

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. on Thursday, January 8, 2015, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, 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 L. Allen, C. Crumrine, 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**

Minutes were not ready for approval.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**20 West Washington Street – Michael Fitzgerald – Wall Sign, Case No. HDC 2014-57.**

Since the applicant was not present, staff recommended that this case be moved to a Design Review. If Mr. Fitzgerald appears later in the meeting, the application can be reviewed after the first design review case.

**DESIGN REVIEW**

**49 and 53 South Potomac Street – Steve Stedman/D Impression Signs – Signage, Case No. HDC 2014-56.**

Steve Stedman, D Impression Signs, was present on behalf of the owner.

Staff Report: This building is a “B” resource in the Downtown Historic District. The property owner would like to install two, double-sided projecting signs not to exceed eight square feet each (one on each storefront). Signs will be digitally printed on one-half inch MDO board with white backgrounds and black lettering with red accents on one of the signs. Both signs will be displayed on scroll brackets secured to the masonry wall. Staff recommended approval. This request is for two separate businesses, so two signs are appropriate in this instance.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Mr. Stedman provided a revised drawing for the file since the drawings submitted with the application had the total square footage of each sign as over eight square feet. The signs will have at least eight feet of clearance between the bottom of the sign and the sidewalk. No comments were received from the sign consultant.

- MOTION:** (Wertman/Silas) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question, and as long as the sign is eight feet or above from the bottom of the property to the beginning of the sign, then it will be constructed in accordance with those plans, so the project is compatible with the character of the districts for the reasons that the height will be fine, we'll have the eight-foot clearance, the materials are also appropriate, and they are generally in harmony with the architectural design guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the character of the adjoining properties. Therefore, I move that the HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. 2014-56.
- DISCUSSION:** None.
- ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**20 West Washington Street – Michael Fitzgerald – Wall Sign, Case No. HDC 2014-57.**

Mr. Fitzgerald was not present.

**WORKSHOPS**

**114 North Potomac Street – Mark Wishnow – Proposed Carriage House Demolition.**

Mark Wishnow, Wish Kitchens and Baths, 114 North Potomac Street, Hagerstown, Maryland, was present.

Mr. Bockmiller explained that this is a unique situation and suggested that Mr. Wishnow meet with the commission in a workshop. The property is at 114 North Potomac Street and the front part of the property is a multi-story, mixed-use building. There is an alley/driveway on the left side of the building with the carriage house/garage in the back. Carriage house/garage is a combination of brick and frame construction. The carriage house, which is only marginally visible from a public way, is in bad condition. Mr. Wishnow is considering demolition of the carriage house because of its condition and he sees this as an opportunity to create some parking for his business.

Mr. Wishnow indicated that the previous owner began working on the building and now the city is pushing Mr. Wishnow to rehab the building. To accomplish what Mr. Wishnow would like to do with the building, he needs the area that would open up once the carriage house is demolished. Mr. Wishnow noted that even though the brick building appears sound from the outside, the interior of the building is completely gone.

Since the carriage house is marginally visible from East Franklin Street, and there are only a few examples of this type of construction remaining, Dr. Reed said she would not recommend allowing this building to be demolished, especially the brick portion of the building.

Mr. Wishnow stated that the windows are broken on the alley side and the brick is falling out. He was not sure if it is possible to walk from one section to another from the inside. Mr. Gehr surmised that the two sections are separate. Mr. Wishnow would like to remove both sections and continue with the previous owner's plans for apartments and a restaurant. He needs the space in the back for parking. Mr. Bockmiller added that the plan was for 16 apartments and commercial space on the first floor. There is nothing in the ordinance that requires parking.

Commission Member Comments: Mr. Gehr noted that the consensus of the commission seems to be that there would be no issue with removing the frame structure adjacent to the alley. However, there would be concern about demolishing the brick building in the middle. Mr. Wishnow argued that the brick needs to be repointed and the roof needs to be replaced. A parking lot would add value to the property. He estimated that it would take \$250,000 to rehab the building, including cleaning it out and stabilizing it.

Mr. Gehr asked what this building was used for historically. Dr. Reed noted that this was a warehouse building for a wholesale grocery company. More recently, a former owner had applied for and received preservation tax credits for the whole complex. The former owner was going to extend the restaurant activity into these buildings. The tax credits have since expired.

Ms. Allen asked if the HDC ever does conditional approvals for demolitions. She was concerned about approving the demolition, and for some reason the project does not move forward. Mr. Gehr noted that the HDC has done that before by requiring plans for the improvements to the site once the building is removed. The HDC usually will not grant the demolition until it is known that the funding and the rest of the plans are going to come to fruition.

