

Submitted: March 12, 2020
Approved: April 16, 2020

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 02-2020
Thursday, February 20, 2020**

The City of Rockville Historic District Commission convened
in the Mayor and Council Chambers on
February 20, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Matthew Goguen, Chair
Laurie Kawa
Anita Neal Powell
Alan Tabachnick

Staff Present: Sheila Bashiri, Preservation Planner
Cindy Kebba, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Andrea Gilles, Principal Planner
Cindy Walters, Deputy City Attorney

I. COMMITTEE/ORGANIZATION REPORTS

- A. Peerless Rockville – Nancy Pickard, Executive Director
Ms. Pickard spoke about applying for grants for community programming including website updates. Peerless Rockville had a successful program on the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Lincoln Park Community Center, with 59 people in attendance. The next event is “Heroes of the Underground Railroad,” on February 23, 2020.
- B. Lincoln Park Historical Foundation – Commissioner Anita Neal Powell, Executive Director-
Commissioner Powell has received many speaking invitations to speak about the significance of the African American Vote. The Lincoln Park Historical Foundation is partnering with various organizations to host programs on Census 2020, and on voter registration.
- C. Public Comments/Open Forum – None.

- D. HDC and staff comments – Ms. Bashiri announced the upcoming Tax Credit Workshop on March 19, at City Hall. The HDC will attend a Sustainability Training on April 2, in Gaithersburg with the Gaithersburg HDC members.

Ms. Bashiri attended the retirement celebration for Commissioner Powell on Sunday, January 26. Guest speakers included Mayor Bridgett Newton, Councilperson Monique Ashton, Montgomery County Executive Mark Eldridge, County Board President Sidney Katz, County Board member Will Jawando, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, and many others. Commissioner Powell was given a round of applause.

Ms. Bashiri announced that Ms. Kebba is retiring, and this is her last HDC meeting. Andrea Gilles was introduced as the new Comprehensive Planning Manager. Ms. Kebba was given a round of applause.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 16 , 2020

Commissioner Goguen requested the January HDC minutes be corrected to show he abstained from voting, as he was not in attendance at the December 2019 HDC meeting.

Commissioner Tabachnick moved to approve the amended minutes. Commissioner Powell seconded the motion. Approved 4-0.

III. EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

A. **HDC2020-00971**

Applicant: Petroleum Marketing Group

Address: 801 Hungerford Drive

Request: Evaluation of Historic Significance (Demolition requested).

Sheila Bashiri explained that the property had been reviewed for significance in 2007, and HDC did not recommend designation. The building was not demolished, and it is currently operating as a Gulf service station. The applicant is seeking to demolish the building to build a larger service station with a convenience store. Ms. Bashiri presented the staff report and showed photos of the service station.

Staff Recommendation: Staff does not recommend that the property be moved forward for historic designation. Staff finds that the property at 801 Hungerford Drive meets one of nine of Rockville's historic designation criteria: Architectural, Design, and Landscape Significance, a) "Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction." However, there is low probability that the building, if preserved, would serve a viable future use. Per Sec 25.14.01.d.3 of the Zoning Ordinance, the HDC may authorize filing of a map amendment if it finds that the designation criteria are met, but it is not a requirement that the HDC do so.

The current (2002) Comprehensive Master Plan notes that “When considering possible new [historic] districts, it is necessary to consider the public purpose for creating new districts, historical and architectural criteria for determining eligibility, the desires of the community within the proposed districts, the advantages and disadvantages of designation, any financial or fiscal benefits or burdens associated with designation, and other factors.” Staff’s current recommendation is reflective of the 2007 HDC decision not to recommend the property for historic designation.

Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit staff recommends that the owner meet the following requirements:

- The building must be documented with photographs using HABS Standards; and
- A 30-day period must be provided to allow an interested party the opportunity to relocate the building or salvage parts.

Soo Lee Cho spoke on behalf of the applicant, Petroleum Marketing Group (PMG). She said that R. C. Goodwin and Associates supports the staff recommendation not to recommend the property for historic designation. Samuel Young, Historic Preservation Specialist at R.C. Goodwin in Frederick, MD read a report that concurred with the staff report recommendation. He stated that the service station was not one of the standard designs used at the time. The concrete block precludes easy removal and it was a copy of an established form using cost-effective materials. Mr. Young disagreed that the building meets the criteria for historic designation that was cited by staff. Ms. Lee Cho stated that the property was not economically viable.

The applicant submitted black and white hard and digital photos of the service station that were taken using National Park Services standards.

Commissioner Tabachnick inquired about the economic feasibility of the property. Bob Ackerly of PMG stated that the project did not move forward in 2007-2008 because of economic conditions at the time. He said the service station reopened, but it is not viable as a service station without a canopy over the tanks, the space to support a convenience store.

Commissioner Tabachnick asked what the plan is going forward. Ms. Lee Cho discussed the plans for the new service station and convenience store plans that were in the Commissioner’s brief book. She said that the redevelopment of the site with the increased square footage for a convenience store, and new landscaping, will upgrade the pedestrian experience.

