

HISTORIC AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE

New Castle Town Hall
2nd and Delaware Streets
December 18, 2014

Members Present: Leila Hamroun, Facilitator
Mike Connolly
Joe Day
Doug Lovett
Jim Meek

Also Present: Debbie Turner, Stenographer

The meeting convened at 6 p.m. The committee was joined by several residents. Ms. Hamroun updated attendees on the status of work since the 10/15/14 initial meeting. Ten to eleven comments/suggestions have been received.

Discussion included streamlining the HAC application process and providing more clear information to residents, use of alternate materials on side and rear elevations that are visible from the public right-of-way and those not visible from the public right-of-way, the role of the architect member on HAC and whether they should have a vote, composition of HAC, a potential two-tier review process to expedite 'in kind' applications versus a more extensive process for other applications, new construction, revisiting the use of "Colonial" in current regulations.

Residents want the HAC application process to be less adversarial. They want HAC to listen to residents' input and be flexible while maintaining certain standards.

Lengthy discussion about the lack of flexibility of current HAC procedures and how some residents believe they have been treated when they appeared before HAC. Many residents want to see use of composite materials as an option citing cost and durability of newer materials. Residents said that some wood products today are not the same quality as in years past and manufacturers' guarantees are much less.

Some residents bypass HAC because of these reasons while others bypass due to financial hardship. Enforcement then becomes an issue. HAC does not have enforcement authority. One resident said he was asked to secure more information that resulted in substantial added cost and time that he deemed unnecessary in order to get his application approved. Residents believe that most citizens want to be in compliance, but are concerned with having to replace wood materials so often, thus resulting in more expenses.

Sally Monigle, resident and HAC Chairperson, lives in an old wood house and has used good wood for repairs with no trouble. She favors reviewing the current process but in order to maintain the historic district she stressed the need to be mindful with modifying materials.

Mr. Connolly thinks there is a place for composite materials, but historic buildings are different from personal homes and he believes we should preserve original materials as much as possible. He suggested repairing rather than replacing as much as possible.

Ms. Hamroun is open to discussion to reach a balance that satisfies historic preservation and residents. She is doing research to identify products that could resemble wood without compromising regulations. She cautioned allowing the down grade of certain rules noting impacts to primary and secondary districts. The historic district is meant to protect an area for future generations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.