

**Town of Elkton
Elkton Historic District Commission
December 17, 2019**

PRESENT: Paula Newton, Chair; Brittany Schwartz; Nancy Yerkes; Jeanne D. Minner, Director of Planning; David Beste, Esq., Legal Counsel

ABSENT: None

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 the first item on the agenda was approval of the minutes from the November 26, 2019 meeting. Ms. Newton noted a number of corrections which needed to be made. After noting the corrections she called for a motion.

Ms. Schwartz made a motion to approve the minutes from the November meeting, as amended. The motion was seconded by Ms. Yerkes and unanimously approved.

Ms. Newton introduced the next item on the agenda.

Request of CASA of Cecil County, Inc. for approval for three (3) signs at 131 E. Main Street

Ms. Donna Veisberg of CASA introduced herself to the Commission. She stated they have signs at the property but were not aware there was a problem until a representative of the Town stopped and informed them that permits were required. She stated two of the signs are directional in nature and the other sign is on the wall in front of the building. She questioned if the Commission had any issues with the signs. Ms. Newton asked if she had completed her proposal.

Ms. Veisberg stated CASA has been in existence since 2015. It started in the Arts Council and they grew too large for that location. In July of this year they moved to 131 E. Main Street and decided to put up more signage to make people aware of what is happening with children in the County. She noted more and more children are having difficulties with drug addiction. There are children being born at the hospital addicted and the parents choose not to take the babies home and they are put up for adoption. She is very concerned for the children and CASA's purpose is to make people aware of these issues in order to help the children in need. She said she was unaware there was a problem with the signage but is open to suggestions from the Commission.

Ms. Newton opened the floor to comments from the audience either in favor of or in opposition to the signage requests. No one stepped forward to make any comments.

Ms. Newton opened the discussion to the Commission members. Ms. Yerkes stated she is more concerned about the large sign as opposed to the two smaller signs. She stated she did not believe

the large sign on the side of the building is appropriate for that part of the building. She stated she believes what they are doing is certainly a good thing but she is unsure whether most people know that CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates.

Ms. Veisberg informed the Commission that CASA is given the ability to present their work to jurors who are involved in cases relating to children. They present a two-minute film which explains their work. During the presentation she mentions to the jurors that CASA is located at the Mitchell House and mentions the large red, white and blue sign. Invariably jurors will say they have noticed the sign. She said she is very encouraged when she is told that the sign is being noticed by people.

Ms. Veisberg stated she felt the sign was an asset to their work although she understood the Commission has their regulations to consider. Ms. Newton stated the Mitchell House is one of the most historically significant buildings in the Historic District and she believes it deserves to be treated with the respect as a structure from the 1700's.

Ms. Newton went on to say that because it is in the Historic District they have guidelines which are pretty specific about should be done and what is recommended for historic structures. She read part of the guidelines which state, "New signage should complement and be subsidiary to the character of the façade. The materials should be compatible with the design of the building. They should be appropriate to the character of the building." She also stated it mentions that large, overbearing signs are not necessary when the façade is well maintained and that they are not recommended.

Ms. Newton made it clear she has no issue with the organization or the purpose of the sign but only about the appearance of the sign. She said she did not feel the material of the sign is appropriate for the building because it is more like a billboard. Ms. Newton stated she wasn't sure the sign on the front door was necessary when they already have a sign on the knee wall.

Ms. Veisberg told the Commission members the reason for the sign on the door was because people would not realize where their office was in relation to the Historical Society office and so they placed the sign with an arrow directing people where they needed to go to get to the CASA office. People would come at different times and the Historical Society office was closed and therefore they thought the CASA office was closed as well.

Discussion regarding what type of material would be appropriate ensued. Ms. Newton stated she believed a wood or wood look sign with a frame would be more appropriate. Ms. Newton said there are a number of signs along Main Street which are wood. Ms. Schwartz mentioned the sign at Brookbend as an example. Ms. Minner stated she could access the Historic District Guidelines regarding signs on the Town website.

Ms. Schwartz asked if the Commission is recommending she provide them with other options for their signage which fall within the guidelines. Ms. Newton agreed that is what she feels is needed. Once those examples are provided Ms. Veisberg can again come before the Commission to present them.

Ms. Veisberg asked which signs in particular they wanted to see changed. Ms. Newton stated she has no issues with the sign on the knee wall since it is at eye level and not on the building. The other two signs on the building would need to be addressed.

Mr. Beste posed a question regarding the ‘directional’ signs and whether they would fall within the historic guidelines. He noted that regardless of their use the signs are not consistent with the nature of the structure.

Ms. Veisberg inquired how long she would be given to provide new samples and come back before the Commission with them. Mr. Beste stated under normal circumstances thirty (30) days would be the limit. Ms. Veisberg stated she did not believe she would be able to have the samples done by the end of December due to the time of year. He stated the Commission has discretion to allow that time to be extended.

Ms. Veisberg explained that as a non-profit they have very little money and so she said they probably wouldn’t be able to have new signs made. Ms. Minner suggested they contact the Elkton Alliance and apply for a façade grant. She said she believed they would cover 50% of the cost of the sign. Ms. Minner gave her the contact information for Jessica Price, Executive Director of the Alliance. Ms. Minner stated there is normally money available and it doesn’t take a great deal of time to go through the process.

