

Draft Minutes

Planning Commission

Town Hall, July 20, 2009

Agenda item 1: Call to order 7:08. PC members present: Jim Auxer (mayor), Pam Berry (president), Harvey Heyser, Karene Motivans, Catharine Wilson. Michael Abshire, zoning officer and minutes.

Agenda item 2: Approval of minutes: May 21, J. Auxer motioned to approve, H. Heyser seconded. Passed with C. Wilson abstaining because she did not attend that session. The minutes of the June 15, 2009, session were passed with a revision to the first paragraph in Agenda item 10, that reflects the PC did not deny the application, but returned it as incomplete. H. Heyser motion the minutes be passed as revised; C. Wilson second, motion passed unanimously.

Agenda item 3: Conflicts of Interest, P. Berry noted that K. Motivans is married to Stuart Wallace, a member of the Town Hall Construction Committee.

Agenda item 4: Visitors: Gussie Mills, Sandra Jenkins, Michael Theis, Dow Benedict, Stuart Wallace, Andy Singletary, Hank Willard, and Bane Schill.

Agenda item 5: Mayor's and Town Council Report: J. Auxer reported he has not heard from attorney yet in regards to the Blasting Ordinance. The schedule was for the revised ordinance to be ready for the August 2009 regular PC session.

Agenda item 6: Shepherdstown Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) Report, M. Abshire reported that three RFQ's had been submitted for performing the updated historic survey, and that the applications are currently being reviewed.

Agenda item 7: Zoning Officer Report. No report.

Agenda item 8: Applications:

09-28 *Corporation of Shepherdstown, erect a six (6) foot by twelve (12) foot double-gate in front of electric transformer area adjoining the Smith property at 101 South King Street.* PC acknowledged that the application is appropriate in

every way, the ordinance §9-802(d) requires denial and a Board of Appeals (BZA) variance. PC questioned the use of pressure-treated wood; Hank Willard, who completed application 09-28 for the Town, said the design was merely an extension of the existing fence and it seemed logical to use the same material. C. Wilson made a motion to reject the application based on the ordinance; J. Auxer seconded. Motion passed 3-1 with H. Heyser opposing.

09-24, Andrew Singletary, demolish current Town Hall and replace. As most PC members attended the July 13, 2009, HLC session, Stuart Wallace (member of the Town Hall Construction Committee and Shepherdstown Town Council) gave an abbreviated presentation of *Project Background Information* (July 13, 2009), *Town Hall Options Considered 2007-2008*; architect Andy Singletary presented *Retaining the Existing Building, Historic Preservation, Exterior Materials Selections*. [All attached at end.]

P. Berry cautioned that PC cannot rule on any internal design, only exterior. H. Heyser took exception saying that if approved the current building would be demolished and there was no way the applicant could talk about it without talking about the internal arrangement.

As most PC attended the July 13, 2009, HLC session, Stuart Wallace (member of the Town Hall Construction Committee and Shepherdstown Town Council) gave an abbreviated presentation of [attached] *Project Background Information* (July 13, 2009), *Town Hall Options Considered 2007-2008*; Architect Andy Singletary presented [attached] *Retaining the Existing Building, Historic Preservation, Exterior Materials Selections*. A. Singletary noted in the pre-design stage, the THCC had to determine whether to keep the current structure and “retrofit” it; what would go into a new building; historic preservation issues; comparative studies of adjacent buildings; and he emphasized to the PC that one of the critical issues the THCC dealt with was to be sure a new building met ADA, access to public spaces. THCC operated from a safety standpoint that the police department entrance and building space needed to be on the ground floor; the elevator needed an accessible location; larger space for public meetings. If using the present building to expand a second floor would be needed and the soil on which the current structure resides is not sturdy enough to hold another floor; this

accumulation of “hurdles” led the THCC to conclude that another building would be needed.

In choosing exterior design, THCC operated under a guideline that a new building should complement the surrounding buildings (McMurrin, Reynolds, Sheets, War Memorial, etc.), a building that is more a “part of the town fabric”.

The architect was questioned on his observation at the HLC meeting that the current Town Hall structure is more fitting as a garage. He clarified his point emphasizing the appropriateness of the current structure in this block and as its function as a Town Hall; he believes the current structure is in the wrong place—in the “monumental core of the town.” He felt if the building were, for example, beside Shepherdstown Lumber, it would be unique and appropriate.

H. Heyser expressed that the HABS (Historic American Building Survey) should be on the table now rather than after-the-fact.

When concern was expressed by PC that the materials of the new structure might make it too dark, Dow Benedict, a member of the THCC, pointed out that in this block, Town Hall should be a bit player in the cast of buildings and not a star; McMurrin is a star, Reynolds is a star.

K. Motivans motion to approve the demolition of the current building and the design of a new building but reject the application based on the “Zoning Data” report and send the application to the BZA (Board of Appeals) to rule on the necessary variances.

