

LAYTONSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2017

Roll Call: Chair Sheree Wenger called to order a meeting of the Laytonsville Historic District Commission (HDC) at 7:37 p.m. Commission members Charles Hendricks and Jill Ruspi were present. Members Lisa Simonetti and Michele Shortley were absent.

Public Attendance: Also present was Jim Ruspi, mayor of Laytonsville, who resides at 7111 Brink Road.

Minutes: Minutes of the meeting of January 16, 2017 were not available.

Hearings:

21611 Laytonsville Road (St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church): Chair Wenger reopened the public hearing on the portion of application HDWP-03-16, proposing repaving and expanding the parking areas and driveways of St. Bartholomew's Church, that the commission had continued at its meetings of October 17, 2016; November 28, 2016; and January 16, 2017. The unresolved issues involve the driveway and parking spaces between the church and the Town Hall. The church's application for a variance for the driveway and parking spaces in this area was still pending before the Board of Appeals. As no representative of the church was present at the February HDC meeting, Member Hendricks moved to continue the hearing on the unresolved portion of application HDWP-03-16. Member Ruspi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6924 Sundown Road (Green residence): Chair Wenger reopened the hearing on the unresolved portion of application HDWP 01-16, which involved the installation of solar panels on the roof of the accessory building. She reported that Dustin Green, the applicant, had told her that he would like to postpone the installation of the solar panels for another six months or more to await the commercial release of solar panels with new and improved designs. Observing that more than six months had elapsed since the commission's first consideration of the application and that the applicant had not submitted a preferred solar panel design, Member Hendricks made a motion to disapprove the portion of application HDWP 01-16 relating to the installation of solar panels. The letter of disapproval will inform Green that he may reapply once one year has elapsed since the submission of his previous application. Member Ruspi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

21607 Laytonsville Road (Town Hall): Mayor Ruspi stated that the front steps of the Town Hall building needed repair and a new coat of paint. He said that the stairs behind the Town Hall as well as the bench and the octagonal table near the path behind the Town Hall should be sanded and stained, either by a Boy Scout as part of an Eagle Scout project or under contract. He also observed that the shutters on the Town Hall are deteriorating and

losing slats. Andy Drouliskos, a town resident, has volunteered to take two samples to an appropriate firm in Frederick to inquire into the cost of repairing a more severely and a less severely damaged shutter. The mayor wanted to know what the commission would require in terms of shutter repair.

Chair Wenger asked whether replacement shutters to fit the Town Hall's windows are available. She observed that she has seen refurbished, previously used shutters for sale in Frederick. Member Ruspi asked about a source for shutter hardware, and Chair Wenger said that that was available in Frederick too. Mayor Ruspi commented that something will have to be done about the deteriorating shutters.

The commission agreed that sanding and staining the back porch and stairs and the bench and table behind the Town Hall was maintenance and did not require HDC approval.

Mayor Ruspi informed the commission that the town will be replacing the light fixtures that it installed on Mobley Farm Drive in 2016 atop seven lampposts that dated from when the area was developed about thirty years ago. The fixtures installed in 2016 have 12-watt LED bulbs, and the town will replace these with fixtures with 48-watt LED bulbs that will produce a soft, yellow light that will be substantially brighter. The design of the new fixtures will be similar to those on Rolling Ridge Lane and White House Lane. Up to five additional lampposts and light fixtures may also be added on Mobley Farm Drive if that appears warranted after the installation of the brighter fixtures on the existing lampposts.

The mayor is considering using the 12-watt fixtures being replaced to improve lighting for the Town Hall parking lot, installing them on shorter poles than had been used on Mobley Farm Drive. Member Hendricks observed that the spotlights atop the Town Hall would, in his view, overpower the 12-watt fixtures and, unless replaced by less bright spotlights, could make the 12-watt fixtures appear deficient. Mayor Ruspi said that while installing all seven fixtures was possible, the cost of poles and wiring for all of them might mitigate against doing that. Hendricks suggested that the town might find that it could save money by investing in a smaller number of new poles with new, brighter fixtures than in a larger number of poles using the 12-watt fixtures and might still obtain as much or more lighting by doing that. But Hendricks added that excessively bright lights are not desirable.

Mayor Ruspi said that Boyland Electric can measure how much lighting is necessary. Chair Wenger and Member Hendricks said that the light fixtures now on Mobley Farms Drive would look appropriate at Town Hall if a determination is made that they will provide adequate light. Mayor Ruspi asked about a color preference for the poles, and Wenger and Hendricks recommended black, with Hendricks observing that the fixtures are black.

At the mayor's request, the commission finally responded to the mayor's report on the work planned for the front steps, and it concluded that no approval was needed for the repair and painting of the broken riser as long as it was replaced by a wooden riser painted white to match the intact risers.

21513 Laytonsville Road (Bataller/Phillips residence): Chair Wenger reported that the roofs of the house and an outbuilding suffered wind damage and would have to be repaired and part of a roof might have to be replaced. She expected to receive further information soon but anticipated that any replacement would match the existing roof type. All commission members present agreed that replacement in kind did not require commission approval.

Various properties: Chair Wenger asked if commission members had any additional items to discuss. Member Hendricks observed that sawhorses had been placed on the sidewalk in front of 6924 Sundown Road (Green residence), preventing people from using it. Chair Wenger said that they had been placed there after she told Green that the open ditches that had been dug right next to the sidewalk some time ago for a stone wall approved by the commission were a hazard. Hendricks expressed concern about how long the sidewalk would be blocked. In response to a question from Hendricks about the extent of homeowners' responsibilities to keep the sidewalks in front of their properties open, Mayor Ruspi said that he had consulted the town attorney recently about various sidewalk problems in the town and was informed that both the town and the adjacent property owner have responsibilities to keep the town's sidewalks safe. The mayor added that he too had talked to Green about concern over the open ditches. Chair Wenger said that she found Green to be very reasonable and would talk to him again.

Member Ruspi expressed disappointment about the very slow progress of exterior work at 21411 Laytonsville Road (Seebold residence). Chair Wenger said that she believed that conversations between the commission chair and individual homeowners were the best way to encourage progress. Wenger and Hendricks both mentioned their greater concern about the possibility of properties being abandoned, and the commission briefly discussed some houses in the town that were currently vacant. Mayor Ruspi said that he wanted to look into whether the owners of vacant houses could apply for grants to rehabilitate their properties, and Wenger said that there were such grants but that the application process is onerous. The mayor said that he plans to attend sessions at upcoming Maryland Municipal League conferences that relate to abandoned houses.

Adjournment: At 9:03 p.m. Member Ruspi made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Member Hendricks and adopted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Hendricks