

**Town of Elkton  
Elkton Historic District Commission  
March 30, 2016**

**PRESENT:** Paula Newton, Chair; Josh Brown, Vice Chair; Mark Clark; Brittany Schwartz; Theresa Thomas, Assistant Planner; John Downs Esq., Legal Counsel

**ABSENT:** Steven Leonard; Jeanne D. Minner, Director of Planning

Ms. Newton called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and stated that this is a meeting of the Historic District Commission and that a quorum was present. She stated that the Commission operates under the authority granted it by the Town of Elkton. She further stated that the qualifications of the Commission members are on file with the Town of Elkton. The basis of the decisions of the Commission be consistent with the Town's Ordinances, they are on file with the Town of Elkton and are hereby made a part of the record of each and every action of the Commission at today's meeting. Each application heard today is considered on its own merits and is not to be considered as establishing a precedent for any other application.

Ms. Newton stated that the first item on the agenda was approval of the minutes from the February 24, 2016 meeting. She asked if any member had any corrections. Hearing none, she asked for a motion.

**MOTION: Mr. Brown made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 24, 2016 meeting as written. Mr. Clark seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Newton introduced the election of officers as the second item on the agenda. She stated that the Commission needed to vote for a Chair and Vice Chair.

A brief discussion ensued.

**MOTION: Mr. Clark made a motion to elect Ms. Newton for continuing as Chair. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**MOTION: Mr. Clark made a motion to elect Mr. Brown for continuing as Vice Chair. Ms. Schwartz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Newton introduced the third item on the agenda.

**Request by Mr. John A. Palmer, Jr. for installation of a fence at 321 Hermitage Drive, Tax Map 311, parcel 715.**

Ms. Schwartz recused herself from this request on the basis that she was owner of a neighboring property.

Mr. Palmer introduced himself to the Commission. He stated that he resided at 110 Delaware Avenue in Elkton, Maryland. He stated he was interested in purchasing 321 Hermitage Drive and is looking to install a 3' high fence to contain his two (2) small dogs.

Ms. Newton asked whether the fence would be installed around the entire property.

Mr. Palmer stated that it would be placed only in the front yard. He delineated the area to be enclosed. He stated that once the wood cures, it would be painted white with a black rubberized mesh on the inside. He stated the clean lines would face the road and the neighbors.

Discussion ensued clarifying the fence location and the style of fences currently existing in the neighborhood.

Ms. Newton asked if there was any public comment in favor of the request.

Ms. Louisa Jane MacDonald introduced herself to the Commission. She stated she was neither for nor against the project but she did have questions regarding the request. She asked how far back from the road would the fence be placed and if it would be placed in front of or behind the trees in the front yard of the property.

Mr. Palmer stated it was a 3' high fence and would be placed in front of the trees.

Discussion ensued between Ms. MacDonald, the applicant, the Commission and Ms. Amy Dunbar clarifying the fence location, the style of fences currently existing in the neighborhood, location of the gate, where the fence would attach to the house, the foot traffic through the area and the color and grid size of the mesh.

Mr. Clark spoke to procedural decorum for the meeting. He requested the audience to direct questions to the Commission and that any drawings be provided to the Commission first and that they would share them with the audience.

Mr. Palmer provided the Commission with a sketch of the fence location.

Ms. Newton asked if anyone on the Commission had any further questions.

Mr. Brown asked Mr. Palmer how he decided on this style of fence.

Mr. Palmer stated that he liked the clean lines and the simplicity of the fence.

Mr. Brown stated that the Commission is concerned with architectural style and the appropriateness to the period of the neighborhood. Mr. Brown stated that this fence is more a rural style fence.

Discussion ensued regarding the construction of the requested fence versus a split rail.

