

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF**

January 9, 2012

The Historic District Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met for the Regular Meeting on January 9, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. Notice and Agenda of the meeting were posted at 201 West Gray Building A, the Norman Municipal Building and at www.normanok.gov twenty-four hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Chair N Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Item No. 1, being: Roll Call.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rangar Cline
 Anna Eddings
 Russell Kaplan**
 Chesley Potts
 Neil Robinson
 Anaïs Starr*
 Scott Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT: Julie Benningfield
 David John

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Atkinson, Historic Preservation Officer
 Jolana McCart, Admin Tech IV

GUESTS PRESENT: Mike Brinkley
 Victor Watkins
 Maggie Mitchell
 Kendel Posey

Item No. 2, being: Approval of the Agenda.

Motion by A Eddings for approval; **Second** by S Williams. All approve.

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Item No. 3, being: Approval of Minutes from the December 5, 2011 Regular Meeting.

Motion by C Potts for approval; **Second** by S Williams. All approve.

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Item No. 4, being: Staff report on projects approved by Administrative Bypass since December 5, 2011.

Staff reported that there had been none issued.

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Item No. 5, being: Staff report on CLG projects.

*A Starr arrived at 7:05

S Atkinson reported that Swearingen Communications has completed filming for the downtown video. A rough draft should be ready by March with the final draft being ready in May.

She also reminded the Commission that the CLG application for next year's grant is rapidly approaching. She mentioned that the Commission might want to consider hosting a symposium about infill design in core neighborhoods. She will have more information on this in February. Another possibility would be a masonry workshop.

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Item No. 6, being: Continuation of Certificate of Appropriateness at 642 S Lahoma. (Granted 10-3-11).

Project still on hold while searching for a front door.

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** Russell Kaplan arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Item No. 7, being: Continuation of Certificate of Appropriateness at 439 Chautauqua. (Granted 11-7-11)

Project is progressing.

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Item No. 8, being: Continuation of Certificate of Appropriateness at 439 S Lahoma. (Granted 11-7-11 for 3 windows; 3 windows were denied).

Staff reminded the Commission that the appeal to City Council would be heard tomorrow evening. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Robinson said that he would be making a statement at the meeting as the Commission representative and handed out to the Commission the comments he would be making. He also presented a letter he would be presenting to the City Council under his own signature.

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Item No. 9, being: Continuation of Certificate of Appropriateness at 639 S Lahoma. (Granted 12-5-11)

Mike Brinkley returned to the Commission with a drawing of the east elevation which shows the removal the existing doorway and window and installation of wider doors. This had been part of the original application but the Commission had requested more detailed drawings.

Motion by S Williams to accept the application as presented. **Second** by R Kaplan. All approve.

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Item No. 10, being: Continuation Request for Certificate of Appropriateness at 635 S Lahoma. (Granted 12-45-11)

Applicants are discussing the fine points of the project details.

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Item No. 11, being: Request of Certificate of Appropriateness at 633 Chautauqua.

(This driveway project had received a COA in December 2009. The COA has expired and the applicants are reapplying to do the same project.)

S Atkinson gave the staff report. Victor Watkins and Maggie Mitchell, applicants, were present to answer questions.

Discussion on this project included water flow, ponding, sidewalk composition, project materials, driveway width, curb approach and property lines.

Motion by S William to approve the application as with the following specifications: the garage door style and concrete sidewalk be approved as presented; the driveway width be the same width as the garage door, with added width for the contracting material and the approach radius be compatible with the width and arrangement of the rest of the drive. **Second** by a Starr. All approve.

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Item No. 12, being: Miscellaneous.

S Atkinson let the Commission know that technology had finally caught up with the ability to allow the flagging of the approximate 282 properties in the Historic Districts in the Cleveland County Tax Assessor's data base.

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Item No. 13, Adjournment. 8:40 p.m.

Passed and approved this 5th day of March 2012.


Chair Neil Robinson

January 10, 2012

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council:

The essence of living in a Norman Historic District is that of being part of a community bound together by self-imposed limits on our right to alter our homes.

When the Districts were created, at least 80 percent of homeowners in the areas to be covered agreed to abide by rules restricting changes to our homes. In return, our neighborhoods receive protection from encroachment by wholesale development and from alteration of individual elements that might, over time, significantly change the neighborhood character.

The protections are not as strong as some would like, but are more than others care to see exercised. The Norman Historic District Commission is responsible for finding a reasonable course between these conflicted positions. The mechanism established to safeguard individual structures in the Districts was that of a 9 member Commission, on which I serve as chairman. About two years ago, after much deliberation, including several public hearings, the Commission drafted the **Historic District Guidelines** and submitted the document to the City Council. Council members reviewed the **Guidelines**, made changes and adopted the rules into the City Code.

Under the adopted rules, the Commission is responsible for applying the **Guidelines** to the real-world aspirations of District residents. The established process is straightforward: District homeowners may at any time submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness regarding a desired alteration to a District structure. In an effort to streamline the process, the adopted **Guidelines** included provisions for replacing architectural elements with similar elements - the term used in these cases is "like-with-like." These items generally may be approved by City staff under "administrative bypass" provisions. Review by the Commission may not be required in these cases.

In cases involving more substantive changes, the Commission hears directly from the applicant. In coming to a decision on a particular case, the Commission considers information from the applicant and the public, and reviews submitted drawings and photographs. Comments and information are discussed in relation to the **Guidelines**, which provide a coherent and reasonable basis for Commission action.

Windows and doors are among the more significant architectural elements the **Guidelines** cover. Windows and doors are major elements of the architectural style of a structure. This is true of modern homes outside the district as well as of vintage homes in the Districts.

Double-hung wood windows like those present in many District homes may be out of place in a modern home and may even undermine its appeal. The same is true for stylish new windows applied to an older home originally built with double-hung windows from an earlier era. For these reasons, the **Guidelines** include provisions requiring the use of windows and doors of the same size, configuration, design and materials when replacements are being considered.

While issues other than those directly related to the **Guidelines** frequently are brought to the Commission, our deliberations are based as much as possible on application of the **Guidelines** to the situation presented in the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

One reason often cited for replacement of old windows is that of energy efficiency. The Commission is not insensitive to the issue and, in fact, drafted current **Guidelines** based upon the fundamental premise that preservation of existing materials is the most effective way to save energy.

Although manufacturers sell new windows with claims for energy savings, the bottom line is: Refurbished old windows can be as good as new windows at saving energy¹. When energy included in the manufacture and shipping of new windows is considered, existing windows save much more energy than replacements carried in from distant parts^{2,3}. In addition, as the many existing wooden windows in the Districts show, old windows may be more durable than those made with new, synthetic materials^{4,5}.

When the Commission voted unanimously to deny the applicant's request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace existing double-hung wood windows with new windows of differing type and style, it did so in compliance with the **Guidelines** and in the belief that its action was in the best interest of the City of Norman and the Historic District.

Respectfully Submitted,

E. O'Neil Robinson
Chairman, Norman Historic District Commission

1. John Leeke's Historic Home Works,
<http://www.historichomeworks.com/hhw/education/WindowsHandouts/WindowEnergyAnalysis.pdf>
2. Ted Kesik, "Embodied Energy Comparative Values," Canadian Architect, Architectural Science Forum, Perspectives on Sustainability, January 2002,
http://www.canadianarchitect.com/asf/perspectives_sustainability/measures_of_sustainability/measures_of_sustainability_embodied.htm
3. National Fenestration Rating Council, <http://www.nfrc.org/>
4. Paul Fiset, "Understanding Energy-Efficient Windows," *Fine Homebuilding* 114 (1998): 68-73.
5. John M. Corbett, "A Last Look at Historic Wood Windows," *Traditional Building* 14, no. 6, (2001)
<http://www.restorationtrades.com/articles/windowrestoration.shtml>

**Discussion Notes for Appeal of Historic District
Commission Decisions**

- I. Historic District is home-grown, not imposed from outside.
 - a. Recent changes in membership reinforced local control
 - b. 80% of residents/property owners signed on
- II. Guidelines were drafted based on input from numerous public hearings
 - a. Adopted by City Council
 - b. Recognized preservation of existing materials is the most effective way to save energy
- III. Guidelines are basis for Historic District Commission evaluations
 - a. Applications submitted prior to work allow cooperative approach
 - b. After-the-fact applications foreclose options
- IV. Selective application of guidelines is unfair
 - a. Increases uncertainty for applicants
 - b. Devalues Historic District protections
 - c. Eliminating uncertainty and instability promotes investor interests