Commissioner Kawa asked for a site plan and about the orientation of the new building. Ms. Lee Cho stated that the orientation would be similar to the existing building. The convenience store will face Hungerford Drive, with the fuel pumps in front. The employee parking would be in the rear.

Ms. Lee Cho provided a preliminary site plan and explained how the layout of the building will be shifted back to the rear of the property, to allow for the fuel pumps in front. Commissioner Goguen asked how many fuel pumps the service station will have. Ms. Lee Cho responded that there are four pumps now, and there will be six pumps with a canopy. Commissioner Goguen also inquired about the number of parking spaces that are currently there, and how many were planned for the

new building. Ms. Lee Cho stated she was not sure how many parking spaces there are now, but they planned to have sixteen spaces in the new plan. She said the redevelopment of the site will improve both the vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

Commissioner Powell asked if there was a car wash across Frederick Avenue from the service station, and Ms. Lee Cho responded, yes.

Commissioner Goguen asked about the operating hours of the service station, and Mr. Ackerly replied that it would be open twenty-four hours a day. Someone will always be there.

Commissioner Goguen asked if PMG had other service stations in Rockville. Ms. Lee Cho thought there is one, possibly more in the area.

Commissioner Goguen said he was trying to understand why the service station is not viable. Ms. Lee Cho stated that reusing the structure limits the consumer experience because the footprint cannot accommodate any more. The interior is set up in such a way that they can't create a modern convenience store experience inside. Also, they cannot increase the number of fuel pumps because of the way the site is laid out now. Currently there is no designated parking for the public. Commissioner Goguen asked if they had thought of moving the existing structure further back on the property. Ms. Lee Cho responded that the existing structure is half the size that they plan on building. The site is small, and the concrete cinder block building would be difficult to move in one piece or in pieces.

Commissioner Goguen opened the floor for public comment.

Nancy Pickard spoke on behalf of Peerless Rockville. She agreed with the Staff report findings that the building met historic designation criteria a) as the only modern "car culture" building left in Rockville. Ms. Pickard stated that the building is a prime candidate for adaptive reuse, and there would be room for rehabilitation and a large addition on the site. Ms. Pickard also noted that not meeting any test economically for optimal viability is not the test.

Soo Lee Cho said the property owner is willing to wait until the site plan is approved before demolishing the building. If the demolition is not approved, the owner will leave it in place and not renovate it. She said it is just barely getting by. Commissioner Goguen asked what "barely getting by" means. Ms. Lee Cho stated that they need the addition pumps to make it financially viable. Currently there is not much that draws people to the site, that you would expect at this type of location.

Commissioner Kawa asked if the proposed site plan would be the optimal use for the site, and if it would be possible to put additional fuel pumps behind the building. Ms. Lee Cho responded that it would be a maze to get to them and they would not be visible. Mr. Ackerly responded that it would not be feasible.

Commissioner Powell inquired about the number of curb cuts on the property. Ms. Bashiri pointed out on the screen that there are two on Hungerford Drive, and two on Frederick Avenue.

Commissioner Tabachnick asked how many mid-20th century service stations are left in Rockville. Ms. Bashiri said she is not familiar with any others. Commissioner Goguen asked if

being the last one is significant. Though it is not a criterion on its own, it could be if it is the last of a certain type.

Commissioner Goguen asked if the owner is amenable to the thirty day hold to allow for the building to be moved and/or have parts salvaged from it. Ms. Lee Cho responded yes.

Commissioner Goguen asked about the documentation photos, and if R. C. Goodwin and Associates had taken the submitted photos. Samuel Young responded that they had, and they would provide additional photos if needed. Ms. Bashiri reviewed the photos and requested more detailed shots. Commissioner Goguen reviewed the black and white photos and requested that the applicant submit color photos with labels.

Commissioner Powell asked if the applicant was expecting a decision from the HDC immediately. Ms. Lee Cho responded yes, and that going forward with the project depended on the demolition of the building. Ms. Lee Cho stated that they originally thought the 2007 Evaluation of Significance decision not to designate the building was still in effect. However, the legal decision from the City Attorney's office determined that the original decision was no longer in effect. Ms. Bashiri pointed out that the Zoning Ordinance had also been amended since the 2007 review.

Commissioner Goguen inquired about deferring the meeting to so the Commissioners could have time to review the site plan, photos, and to have an opportunity to read Mr. Young's report. Staff affirmed that it could. Commissioner Tabachnick asked how the meeting could be deferred and the HDC and staff discussed when the meeting could be held and how the motion could be made. Due to the scheduled 7:00 PM Tax Credit Workshop on March 19, the decision was made to hold the HDC meeting before the Workshop, at 6:00 PM.

Motion: Commissioner Tabachnick made a motion to continue to the March 19, 2020, HDC meeting at 6:00 PM. Commissioner Powell seconded the motion. Approved 4-0.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Old Business

Ms. Bashiri stated she is working on the Historic Resources Management Plan (HRMP), and she will also be working with the Website staff to update the webpages. Ms. Kebba stated that we would no longer be working with the consulting firm on the HRMP, and staff would make the required changes.

V. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Goguen adjourned the meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Bashiri