[Following are the variances sought:

9-604 (b) Front Setback 20' Minimum None Provided **Requires Variance**

9-604 (c) Rear Setback 50% of Lot Depth 3'-4" Provided **Requires Variance**

9-604 (d) Side Yard Setback One Side yard @ 5'-0" Minimum None Provided **Requires Variance**

9-904A Lot Merger Requirements Single Lot Required Two lots **Requires Variance**

9-207 I (e) Parking Requirements 5 Spaces per 1000 S.F. (23 required) Two Provided Onsite **Requires Variance**

The motion was amended to reflect the HLC stipulation that the current Town Hall be documented and receive a modified HABS before demolition. H. Heyser

seconded. Motion passed unanimously; the application will be forwarded to the Board of Appeals to seek variances.

No further business entertained, **meeting adjourned at 9:35.**

[Attachments]

Town Hall

Project Background Information – July 13, 2009

The impetus for the project, i.e., the development of a new Town Hall housing all administrative and police department functions is two-fold:

- The Town currently operates two separate facilities, a Town Hall and a Police Department office, that is inherently inefficient operationally in terms of additional costs and administrative efficiencies.
- The current Town Hall is inadequate on many levels to support the existing administrative functions and the addition of the current Police Department functions would not be possible. The inadequacies of the current building include lack of adequate rest room facilities for staff, lack of adequate meeting space for a variety of functions ranging from personnel matters between town officials and staff, meetings with citizens, committee meetings and public sessions, and lack of adequate insulation and heating / cooling systems that provide comfortable working conditions at affordable costs.

As a result, the Town Council voted to pursue the establishment of a new Town Hall housing all administrative and police functions.

The Town Council looked at a number of options for the establishment of a new Town Hall including the Train Station, the Entler Hotel, the Men's Club, a Private Residence within the corporation, and the existing Town Hall Site. The Town Council considered multiple factors including displacement of existing businesses, displacement of public and private functions, the cost of construction and

operation, the ability to efficiently provide an adequate working environment, ability to provide a structure meeting current federal accessibility guidelines, and physical location within the community (see “Town Hall Options Considered 2007-2008”). As a result of this process, the Town Council voted to establish the new Town Hall at the site of the current Town Hall.

The next step was the evaluation of two basic options for establishing the new Town Hall; utilizing all or part of the existing building with addition(s) or demolishing the current building and constructing an all new building. The evaluation of these two options was conducted under the direction of the Town Hall Construction Committee (THCC) and included review of work by the consultant Architect (see excerpt from narrative by Singletary Rueda Architects, PC re: “Retaining the Existing Building” and “Historic Preservation”) regarding:

- Development of a program for the building (approved by the Town Council per recommendation of the THCC)
- Comparison of the relative cost of construction and functional operation for the two basic options to support the desired program for the new Town Hall;
- Historic status of the existing structure;
- Aesthetic implications of each option; and
- input of interested parties per public meetings held regarding this project.

The results of this evaluation included the following findings by the THCC:

- The cost implications for construction and operation of the two options were not dramatically different although it was determined that the new construction option would be marginally less expensive due primarily to structural limitations of the existing Town Hall (to support a 2nd floor which would be necessary to attain the program space for the building).
- The functional implications for the two options were more profound. The new construction option afforded a more practical relationship between the police functions, the surrounding streets and alleys and the administrative functions and improved accessibility from the main street entrance.
- The existing structure is not considered to be a structure of “unusual importance” to the Town in terms of historic preservation as supported by the original historic survey of the town (which did not identify the building as a contributing structure) and subsequent studies of the building by independent architects and the current consulting Architect.
- The existing structure presents a number of challenges to provide additions that have a coherent aesthetic effect due to the relatively small size of the structure and the current detailing (e.g., the parapet on the front façade is difficult to work around).
- Input from interested parties re: preservation of the existing structure included tentative acceptance of the idea of providing some level of recognition or acknowledgement of the old structure in the new structure versus having to actually preserve the whole structure. It was subsequently determined it would be possible to include certain material aspects of the existing building in the new construction.

As a result of this analysis and the overarching desire on the part of the THCC and the Town Council to provide a building that works as well as possible for all functions as well as the ability to preserve some visual attributes of the existing structure, the THCC recommended and the Town Council voted to proceed with a design based on demolishing the existing structure and building a new structure on the same site.

The Town Council and the THCC acknowledge that one of the problems facing the Town is the loss of historic structures over time due to a variety of reasons and do not take this decision lightly. However, the Town Council also has the responsibility to provide an optimal solution for the provision of administrative and police functions balancing cost, function, aesthetics and historic preservation and firmly believe this is the best path to follow.

Town Hall Options Considered 2007-2008

During the winter of 2007-2008, the Town Council considered five options. These options included the four listed below and the current Town Hall. The following indicates the deficiencies for each option that contributed to the Town Council decision to utilize the existing Town Hall building and/or site for development of a new combined Town Hall / Police Department facility.

