

MINUTES

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

January 28, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Meeting took place virtually via Go to Meeting platform due to COVID 19 restrictions

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Peg Lucas, Chair
Paul Edmeades, Vice Chair
Jeff Campbell
Brian Payne
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Laura M. Bianca-Pruett, Planner
Amy G. Chmielewski, Mayor
Erin Hughes, Town Commissioner
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
Justin Polun, Property Owner
Kathi Santora, Recording Secretary
- ABSENT:** Megan Greco
Jennifer Mainster-Hanna
Steve Lober

Ms. Lucas called the Historic Preservation Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

I. Administrative Matters

A. Approval of minutes

Ms. Lucas introduced the November 19, 2020 and requested comments.

P. 2, last paragraph, Ms. Lucas asked that the word “noted” in first line be changed to “suggested.”

P. 3, 5th paragraph, Ms. Lucas asked that the following italicized words be added in the first line: “Ms. Lucas noted that the HPC could skip the December meeting, *as has been the custom*, and meet again in January.”

P. 4, 8th paragraph, Ms. Lucas requested that the following italicized words be added: Ms. Lucas noted that the materials should be in-kind wood with a matching profile and reveal that

matches the design, scale, proportion *and* arrangement of materials *that existed on the structure prior to unauthorized removal.*

Mr. Edmeades moved that the minutes be approved as corrected. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Election of Officers

Mr. Small called for the nomination of the new HPC Chairperson.

Ms. Lucas nominated Mr. Edmeades. There were no other nominations or discussion. Mr. Small requested roll call for the votes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Edmeades, in his new role as chairperson, called for nominations for Vice-Chairperson. Ms. Lucas nominated Mr. Campbell.

There were no other nominations. Mr. Edmeades asked for a motion to close nominations. Ms. Lucas did so. Mr. Campbell seconded. Mr. Edmeades requested a roll call for the votes. All in favor. Motion carried.

II. Old Business

A. HA 224 (Van Bibber House) located at 303 S. Main Street March 28, 2019 approval with conditions

Mr. Edmeades asked Ms. Bianca-Pruett to summarize the current status. In March 2019, there was an unauthorized removal of siding from the property. Zoning violations were issued. Fiber cement siding was applied, which had not been approved by HPC. Since that time, there have been a number of meetings to find a resolution and to get the proper siding installed.

HPC members, at the most recent meeting, asked the owner, Mr. Polun, to supply a contractor who will complete the project in line with Town and HPC guidelines. She added that a recent contractor had removed himself from the project. Mr. Polun reported to her this morning that he had secured a new contractor. Mr. Polun asked for additional specs to provide to the contractor.

Mr. Edmeades called on Mr. Polun.

Mr. Pulon questioned the reference “unauthorized removal” that was discussed during the minutes’ approval discussion. He stated that the wall was deteriorating rapidly. At issue here, he stated, was the proper siding material for reinstallation.

Mr. Campbell stated that the conversation referenced was about approval of minutes and that the issue is well past the discussion of removal/reinstallation of siding. There was not a permit to do any work at the time. Mr. Campbell then invited Mr. Polun to update the HPC on the current status of identifying a contractor.

Mr. Polun stated that the contractor is Modern Remodeling, located in Nottingham. The contractor and his project manager met with Mr. Polun at the site. The contractor asked Mr. Polun to supply specs clarification in writing in order to avoid confusion. All are aware of the June deadline.

Mr. Polun stated he had spoken to at least a dozen contractors. Most are not interested in the job.

Mr. Polun asked for clarification on why the current installed siding would not be acceptable. He believes that it is structurally sound and attractive.

Mr. Edmeades stated that the Van Bibber House is one of the most historically significant structures in the Town of Bel Air. It is designated as an historic property. As such, owners are eligible for certain tax credits for changes. However, all changes must be HPC-approved. Placing the fiber cement siding was not in keeping with appropriate historic restoration for that building.

He referred to a previous meeting in which Mr. Polun presented a sample of fiber cement siding and the HPC advised that it was not acceptable. HPC then advised on appropriate material.