Mr. Clark stated that the Commission is not just looking at the age of the house but the whole neighborhood and that he does not consider this fence to be neighborhood appropriate to the Hermitage. He stated the style fence shown is a rural fence and more appropriate to an area where there are horses and livestock. He stated that he cannot pick a particular style fence to be installed. He further stated that it is upon the applicant to provide the Commission with what they desire to install and the Commission makes a decision. He stated he would not vote to support the fence presented tonight because he believes it to be inappropriate to the neighborhood. He stated that he did not have a problem with the vinyl coated mesh behind the fence. He stated that

simple is something not necessarily desired in a historical area and that a fence with more detail would be more appropriate here.

Mr. Palmer stated that from a safety perspective he was not a fan of picket fences, especially when it is only 3' high.

Discussion ensued regarding the different styles of picket fences.

Ms. Newton requested a motion.

**MOTION: Mr. Clark made a motion to deny this request for a fence at 321 Hermitage Drive based on the rural style of the fence and its inappropriateness to an historic neighborhood. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Newton presented the fourth item on the agenda.

**Request by Mr. Ahmet Furat for the installation of a sign on the rear wall of 124 W. Main Street, Tax Map 310, parcel 1484.**

No one was present to present this request.

**Old Business:** Ms. Thomas distributed information from John Milner Associates regarding the Commission's concerns with the historic guidelines.

The Commission felt that while Ms. Minner had accurately conveyed the Commission's concerns, the consultant's responses did not adequately address those concerns. They regarded the tone of the responses to be condescending in nature and would like the consultant to be invited to the next meeting so that they may address the consultant directly. They did not request supplements to the previously presented guidelines but new guidelines altogether.

Mr. Clark asked whether he would be able to contact the consultant via telephone or email.

Mr. Downs stated that the point of contact with the consultant is Jeanne Minner, Director of Planning and that it would not be appropriate for a Commission member to contact the consultant on their own.

Discussion ensued regarding the sidewalk in front of the Presbyterian Church, bricks from Main Street's sidewalk to be used in a walkway along the Historical Society building, and the slate shingles on the Alliance Building at 110 North Street. The Commission expressed their frustration that they are tasked by the Mayor and Commissioners with preserving the Historic District but are often not informed of projects occurring within the District or there is no follow through with suggestions they make when they are informed. The Commission stated that they know they cannot override the Mayor and Commissioners but they would appreciate more and better communication between the two (2) Boards regarding Town projects in the Historic District.

Discussion continued regarding the ramp at Larry Crouse's building, the snow fence in the front yard of 250 E. Main Street, and the lack of "teeth" in enforcing code violations.

Mr. Brown asked if we could improve the process.

Mr. Downs stated that he had ideas regarding improvements but that is venturing into the area of legal counsel and he would rather not do that in an open meeting.

Ms. Newton requested a motion on whether or not to enter an executive session.

**Motion: Mr. Brown made a motion to go into executive session. Ms. Schwartz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

The Historic District Commission went into executive session at approximately 7:10 PM.

The purpose of the executive session was to seek legal advice on amending the process regarding violations to the Code.

The executive session ended at approximately 7:30 PM

Ms. Newton asked if there was any further old business. Hearing none she asked if there was any new business.

**New Business:** Mr. Clark requested that the Town require a site drawing as part of the application process. He stated having the gentleman tonight sketch on the back of folder was unacceptable.

Ms. Thomas stated that she agreed with Mr. Clark and when applicable a site plan would be required with applications.

Ms. Thomas stated that the Town was going forward with improvements to the public parking lot at 117-119 E. Main Street. She further stated that Elkton High School would be creating a rain garden and adding rain barrels to the parking area of the Town's Farmers' Market located at Bow Street and Howard Street.

Ms. Newton stated that, speaking for the Commission, they were very pleased at the work done to the former Boy's and Girl's Club. They were happy to see that the contractor included their suggestions in the finished work.

Mr. Brown asked if there was any inspection done regarding the work approved by this Commission on projects in Town.

Ms. Thomas stated that the Commission's approval/ denial is relayed to the Building Department and becomes part of their inspection process.

**The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.**