

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:28 p.m. on Thursday, August 22, 2013, in the Fourth Floor Conference Room, City Hall. A roster of the members of the commission and the technical posts they fill are on file and available upon request. Also present were commission members C. Davis, S. Dozier, V. Hrabal, D. Matonak, P. Reed, S. Silas, and M. Wertman. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator; and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Division.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 8, 2013.**

**MOTION:** (Wertman/Dozier) Mr. Chairman, I move we approve the minutes.  
**DISCUSSION:** None.  
**ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**25 West Washington Street –Helen Tineo/Beatitudes Hair and Beauty–Temporary Banner, Case No. HDC 2013-40.**

**27 West Washington Street –Pretty Little Girls Bowtique–Window Signs, Case No. HDC 2013-41.**

Ms. Hrabal had a question about Case No. HDC 2013-41; therefore, that case was moved to Design Review.

**MOTION:** (Hrabal/Dozier) Mr. Chairman, I have reviewed the materials submitted in Case No. HDC 2013-40, and its associated staff report and recommendation, and I have viewed the property in question. The staff report recommends approval of this application as consistent with the applicable standards adopted by this commission, and no one has appeared at this hearing with concerns about, issues with, or objections to this application. Therefore, I move that this commission adopt the staff evaluation and recommendation in this case as its own and grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. HDC 2013-40.  
**DISCUSSION:** None.  
**ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**DESIGN REVIEW**

**27 West Washington Street –Pretty Little Girls Bowtique –Window Sign,  
Case No. HDC 2013-41.**

Kayla Yeakle, 11329 Quail Bridge Circle, Hagerstown, Maryland, was present.

Staff Report: This building is a B resource in the Downtown Local Historic District. Applicant seeks approval to install vinyl signs and graphics on the exterior of the storefront windows. Materials will be pink Mactac vinyl and Mactac laminate. Staff recommended approval. Since the storefront windows are tinted, the signs and graphics (which would normally be placed on the inside of the glass) must be placed on the exterior surface of the window. Mr. Bockmiller noted that he spoke with the applicant about her proposal. Ms. Yeakle would like to open her business as quickly as possible. She plans to come back at a later date for approval of a projecting sign. Staff pointed out that signage placed on the exterior of the window would not harm the historic fabric of the building.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Ms. Yeakle stated that because of other projecting signs on the building, it will be difficult for her to find a location for her projecting sign. Currently, Beatitudes Hair and Beauty Supply has a projecting sign on one side of the building adjacent to her storefront and The Plum has a projecting sign on the right corner. It will be difficult to find a location for her sign, unless one of the other businesses will agree to move their sign. Mr. Bockmiller added that the HDC would have to approve a sign relocation for the other business. He also indicated that placing the proposed sign on the glass would not permanently damage the building.

Mr. Gehr pointed out the decorative leaded glass feature that is located in the typical sign board area. Mr. Bockmiller noted that The Plum sign is nonconforming in its placement. Ms. Dozier was concerned about vandalism with the sign material adhered to the exterior of the window.

Ms. Hrabal asked when Ms. Yeakle thought she might be able to install a permanent projecting sign. She asked whether the proposed sign could be painted on the outside of the glass. Mr. Gehr stated that unless there is a coating on the glass that prohibits it from being painted, he did not see any reason why the sign could not be painted on the outside. However, due to the time required to paint a sign, and the fact that hand painting is a dying art, it would be more costly. Dr. Reed noted that painted windows are an historic signage option, however, most historic signs were backpainted. Mr. Matonak stated that windows painted on the outside would be more likely to chip or have the paint scratched off. Ms. Hrabal stated that her objection to the proposed sign is the shiny nature of the vinyl material. She asked whether the vinyl is available with a textured surface to resemble paint.

The commission discussed possible locations for a projecting sign. Mr. Bockmiller stated that the Zoning Ordinance requires projecting signs to hang no lower than eight feet from the sidewalk and no higher than 12 feet.

The commission halted review on the application in order to give Ms. Yeakle an opportunity to contact her sign contractor to find out if there is a material available with a matte finish.

**19-23 West Antietam Street –City of Hagerstown–Demolition (Fire Damage),  
Case No. HDC 2013-37.**

John Lestitian, Director of Community and Economic Development, and Blaine Mowen, Chief Code Official, were present on behalf of the City of Hagerstown.

