

Historic District Commission

January 23, 2020

Minutes

Chairman William Blackwelder called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, January 23, 2020 at City Hall in the Council Chamber.

Present: Commissioners Jerry Tucker, Andi Eddlemon, Dick Ruhlman, William Blackwelder (Chair), Ed Starr, Carol Hauer and Clark Simon

Absent: None

Staff present: Charles Graham, Assistant City Attorney; Jason Thompson, Planning Director; Kim Wallis, Planner; and Chrystal Howard, Secretary

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check

Chairman Blackwelder opened the meeting and declared a quorum.

ITEM 1b. Adoption of the Agenda

Commissioner Tucker made the motion to adopt the December 12, 2019 Agenda. Commissioner Eddlemon seconded the motion and the motion unanimously passed (7-0).

ITEM 1c. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Blackwelder made the motion to approve the December 12, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Eddlemon seconded the motion and the motion unanimously passed (7-0).

Chairman Blackwelder stated because of the quasi-judicial format of the hearings, persons wishing to speak and offer evidence are required by North Carolina law to be sworn in or affirmed, and asked all speakers to come forward. Speakers were sworn in by Ms. Howard.

Chairman Blackwelder provided an explanation for public hearings on Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications and order of business.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # 9413)

- Ross Pittman Asset Group, Inc.
- 401 S. Chester Street
- To remove and replace fourteen (14) windows

Chairman Blackwelder opened the public hearing recognizing Ms. Kim Wallis, Planner for the purpose of staff presentation.

Ms. Wallis stated the applicant's name, subject location, and the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) request. She displayed a front view photo of the house and a zoning map. Ms. Wallis provided the property description and findings. She provided key elements of the design and displayed photos of the recently installed windows and previous windows. Ms. Wallis commented that the new windows have been installed. Since the windows were installed without an approved COA, she explained why this item was being presented to the full commission instead of a subcommittee meeting. Ms. Wallis finished her presentation with excerpts from the Design Guidelines as presented in the agenda.

Chairman Blackwelder asked why the windows were replaced without permission and Ms. Wallis referred this question to the applicant.

Commissioner Eddlemon inquired how this violation was brought to staff's attention and Ms. Wallis stated staff drove by and noticed the violation, as well as, receiving an email from a concerned resident.

Commissioner Hauer asked if the grid lines in the windows were removable and Ms. Wallis commented that the grids were between the glass and she was unsure if it would be easy or difficult to remove. Commissioner Hauer asked if these windows were anywhere in the York-Chester district. Ms. Wallis commented that these prairie windows were quite common. Clarification was made on the prairie windows being common; however, not in the local historic district.

Ms. Laurie Knisely, 305 Linstowe Drive of Belmont, NC was recognized. Ms. Knisely explained how she had interpreted the Design Guidelines with the understanding that inoperable or unrepairable windows could be replaced without an approval as long as the windows were of similar style. She explained the decision of their upgraded windows were built and designed to

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mimic the historic time period. She stated that they were trying to preserve the history of the home. Windows of homes nearby were displayed showing different grid patterns and styles, as well as, a basic low end vinyl window. Ms. Knisely commented on the various Certificate of Appropriateness they have applied for, such as a fence, columns, and deck. She shared how they have tried their best to preserve the interior of the home to its original state.

Mr. Thompson asked how she received the Design Guidelines and she answered that she picked it up from the Planning Department.

Commissioner Eddlemon thanked her looking at the Design Guidelines.

Chairman Blackwelder asked if they plan to live in the home or sell it and Ms. Knisely replied that the house will be sold.

Commissioner Starr inquired about the choice of the prairie style window versus the existing window style, not relating to quality. Ms. Knisely stated the prairie grids may not be as traditional in Gastonia's Historic District, but it provides better lighting into the home and was period related. Brief discussion ensued on districts outside the city limits where it is common to have these windows, such as Dilworth and Wilmore, North Carolina.

Chairman Blackwelder thanked her purchasing upgraded windows and matching the original house color.

Mr. Thompson and Attorney Graham explained zoning ordinance regulations and design guidelines, and what was the violation of law.

Brief discussion ensued with Ms. Knisely on the lack of clarity of the requirement for approval. Chairman Blackwelder requested her feedback to help improve the clarity and understanding of the Design Guidelines and regulations.

Commissioner Tucker thanked Ms. Knisely for her efforts to restoring this house. He commented that the concern is the design change. Chairman Blackwelder and Commissioner Eddlemon also thanked Ms. Knisely for her efforts. Commissioner Tucker inquired about any additional work that would require a COA and Ms. Knisely replied that she did not have any future work that would require a COA.

Commissioner Simon commented on reviewing and clarifying Design Guidelines. He used Fenestration (Windows, Doors) part d. as comprehensive and the task of clarifying it further.

Commissioner Hauer commented on windows being an important feature on any house and the prairie windows are a big change from plain windows.

Discussion occurred on upgrades to the home, the prairie windows not being original to the house, and prairie windows in general not common in the City of Gastonia's local historic districts.

Commissioner Starr commented on the prairie windows not being offensive and the house not having a distinct style. He noted that the prairie windows were not original to the house.

Further discussion ensued on windows in the historic district. Brief discussion ensued on shutters.

Being that the applicant owns a window company, Commissioner Tucker made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Starr seconded the motion. The motion failed 2-5 (Eddlemon, Ruhlman, Hauer, Simon, Blackwelder).

Brief discussion ensued on creating a motion involving shutters and the result was not to pursue shutters, as well as, the original window design.

Chairman Blackwelder made a motion to approve with the condition to alter all windows to a 1-over-1 sash and Commissioner Eddlemon seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-1 (Tucker).

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # 9414)

- Hipolito Viveros Contreras
- 709 S. Chester Street

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- To remove front center two (2) windows on second floor and replace with one (1) smaller window

Chairman Blackwelder opened the public hearing recognizing Ms. Kim Wallis, Planner for the purpose of staff presentation.

Ms. Wallis stated the applicant's name, subject location, and the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) request. She displayed a front view photo of the house and a zoning map. Ms. Wallis provided the property description and findings and key elements of the design. She displayed photos of the potential design. Ms. Wallis commented that installing one window will be off-center because of the bathroom shower area. She stated the applicant is open to suggestions. Ms. Wallis finished her presentation with excerpts from the Design Guidelines as presented in the agenda.

Brief discussion ensued on the existing windows being in the shower area, smaller windows replacing existing windows, 6 over 6 sash versus 1 over 1 sash, and the offset of a new window.

Suggestions were installing two smaller 24x18 windows, blackout the window, horizontal upper window, and two half size windows installed in the upper portion of existing window area.

After inquiry if the homeowner would be willing to take an interior photo of bathroom wall with the windows to help provide a better understanding of the issue, Commissioner Tucker made a motion to continue the item to allow staff to relay the concerns and suggestions to the homeowner and Commissioner Starr seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

ITEM 3. Other Business

Introduction to the new marketing/branding materials:

Ms. Wallis introduced the new newsletter, York-Chester and Brookwork Handbooks, and postcard. She commented that the video had been postponed until Spring. She encouraged the board to contact her with any additions or suggestions.

Subcommittee Meeting Tonight, if Needed:

No subcommittee meeting is needed.

ITEM 4. Adjournment

There being no other business, Chairman Blackwelder adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

William Blackwelder, Chairman