



CITY OF WESTMINSTER HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, August 5, 2020, at 7:00 PM

Virtual meeting via Zoom and broadcasted live on the City Facebook page

A meeting of the City of Westminster Historic District Commission was held virtually via Zoom and broadcasted live on the City Facebook page on August 5, 2020, at 7:00 PM.

Call to Order

Chair McMasters read the statement of authority into the record.

Chair Kristen McMasters, Commissioner Aaron Burroughs, Commissioner Steve Colella, and Commissioner Kevin Wagman were present. City staff Sandy Anderson, Mark Depo, Andrea Gerhard, and Samantha Schlitzer were also present.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Wagman moved to approve the revised meeting summary for July 1, 2020. Commissioner Burroughs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Chair McMasters opened New Business Item A – Section 106 filing for AT&T located at the City-owned water tower at McDaniel College. Chair McMasters explained the responsibilities of the Commission in reviewing Section 106 filings on behalf of the City. Ms. Anderson provided background information on the item and staff recommendation that the Historic District Commission review it and provide feedback and/or questions regarding the proposal.

Chair McMasters stated that the information provided was not a full project proposal, as it does not meet the minimum standard for information. Commissioner Wagman requested the applicant provide more information for review. Chair McMasters directed staff to draft a request for project specifics, including mitigation to disguise the antennae.

Mr. Depo stated that it was at his request that this item be placed on the agenda so it could be furthered along in the process of approval. Commissioner Burroughs noted the notification date of July 12, 2019, stating that the Commission may have already approved the request, and this was just an update of a previously reviewed project.

Commissioner Wagman motioned for staff to send a letter to the applicant requesting more information. Commissioner Colella seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Chair McMasters stated that a second item of New Business not included on the agenda was a discussion of the Standards of Renovations regarding signage in downtown Westminster. Mr. Depo explained that the Standards of Renovation were guidelines, but the City's Zoning Ordinance specifies signage requirements for downtown businesses. As a result, the majority of downtown business signages does not meet the Standards of Renovation requirements. He suggested possible modification to the Standards of Renovation, specific to the signage requirements, that the City can approve instead of the Board of Zoning Appeals as the current process.

Commissioner Wagman expressed his encouragement to help businessowners be in compliance, but does not want to discourage changes to make the signs follow the Standards of Renovation. He requested staff provide a draft of changes for review at the next meeting. Mr. Depo added that if the Standards of Renovation are revised, staff can approve applications rather than them coming before the Commission.

Chair McMasters inquired if the signage changes might qualify for Façade Improvement Grant funding. Ms. Anderson stated that they could be eligible and that she would work with businessowners to move forward with those requests.

Chair McMasters then introduced a third item of New Business not included on the agenda was a discussion of the membership standards for the Commission. Mr. Depo stated that staff is recommending lowering the number of Commission members from seven to five. Staff also suggested changing the requirement that the Commission was required to have a majority of members living within City limits, adding that the remainder may live outside of City limits or simply own property within City limits. He believed that the Commission applicant pool could be expanded by allowing owners of property within Carroll County.

Chair McMasters stated her belief that members of the Commission should live within the City, as the Commission decided where taxpayer funding would be allocated. Mr. Depo clarified his recommendation of no more than two members live outside of City limits.

Commissioner Wagman agreed that there is not an increased need for Commission members to include candidates from outside of City limits.

Commissioner Burroughs also agreed, stating that if the Commission is reduced to five members, he did not feel it would be difficult to get new applicants.

Commissioner Colella stated that if someone has a significant vested interest in the City and was a businessowner, rather than a resident, they could be included in the applicant pool due to the impact that the Commission has on their ability to renovate and make changes to their properties. He stated that if an applicant owns a business within the City limits, either by renting or owning a property, and also meets the knowledge requirements, they should be considered as having the City's best interests in mind.

Historic District Commission and Public Comments

Commissioner Colella stated that he would be stepping down from his position on the Commission due to moving outside of City limits.

Chair McMasters then reported that the Historical Society continued to face difficulty in planning and holding events due to COVID-19 restrictions. She announced upcoming activities that would be hosted virtually.

Ms. Gerhard stated that the Maryland Heritage Area Grant was awarded for an historical structure assessment on the Durbin House, located on the former Wakefield Valley Golf Course property.

Ms. Schlitzer stated that any comments for the meeting could be emailed to planning@westgov.com.

Adjournment

Chair McMasters made a motion to adjourn. The Commission adjourned at 8:45 PM.