

MINUTES

Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission

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

July 12, 2021 5:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Alex Alvarez
Ms. Sandie Burkett
Mr. Tommy Crane

Ms. Sally Querin
Dr. Harry Hamm
Ms. Celine Gladwin

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Laura Yale

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeff Brammer
Ms. Lauren Hurley
Mr. Matt Martin

VISITORS PRESENT

Steven Heddon
Mary Ann Heddon
Vickie Everitte
James Carter
Jane Carter

Barbara Hallman
Jimmy Moore
Jason Richardson
Phil Brown

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Chairman Alvarez. It was determined that a quorum of members was present. Chairman Alvarez thanked everyone for coming and reminded the audience members to please sign the attendance register.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

The May 3, 2021 draft minutes were reviewed by the Board and there were minor corrections noted. Mr. Crane made a motion to approve the minutes, with the corrections as stipulated. Mrs. Querin seconded the motion and it was called and carried unanimously (6-0 vote).

III. Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Applications

(A) **HPC-2021-51- 120 3rd Ave.** - Mr. Brammer reviewed the application for 120 3rd Avenue describing the house as a 1917 Folk Victorian Queen Anne Cottage located in the local historic district as a contributing structure in Subarea II and zoned as R-6. Pictures of the house from each angle and the zoning maps illustrated the design of the house and its location within the city. Mr. Brammer also included photos of the surrounding properties to familiarize the commission. The listed projects include installment of an outdoor HVAC unit, gravel driveway, wooden picket fence around the perimeter of the property line, and façade fenestration realignment. The HPC guidelines were presented with each listed project. To start, the HVAC unit guidelines noted that the mechanical equipment be located at the rear, with secondary elevations, or that if the mechanical equipment is visible from the street that it be screened by fencing or landscaping. The HVAC for 120 3rd Avenue will be behind the proposed fence. The driveway guidelines state that parking should be located at the side or the rear of a residential building and that new driveways be placed at the side or rear of the building. The proposed driveway is located at the side of the house. The guidelines also state that gravel and peastone are the preferred materials for driveway, but that poured concrete and asphalt are also allowed. The proposed driveway will be gravel. The guidelines addressing fencing state that the front yard fence be made of wooden pickets or cast iron and cannot exceed 4 feet in height. 120 3rd Avenue will have fencing starting at both sides of the house tracing the perimeter of the property consisting of wooden planks, therefore within the guidelines. Finally, the property owner plans to swap the front door with two side by side windows and reposition the front door. The guidelines state that retaining the windows and door location on the façade is mandatory. The homeowners are also interested in the option of a steel door or wood panel door to replace the door that is there at the moment. Staff recommends the approval of the HVAC unit installation, the new driveway

as proposed, and the new fencing as proposed. Staff recommends to deny the removal and replacement of the façade fenestration.

The applicant was called upon to speak in favor of the application. Jane Carter (120 3rd Avenue, Valdosta GA) approached the podium. She stated that she inherited the house from her father and that it has remained a rental property, but that she is looking to move back in and restore the property. She stated that she will be submitting more requests through the preservation planner. They are preparing the house to be livable with central heat and AC. Matt Martin spoke and recalled conversations that he and Mrs. Carter have had regarding changes in the initial application. She said that they have decided to leave the front door where it is without changing the façade of the house and that she would like to withdraw that request from the application.

The commission began with questions. Commissioner Gladwin asked why she would want to make the change to the front door, but added that it was now irrelevant as it had been withdrawn from the application. Mrs. Carter replied that they had considered changing the door location because they thought that they would like to have the foyer be the living room instead of having the front door lead into their hallway. Commissioner Hamm asked if she was planning to place boundaries on either side of the gravel driveway as depicted in the photos. Mrs. Carter stated that they would indeed put boundaries on either side of the gravel driveway but that that project has been delayed because there is a tree that must be removed by the city arborist that is impeding on the driveway and the water meter. No one spoke in opposition of the application.

With no further questions, the public hearing portion was closed and discussion among the commission began. Commissioner Hamm stated that the only questions that he had concerned the position change of the front door and windows and that now that those changes were withdrawn from the application, he has no objection to the application. Commissioner Hamm then motioned to approve the first three items with the condition that the fourth item be withdrawn. Commissioner Burkett seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (vote 6-0).