Train Station Renovation

- Displacement of existing business (existing lease agreement)
- Displacement of community functions and events
- Functional considerations (program needs versus available usable space and configuration)
- “Remote” location

Entler Hotel Renovation

- Displacement of as many as 13 existing small businesses with no viable alternatives for relocation within or near the Town
- Displacement of community functions and events
- Functional considerations (program needs versus layout including ADA compliance)
- Costs to renovate including addressing deficiencies in the building structural conditions

Private Residence Acquisition and Renovation

- Displacement of existing residential / commercial land use
- Functional considerations (program needs versus layout including ADA compliance and availability of adequate parking in the immediate vicinity)
- Cost to acquire and renovate

Men's Club Acquisition and Renovation

- Displacement of community functions and events
- Functional considerations (program needs versus layout including availability of adequate parking in the immediate vicinity)
- Cost to acquire and renovate

All of the preceding included assumption the Police Department would relocate to the existing Town Hall building (with undefined renovation costs) which would decrease but not completely eliminate the cost of operating two locations.

Retaining the Existing Building

There is a natural inclination for some to attempt to retain all or parts of the existing structure. An initial review of the structure by Architect David Kemnitzer is attached. Our findings are below:

1. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are inefficient and inadequate for reuse within the new project. As the intent is to minimize energy costs and maintenance costs, retaining the current systems would not be acceptable. These systems will be required to be removed regardless of whether the building is retained.
2. As the proposed program requires two occupied levels on the site, the roof will need to be removed.
3. As per item 1, the existing windows and doors are inadequate for maintaining anticipated energy costs. While the exterior structural shell is in good condition, additional framing and insulation would need to be added to maintain anticipated energy costs. Additionally, the existing slab would preclude the use of hydronic floor heating systems.
4. The existing masonry shell is in good condition, reuse and the possible additional loading of a second floor would require structural study to establish acceptable load limits. This study would require the excavation of test pits to determine the depth and configuration of existing footings, and soil borings to establish design pressure of the soil. The soil boring

information will be prepared regardless and is not additional work. Given the initial geotechnical report, it can be assumed that additional structure will be required to span over the existing building.

5. Retaining the existing footprint may impact the possible use of geothermal systems, as these systems require footprint to attain acceptable thermal conditioning.
6. Demolition and safe removal of debris will be an additional construction cost. The existing block may be recycled locally, for use as aggregate in highway repair.
7. The height of existing ground floor slab is approximately three feet above the existing sidewalk, which will complicate ADA compliant access to parts of the building and may necessitate a change in level in the first floor. If this floor is to be accommodated in the new design, an additional stop and a specific layout for the cab will be required for the elevator.
8. Retaining the existing structure, most specifically the front façade, would satisfy preservation and sustainability goals. This would require shoring methods for stabilization during construction.
9. The rear (west side) of the existing building is currently over the property line by approximately 9 inches.
10. An all new structure could take advantage of modern construction methods and reduce the customization of the planning and construction required to work around the existing conditions.

Some of the issues noted above have cost implications, in budget terms these are:

Items 1 and 2: Selective demolition (as opposed to general removal) \$4,000

Item 4: Test pits: \$2500, Additional structure, \$5,000

Item 6: General Demolition: (\$12,000)

Item 7: Elevator changes: \$8,000

Item 8: \$4,500

Generally, an all new structure would save construction dollars beyond what is identified above.

Nonetheless, the possibility of retaining the existing shell has been investigated, and a “Test Fit” prepared, indicating an addition to the side and above the current structure. The test fit plans and are attached.

Some comments:

1. No single function can be accommodated in the current foot print. Its foot-print must be extended. The elevator must be placed so that it serves both the accessible entry, and the higher first floor of the existing building.
2. The entry to the existing structure extends deeply into the plan, making the Police station public areas larger than necessary, and isolating the office in the south east corner of the building from the remainder of the plan.
3. The existing structure is approximately four feet from the south property line, which presumably will not require a setback. Not being able to occupy this area impacts the layout and flexibility of the first floor police area.
4. The plan without the existing structure provides a suitable, large open area for the front office and squad room areas of the police function, providing a much better layout.

Attachments:

- Review of initial structure by David Kemnitzer, AIA
- Test Fit Floor Plans

Historic Preservation

The existing structure was built in 1948 and was considered “non contributing” at the time of the original historic inventory of 1978. The building is incorrectly noted as clapboard on the original survey, presumably due to its use of an unusual cement block pattern, which emulates the profile of wood clapboard siding. This is the most, if not only, notable aspect of the structure. This block is still available as a custom shape.

This form of construction is not unique to the construction of public buildings (or specifically Town Halls), nor was it developed in response to unique conditions of the site or of the buildings function.

The site is surrounded by contributing historic structures. The Historic Register abstracts for the existing and neighboring structures area enclosed.

Attachments:

- Original Lot Survey
 - National Register of Historic Places Inventory (NRHP) Nomination Form- for Corporation of Shepherdstown
 - Architectural Inventory Form- Reynolds Hall
 - Architectural Inventory Form-Lutheran Church
 - Architectural Inventory Form-Knutti Hall
 - Historic Properties Inventory Form- Existing Town Hall
 - Historic Properties Inventory Form- Men's Cub and other German Street Properties
 - Historic Analysis of Reynolds Hall
-

PDF documents:

Exterior Materials Selection

Outline Format (HABS report)

Zoning Data