

HISTORIC AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE

New Castle Town Hall
2nd and Delaware Streets
March 24, 2015

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

*joined meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting convened at 6:06 p.m. Ms. Hamroun informed this work session will include discussing status to date with the final draft, next steps forward and official recommendations to City Council of modifications to the current ordinance. Certain items have to be changed because of the way the ordinance is written while the rules and procedures (guidelines) for HAC do not need to be part of the ordinance revision. They are part of the rules and procedures that HAC establishes and can be changed easier. The final draft will be given to the City Council for consideration of adopting those guidelines.

Process and Procedures

Status -- Everyone agreed not to refer to the "Colonial" character of the City of New Castle. The word "historic" should be used instead. Another was the role of the architect on the HAC; whether the architect should be a voting member. The majority of the group felt the architect should remain a voting member. (*Ms. Hamroun abstained from discussion.*) At the public HAC meeting there was a strong feeling that the architect member should not be a voting member, citing making the process cleaner and the architect should be an advisory member. No one from the public was present at the HAC meeting. Ms. Hamroun said those members of the public who have expressed an opinion favor the architect not being a voting member. The membership of HAC would then need to add a member. She asked the group whether they want to add a recommendation for the additional member.

It is Mr. Lovett's opinion that part of the objection to the architect having a vote is that in the past the former architect voted out of order to let other HAC members know how they were voting. He added that the majority vote was still in place, though undue influence was a concern.

HARC is in favor of keeping the architect a voting member.

Mr. Connolly revisited whether to have a representative from the New Castle Historical Society (NCHS) on the HAC. Ms. Hamroun said that HAC was in favor of having someone from the NCHS on the commission.

HAC supports HARC's position that HAC should be observing the work once it is completed. Proper language will be incorporated in the application pack. The application will go through the current process (building official, etc.).

Membership – Includes recommendation that city residents are now appointed for a three-year term. The number of terms is not limited; however, a member cannot serve more than two terms consecutively. This will allow for a turnaround of HAC composition.

Key Terms

In-kind repair – Defined as a limited replacement of materials and assembly and cannot exceed 20% of the existing fabric of any one elevation. Anything beyond that would be considered and reviewed as a replacement.

Routine maintenance – Recommended the text “no alteration of exterior features” be added.

Procedures

Tier concept – Adding provisions for pre-application consultation and underscoring it is not a final approval. The application form will be reviewed with legal counsel to make sure it is clear to applicants that approval is in concept only.

Routine maintenance, emergency repairs, in-kind replacement have been detailed. The flowchart, matrix and guiding philosophy have remained unchanged.

Guidelines

Roofs – If it is a key building then alternate materials for roofs may not be considered. If it is a contributing building they may be considered.

Alternate materials – Not appropriate on key buildings but may be considered on elevations of non-contributing buildings. Mr. Meek questioned the clarity of language between two sections referencing types of materials that are appropriate for key and non-contributing buildings. Ms. Hamrout clarified that ‘design considerations’ sets the parameters then the section about alternate materials discusses what is appropriate if someone elects not to use original materials. Mr. Meek thinks this section can be confusing to residents.

Ms. Hamrout is concerned that by offering alternate materials up front many people will use them by default. She prefers having people use something different before going to an alternate option.

The wording ‘Preferably/strongly encourage’ was suggested, but not preferable in key buildings.

Once the graphic portion is incorporated the whole document will be easier to understand.

Fences – Mr. Meek referenced the text stating ‘wood fences should have a painted or stained finish when visible from the public right of way and unfinished wood fences are not appropriate along the public right of way.’ He noted several streets in the city that had unfinished cedar fences on them. He does not think it is reasonable to ask for paint or stain. Ms. Hamrout said this guideline would represent what is appropriate for the city. Going forward if a fence is installed then this guideline would be followed. Mr. Connolly agrees that fences should be painted and noted the use of pressure-treated wood as a fence material is not part of the guideline. If it is added he suggested adding an unfinished fence can only be made out of cedar.

Ms. Hamrout does not think painting/staining is an imposition, particularly when visible from the street. Mr. Meek suggested making paint/stain/unfinished cedar an option.

Ms. Hamroun said this guideline relates to front fences on the public right of way, not privacy, side or back fences. Mr. Meek said 'visible from the public right of way' will include many side fences. He cited the Read House saying all the side fences are made of untreated cedar and are on an alley or visible from the right of way. Language to be changed to read 'front fence must be painted/stained.'

Architectural styles

In the Introduction of the guidelines there will be a chart showing only New Castle centric. Ms. Hamroun has looked at all the listings in the National Register Nominations and developed a core of about 100 buildings she thinks will be good illustrations covering all the styles currently in the city and will identify the primary streets. All the periods (Colonial, 1920s-1930s, bungalows) will be covered. She is preparing illustrations showing streetscapes to show people there is a range of guidelines that are relevant to everyone.

Ms. Hamroun is doing updated photography to be used in the guidelines.

Guidelines are now digitized, but a mechanism is needed to allow residents to see their properties. It is a helpful tool to sort data (year, location, etc.).

The graphics and matrix components for the document have been postponed due to budget constraints and after city elections (4/11/15). After discussion with City Council President Linda Ratchford, Ms. Hamroun will develop an interim product that includes samples with illustrations to help make it more user friendly. It will not represent the final product. She invited the committee's input.

The final document is intended to be a City of New Castle document.

Public Discussion -- David Robinson, city resident, suggested it is a good time to address whether both sides of Fifth Street should be included in the historic district. Mr. Meek said there is already confusion because we have what the HAC regulates and what the historic district regulates. They are not the same. Ms. Hamroun said the ordinance addresses boundaries (what does a boundary mean, does it go to the center line of the street, etc.) that needs clarifying. The national historic landmark district is very precise.

An overlapping map with information about parcels will be developed. She will recommend an update of inventory of the national historic landmark district (key, contributing, non-contributing).

Terry Gormley of the *New Castle Weekly* wanted to clarify that HARC would submit its recommendations to City Council for adoption, and if the public would be able to see the draft document prior to it being submitted to Council. Ms. Hamroun said the revised guidelines will include public input, HAC and HARC input, but will follow up with Administrator Barthel for a response.

Ms. Gormley asked if the architect member of HAC will not be a voting member, does that ruling apply to the position or the individual. It will refer to the position.

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Mr. Meek commented that the draft guidelines are an improvement over the former guidelines. He believes adding dates and appropriate styles will be well received.

Ms. Hamroun will re-write the recommendations and distribute the draft guidelines to the committee before submitting to Council. At this time there are no plans for more HARC meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

(Debbie Turner, Stenographer, prepared minutes from recording.)