Mr. Wishnow said he is a small business owner and is investing in downtown. For him there needs to be a starting point, but this project might take ten years. He would like permission to demolish the building first and then proceed from there. Without the demolition, it does not make sense to spend money on the primary building.

Ms. Wertman agreed with Ms. Allen and wants assurances that the owner is taking the necessary steps to begin rehab of the apartments. She does not want the building to come down, the parking lot constructed, with no progress made on rehabilitating the apartments. Mr. Bockmiller advised Mr. Wishnow to meet with the City's Department of Economic and Community Development. He pointed out that the HDC is skittish about demolitions based on anticipated "future" construction or plans because several demolitions have been approved, but the only thing that happened was the demolition and no projects were developed on the vacant site.

Ms. Allen asked if a demolition is approved whether the building could be photo documented. Mr. Gehr said it is the commission's practice to require photo documentation of these types of buildings prior to demolition.

**805 Hamilton Boulevard – Jeff Mussolino – Front Porch Steps Alteration.**

Jeff Mussolino, 805 Hamilton Boulevard, Hagerstown, Maryland, was present.

Mr. Mussolino owns both sides of this duplex, which was built in 1913. The front porch needs to be repaired. His plan is to redo it exactly the way it is now. His biggest concern is the porch roof which has small drainage holes at the ends closest to the street that catch the rain water. The drainage holes are not adequate so the excess water runs down over the side of the roof and has deteriorated and rotted out the boxing. Mr. Mussolino would like advice from the commission on how to fix that issue. He asked if it would be acceptable to install gutters on the side of the porch roof to catch the water. Gutters would match the gutters on the upper portion of the house.

According to Mr. Mussolino one of the corner piers has settled and he would like to reconstruct it with a footer. Commission members indicated that a footer would not be an issue because it would not be visible. Mr. Mussolino asked if he could enlarge the lip on the porch roof so it will support a gutter system. Mr. Gehr indicated that the lip could be built up with 2 x 4s and the gutter could be attached to that. The average passerby will not notice a difference if it is painted to match the existing trim.

As far as the porch railings, Mr. Mussolino would like to keep the original porch railing system. The tongue-and-groove flooring and the bead board will be replaced in-kind. Mr. Gehr noted that if the porch is taller than 30 inches, the railings will need to be replaced to meet the current building code. Mr. Mussolino indicated that when the roof dropped down it caused a crack in one of the columns. He said the column can be replaced in kind.

Another component of Mr. Mussolino's project would be to replace the wood steps with brick to match the house, including recessed lighting. Dr. Reed and Mr. Gehr pointed out that the divider post is original. Mr. Mussolino said he can get pre-formed concrete slabs to match the lintels to set on top of the brick. He stated that 50% of the steps on Oak Hill Avenue and Hamilton Boulevard are brick—the other half are wood construction. Mr. Gehr said he was not concerned about the steps since they could be changed in the future.

In summary, the commission said the following work would be appropriate:

- Build up the porch roof edge to allow addition of a gutter, preferably half-found.
- Replace the brick pier, as long as it's in-kind.
- Footer under one of the corner piers for stabilization purposes.

- No strong objections to replacing the wood steps with brick steps on the front porch.

Mr. Gehr recommended that the newel post in the center of the porch be retained. The Building Code will require some type of handrail. Steps over five feet wide will require a center rail.

**DESIGN REVIEW - Continued**

**20 West Washington Street – Michael Fitzgerald – Wall Sign, Case No. HDC 2014-57.**

Mr. Fitzgerald was not present. Staff asked the commission to find that application is incomplete since the applicant had promised to bring samples of the proposed sign material to the meeting.

**MOTION:** (Wertman/Silas) Mr. Chairman, I move that HDC application 2014-57 is incomplete and we would like to kick it to the next meeting on January 22, provided he completes the application, we can review it.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Staff announced that the Planning Commission will be holding a public review meeting on the proposed Land Management Code text amendments on Wednesday, January 28, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. At that time, the Planning Commission will entertain public testimony on the proposed amendments, which include the hardship language pertaining to economic development projects in the Downtown Local Historic District.
- The last two events commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War will be on Friday, April 17, and Friday, June 25. Bridge of Life Church will be hosting a showing of Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln" on April 17; and the movie "The Conspirators" on June 25.

**Historic District Commission  
MINUTES**

**January 8, 2015  
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

---

These events are free and open to the public.

**ADJOURN**

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:30 p.m.).

3/12/2015

---

Approved



---

Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary