

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HAPC)

MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, October 13, 2021

6:15 P.M.

I. Call to Order

The October 13, 2021 meeting of the Oxford Historic and Architectural Preservation Commission was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by Chris Skoglund.

Those members present: Chris Skoglund, Edna Southard, Dana Miller, Hueston Kyger, Corey Watt, Sean Wagner

Those members excused: Chad Smith

Staff members present: Sam Perry, Community Development Director

Staff members excused: None

II. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Watt made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Southard seconded the motion. All were in favor.

III. Public Comments

Mr. Spurlock stated that the property request list is going to be done in 1-2 weeks. Lot of the identified buildings on the list are mostly from the 1800s. Once the list is completed, it will be uploaded on Google Drive. Each property will have a folder. 39 properties have been visited so far.

At the City Council meeting, the one prior to the last meeting, Mr. Skoglund informed the Council how the Commission engages the Smith Library to do the property research.

IV. Approval of Minutes of September 8, 2021

Ms. Southard made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Kyger seconded the motion. All were in favor.

V. Old Business

a) Status of previously approved COA's in Uptown District

Mr. Perry stated that a new COA was not submitted for 101 W Church Street.

22 S Beech St: Planning Commission and HAPC approval expired, but it was resubmitted. Both Commissions have given approval for the resubmitted application. The building permit also expired but it has been resubmitted earlier in the week.

131 W High Street: the project is moving along on the Caroline Harrison Building.

Mr. Perry added there have been a few sign approvals as well.

Mr. Skoglund observed the new Doughby's sign is shorter than the previous one and he talked to them about painting over the place of the old sign so it will be the same color as the rest of the building.

Mr. Skoglund said that the project on the property located next to UDF is moving along as well.

Mr. Watt inquired about the door that was installed along the Sky Deck at 36 E High Street. Mr. Perry stated there is no new update on this matter at the moment.

Mr. Kyger inquired how long can be the delay for the resubmission of a new COA for 101 W Church Street. Mr. Perry said there is no time limit on this. Mr. Perry also used the old bookstore as an example stating that as long as the minimum standards are being met for property maintenance conditions, and the taxes are being paid, no other actions are needed.

Mr. Wagner had a question about incentives to develop a vacant lot. Mr. Perry stated that Council took the advice from Law that the risks outweigh the benefits. Mr. Perry added there are laws to pass that prohibits vacancy, and there could be financial incentives which would be a new topic for the City Council to consider.

Ms. Southard was wondering if there was a way to strengthen the Design Guidelines, within the limits of the Law, so the external appearance of a vacant property can be maintained. Ms. Southard used windows on vacant houses as an example. Mr. Watt added there are window coverage guidelines from the City and perhaps incorporate some kind of a guideline into that. Mr. Skoglund suggested to look into what Hamilton did.

Mr. Skoglund had a question about 45 E. High. Mr. Skoglund wanted to know if they have to come back to the Commission when they plan the sign for the building. Mr. Perry said yes.

Mr. Wagner had a question on the previous bookstore building in Uptown. He wanted to know if there is a fine for not maintaining the building as required. Mr. Perry said yes, there is a fine. Mr. Wagner also wanted to know what would happen if the Guidelines were violated. Mr. Perry believed there would be a citation for violating the Preservation Ordinance, but need to check what the Code says.

Ms. Southard stated there was a meeting with Smith Library about the tours for next year. Ms. Southard reported they plan to have the four tours in May since it is Historic Preservation month. Ms. Southard added that the tours in September were very successful. Ms. Southard mentioned if anyone from the Commission members would like to do tours they would be happy to assist. The planned tours: N Elm & West Sycamore, Hillcrest & Coulter Subdivision, Hilltop, N Main 200-300 blocks, for future Peabody and McKee. Mr. Miller wanted to know how long these tours have been offered. Ms. Southard could not give an exact answer, she said she has been involved for 6 years. Mr. Perry thought 10-15 years total.

Mr. Watt made a comment that last night's Planning Commission meeting made him realize that there is some kind of disconnection between Planning Commission and HAPC. Perhaps HAPC could come and provide information before a decision is made on a case that affects historical sites or the property is in the Historic District.

b) Scope of Work for Discussion for Design Guidelines Update

There is a need to update the Design Guidelines and to be able to answer to the property owner's questions.

Mr. Watt was wondering if there is a way to put in the Design Guidelines that certain things (basic things) are applicable to everyone in the Historic District regardless of the type of usage. Mr. Watt agreed with Mr. Skoglund that the Guidelines should be easy to understand and not overwhelming to people.

Mr. Skoglund drew attention to the importance of keeping the historic look of a house but being efficient at the same time.

Mr. Watt was wondering if there are any funding available. Mr. Perry said yes, the Federal Tax Credit (20%), State Tax Credit (25%), or Qualified Restoration Credits through the Ohio Department of Development, called Historic Tax Credit Program. Mr. Perry said that the local landlords are not really interested in this program. Mr. Watt added that it would be ideal if additional funds were available if someone, for example, wants to update a building to more modern accessibility standards.

Mr. Perry was doing a research on what he would call Degree of Regulation. There are areas that require attention before a consultant will be hired to help. For example: demolition of historic buildings, and what will be built in its place (the style, the details). Mr. Perry also pointed out there are already vacant lots in the Historic District, and a decision needed to be made on whether new architecture is allowed or not. Mr. Perry suggested if there are things the Commission wants to include in the scope of work to discuss it and give it to him in writing. Mr. Wagner added that it is a good idea because this way the Commission is better equipped to explain to those whose properties are affected why this is beneficial, what the purpose of expanding the Historic District. This way consensus from the public could be gained. Mr. Watt agreed with Mr. Wagner.

Mr. Skoglund hoped that the Commission's desire to work with the property owner would come through the Design Guidelines and clear communications.

Mr. Watt added it would be a good idea to help Mr. Perry and his team with possible penalties if someone does not comply with regulations. Mr. Watt pointed out it would also be helpful and consistent to provide guidelines on styles, material when it comes to new buildings in the Historic District. Mr. Skoglund added that it is important because we do not want architectural changes on a building. Mr. Skoglund mentioned the Copy Shop across the street from the Police Station as an example.

Mr. Miller added that the requirements should be written down. Mr. Perry encouraged the Commission to write their thoughts down so he can include them in the Guidelines. Mr. Watt suggested to give Mr. Wagner and Mr. Kyger permission to work with Mr. Perry in the behalf of the Commission, as a subcommittee.

Mr. Miller suggested to look through other design guidelines that the City has in a hard copy form. Mr. Watt said it would be important to have the new Design Guidelines online and be searchable. Mr. Watt suggested to form a Focus Group to provide input on things that the Commission might not think of.

VI. Administrative Decisions (Previously Decided)

HAPC-2021-10, 37 E High Street, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, new wall sign, Xinxia Li, Applicant/Agent

The Commission liked the name of the business, Barcode.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Kyger made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Miller seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.