

**MINUTES of the June 18, 2024 Meeting of the Commission
(via Zoom)**

Adopted July 16, 2024

Members Present: The meeting began at approximately 7:40 p.m. Bob Booher, Wendy Harris, David Stopak, Bill Earl, and Mimi Styles were present. Sam Suzich (alternate) was unable to attend. Georgette Cole, PC Chair attended, as did Barbara Raimondo, the recently appointed TC liaison. Tim Carle of Caruso Homes participated in the review session for 328 Ridge Road.

Approval of Agenda

Minor modifications to the proposed agenda were made and it was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the April meeting were unanimously approved.

Review Session - 328 Ridge Road

Bob started the review session by asking Tim Carle whether “Anthony Mel Golden” who signed the building permit application dated 5/14/2024 was indeed “Mel Golden” with whom the HPC had numerous meetings and correspondence in 2020 relating to 328 and well as 326 Ridge Road. Tim confirmed this is the same person.

Bob also reviewed the conditions that had been attached to the Planning Commission’s 2020 subdivision approval. Tim said he had only just been brought into this matter and the history of negotiations with Mel Golden had not been shared with him. He also only had a brief window to review Town Design Guidelines.

The HPC outlined its many concerns with the proposed home: perceived scale (and actual height), detail concentrated on the front façade, leaving other elevations to present as “afterthoughts” -- this is of particular concern as all four elevations would be visible from the public way. The HPC suggestions included: increase first floor eave lines by extending the front porch and the adding of a rear porch; reduce the overall height of the structure; reduce roof pitch/change to a hip roof; spread design details among all four elevations rather than concentrating them on the front façade. A dormer on the back of the house, similar to the one shown on the front façade could be considered. Moving the house to the back of the lot (which is wider) would also allow more design flexibility.

Bob suggested that Tim could submit quick sketches of design changes (rather than detailed architectural drawings) for HPC comment. This is how we handled the process with Mel in 2020; it is unfortunate that some of that history was not shared with Tim. Also, if there is another house design in Caruso’s portfolio that would address the HPC’s concerns and be more compatible with Town design guidelines, Tim was encouraged to forward it.

(Note: Bob followed up on June 20 by providing detailed written comments to Tim and included copies of pertinent 2020 documents and correspondence. Lacking Tim’s contact information, it was sent to Jane Eismeier of Pinecrest Development for forwarding to Tim.)

Archeological Update

Before the meeting, Wendy had distributed her report “Site Visit and Geological Assessment, Washington Grove Steatite Quarry” that she prepared following the May 19 visit of Dr. Caleb Fassett, a NASA staff geoscientist, and Don Housley, who volunteers with the Montgomery Parks Archaeology Program, as does Wendy. Dr. Fassett’s initial assessment is that what had been considered quarry pits may be dissolution pits – created by natural forces (i.e., the force of water) rather than by indigenous activity. He allows that he may not be correct in his preliminary assessment, so he plans to return with a team of colleagues and specialized equipment once grasses and brush have died back in the late fall or winter.

HPC 2024 Goals and Coordination with PC Goals

Updating the Design Guidelines to reflect the Town’s 2020 NR status, especially the inclusion of additional homes built between 1937 and 1967 will be a priority. Including photographic examples in the Guidelines document could be a good educational tool.

Correction to Architectural Survey

Christine Dibble had provided a “mock-up” House History for 209 Maple Avenue that was presented by David and discussed. Architectural Survey (Robinson & Associates) information is planned to be added to the existing “House Histories” site. There will also be an area for comments/remarks from the homeowner. Whether or not to include photographs is being discussed. It would be desirable to update past and current owner information. We will need to be organized in our approach to adding information, as Christine does not want to enter the website record for any specific house more than once.

ADU Zoning Text Amendment

Bob summarized that it had been the HPC’s suggestion and hope that building permit applications for ADUs be handled similarly to applications for subdivision, specifically that the HPC would make recommendations to the PC in its review that the PC could, in its judgment, decide whether to impose as conditions for permit approval.

In conversation John Compton expressed to Bob that approvals could indeed be conditional; it would be up to the PC to determine whether to consider HPC recommendations as required conditions.

However, Barbara (who participated in its drafting) said that this was not the intention of the TC. The word “voluntary” as well as the choice of “should” rather than “must” (Section 6.13.2.d) were carefully selected to make it clear that the Planning Commission cannot impose conditions based on HPC recommendations that are not outlined in the ordinance.

Meeting in Person

Barbara reported that the technology for hybrid (in-person/Zoom) meetings is about to be introduced for Town Council meetings – perhaps as early as July. Members expressed their opinions about remaining exclusively with Zoom for HPC meetings or planning at least a few in-person meetings each year; the latter could be beneficial when new members join the commission. Decisions will be based on the TC’s hybrid meeting experience.

Bulletin Material

There will be no bulletin insertion for July. Mimi has spoken with Marilyn Frey about the piece she had offered to write some time ago – “Fireplace Memories” of Town kids and teens of the 50s and 60s. Marilyn will enlist her brother and other former neighbors’ recollections in preparing it.

Planning Commission Meeting

No one from HPC attended the June PC Meeting. Georgette reported that Peter and Robert volunteered to draft changes to Article 7 that would allow more flexibility for the Commercial Corner, to be of benefit to both town residents and the property owner. They will bring their results to the next Planning Commission Meeting.

Commercial Corner

Bob reported that the owner’s architect came back with concept sketches that reflected the Town’s concerns – especially restoration of the Oddfellows Hall as part of the redevelopment. Georgette expressed concern about adequate parking and impact on Hickory Road. The parking studies will be important.

Town Council Meeting Report

Barbara reported that a resolution has been introduced regarding non-residents in leadership roles on committees as well as their eligibility to vote on committee business. The issue will be on the agenda for the next TC meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:45 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, July 16, at 7:30pm via Zoom.