



Approved February 11, 2009

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

January 14, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Jonathan Crotty, Chair
Ms. Lucia Griffith
Ms. Barbara Highfill
Mr. Jeff Koenig
Mr. John Phares
Mr. Damon Rumsch
Ms. Karen Rush
Mr. Terry Sheffield, Vice Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Mary Ellen George, Alt. Vice Chair
Ms. Jane Anne McDermott
One Vacancy

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. John Rogers, Administrator
Historic District Commission
Ms. Wanda Birmingham, Secretary to the
Historic District Commission
Mr. Mujeeb Shah-Khan, Assistant
City Attorney
Ms. Tamara Titus, Liaison between HDC and
DCDA

With a quorum present, Chairman Crotty called the regular January meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 3:10 pm. He began with a welcome to all in attendance and by swearing in those present (and continued to do so throughout the meeting as others arrived). Due to the quasi-judicial nature of the Commission, staff and others who may speak are sworn in at every meeting. (Commissioners are sworn in by the City Clerk for the length of the appointment at the beginning of each term.) Mr. Crotty asked that everyone in attendance please sign in and when addressing the Commission please state name and address for the record. Mr. Crotty explained the meeting process. The review of each application consists of two parts. The first is the presentation portion. Staff presents the application then Commissioners and those speaking on behalf of the application will discuss the project. Next, members of the audience will be asked if anyone present wishes to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application. Again, there will be an opportunity for comments and questions from the Commission and the application. The second part is the discussion and deliberation portion of the meeting. At this point, discussion of the application is limited to Commission members and staff only. Unless the Commission votes to re-open the meeting to ask additional questions or for clarification of some issue, the applicant and audience members do not participate in this portion of the discussion. Once discussion is complete, a MOTION will be made to APPROVE, DENY, or DEFER and a vote will be taken. A simple majority vote of those Commissioners present is required for a decision. Mr. Crotty asked that all cell phones and any other electronic devices be either turned completely off or set to silent operation. He also asked that all Commissioners announce, for the record, their arrival and departure when this takes place during the meeting.

Index of Addresses:	827 East Boulevard	Dilworth
	724 Walnut Avenue	Wesley Heights
	1156 Linganore Place	Dilworth
	2037 The Plaza	Plaza Midwood
	717 Mt. Vernon Avenue	Dilworth

Application: 827 East Boulevard – Porch Enclosure.

A Stay of Demolition has been running for five months on this house. During this time the owners are trying to find a way to enclose the front porch that will meet their needs and that could be HDC approved. Past applications have shown plans that add a group of windows above the existing ½ wall, relocating the front door and side lights to the top of the steps. A Design Review Committee met on the front porch and offered suggestions. A new compromise application is for plate glass to be installed between existing columns, above the shingled knee wall.

FOR/AGAINST: No one accepted Mr. Crotty's invitation to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application.

MOTION: Based on probable compliance with *Policy & Design Guidelines – Porch Enclosures*, Ms. Rush made a MOTION to APPROVE IN CONCEPT the glassing in of the front porch (plate glass) with no changes to the existing structure and drawings will come back to the full Commission. Mr. Rumsch seconded.

VOTE: 6/1 AYES: HIGHFILL, KOENIG, PHARES, RUMSCH, RUSH, SHEFFIELD

NAYS: CROTTY

DECISION: PLATE GLASS ENCLOSURE APPROVED IN CONCEPT WITH FINAL PLANS TO COME BACK TO FULL COMMISSION.

Application: 724 Walnut Avenue – Addition.

The existing cross gable roof plane will be extended five feet for an additional height of three feet. Existing rake on side will remain with a parallel one added with new roof height. Rear two story will be accommodated by roof extension. Cedar shake siding will be the siding material of choice for the addition. A large tree grows very near the rear corner of the house. If the addition is approved and is to be built, the Urban Forestry Arborist has given her opinion that the tree would need to be removed.

Applicant Comments: All new windows will match those found on the house.

FOR/AGAINST: No one accepted Mr. Crotty's invitation to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application.

MOTION: Based on the need for additional details and notes and for further design study re: (1) gable alternative, (2) dimensions added, (3) materials noted – existing and proposed, (4) tree loss mitigation, Mr. Rumsch made a MOTION to DEFER the application. Mr. Sheffield seconded.

VOTE: 8/0 AYES: CROTTY, GRIFFITH, HIGHFILL, KOENIG, PHARES, RUMSCH, RUSH, SHEFFIELD

NAYS: NONE

DECISION: APPLICATION DEFERRED.

Application: 1156 Liganore Place – Addition.

This contemporary, wood sided, house sits high on the hill at Romany and Liganore. There is a blank place on the front wall. The proposal is to add a pair of windows to match others on the house.

FOR/AGAINST: No one accepted Mr. Crotty's invitation to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application.

MOTION: Based on compliance with *Policy & Design Guidelines – Additions*, Mr. Rumsch made a MOTION to APPROVE the addition of a pair of windows to the front of the house which match others found on the house and to be trimmed out as the others. Ms. Griffith seconded.

VOTE: 8/0 AYES: CROTTY, GRIFFITH, HIGHFILL, KOENIG, PHARES, RUMSCH, RUSH, SHEFFIELD

NAYS: NONE

DECISION: WINDOW ADDITION APPROVED.

Application: 2037 The Plaza – Outbuilding.

This house is located at the corner of The Plaza and Belvedere Avenue. A small metal storage building has been added to the middle of the back yard on this very visible lot. The application is in response to an Enforcement Letter sent to the owner by staff.

Applicant Comments: Owner, David Singletary, explained that a past tenant put it there to store the lawnmower. A fence around the backyard (to screen it from view) is not possible due to some shared drive issues.

FOR/AGAINST: No one accepted Mr. Crotty's invitation to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application.

MOTION: Based on the need for further study re: (1) a different building, (2) a

different location, (3) screening, Mr. Rumsch made a MOTION to DEFER the application. Mr. Sheffield seconded.

VOTE: 8/0 AYES: CROTTY, GRIFFITH, HIGHFILL, KOENIG,
PHARES, RUMSCH, RUSH, SHEFFIELD

NAYS: NONE

DECISION: APPLICATION DEFERRED.

Application: 717 Mt. Vernon Avenue – Addition.

A small (5'x15') gabled addition to the driveway side of this house will become a mudroom. Materials will be matched or reused.

FOR/AGAINST: No one accepted Mr. Crotty's invitation to speak either FOR or AGAINST the application.

VOTE: 8/0 AYES: CROTTY, GRIFFITH, HIGHFILL, KOENIG,
PHARES, RUMSCH, RUSH, SHEFFIELD

NAYS: NONE

DECISION: ADDITION APPROVED.

A MOTION was made seconded and the vote was unanimous to APPROVE the December Minutes.

A discussion took place on the first of eight topics to be addressed: "What is the HDC Protecting?"

Mr. Rogers began with the Ordinance definition of 'Purpose'. What defines the overall character? What individual elements are important parts of the character?

Ms. Highfill said it depends on a particular street. Authentic (real) materials are always important.

Ms. Griffith added, “and/or proven materials”.

Ms. Rush said streetscape and size, as judged from the sidewalk, are most important.

Ms. Griffith agreed that the pedestrian scale is the beginning point.

Mr. Crotty said additions should be pushed back, thereby not altering how the house addresses the street.

Ms. Griffith said the character and scale is to be respected.

Mr. Phares said the important thing is what you can see from the middle of the street. Consider the nine Guideline points and then ask why or why not an application complies. It could be different for every project.

Ms. Griffith said we need tools to measure compliance.

Mr. Koenig said the important things are integration and continuity and how an application potentially fits the street and the neighborhood.

Mr. Rumsch said the feel of “back then” needs to be included: front porches, how materials work with the overall look, variety, should be room for good contemporary projects, no dictation of style, adequate molding and size of details.

Mr. Sheffield continued by emphasizing the importance of materials, workmanship, details – overhangs, trim, construction methods. Knotted wood is the worst. The scale from the street and material integration is the challenge.

Mr. Crotty said the biggest loss of character is the loss of the large pin oak canopy. Replacement crepe myrtles do not contribute to a future canopy.

Mr. Rumsch agreed adding that a maple tree is a tree of choice by the City but it does not replace a great oak.

Ms. Griffith said there needs to be ways found to offer more customer guidance and education on simple issues that matter the most. The process and choices need to be made easier for homeowners.

Mr. Rumsch suggested making a list of the Top 15 issues.

Ms. Griffith said it all goes back to the need for a comprehensive check list.

Mr. Rumsch agreed with audience members that varying height is very important.

Ms. Rush said she understands that the HDC cannot restrict size but can restrict height.

Ms. Griffith said the duty is to manage the change.

Mr. Rumsch said the street presentation is the most important. Additions can be larger in the back, porches are important, different heights are very important.

Mr. Rogers said we are witnessing a fascinating massive real estate bubble burst. Pressure is on the neighborhoods to become homogenous. The houses are investments rather than homes in larger percentages than ever before. Dilworth, Myers Park, Wesley Heights, Plaza Midwood were all designed to be socio-economically mixed – rich, factory workers, factory supervisors – with an opportunity for all. The economic pressure is on.

Regarding trees, Mr. Rogers said the challenge is to replace the trees. Two factors are at work: Duke won't bury power, and the City feels liability of falling trees. The past severe drought has many trees stressed.

Visitor in the audience, Debbie Glennon, said the value of trees is unprecedented. She went on to say that 'character' is not a definable term but 'historic integrity' can be defined.

Mr. Rumsch said the question is how do you measure success. He answered his own question by saying that you look to the future – 100 years out to judge if the same look and feel has been created. That is the real test. In order to maintain the streetscape, let bigger go out the back. Encourage the façade remaining unchanged as much as possible. If Demolition occurs, then New Construction respects the original.

Ms. Highfill said changes must be true to the spirit.

Mr. Crotty said in wrapping up, consensus is that individual elements are defining. Streetscape impact is judged from a middle of the road vantage point to include walkway, driveway, and threat of mass and size. The impact on the streetscape is to minimize, load to rear, low visibility, creation of variety, and judgment with a post war mindset.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm with a meeting length of two hours and 30 minutes.

Wanda Birmingham, Secretary to the