

MINUTES

Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission

*Valdosta City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room
300 North Lee Street, Valdosta, Georgia*

December 7, 2020 5:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Harry Hamm
Dr. Alex Alvarez
Mr. Tommy Crane
Ms. Laura Yale
Ms. Sandie Burkett

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Sallie Querin
Ms. Celine Gladwin

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. James Horton

VISITORS PRESENT

Timothy Mabry
Zachary Cowart
Mark Perry
Ansley Wright

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm by Chairman Alvarez. It was determined that a quorum, consisting of five members, was present. Chairman Alvarez thanked everyone for coming and asked the guests to please sign the register.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

The November 2, 2020 minutes were reviewed by the Board and there was one alteration suggested. Mr. Crane moved to approve the minutes and Dr. Hamm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (4 – 0 vote).

III. Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Applications

Chairman Alvarez announced the first item for consideration, HPC-2020-150, 109 W. Adair Street. He then read the request which was to remove the barn in the rear and add three offices and a storage room to the rear of the building. Chairman Alvarez then asked Mr. Horton to give his staff report on the proposal. Mr. Horton showed a Power Point presentation and recommended to approve the proposal as submitted with the condition that the historic casement windows to be removed for the new addition be stored on site and kept for future use.

At this point, Chairman Alvarez asked if there was anyone in the audience to speak in favor of the proposal. Zachary Cowart, one of the attorneys in the firm occupying the subject property, came to the podium. He told the group that he had leased the building in 2008 for a law office and had purchased the building in 2010. He said that he did not desire to leave the building and that he wanted to expand it so he could continue to have his office there. He explained that he had hired a draftsman to draw up some plans for expansion so that he and his office partner could establish new offices in the rear of the building to free up space in the front part of the building for meeting rooms. Mr. Cowart went on to explain that at one time the building fell into disrepair and that Jimmy Cone and Richard

Miller rehabilitated it. He also told the group that he had considered glassing in the front porch before but never did it. He thinks the new addition will give him the space needed so the porch will not need to be glassed. He also talked about the barn in the rear and told the group that it had a dirt floor and that he was not planning to maintain it or use it.

Dr. Hamm asked Mr. Cowart if he could add his addition by creating a breezeway from the historic home to the new addition, therefore not removing the entire historic back wall. Mr. Cowart responded by telling him that they had thought about that but could not do it because it would push the addition into the setbacks. There seemed to be no other questions of the applicant. Chairman Alvarez asked if there was anyone else present to speak in favor of the proposal and there was no one. He then asked if there was anyone present to speak in opposition to the proposal and there seemed to be no one. Chairman Alvarez then looked to the Board for any questions. Ms. Yale asked if the historic windows could be used in the new addition or would that confuse the separation of the historic and new? Chairman Alvarez replied that he thought that it would be ok. Mr. Horton replied that the Design Guidelines suggested that the new addition be distinguished from the historic one in design and materials and suggested the use of hardieplank for the siding instead of replicating the historic shingles.

There seemed to be no further discussion so Chairman Alvarez closed the public hearing portion of the meeting and opened the floor to Board discussion. Dr. Hamm commented that the subject was a very nice house and that he had no issues with the proposal. With no further comments, Chairman Alvarez called for a motion. Ms. Burkett moved to approve the proposal as submitted with the new office addition and demolition of the barn, with the following conditions: (1) that the historic windows removed from the back wall be stored on site for future use, and (2) that hardieplank siding be used for the new addition. Dr. Hamm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (4 – 0 vote).

Next on the agenda was **HPC-2020-151, 504 E. Magnolia Street.** Chairman Alvarez announced the item and read the proposal which was to add 40 solar panels to the roof of the home. He then asked Mr. Horton to give a staff report and recommendation on the proposal. Mr. Horton showed a Power Point presentation and explained that the proposal was not supported by the Design Guidelines. Mr. Horton recommended denial of the proposal.

Chairman Alvarez thanked Mr. Horton for his presentation and recommendation and looked to the audience for the applicant to come to the podium. Tim Mabry, the property owner, came to the podium and gave his name and address. He then proceeded to tell the group that the house was in the historic district but was not historic. He said that he wants to stay in the house and that he doesn't make a lot of money but wants to do the best for his family. Dr. Hamm made a statement that the house is now ten years old and the roof is too. He asked Mr. Mabry how would the roof get replaced in about ten years when it needed it. Mr. Mabry told him that the solar company comes out and removes the panels for the roof to be replaced. Mr. Crane wanted to know the orientation of the front of the house and Mr. Horton told him that it was facing south. Dr. Hamm asked Mr. Mabry if he had a driveway and he replied that he did but it held only one car and he had four cars. Dr. Hamm stated that it was not appropriate or acceptable to park cars on the front lawn of a house in the historic district.

At this point, Chairman Alvarez looked to the audience and asked if there was anyone else to speak in favor of the proposal and there was no one. He then asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition and there was no one. He then ended the public hearing portion of the case and moved to questions by the Board. Ms. Yale wanted to know if there were other homes in the historic district with solar panels on them. Mr. Horton replied that he did not know of any with visible panels but ventured to say that there may be some with panels on the rear or non-visible roof elevations. Dr. Hamm commented that he had seen a home in Waycross in the historic district with solar panels over the whole roof and that it did not fit in there. Mr. Crane stated that the subject house is not contributing to the district. Dr. Hamm agreed but stated that, even so, the solar panels would affect historic homes all around and in the district. Ms. Burkett agreed that the solar panels would not be acceptable anywhere in the district. Mr. Crane asked to see the street view of the subject home again and Mr. Horton moved the Power Point to that photo for him to see.

