

HISTORIC AREA COMMISSION
1 Municipal Drive
April 10, 2025

Present: Tera Hayward-Olivas, Chairperson
Cynthia Batty, Planning Commission Liaison
Kevin Wade
Lisa Doak

Absent: Michael Westman

Also Present: Leila Hamroun, City Architect

Ms. Hayward-Olivas convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

March 13, 2025 – A motion to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2025 meeting as presented was made by Ms. Batty. The motion was seconded by Ms. Doak and was unanimously carried.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas noted that during the Candidate Forum a question was presented about how over-regulation would be addressed in the Historic District. Although none of the candidates felt there was over-regulation, some suggested there should be more consistency.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas explained the importance of understanding that the Historic Area Commission (HAC) exists because the Historic Districts are established by zoning; therefore, the City is required to have a Historic Area Review Board, which in New Castle is the HAC. HAC was established in 1951 because the City decided there was a need for responsible stewardship and all work performed in the Historic Residential District, the Historic Commercial District, or on properties listed on the National Register comes before the HAC.

HAC was established by City Council and the Guidelines and Standards used were approved by City Council; and this is not a subjective process. The current HAC members follow the Guidelines and Standards, they are guided by a Subject Matter Expert, it is an open process, and there is an appeals process if an applicant disagrees with the determination of HAC.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas also stated that HAC has no enforcement powers, and enforcement of the Code lies with the City. Ms. Hayward-Olivas recommended that anyone who has questions should contact the City Administrator, the City Code Enforcement Officer, or the City Building Official.

Ms. Batty noted that approximately 1/3 of the laws in the City Code relate to historic preservation, and information about how to apply knowledgeable information about historic periods, etc., in the Standards and Guidelines is, by reference, incorporated into the City Code and has the full force of law.

New Applications

204 Delaware Street – Amanda Reeder / Denali Beauty Works

An application was submitted for commercial window signage. Ms. Reeder explained that after she hung her sign in the window of the shop she was informed that she had to submit an application to HAC for approval. The sign is wood with vinyl lettering hung with metal chains.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas explained that anything that affects the streetscape is a contributing feature of the Historic District, and as such is under the purview of HAC. Ms. Hamroun added that windows displays are considered furnishings and does not need HAC approval; however, applied decals as part of the window display affects the actual structure.

Ms. Hamroun explained that there three aspects to consider for signage:

1. Shape – and whether it is suitable
2. Material
3. Location – and how it is consistent with how it would have typically been done in a historic context.

Ms. Hamroun added that in this case:

- The shape is fine.
- The design and material of the sign (wood) is fine.
- The lettering on the sign is vinyl, which is not permitted
- The metal components used to hang the sign are visible from the public right-of-way.

Ms. Hamroun explained that the preferred modifications would be to (1) relocate the sign to the outside of the building and hang it on existing hardware, and (2) remove the vinyl lettering and have the design and lettering painted on. In response to a question from Ms. Reeder, Ms. Hamroun explained further that historically it would not be consistent to have signage hanging inside the glazing storefront.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas concurred with Ms. Hamroun's assessment. In response to a comment from Ms. Batty, Ms. Hamroun agreed that the small sandwich board inside the window is acceptable because it is not permanent and could be considered a furnishing. Ms. Hamroun also stated that placing the existing sign on an easel set back from the glazing would also be acceptable because it could be considered a decorative element.

In response to a question from Ms. Batty, Ms. Hamroun stated that hanging the existing sign farther back from the glazing would not be acceptable because it impacts the view of the storefront and because it is obviously a sign it should be on the streetscape.

A discussion of how much time the applicant would have to make the recommended revisions ensued, during which Ms. Hamroun stated that there is no mechanism by which HAC can tell an applicant when they must come into compliance. Relative to conformance, Ms. Hamroun stated

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that the fact there is different enforcement is unfortunate; noting that how to enforce conformance is under the purview of the City.

In response to a question from the applicant, Ms. Hamroun stated she would be comfortable if the existing sign was placed on an easel and set back from the window. Ms. Doak explained the importance of preserving the vista of the architectural beauty of a historic building. Ms. Hamroun also explained why hanging the sign inside from chains is not acceptable. She also stated that painting or gilding on the glass would be acceptable as well; however a vinyl applique would not be acceptable.

It was suggested that the application be tabled with the applicant's approval to give the applicant and Ms. Hamroun the opportunity to meet on site and discuss options.

