

City of Lewisburg
Historic Landmarks Commission Regular Session and Public Hearings
Meeting Minutes — October 16, 2023, 5:00 p.m.
942 Washington Street West, Lewisburg, WV
Paul L. Cooley Council Chambers

PRESENT: Chairperson David Craddock; Commissioners Donna Johns, William Deegans, Adrienne French and Clifford Gillilan; Planning and Zoning Officer Marsha Cunningham; HLC consultant Michael Mills (via ZOOM); Recording Officer Tina Alvey.

ABSENT: None.

VISITORS: Mayor Beverly White, City Manager Misty Hill, Jerry Janiga, Skip Thompson, Mitchell Thompson, Edith McKinley, Mike and Nikki Tremann, Josh Adamo, Susanne Bromke (via ZOOM).

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairperson David Craddock.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commissioner Clifford Gillilan moved approval of the September 11, 2023, meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Donna Johns. The motion passed 5-0.

***Public Hearing:** Edith McKinley, 320 Lee Street. Replace window on second floor.*

Applicant described a plan to replace an odd-sized window on her home with a new double-hung, aluminum-clad wood window to match the other 31 windows on the house. The work will likely be done next summer.

Johns made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Commissioner Adrienne French, and passed on a 5-0 vote.

***Public Hearing:** Mike Tremann, 1621 Washington Street East. Install standing seam awning over basement walkout.*

Applicant described his project as the installation of a dark bronze metal roof over the basement door on his home.

Gillilan made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Commissioner William Deegans, and passed on a 5-0 vote.

***Public Hearing:** Keith Bromke, 134 Lee Street North. Demo 16x10' garage and replace it with a 16x10' shed.*

Speaking on a ZOOM link on behalf of the applicant, Susanne Bromke described the need to replace an existing garage built in 1979 which is in “terrible condition” with a shed painted to match the house. She noted that her father is disabled and gets around on a scooter, which she

wants to store securely in the new shed.

Gillilan made a motion to approve the project, seconded by Johns, and passed on a 5-0 vote.

Public Hearing: Tina Morris, 197 Maple Street. Repair patio roof with a support column, replace the roof with Atlas Pinnacle Pristine Black Shadow, replace gutters and downspouts (white), install cap over the chimney (black).

Applicant is requesting permission to replace shingles, repair the patio roof and add a support column to it, and install a stainless steel chimney cap, painted black.

Gillilan moved approving the project, seconded by French. It was approved on a 5-0 vote.

Public Hearing: Wooton, Davis, Hussel & Johnson, Jefferson Street. Building expansion with colors.

Representing the applicant, architect Jerry Janiga told the Commission that, due to accessibility issues, the law firm needs to expand its office building, located on the corner of Jefferson and Randolph streets. The original structure is minimal traditional, while the addition will be contemporary in design. Janiga said his client wants to move quickly on the project. While a month's postponement will not derail the project, Janiga said he needs assurances from the Commission that concepts are acceptable.

HLC consultant Michael Mills said he had spoken with Janiga recently but has concerns about the stucco exterior and the large windows proposed for the addition. Mills said the proposal needs to be reviewed "from every angle" before commissioners vote on the project. Craddock agreed that the Commission needs more time to consider the application, as the addition differs widely from the existing structure. Deegans commented that the building is quite visible to those entering downtown from the north, while French expressed appreciation for the Prairie style of the addition.

Janiga reiterated his need for immediate assurances, whereupon Craddock responded, "Generally, we're in favor of what you're doing." Gillilan moved to table the application, seconded by Johns, and endorsed on a 5-0 vote.

Public Hearing: Libby Tomar, 1505 Washington Street East. Replace porch posts with wood posts painted white and replace the old 27" tall handrail with 34" tall handrail.

Representing the applicant, contractor Skip Thompson said the proposed project calls for replacing the house's porch posts using material similar to what was there, the existing posts having been determined to be unstable. All of the posts were removed from the porch before the zoning officer got involved and halted further demolition, pending HLC action. In addition, Thompson said the house's handrails were only 27" high; the current state building code requires a minimum height of 34". The handrails were also removed and are now stacked behind the

house.

Local contractor Josh Adamo offered frequent comments on the proceedings, criticizing removal of the posts and railings and accusing Thompson of lacking sufficient knowledge of the protocols of historic restoration. Adamo is a former owner of the house in question and was recently supplanted as the the project's general contractor by Thompson. City Manager Misty Hill put an end to the back-and-forth between the rival contractors with the admonition that the commissioners needed to hear from the applicant's representative.

The application was tabled on a 5-0 vote, moved by Gillilan and seconded by French.