(B) HPC-2021-59- 210 E. Alden Ave. - Mr. Brammer began with his staff report stating that the application was to install solar panels on the roof of the home. The home is a Craftsman style home built in the 1940s in the local historic district in the Brookwood North neighborhood. The house is contributing and in Subarea 1 and zoned DR-10 (residential). Mr. Brammer described the house and showed pictures of the house from the street on each side. The back portion of the home was built in the 1980s. He also showed photos of the adjacent properties to get the commission acquainted to the neighborhood. The project description is to install 34 photovoltaic solar panels to the existing roof. The plans as submitted contain designs in four sections (1 in the front, 2 on the west and 1 on the east) of the roof to have the panels installed. The guidelines stated that skylights, solar panels, roof decks, balconies, vents, and new dormers not be placed on any readily visible roof elevation and that roof mounted mechanical systems be located on rear of the building. The photos taken of the house show the solar panels as they have already been installed. The solar panels are visible from the front of the home and the west side. The installation was completed without pulling permits and code enforcement are aware of the situation and will take action based on the disposition of the Historic Preservation Commission hearing. Staff recommends that the installation is denied as proposed with a note that HPC work with the applicant to reach an agreement on placement of solar panels in less conspicuous locations.

The applicant was called upon to speak in favor of the application. Mr. Steven Heddon (homeowner of 210 E. Alden Avenue) stated that they had gone through the solar company and were assured that the solar company would take care of permitting and authorization and that they are here now because they learned that the solar company had not gone through the proper authorization process to install the solar panels. Commissioner Burkett asked for clarification that Sun Pro Solar did not get a permit for the installation. Mr. Heddon stated that he told the sales representative that they were located in the historic district and that the sales representative told him that Sun Pro Solar would take care of it. He stated that he also spoke to the account manager and was informed that everything was on track.

Jason Richardson, the operations manager at Sun Pro Solar, then spoke regarding the error. He said the person handling the status of the project flipped the status as approved. He states that he learned that it was not approved a month after installation. Commissioner Querin stated that now moving forward the commission must come up with a solution for this incident. Mr. Richardson stated that he thinks the solution is to remove the 7 panels from the front and move them to the rear of the home and move them to the back of the home and repair the holes on the roof where the installation of the 7 panels took place. Commissioner Querin asked if the East side of the home is visible from the road. Mr. Brammer stated that the East side is not visible from the road. Mr. Richardson stated that they could produce another design. Commissioner Querin researched historic homes with solar panels in other cities like Savannah and Atlanta to see what solutions they had for including solar panels on homes in the historic district and the consensus is that the solar panels are not visible from the road or on the front of the house. Commissioner Querin suggested moving them from the front of the home to other portions of the home. Commissioner Gladwin reminded the commission that the back portion of the home is not a historic building. Mr. Brammer confirmed that the tax records reflect the addition in 1985.

With no further questions or no opposition to the application, the commission began their discussion. Commissioner Hamm asked if there was a sign placed out in the yard. Mr. Brammer stated that there has been a Historic Preservation Commission meeting sign in front of the property placed there 11 days prior to this meeting. Commissioner Hamm noted that there are not any neighbors at the meeting in opposition. Mr. Heddon stated that there is a neighborhood association and that at a garbage pick-up day, many of the neighbors asked how they could get solar panels on their homes. Mr. Heddon stated that he foresees many more solar panels proposed for homes in the Historic District. Commissioner Hamm recollected that there was an application for a solar panel project in the Historic District about 6 months ago that was denied. The previous project had not yet been installed and was visible from all sides.

