



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
ELLCOTT CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT ■ LAWYERS HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Administered by the Department of Planning and Zoning

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FEBRUARY MINUTES

The second regular meeting for the year 2009 of the Historic District Commission was held on Thursday, February 5, 2009 in the Tyson Room II located at 8930 Stanford Boulevard in Columbia, Maryland.

Members present: Lisa Badart, Chairperson; Samuel Crozier, Patrick Mullaly, and Joseph Hauser

Staff present: Samantha Stoney, Mina Hilsenrath, Dan Bennett, Jim Vannoy and Virginia Vargo

Chairperson Lisa Badart, Chairperson, opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and asked the Commission members if there were any changes to the January 2009 minutes. Joseph Hauser made a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Samuel Crozier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#09-08 – 3744 Old Columbia Pike, HO-310

Install sign.

Applicant: Kimberly Kepnes

The building is listed on the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory as HO-310 (Margaret Ijam's Double House), and dates to 1930 (according to MDAT).

The Applicant proposes to install a flat mounted sign on the wood siding of the building, using a screw and anchor mounting. The sign will be 3' by 6', for a total of 18 square feet, and made of wood or a synthetic polymer. The sign will have a black background with off white lettering and will read: Little French Market (on three lines). The sign will be mounted above the awning, to the right of the second story window (on the rear of the building facing the parking lot).

Staff Comments: The application complies with Chapter 11.A recommendations, using simple words and a minimum number of colors. However, Chapter 11.B (page 83) of the Guidelines recommends "limit the area of signage to one-half square foot of sign area for each linear foot of primary street frontage, with a limit of eight square feet in area for any one sign." The application includes several alternative sign configurations, including a version with two lines of text that is 22" by 72" (about 11 square feet). Staff finds the alternative version to be in scale with the building.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends Approval of the alternative sign as shown on the application.

Testimony: Chairperson Lisa Badart swore in the Applicant, Kimberly Kepnes, who brought in an alternative proposal to the staff recommendation. She amended the application to request a 28" x 72" sign. The store logo contains three lines of text and Ms. Kepnes would prefer the sign reflect the logo. Ms. Kepnes explained that the 28" height allows her the ability to keep the three line logo, and is less than the original application which was 36". She is requesting a 6" increase to the staff's recommended 22" to allow a better proportioned sign. The 72" length is half the distance between the left window on the upper floor and the limit of the awning.

Patrick Mullaly commented that as a graphic designer he likes the layout with three lines of text and finds the sign aesthetically pleasing, but would like to see the sign not as large as the original proposal and located higher on the building

Ms. Kepnes stated that she would like to amend the application to make the dimensions of the sign 28" x 72", with permission of the Commission.

Ms. Badart said she prefers the 28" x 72" sign with three lines of text. Samuel Crozier asked if Ms. Kepnes had considered a sign on the awning. She said she had not considered a sign on the awning. Mr. Crozier said that other buildings have signs more in scale with the size of building and the proposed sign seems too large for the size of the house. Joseph Hauser does not like the placement or the size of the sign. He thinks the best solution is the staff recommendation of 22" x 72". He also suggested moving the sign down to the awning. Mr. Mullaly agreed that the sign would look better closer to the awning.

Mr. Hauser suggested installing a single light over the smaller sign, since the shop will probably have evening hours. Ms. Kepnes asked if the Commission would allow an amendment to the application or if she would have to come back. Jim Vannoy said the Commission could allow Ms. Kepnes to amend the application to include lighting and the Commission could make it part of the decision. Samantha Stoney stated that Ms. Kepnes would have to provide a design for the light fixture.

Ms. Badart asked for confirmation on the dimensions being discussed, which Ms. Kepnes confirmed to be 22" x 72". Mina Hilsenrath explained that the original dimensions were 36" x 72" which Staff felt was too large at 18 square feet rather than the 8 square feet recommend by the Guidelines. The 22" x 72" brings the dimensions down to about 11 square feet, which is the size Staff is looking for. Ms. Hilsenrath stated that increasing the square footage to 28" x 72" brings dimensions to about 14 square feet. She suggested that the individual dimensions are not as important if the size can be brought down to the 11 to 12 square foot range. This will allow the Applicant the flexibility to decide what the right proportion is for a sign with three lines of text. Mr. Mullaly confirmed Ms. Hilsenrath's explanation, adding that if Ms. Kepnes reduces the sign to a 22" height, then the 72" length of the sign will be reduced to a correct proportion.