The HPC’s mission is to preserve Bel Air’s very important historical buildings.

Mr. Polun noted that 85% of the building is in its original state. The issue here is limited to the front right of the building. He thinks the building is attractive as is and has a very stable tenant.

Mr. Edmeades advised that the side of the building in question is important to its historical status. Historical preservation seeks to preserve the historic nature and quality of buildings. Any changes should be with in-kind materials and processes. He added that this is what Mr. Polun agreed to do.

Mr. Polun stated that he made the decision to replace the siding with the materials in question in good conscience. The building was in poor repair and the decision was made quickly. He asked that the HPC find the current product acceptable.

Mr. Campbell stated that this issue has been thoroughly discussed previously. There are other town properties that follow the rules. All properties must be treated in the same way. The goal now is to update and take remedial action.

Mr. Edmeades stated that the HPC tonight will discuss the replacement contractor and timeline. What is the current status?

Mr. Polun stated that the contractor is a qualified one. There is not yet a bid or contract. The contractor would like specs and Mr. Polun asked for all information in writing from the HPC. They are able to do the job in May.

Mr. Small advised that Mr. Edmeades, Mr. Campbell and Mr. Payne can meet outside of the HPC to assemble detailed specs. This is acceptable since three persons would not constitute a quorum. He does believe that Mr. Campbell has already provided this information to Mr. Polun. Questions can be addressed via Ms. Bianca-Pruett. Mr. Campbell suggested that the previous correspondence can be simply shared again via Ms. Bianca-Pruett.

Mr. Edmeades stated that there are other details that the HPC could provide to the contractor. These may include nails design and siding finish.

Mr. Small stated that all details can be assembled after there is a signed contract. If contractor has questions, the committee can address these.

To clarify, Mr. Small stated that Ms. Bianca-Pruett, Mr. Polun and the contractor all need to work together to clarify details and answer questions.

Mr. Campbell stated that an update on the contract will be required at next month's HPC meeting. Mr. Polun agreed.

Mr. Campbell moved to continue to suspend fines until the next HPC meeting update. Ms. Lucas seconded the motion. No discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Payne reminded Mr. Polun that approved work is eligible for tax credit. He invited Mr. Polun to submit his bid at the next meeting for preliminary tax credit approval.

There were no other questions or comments. Mr. Polun left the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

III. New Business

A. Review of 2021 Revised Powers & Duties (draft)

Mr. Small stated that the Department of Planning has reviewed the currently-published powers and duties of the Planning Commission, Board of Appeals and the Historic Preservation Commission. The goal was to review for consistency across all three groups and to address issues that have been ignored or not followed. These documents have not been reviewed since 2003.

Updated drafts have been distributed to all three commissions. There is a lot of repetition in the documents. There are also elements in State requirements that are not found in the town's documents.

He asked that the HPC review and provide comments in the next two weeks so that another draft can be prepared for next month's meeting.

B. Designated Historic Site Inventory Updates – Broadway

Ms. Bianca-Pruett stated that Department of Planning staff has scanned reports/descriptions of designated properties that are located on Broadway. She asked that the HPC decide how to proceed with the updates. She will post what has been done so far on a share drive so that HPC members can access.

HPC members discussed and decided to divide the existing 15 residential properties. Ms. Lucas will assign properties to each member. They can be reassigned if a commissioner is not able to complete the review.

IV. Other Business

Ms. Bianca-Pruett updated the HPC about the status of the architectural surveys of new potential properties that have been discussed in previous meetings.

The Town did not receive the \$5K grant to support the project. This was to match funds provided by the Town. However, Mr. Small has discussed with Ms. Moody, Director of Finance, about a possible budget mid-year adjustment to cover these costs. There were funds that had not been expended due to COVID. This adjustment proposal will be submitted to the Board of Town Commissioners for review.

There were no other issues brought forth for discussion.

Mr. Payne moved to adjourn. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. All in favor.

The meeting ended at 7:01 p.m.