Staff Report: This building is a B resource in the Downtown Local Historic District. Applicant seeks approval to demolish the remaining portions of this former five-story structure. A fire early this year severely damaged the building. Anecdotal evidence indicates a sixth floor was lost to a fire years ago. Two of the original six floors are gone. The building is severely damaged, unsafe, and the Department of Community and Economic Development is prepared to report that rehabilitation and reuse of the building is not economically feasible. Staff recommended approval of the demolition request.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Mr. Lestitian told the commission that the building is continuing to deteriorate, it presents an attractive nuisance, and is no longer reasonable to repair. He submitted a financial analysis of the site (meeting file) that shows it would cost approximately \$1.6 million to renovate the structure, which does not include the cost of a new elevator, structural cost of a new roof, and abatement of water damage throughout the building. Real estate rents continue to be depressed as do commercial and residential rents which determine the value of a structure. The value of the structure in the immediate case post renovation will be a fraction of the investment.

The size, scope, and conditions at this structure make it unreasonable to undertake such a project. The City does not have the resources to assume this renovation project at this location. Unabated, the structure will continue to deteriorate, be an attractive nuisance, and to cause diminution to the area. The goal is to remove the blight. Mr. Lestitian said his department does not foresee anyone who would be willing to step forward and put the money into it to bring it back.

Commission members expressed sadness that the building needs to be demolished, but they understood the reason for the demolition. Ms. Hrabal asked if there was anything worth saving. Mr. Lestitian indicated there may be some building elements that could be salvaged. Typically in demolition contracts, the City allows any salvage value to go to the demolition contractor which

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helps to reduce the cost of the demolition. Mr. Lestitian estimated the cost of this demolition to be between \$150,000 and \$200,000.

Dr. Reed questioned how the empty lot will be finished. Mr. Lestitian indicated the City did not have a plan for the lot yet. The specs call for either gravel or seeding. The lot will be difficult to redevelop since it is only 5,000 square feet. A possibility is the construction of an historic marker with an old photo of the building.

Commission members asked that the exterior of the building be photodocumented, with particular attention given to the cornice line. Also of interest are the bay windows, lintels, and sills. Mr. Lestitian asked for a recommendation of what to do with the leaded glass if they are able to remove them intact. Mr. Gehr said the commission does not want the materials going to the landfill. Mr. Lestitian stated that if the demolition contractor is able to remove the leaded panels that the City will retain them possibly re use them in whole or in part in another building renovation in Hagerstown.

**MOTION:** (Hrabal/Wertman) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question and if deconstructed in accordance with these plans, the project is compatible with character of the district for the reason that the building that was damaged in a fire had not been repaired and experienced further damage and is now so badly deteriorated that it cannot be feasibility saved without investing a very large amount of money and if it remains untouched may provide a hazard to the public if it started to fall. If it does come down we ask that some of the defining architectural elements, mainly the leaded glass, can be preserved for use in a future project and that building be photographically documented for the remaining architectural details. Then we would agree that it would be generally in harmony with the Architectural Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the character of the adjoining properties. I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. HDC 2013-37.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**27 West Washington Street –Pretty Little Girls Bowtique –Window Sign,  
Case No. HDC 2013-41.**

Discussion resumed on this case.

Ms. Yeakle reported that the sign could be printed on a matte finish vinyl. She amended her application accordingly.

- MOTION:** (Hrabal/Silas) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question and if constructed in accordance with these plans, the project is compatible with character of the district for the reasons that the materials being used will be more historic in appearance if it is a matte finish, and because of the architectural detailing preventing a standard hanging sign or anything else that would fit within City codes, we agree that this will be generally in harmony with the Architectural Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the character of the adjoining properties. I would like to state this is not to be precedent setting. We do not normally consider vinyl signs in the Historic District to be appropriate, however, for the reasons cited I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. HDC 2013-41.
- DISCUSSION:** None.
- ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**WORKSHOP:**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Mr. Gehr Chair recognized and welcomed new commission member, Christina Davis. Ms. Davis told the commission that she has lived in Hagerstown for eight years, and previously was active with the Prince Georges County historic district commission and served as vice mayor and on the council in Riverdale Park.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- Text Amendment for Economic Development –The committee met last week and staff hopes to have the recommendation the next meeting packet. As background, the HDC and staff members were asked to look at ways the HDC could approve the demolition of certain historic resources if the City is faced with a significant economic development project. Mr. Bockmiller stressed that the proposed language is tightly written and most likely will not be used very often. Mr. Bockmiller noted that when he inquired with other jurisdictions, he found that other cities did not have models on which he could base Hagerstown’s language. As an overview, all “A” resources are protected, and bonding is required for the replacement of any building that is slated to be removed in order to prevent holes in the streetscape.

Mr. Gehr agreed with staff that the new language will not be used very often. He noted

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that there are plenty of areas outside the historic districts where development is possible. The language ensures that plans for the hole left after demolition need to be in place before the demo is approved. The design of any replacement structure would need to be approved by HDC.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The remaining vacant slot on the Historic District Commission is tentatively slated to be filled soon.

**ADJOURN:** It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:25 p.m.).

9/12/2013  
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Date

  
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Debra C. Calhoun - Secretary