Regarding exterior decorations, a number of items that are specifically not permitted were noted and it was recommended that the applicant review the Guidelines and Standards posted on the City website.

Public Comment

There was no comment from the public.

A motion to table the application for 204 Delaware Street with the applicant's consent was made by Ms. Batty. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wade and was unanimously carried.

206 Delaware Street – Dwayne Foster

An application was submitted to remove an existing shed connected to an existing garage and construct a 12'x20' addition with a new entry door and window.

Mr. Foster explained that he intends to add onto the garage space to provide a small event space and a kitchen to expand his business.

Ms. Hamroun stated that the addition is in the back, it is a secondary structure, and it is not visible from the public right-of-way; so removing the shed roof and rear addition and building the new addition is acceptable. The plan calls for wood doors and wood windows with divided lights. Ms. Hamroun stated she would recommend approval of the application for scale, materials, impact, and concept.

In response to a question from Ms. Hamroun, Mr. Foster stated that he had not yet gone to the Board of Health or the Liquor Board. Ms. Hamroun expressed a concern that the kitchen is very narrow and recommended that Mr. Foster use the HAC meeting as a consultation to get approval in principle on the concept, scale, materials, and proposed work; and get approval of the kitchen space from the Board of Health before HAC reviews and approves the final application to ensure that the Board of Health does not require any changes that would impact the overall exterior envelope. Ms. Hamroun noted that when the application is resubmitted it can be reviewed as Tier 1.

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Mr. Foster stated that he would like to proceed with using the HAC meeting as a consultation and resubmitting the application with any modifications for review as Tier 1.

Ms. Hayward-Olivas recommended that any exterior lighting fixtures, signage, or hardware be included with the resubmission for the Tier 1 review, or as a separate application as those elements all need to be reviewed since they were missing from the application.

Public Comment

Phil Gross

In response to questions from Mr. Gross, it was stated that:

- The garage area would be an event space and will be accessible to patrons.
- If there is a change of use it would be a Code review and would be reviewed as part of the Building Permit review.

A motion was made by Ms. Batty to approve the concept as presented in terms of materials and scale as a consultation. If anything changes or modifications are made relating to the depth of the building, as long as everything is consistent with the application as presented it can be reviewed for Tier 1 approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wade and was unanimously carried.

New Business

Planning Commission Update

There was no Planning Commission update.

Signage in the Historic Commercial District

Ms. Hayward-Olivas reported that the document approved by HAC was submitted to the City Administrator for review. Ms. Hayward-Olivas will monitor the matter and report back to the Commissioners.

Ms. Batty noted that she wrote introductory documents for new homeowners, renters, new businesses, real estate agents, and real estate lawyers in dealing with the Historic Area that she can reformat to match the signage document. She also suggested that a case study be drafted for signage.

Ms. Hamroun noted that the Guidelines state that HAC “does not review interior work unless it impacts the exterior appearance of the building”

Ms. Hayward-Olivas cautioned board members regarding discussing specific matters with applicants outside a meeting, recommending that people be directed to the Guidelines and Standards document that is on the website. During discussion, Mr. Wade suggested that information be provided to the public. Ms. Hayward-Olivas stated that she discussed adding information to The Crier, and more outreach is planned. Ms. Hayward-Olivas also stated that she is in favor of sending out an annual letter to residents in the Historic Area.

Additional Public Comment

- Mr. Gross opined that some business signage is out of control and that should be addressed. He opined that small tables and chairs should be allowed. Ms. Batty suggested that Mr. Gross submit his concerns to the City office.
- Mr. Gross noted his appreciation for having a link to the meeting packet posted online.
- In response to a question from Mr. Gross, Ms. Batty stated the documentation she is drafting will be provided in print and on the city website.

With regard to sidewalk tables and chairs, Ms. Hayward-Olivas explained that although historically merchants did have tables and chairs outside on the sidewalk, they were typically removed at the end of each day, and they did not have to comply with ADA rules and zoning laws; and it is important for pedestrians to have space to traverse the sidewalks. Ms. Hamroun added that there are specific requirements for restaurants providing exterior seating; and if a business has an approved area of seating that is left outside that becomes quasi-permanent because it is not taken in each evening then it should be appropriate and meet HAC Standards and be reviewed as “street furniture”.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Hayward-Olivas called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Batty and seconded by Mr. Wade. The motion was unanimously carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer