

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

January 5, 2021

MONTGOMERY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Waddell declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Present: Britnee Ghutzman, Jeffrey Waddell, Allyson Clark

Absent: Keri May, Merriam Walker--who joined at 7:15 after resolving computer connectivity issues

Also Present: Dave McCorquodale, Assistant City Admin. / Director of Planning & Development

VISITOR/CITIZENS FORUM

No comments given.

1. Consideration and possible action regarding regular meeting minutes of December 1, 2020.

Britnee Ghutzman moved to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Waddell seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

2. Consideration and possible action regarding a proposed outdoor playground for Living Savior Lutheran Church located at 309 Pond Street in the Historic Preservation District.

Staff introduced Mrs. Cheryl Bailes from the church for a brief overview and discussion with the Commission regarding details of the project. Points from the discussion were the well-used condition of the existing playset, the surrounding buildings that will screen the playground location from most surrounding properties, and the desire of the church to begin work as soon as practical.

Britnee Ghutzman moved to approve the proposed playground for Living Savior Lutheran Church as presented. Allyson Clark seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

3. Consideration and possible action regarding temporary banners and signs in the Historic Preservation District.

Staff introduced the item and stated the item was first brought up during Commission Inquiry at the December 5, 2020 meeting and was asked to be placed on a future agenda for discussion. The topic centered around the proliferation of temporary banners primarily in the downtown area. Staff provided examples photos of unpermitted and/or unauthorized banners at several downtown locations. Staff stated that the City's enforcement of the sign ordinance regulations related to temporary banners has been somewhat relaxed during 2020 given the COVID-19 pandemic and the struggles many small businesses have experienced. Mr. McCorquodale added that the City does not want to be a hindrance to business and also recognizes the need to protect the City and is planning to contact businesses about finding ways to achieve compliance and maintain the integrity of the Historic Preservation District without negatively impacting the business visibility.

Commissioner Waddell thanked staff for the way the information was put together and suggested that a sign ordinance review with businesses could be integrated into a discussion/introduction of the Downtown Design Project currently underway and funded by the MEDC.

Allyson Clark asked about the distinction between vinyl signs that are temporary and those used for permanent signage. Mrs. Clark also inquired about political signs downtown and whether the City can require political signs to be removed. Staff advised they had a recent opinion from the city attorney stating that cities cannot regulate political signs on private property that are under a certain size and height. Staff also mentioned that the City could improve the language of the sign ordinance to clarify that point. Mrs. Clark also mentioned the "coffee" pennant flags recently put up in downtown. Mr. McCorquodale stated he noticed one had fallen over several days earlier and placed both flags on the shop's front porch and contacted the owner about the provisions of the ordinance. The owner asked to convey she had a difficult time with visibility from FM149 and hoped the flags would help. Mrs. Clark inquired about the food trailer recently located to downtown and if it had been approved by P&Z. After detailed discussion about the previous actions taken by the Commission related to the property, Commissioner Waddell circled back to the idea of the need to continually educate new and existing businesses about Historic District regulations along with all other City efforts in the downtown area. Commissioner Waddell suggested the Commission could look at a tentative timeline at the next meeting on contacting businesses.

Merriam Walker joined the meeting at 7:15 and added to the discussion on temporary signs. Her impression of the existing non-compliant signage in the downtown area is that it shares a common trait of being repetitive, redundant, and duplicated. Mrs. Walker stated multiple signs on the same property

create visual clutter in the downtown area and suggested a 30-day period be given for non-compliant properties. No formal action was taken and staff indicated updates would be provided on the item.

4. Consideration and possible action regarding visual enhancements in the Historic Downtown District.

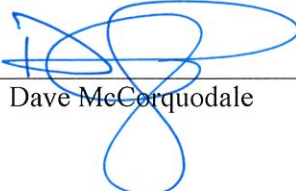
Staff introduced the item and provided pictures taken in the downtown area of dumpsters and trash bins in highly visible locations. The conversation was centered around the overall visual quality of downtown and what opportunities exist to improve the aesthetic environment. Staff suggested several possibilities to enclose trash from public view including MEDC grants, shared/consolidated trash facilities, and updates to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Mr. McCorquodale asked for feedback on the topic and direction as necessary. The Commission expressed desire to find ways to screen service-related items like trash and utilities from public view and discussed several examples of properties downtown that illustrated the potential challenges on small sites. Commissioner Waddell stated he appreciated the discussion and good ideas brought up by the Commission. No formal action was taken, and direction was given to keep moving the idea forward.

Commission Inquiry

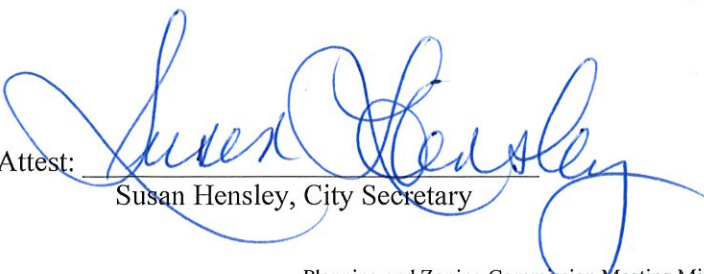
None.

Adjournment

Britnee Ghutzman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Allyson Clark seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

Prepared by:  Date approved: 02/02/2021
Dave McCorquodale


Chairman Jeffrey Waddell

Attest: 
Susan Hensley, City Secretary