Motion: Joseph Hauser made a motion to allow the Applicant to amend the application to change the size of the sign to 22" high by something close to 68" in width, depending on the three lines of text and to allow for a single light above the sign to be approved by Staff. Patrick Mullaly seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#09-09 – 3744 Old Columbia Pike

Modify and replace door.

Applicant: Kimberly Kepnes

The Applicant proposes to expand the existing 30" wood doorframe to 36" in order to accommodate Americans with Disabilities Act regulations (ADA). The new door will be a black single-lite wood door. The door is located on the rear of the building, facing the parking lot and is the main entrance to the business.

Staff Comments: The application complies with Chapter 6.G recommendations.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends Approval.

Testimony: Ms. Kepnes explained that she would be interested in finding a wood door that has 2/2 lites, like the existing door, even though the application is for a single lite. She has been unable to find a supplier for a pre-hung 2/2 lite door. The Howard County Health Department would like to see the building be ADA accessible. Mr. Hauser asked if the Health Department was requiring the bathrooms to be ADA accessible. Ms. Kepnes replied that there is no seating in the market, so public bathrooms are not required.

Ms. Kepnes said that the awning hangs over an additional foot on the door side so increasing the door size on the left side of the building will not change the scale very much. Mr. Hauser stated the increase will allow the door to align with the windows.

There was some discussion about a single-lite door. Mr. Mullaly stated that a single-lite is a contemporary style and Ms. Kepnes agreed. Mr. Hauser suggested a single-lite over two panels, which is a historic style. Mr. Mullaly said that the existing door seems to be a natural match to the arrangement of the lites on the second floor windows. Mr. Hauser said Ms. Kepnes should be able to find the style of the existing door in the 36" width.

Motion: Patrick Mullaly made a motion to approve a four-lite door over two panels with the stipulation that it is affordable and available. If the two panels are not affordable and available, a four-lite door with one panel is acceptable. Samuel Crozier seconded. The vote was three for (Patrick Mullaly, Joseph Hauser, and Samuel Crozier) and one opposed (Lisa Badart). The motion passed.

#09-07 – 8390 Main Street, Ellicott City

Roof replacement.

Applicant: Donald R. Reuwer Jr. and Main Street F.H., LLC

The Applicant proposes to replace the roof on the former Ellicott City Firehouse. The current roof is slate and the Applicant would like to install Eco Star Majestic Slate, a synthetic roofing material. The application states "the existing slate roof leaks and it is difficult to make repairs because the roofer needs to make repairs under the slate. We have had two roofers and our in-office maintenance supervisor look at the roof and all have determined that it needs to be replaced."

This case came before the Commission as HDC-06-10 on March 2, 2006 and was denied. The Applicant appealed the case to Circuit Court and the Court remanded the case back to the Commission.

Staff Comments: The former Ellicott City Firehouse, built circa 1938, is a significant Greek Revival building and serves as a gateway to the Ellicott City Historic District. National Park Service Preservation Brief 29: The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs, mentions that slate was most often found on "institutional, ecclesiastical, and government buildings." The Firehouse was a government building before it was used for retail, and the slate roof is an important architectural feature that, if removed, would negatively impact the historical and architectural integrity of the building.

A review of the case history for 8390 Main Street shows that in 1986 the Howard County Department of Public Works applied to the Commission to replace the slate roof in-kind. The Application was approved.

The Firehouse has a rectangular hipped roof and is approximately 3,753 square feet, making it one of the largest and most visible roofs in the Historic District. Chapter 6.E of the guidelines (page 31) recommends "retain and repair historic roofing material. If necessary, replace small areas of roofing using material matching the original in size, shape, color and texture." The guidelines (page 31) explain that in order to retain the district's historic character, "every effort should be made to repair and preserve historic wood, metal or slate roofing, particularly for roofs visible from public ways." For cases of extreme

deterioration the guidelines (page 31) recommend “replace historic roof materials only when necessary due to extensive deterioration; use replacement material that matches or is similar to the original.”

The guidelines allow for modern materials only when replacement materials that match or are similar to the original materials are not possible. Chapter 6.E of the guidelines (page 32) states “replace historic roofing with asphalt shingles or other modern materials only if historically accurate materials cannot reasonably be used...a modern material similar in appearance to the original, such as a synthetic that reproduces the appearance of slate, may be used.” The guidelines (page 32) recommend against “replacing historic roofing materials that could be retained and repaired.” Typically, synthetic materials are deemed appropriate for structures with roofs that are not highly visible from the public view.