Jimmy Moore, a Sun Pro Solar sales representative, asked to speak to the board. He stated that the applicant decided to go with solar energy because it is good for the environment and offers savings on utilities. He stated that the Heddens are on track to spend \$133,000 on their electricity but that the solar panels will consume 62% of that cost. He also described why the panels were placed in their locations based on the sun exposure. Commissioner Burkett asked how they calculated how many panels to be put on. Mr. Moore explained that Sun Pro Solar has a software that calculates the most beneficial placement of the panels and how many to place. Commissioner Querin asked if the panels could be angled to take advantage of the southern exposure. Mr. Moore stated that Sun Pro Solar would not do that because it would not look good on the home and would not be beneficial. Commissioner Gladwin summed up that both HPC, the owners and Sun Pro Solar acknowledge that the best route would be to remove the solar panels from the front portion of the home because it is not appropriate for a historic neighborhood. She then stated that she does not feel that the panels are offensive on the addition (back portion) of the home but would recommend the removal of the panels from the front portion of the home.

Commissioner Gladwin made a motion to approve the application with the condition to remove the solar panels on the front portion of the roof facing Alden Avenue. Commissioner Hamm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (vote 6-0).

IV. Consent Agenda

Board members reviewed the Administrative Reviews for the months of May and June. Chairman Alvarez asked why the cases for 505 West Street and 1112 N. Toombs Street were pending. Mr. Brammer stated that those are COAs for the August meeting and wanted to list them because the case numbers would have been thrown off if they were not included. Commissioner Hamm asked why items that have interior renovations listed are included in the Administrative Review when Administrative Reviews deal with exterior changes. Mr. Martin stated that the ARA may include interior work because it also includes exterior work and the entire scope of work is included on the ARA.

V. Other Business

(A) Local Historic District Survey Update - Mr. Brammer told the Commission that the grant for phase 2 of the survey of the local historic district was awarded to complete the survey. He said that there would be a conference call tomorrow to discuss details and plans for the survey and that he would keep the Historic Preservation Commission informed on the details and progress. He provided HPC with information that he received that contained other municipalities which had received grant funding and that Valdosta will be receiving the second highest amount in grant funding. Mr. Martin noted that the process may be different because of the times (COVID-19) and that the amount in funding is greater. Mr. Brammer stated that the next step would be to go over the request for proposal (RFP). The RFP from 2019 can likely be used again because it is the second half of the original project.

Commissioner Querin asked the Commission if anyone could answer a question: Is a realtor obligated to tell clients that a property is located within the local historic district? Chairman Alvarez answered yes, that it is a part of the certification test. Commissioner Querin stated that she believes that there are many realtors who have no clue about the local historic district and the guidelines or regulations for the district. She suggested that the commission put together information to present to the Realtors Association. Commissioner Gladwin suggested sending a memo with the City of Valdosta seal and local Historic District letterhead to realty agencies within the county to educate them on the boundaries of the local historic district and inform them of their obligation to inform their clients. Commissioner Gladwin also clarified that the second round of the survey will not affect the boundaries of the local historic district, rather categorize the homes within the district as contributing or noncontributing and possibly add structures that are now eligible to be considered contributing. Mr. Brammer stated that he would draft a letter and let the commission review it before it is sent. Mr. Martin suggested that HPC staff could attend the Realtors Association quarterly meetings to provide insight and details regarding the local historic district and specify the differences between the National Historic Registry and the Local Historic District. Commissioner Hamm stated that he knows that there is a step in the buying process that asks if the property is located within the local historic district in Lowndes County giving insight into the process. Chairman Alvarez stated that there is a contact online for the Valdosta Board of Realtors and that they have an annual continuing education program which would be a great place to start.

(B) Historic Preservation Planner- Recognition James Horton

The Commission planned dinner for after the September 13th meeting at 306 North starting around 7pm or after the meeting's adjournment. Commissioner Querin had to excuse herself and exited the meeting.

(C) Historic Preservation Planner- Welcome Jeff Brammer

The Commission welcomed Jeff Brammer and he reciprocated his appreciation for the community.

VI. New Business

(A) New business from the floor.

City staff asked the Commission about what contact information they would approve putting on the Valdosta City website. Mr. Brammer gave the commissioners handouts of the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission's contact information table as an example. City staff will create a table of contact information for each of the commissioners and send it out for corrections or updates. Once the updates are made, it will be posted on the City of Valdosta website.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Alvarez called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Crane then made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Burkett seconded the motion and it was called and carried unanimously (6-0 vote). The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm.

HPC Chairman _____

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CAF', written over a horizontal line.

Date _____

8/4/21