Public Hearing: Adam Long, Court Street. Replace roof, replace cedar shingles with synthetic shingles.

In the absence of the applicant, contractor Kevin Thornton sought approval for replacing only the roof at this time, using composite material. The cedar shingle project will be presented to the HLC at a later hearing.

Approval for the roof replacement was moved by Gillilan and seconded by Johns. The vote in favor was 5-0.

Public Hearing: Jessica Chestnut-Hall, 1599 Washington Street East. Detached garage structure, change siding and roofing to a metal roof, wood trim and hardy plank siding.

Commissioners called this hearing to take further action against applicant in the wake of her earlier remodeling of a garage without obtaining a permit. Hill explained that if commissioners want the city to proceed with a lawsuit against Chestnut-Hall they would first need to formally deny a portion of the application the woman filed after the project was discovered, and would then need to vote to require the city to proceed with a lawsuit to get the applicant to remove the materials that were not approved by the HLC.

Deegans moved to deny the applicant's tardy request for installation of unapproved roofing materials on the garage at 1599 Washington Street East. The motion was seconded by French, and passed on a 5-0 vote.

French moved to request the city "engage in the request that the roof that was replaced without approval be removed." Johns seconded the motion, and it passed on a 5-0 vote.

Public Hearing: Ben Long, 491 Church Street. Add a wall to the previously-approved driveway.

Recognizing the absence of the applicant, the Commission tabled the application on a 5-0 vote, moved by Gillilan and seconded by Johns.

DISCUSSION OF WAYFINDING MASTER PLAN: Renderings of the proposed entrance

sign and kiosk sign were presented to the Commission, with the caveat that colors are being tweaked. Hill noted that entrance signs will be placed in front of Shoney's near the I-64 interchange, on Caldwell Hill, and on the southern entrance to town coming up from Fairlea. She asked for a motion approving the placement of the illuminated kiosk so that the Public Works Department can proceed with installation of electrical service at that site.

French moved approval of the site, seconded by Deegans, and approved 5-0.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: In a 10-minute speech, Adamo continued his objections to the measures being taken in regard to the Tomar house and renewed his request to serve as a consultant for the city and the HLC on historical restoration matters. "I'm trying to find my new niche here," he said.

While members of the Commission assured Adamo that his proposal is under consideration, Hill said Michael Mills already serves in the capacity of consultant. "He's our preservationist," she said, a point later reiterated by Mayor Beverly White.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioners informally declared an unlisted executive session at approximately 6:45 p.m. in order to further discuss the Wooton, Davis, Hussel & Johnson office building expansion.

Deegans made a motion to return to regular session at approximately 6:50 p.m., seconded by French and approved 5-0.

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF TOMAR APPLICATION AND OTHER ISSUES: Following the brief executive session, discussion continued concerning the Tomar application. Mills noted that if the railings are salvageable, as Adamo maintained, Tomar and her contractor should be made to reinstall them with appropriate modifications to bring their height up to code. Mills also commented that it would set a bad precedent if the Commission doesn't make the applicant's contractor reuse at least the four porch posts (of a total of nine or 10, according to Thompson) judged to be stable and to custom craft replacement posts to closely match the materials and style of those posts.

There was no vote on Mills' recommendations, as the application had been tabled.

Additional discussion also ensued concerning Adamo's earlier suggestion that the city stage training sessions for property owners and building contractors who want to work on projects in the Historic District. Hill said she would look into grants to fund such sessions. Mills said he would be glad to bring in outside experts and facilitate the sessions.

Citing legal pitfalls, Hill rebuffed a notion that people applying for building permits in the Historic District be steered toward contractors with experience in restoration work. She said the city prints a list of local licensed contractors but cannot recommend one over another for any project.

Hill also addressed the conduct of HLC's public hearings, saying the proceedings should not be allowed to devolve into a back-and-forth exchange like the one between Adamo and Thompson. She said it isn't fair to the applicant when someone from the audience is allowed to interrogate and argue with the applicant. She suggested the city no longer call such proceedings "public hearings" and only allow public comment at a designated time at the end of the meeting.

Hill said work is set to begin on the Lafayette Street sidewalk project. In addition, she said she had met with state and federal ADA officials and ascertained that the city needs to formulate an overall sidewalks plan that will include allowances for sandwich board signs, chalkboard signs, lampposts and other intrusions while still leaving an unimpeded pedestrian path that is at least 4' wide.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS: Deegans noted that SHPO requires regular updates of surveys for historical districts. Grant funding is available for an update to Lewisburg's survey, but it requires matching funds.

ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion by Gillilan, the meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Alvey
Recording Officer