At this point, there seemed to be no further questions or comments so Chairman Alvarez called for a motion on the matter. Dr. Hamm moved to deny the request. Ms. Burkett seconded the motion. The vote was not unanimous (2 – 1 vote) with one abstention stating difficulty with coming to a clear decision.

Next under "Consideration of Applications for Certificate of Appropriateness" was not a formal public hearing item at this meeting, but a concept presentation by Mr. Ansley Wright for an apartment complex on 915 West Street. Mr. Wright wishes to bring the proposal before the January 4, 2020 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). He and Mr. Jimmy Cone are working on a proposal for apartments on the site and wanted the HPC to give preliminary feedback on the proposal. Mr. Horton showed some photos of the site as it exists and explained the proposal in general. He also showed some photos of the potential development site plan and elevation drawings of the buildings. After the presentation, Mr. Wright came to the podium to discuss the project with the HPC and answer any questions. Mr. Matt Martin, Planning Director for the City of Valdosta, had joined the meeting at this time and he offered some maps showing the layout of the property. He told the group that there would be a 20 foot buffer yard required but that could be reduced by adding a six-foot privacy fence. Mr. Martin felt that there could be several different development options for the property mentioning the possibility of duplex development, in addition to the multi-family residential apartment development. Dr. Hamm wondered if the proposed buildings would be elevated and also if the area where the trees are shown was a wetland. Mr. Wright did seem to think that the buildings would be elevated and he explained that the area where the trees are today was once an area where cows and chickens were kept when he was younger. Dr. Hamm commented that they had done a good job of maximizing the use of the property and that the arrangement squeezed the complexes in there with parking in the front. Mr. Wright went on to tell the group that the house that was shown in the photographs there is old but it once burned and was re-done to what it is today. Dr. Hamm, looking at the handout, surmised that it would be good for Mr. Wright to acquire the lots at 511 and 909 for the development as well. Chairman Alvarez spoke up and told the group that a church seems to own those lots.

Mr. Martin moved to the podium at this time and he told the group that whatever was submitted would have to be approved by the zoning department. He told the group that the current zoning was R-6 and that the zoning would have to be changed to R-M for the development and that this would require variances. The reason for the variances are that the buildings in the back are too close to the setback and too far away from the parking lot. He also noted that a storm water detention pond would be required for the development as well but that it would be difficult to locate in the rear since there was a ten foot elevation change between the front and rear of the property sloping towards the front. He went on to explain the concept that he had mentioned earlier concerning the development of duplex housing. He told the group that the R-6 zoning would allow a planned development with a maximum of eight duplexes. He stated that the duplexes could be one-story in height like the other buildings in the neighborhood and that this type of development would not require parking, or storm water detention. Ms. Burkett wondered if the arrangement would be like a horse shoe design. Dr. Hamm commented that he liked the proposal because it did not entail tearing down historic homes and that he thought that Mr. Wright should proceed with his proposal development and get on the January meeting agenda. Mr. Crane asked Mr. Wright if he was thinking about using some decorative elements like columns, pediments, etc. and he confirmed that he was thinking that. Dr. Hamm suggested to design the proposed apartments like the Timbers on Cranford because they were a good design. Ms. Burkett suggested that Mr. Wright proceed with planning and bring his proposal to the HPC and he said that he would.

IV. Consent Agenda

Next Chairman Alvarez then moved on to the Consent Agenda and asked the Board if they had any questions or comments. No one had any so he moved to Old Business.

V. Old Business

Mr. Horton reported on the Demolition by Neglect cases telling the group that he had no new information on 210 West Mary. In response to that, Ms. Burkett told the group that she had found out that the home had gone into a foreclosure process. Next, Mr. Horton reported that 113 North Street had reacted to the certified letter in a positive way and that he had met with an architect to discuss possible rehabilitation of the existing historic house and potential new development on the vacant property next door. Also discussed was 203 E. College with no activity and the McAlister property which had not been sent a letter yet. Mr. Horton then told the group that the re-survey of the Local Historic District had turned out great and that he and Mr. Martin had put a lot of work into the grant reimbursement paperwork. He was confident that the City would receive more than the original \$13,500 promised by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division as the original match for the project.

VI. New Business

Next Chairman Alvarez moved to New Business. The letter to encourage the McAllister Company to donate the property to the Heritage Foundation was discussed by the Board. Chairman Alvarez thought that it would be a great idea for the company to either sell the property or donate it to the Heritage Foundation. The group agreed to work on the letter before the next meeting.

Next, Chairman Alvarez mentioned to the Board that some member's terms would be expiring at the beginning of the year and that the group should also think of officers for the next year as well.

VII. Adjournment

With no more discussion apparent, Chairman Alvarez called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Crane moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Burkett seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (4 – 0 vote). The meeting was concluded at 7:02 pm.

HPC Chairman

C. Alex Francis

Date

3-4-21