After discussion the Commission members agreed to allow an additional ten (10) days for the signs to be addressed. Therefore they have until January 10, 2020 to provide the Commission with their new proposal. Ms. Newton suggested Ms. Veisberg take note of the current signage along Main Street within the Historic District which would provide her with some direction. She also suggested Ms. Veisberg review the Historic District regulations with regard to signage.

It was determined that once CASA received the proofs from their sign company they should provide copies to the Commission for their approval. Mr. Beste suggested they have the mock ups done showing the type of materials used prior to having the signs made up so money is not spent needlessly if any changes are requested by the Commission.

Ms. Newton called for a motion. Ms. Schwartz made a motion to deny the current request and will await the mockup of the new request for signage.

Ms. Veisberg thanked the Commission for their time.

Request of Bryan Spies for approval for signage at 123 N. Bridge Street (The Teal Antler)

Mr. Bryan Spies representing The Teal Antler was in attendance to address their request. He stated they lease the building from Anchor Pontiac and when they came to the Town to apply for their sign permit they were informed the property was within the Historic District and the Town Center Zone. They were unaware of this information prior to placing the sign on the side of the building.

There being no one in attendance at the meeting to speak for or against this request Ms. Newton opened the floor to Commission member comments or questions. Ms. Newton questioned whether this was actually a sign or an art mural. Ms. Minner clarified once the name of the business is provided it becomes a sign. Ms. Minner asked if a variance would be needed for the sign on the wall due to its size. Mr. Spies stated Mr. Bromwell informed him the current sign takes up the full amount of square footage allowed for the business and if they wish to place any additional signage it would require a variance.

Ms. Newton stated the building has no historical significance and it happens to be one of the only buildings on Bridge Street which falls within the Historical District. It was placed within the district in order to keep the zone of East and West Main consistent. She stated it doesn't contrast with any of the surrounding buildings.

Ms. Newton called for a motion. A motion was made by Ms. Schwartz to approve the application for the signage for the Teal Antler at 125 N. Bridge Street. The motion was seconded by Ms. Yerkes and unanimously approved.

Ms. Newton inquired where they would be placing the 'light box' sign. Mr. Spies said they would be placing a new sign within the existing box on the front of the building facing Bridge Street. Mr. Spies stated when they spoke to Dave Williams about leasing the building he told them they would need to do 'something' to get people to notice the business and come in.

There being no additional items for presentation Ms. Newton asked if there was any items of Old Business. There were no items of Old Business for discussion.

Ms. Newton then called for items of New Business. Ms. Minner stated they needed to vote on the Election of Officers. Ms. Minner asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair.

Motion was made by Ms. Schwartz to nominate Ms. Newton as Chair of the Commission for the 2020 Fiscal Year. The motion was seconded by Ms. Yerkes. There being no opposition, the motion carried.

Motion was made by Ms. Newton to nominate Ms. Schwartz as Vice Chair of the Commission for the 2020 Fiscal Year. The motion was seconded by Ms. Yerkes. There being no opposition, the motion carried.

Ms. Minner raised the subject of the remnants of a cemetery off of Frenchtown Road by the river. Ms. Newton said she believed Ms. Minner was talking about the 'Henderson' cemetery. She said she has a special interest in the cemetery since she is a Henderson. She informed Ms. Minner she has pictures of headstones from that cemetery. She said Mike Dixon, of the Historical Society, has a letter from the owner's son which gives some history about how the property was used in the past. Ms. Newton said she believed it was a family plot. There was discussion about 'Heddy' a slave who misdirected the British. She said Mike Dixon would know more about the property and any information connected to it.

Ms. Minner voiced her concern about the PUD placing houses in the area and wanted to be able to conserve the cemetery. She mentioned the fact that a backhoe had come onto the property and had started pushing over the headstones when a woman who lived in the area interrupted them. Ms. Minner mentioned this happened some time ago, not in recent years.

Ms. Newton stated she believed there was another site near where Terumo is doing the new parking lot. There were markers in that area that had been removed. Someone had called Ms. Newton to try to find out if the markers had been saved or if they had been thrown out. She said this was the same person who told her the County was destroying the tan yards at Calvert. Her understanding was these were the only ones which existed in the state. She explained they are large underground vats which had been used in the tanning process for soaking the hides. She stated these tan yards were located in the ground behind the old Delano house on the property. She said this is apparently where the County has its dumpsters for the park and therefore dump trucks run back and forth over them all the time. She also stated they are documented and there was a sign there at one time but it is now missing. She said her understanding was there are approximately 10 vats in the ground there and they are the only remaining ones in the state. She noted this was in the pre Revolutionary War era. Discussion ensued regarding the owners of the property and the fact that the vats can be seen especially when there are drought conditions.

Ms. Minner mentioned the jasper quarry site which is located off Muddy Lane in Elkton. She shared a copy of the American Archaeological publication which has an article regarding the quarry. She mentioned they had applied for an easement in order to be able to access the property. Ms. Minner said often in the articles they provide a specific location in order to keep the public from digging up artifacts. Ms. Newton said she understands there is jasper up in the Octorara area in Delaware as well.

There being no additional items for discussion, Ms. Newton called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Schwartz to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Yerkes and unanimously approved.