The proposed synthetic slate is significantly shorter in length than the original slate. The proposed synthetic slate is 17.5” long and the weather (portion exposed to the elements) will be approximately 6.75” long, whereas the existing slate is 23.5” long and the weather is approximately 12.5”. As a result, twice the amount of synthetic slate will be required to replace the roof, completely changing the original appearance. Additionally the color of the proposed synthetic slate is black and significantly darker than the original gray of the existing slate. The proposed synthetic slate also has a sunburst pattern and sheen, which does not exist on the original slate.

National Park Service Preservation Brief 29 indicates that “slate is one of the most aesthetically pleasing and durable of all roofing materials,” and that “installed properly, slate roofs require relatively little maintenance and will last 60 to 125 years or longer.” The Applicant has stated that the roof needs to be repaired under the slate, but does not indicate whether it is deterioration of the slate, flashing system, or roof substrate that is the cause of the leaks. A review of the transcript for Case HDC-06-10 indicates that the water related problems stem from the membrane under the slate. Staff suggests the Applicant remove slates to make repairs to the roofing system, reusing the existing slates and replacing any broken slates to match the original. There is no evidence to suggest all of the slate is failing. Reusing the existing slate and replacing when necessary would qualify for Howard County Historic Property Tax Credits.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends Denial of the application to replace the roof with Eco Star Majestic Slate.

Testimony: Chairperson Badart swore in Sean Hughes, on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Hughes asked to amend the application to replace the roof with real slate. Mr. Hughes presented Commission members with a sample of the new material and pictures. He said that when the slate is laid it will have the same width and exposure as the existing slate roof. Mr. Hauser asked if the new material was true slate and Mr. Hughes confirmed. Dan Bennett asked for specifications on the proposed material, but the Applicants did not have them with them.

Donald R. Reuwer III was sworn in. Mr. Hauser said that he had passed the firehouse within the last several days, and the present roof looks darker than the proposed replacement slate. The present roof material is a gray-black and the replacement material will be a similar gray-black called “onyx black”. Mr. Hauser asked Mr. Reuwer to explain how the new roof will be installed. Mr. Reuwer explained that true slate is laid down over a titanium paper rather than felt roofing paper. The slates are spaced out when the slates are installed they are not nailed, but fastened underneath one another with stainless steel hooks (about two per slate). The hooks are not visible from the ground because they are powder coated to match the slate. This method saves weight on the roof, as opposed to the overlapping method that is currently on the roof.

Commission members asked additional questions regarding installation and size of the materials. Mr. Reuwer explained that the current slate has a 10” exposure, not 12.5” as stated in the staff report and that

the synthetic would only provide an 8” exposure. Mr. Mullaly asked if the proposed slate will be the same size and configuration as the current slate. Mr. Reuwer explained it will look to be the same size but will be different because there is no concealed slate with the new product. Mr. Reuwer stated that weatherproofing on the new slate comes from the bituminous underlayment, not the overlapping of slate. The manufacturer of the proposed slate is GAF and it is a Vermont slate. Mr. Bennett said that the present slate on the building is Buckingham slate from Virginia.

Ms. Badart asked where the roof leak is. Mr. Reuwer said there are multiple areas that are leaking, such as around the cupola where the flashing is pulled away. Mr. Reuwer said there any many missing and cracked slates. Ms. Badart asked if the entire roof has to be removed to fix the leaking problem. Mr. Reuwer replied that the roof could be patched, but he would prefer to replace it entirely to avoid continuous problems.

Mr. Hauser pointed out that the roof has held up for 25 to 30 years and that the slate has life left in it, but the underlayment is failing. Mr. Bennett explained that trying to get the slate off without breaking them would be difficult. Mr. Hauser asked Mr. Vannoy if the Commission can stipulate in the motion that the slates to be removed from the building not be destroyed, but donated. Mr. Vannoy stated the Commission cannot require them to, but can ask if they are willing to save and donate the slate. Mr. Hauser asked Mr. Reuwer if he plans to attempt to save any of the slates that are in good condition. Mr. Reuwer explained that it would not be possible given the removal method.

Motion: Patrick Mullaly made a motion to approve the GAF slate in the same color as the sample provided (black) and to amend the application accordingly. Samuel Crozier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

*Chapter and page references are from the Ellicott City or Lawyers Hill Historic District Design Guidelines.

Elmina J. Hilsenrath, ASLA
Executive Secretary

Lisa Badart, Chairperson

Virginia L. Vargo, Recording Secretary