

"A Historic Past"



"A Bright Future"

CITY OF DELAWARE CITY
407 Clinton Street - P.O. Box 4159
Delaware City, Delaware 19706
302-834-4573

**CITY OF DELAWARE CITY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WORKSHOP - CHAPTER 49
Tuesday, September 19, 2017 - 7 p.m.
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Turley called to order the meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) at 7:00 p.m. Those present included Commissioners Wood, Sellers, Hanna, and Palmer. Also in attendance were City Manager Houck and former Commissioner Slotter.

ACTION UPON THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

City Manager Houck noted on page 2, the last paragraph should read, "*in case demolition work is incomplete*". Commissioner Sellers made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 11, 2017 meeting as amended. Commissioner Wood seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all ayes, motion carried.

A discussion followed about the need of a bond. City Manager Houck explained it depends on the type of work. In this particular case it's faith of performance if the work is not completed Delaware City has access to funds to finish the demolition.

CHAPTER 49 DISCUSSION-WORSHOP INTENT

This workshop is to review and discuss what structure and direction HPC should consider in changes to the mandate and practices. Commissioner Turley had asked each Commissioner to come with their concerns for discussion.

Commissioner Wood believes what we recommend to residents for design guidelines should be easier to understand.

Commissioner Sellers would like to see a clear definition of what HPC's role is: advisory or mandatory.

- Is it mandatory only in the commercial district?
- Why only advisory in the residential historic district?
- Who should come before HPC and how far does HPC's authority extend?
- What changes to an historical home should come before HPC?

One item of discussion was the matter of fences. Former Commissioner Slotter believes the Delaware City's fence ordinance has guidelines to follow but if a homeowner wanted to vary from the guidelines then it is necessary to come before HPC.

Commissioner Hanna refers to page 4904, Item F of the charter and in particular the word "new". This has frustrated and divided the HPC Commissioners as to whether or not a homeowner has to use the exact materials or reproduction materials in their restoration plans. Discussion began and touched on the following:

- The high cost and scarcity of historical materials
- Chapter 49 states no financial hardship should be placed on homeowner - important to consider the incomes of Delaware City residents and not have such standards that would discourage improvements
- Key word to work with could be "*other visual qualities*"
- A welcome packet to new homeowners explaining what the requirements are for living in the historical district and why it is important to maintain and preserve the history.
 - Concern is people are buying in Delaware City because of the low cost of real estate, not the desire to live in an historical home.
- Make homeowners aware they could be eligible to apply of tax credits, grants and revolving loan funds

Former Commissioner Slotter said making the decisions on the restoration practices is not based on what does or does not look good, or what is personal preference it is sticking to the National Standards of Historic Preservation. We began discussing the need to determine where we are going in terms of preservation for Delaware City.

- What do we want the town to look like?
- Gradual steps in implementing the plan
- Stop the destruction of homes in the town; i.e. Council to put pressure on the banks that hold the mortgages on vacant homes. Can the mandatory purview be expanded to include the rental properties?
- Commissioner Turley will draft a letter for Mayor & Council to consider sending to banks holding mortgages on vacant properties.
- Important to integrate the town with the redevelopment of Ft. DuPont (do not want to become the wrong side of the tracks)
- Imperative we be one town not two
- Integrating with the Downtown Development District Plan*

*City Manager Houck explains the Downtown Development District Plan's goal is to create with public engagement a plan for downtown, which we never had. It will spring board us into an opportunity to access funding to implement the plan. HPC, PC and business owners will be involved in the planning.

How to Involve Residents & Suggestions For Keeping In Step with Ft. DuPont's Redevelopment:

- The same street signs. Will be costly so has to be done in a systematic order beginning in the center of town and branching out.

- Improves our appearance and shows we are keeping up
- Clinton Street repaved
- Replacing sidewalks. If homeowners would go in together the cost would be reduced. Perhaps financial assistance to those families could be worked out
- Identify more beautification projects in town: businesses and families contribute towards the maintenance
- More plaques noting historical homes and landmarks. Valuable for residents and visitors to see the significance of our town.
- Brochure identifying these places for visitors to guide them on a walking or cycling tour through town

Should we incorporate some of Ft. DuPont's guidelines into our documentation?

- It would be difficult; it is specific to new construction that has to blend with the historical architecture that exists.
- Delaware City's architecture spans a wide period of time.
- University of Delaware has done a thorough documentation of Delaware City and we are still engaged with them under the Certified Local Government Program

Concern over rental properties:

- Should our mandatory purview be expanded to incorporate the "for profit buildings"?
- These properties are under review
- The recently adopted ordinance holding landlords responsible for their properties has been pushed back and needs to be revisited by Mayor & Council to be specifically designed for the needs of Delaware City.
- Concern for renters living in homes that are in need of repairs
- HPC to work with Code Enforcement Officers

HPC Training & Membership

Assistant City Clerk Clifton forwards all emails about training opportunities that become available. Many, however are far away and often for specific topics. It is felt; we need to start with the basics. City Manager Houck suggests we find out if they can come to Delaware City. Former Commissioner Slotter said Maryland has a very informative HPC charter and he will forward it to each member.

Need for more members on the HPC board. To date there are five (5). Board should have seven (7) members one of which should be an architect.

Community Awareness of HPC & its Credibility

Discussion of ways to bring awareness of HPC:

- Community event; something intriguing, a speaker
- Articles in the Town's newsletter
- Feature an "historical home of the month"
- Post schedule of meetings
- Facebook page for HPC needs to be redone and updated
- Cable channel to educate people about what's going on in town

Benefits of HPC awareness:

- Delaware City moving forward, preserving the past to expand into the future
- Will pull people into town as homeowners could raise level of income

SUMMATION

Chapter 49:

- Possibility of re-writing Chapter 49 into more easily understood language
- More clarity in Chapter 49's language regarding repairing vs. replacing historic elements
- Examples of modifications to historic structures from different eras that may remain when restoring
- Clarification regarding maintaining original materials versus original appearance.
- Guidance for application of standards to selection of modern versus historic materials

To the Community:

- Need for standards and requirements be clearly communicated and understood by the community
- Produce a packet for homeowners that clarifies process for permission or approval of projects
- Include guidance regarding what does not require a session before HPC but can be approved through City Hall

HPC:

- Clear determination regarding where our jurisdiction extends and whether compliance is voluntary or mandatory
- Clarification regarding details that have been addressed in ordinances versus historic guidelines and when to apply each
- Additional training for Commissioners both formal and individual
- Address possible modification of statutes by City Council regarding mandatory versus advisory in the historic part of town outside the C1 designated areas
- Clarification of how HPC integrates with other Delaware City departments and authorities
- Consider impact of broadening the definition or assignment of historic district boundaries.

Other Topics Outside of Chapter 49:

- Trader Joe's or other food source provider assistance programs investigation
- Investigate seed money resources for homeowners in conjunction with more stringent requirements for code and HPC mandates

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hanna made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Turley seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all ayes, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Lynn Hanna

City Secretary