

MINUTES
The Spartanburg Board of Architectural Design and Historic Review
Thursday, May 12, 2016 ~ 5:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Board Members Attendance: Dr. Phillip Stone, Ray Trail, Will Ringo, Thomas Koenig, and Joshua Turner.

Absent Board Members: Michael Chewning, Carolyn Schoepf, Sarah Love and Al Jolly.

City Staff: Natalia Rosario, Planner III, Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant, Buddy Bush, Building Official, and Martin Meek, Preservation Specialist. Assistant City Manager Chris Story also attended the meeting.

Dr. Stone, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and stated the hearing procedures. Dr. Stone recognized the five Board Members that were present constituted a quorum, and he proceeded with the guidelines for the procedure of the meeting.

Mr. Turner moved to approve the Agenda for tonight's meeting; and he was seconded by Mr. Trail. The motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Old Business

There was no old business for discussion.

New Business

Discussion regarding Solar Panels in Historic Districts:

Dr. Stone informed the Board Members this would be a somewhat informal meeting, and they had addressed the matter of Solar Panels in Historic Districts for the first time at a prior meeting on September 10, 2015; and he said since his term and Mr. Chewning the Vice-Chair's term would be up on the Board as of June 30, 2016; he just wanted to bring some type of decision or closure to the matter regarding his time left on the Board. Dr. Stone asked Natalia Rosario to come forward and asked had she become full-time yet with the City of Spartanburg.

Ms. Rosario came forward and informed the Board Members she had become full-time with the City; and said she had brought the information that Martin Meek had circulated regarding solar panels from the NPS to the Board Members and Staff; and that Staff would like for the Board Members to discuss what they felt would or would not be appropriate; and what the Board Members felt they might could recommend to be included in the Historic Guidelines regarding whether or not solar panels could be installed in historic districts.

Dr. Stone asked Mr. Meek if he had anything he wanted to add before the discussion got started.

Mr. Martin Meek, the City of Spartanburg's Preservation Consultant came forward and said he felt they all needed to be good stewards of the earth; and the information he had sent to the Board Members from the Park Serve had been an ongoing conversation as far as National and Local levels. He felt it contained good information they could build upon; but he felt they also needed to be focused on whether the information applied to the Hampton Heights and Beaumont Village Districts. He explained they needed to take certain factors into consideration when they looked at placement as follows: any special conditions, did they need to be in a specific location, did they wish them to impact views regarding pedestrian right-of-ways. He indicated some of the photographs in the brochures from the Park Service had kind of shocked him somewhat regarding placements. Mr. Meek said the Guidelines they had written are often taken from other cities guidelines that had been in place for a number of years, and felt this gave them a good starting point. His suggestion was that these would remain a Major Work, and not a Minor Work if approved.

Dr. Stone felt it was a point well taken as a Major versus a Minor Work. He said there were a number of things Staff could approve such as Storm Windows, or replacing like materials with like; etc. that were either reversible or were not major structural changes without having to have a Board Hearing. On the other hand, window replacements were Major works, and kind of hard to come by. Dr. Stone liked the reference from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions and he liked the fact that it made some reference to the Secretary of the Interior Standards regarding solar systems in Local Historic Districts could conform to the

Secretary's Standards and it listed two standards which essentially indicated that as long as you were not altering roof lines, and the historic character of a property was retained and preserved, he thought those were helpful.

Mr. Koenig felt the height of a house should factor in, such as on a one story house the panels would be more visible than panels on a second story house; and his question would be were there certain issues that had already been shown that were totally different between the two historic districts that needed to be addressed differently, such as size of the house, how much solar panels are visibly ok; the shapes of roofs might make it impossible.

Mr. Meek used a scenario of a hipped roof where only about a third of the roof slope was going another direction, it might not even be productive to have them. He felt owners would need to bring the Board Members/ and or Staff, an analysis that would have already been performed by a contractor to indicate whether if it was approved that it would actually help out the home owner. He referenced a solar house that was done many years ago in Gaffney, S. C.; and he said in order to get the panels facing the right way they had to break the basic layout of the historic neighborhood. He felt the orientation of house, landscape coverage affecting sun exposure, and other things needed to be taken into consideration on an individual basis.

Mr. Koenig asked a question regarding the number of solar panels a home owner might could have in order to get a big savings. Also would the home owner be trying to get off the grid or would they be going back into the system.

Dr. Stone asked Assistant City Manager Story about Mr. Koenig's question, and he said there were a number of firms that would do an assessment of someone's home; and he explained before an application even got in the door that an appropriate third party would need to do an analysis and could send it in as to whether or not it would be viable for the home owner to consider doing.

Dr. Stone said there had been a solar panel installation on Phifer Drive that had gotten through the permit process, so they did actually have a case to deal with.

Ms. Rosario referenced a slide of 129 Phifer Drive in Beaumont Village with solar panels on the roof; and she explained Building Inspections had put a stop to the matter and would not allow the meter to be installed until the matter was resolved. She said there were two or three panels on the front and some on the other said.

Dr. Stone said part of the conversation they needed to have was what type of roof type, like whether it was a street frontage roof, side roof or rear roof, and what would be appropriate. He used his own home as an example, and that part of it would be visible.

Mr. Ringo felt the Board Members needed to come up with a list if they determined Solar Panels to be recommended for historic home owners as a guideline of what could and could not be done; and what they needed to do. He felt it would need to be reversible so it could be undone.

Dr. Stone felt that altering a roof line would not be appropriate.

Mr. Trail felt they needed a list regarding each home, regarding what would be appropriate.

Mr. Turner agreed with the analysis suggestion of the homes; and felt the less you could see would be better. He also mentioned something about solar shingles.

Dr. Stone felt regarding solar shingles they would get into the materials appropriate area.

Mr. Meek said solar shingles would deal with areas of reflectivity, textural differences, which were they things they got into with the window replacements.

Dr. Stone said at the June meeting, Staff needed guidance from the Board Members on what they would or would not approve; and they needed to know what the HARB Board would likely approve and also have some guidance to be able to work with home owners before the HARB Board even entered the picture.

Assistant City Manager Story suggested the Board Members may consider a two-step process, and maybe surfaces not visible from the road or public right-of-way could be approved as Minor Works; and that Major Works would be anything on the side or the front that would be visible from the public right-of-way; and he said that would also give Staff the flexibility regarding solar shingles on the street facing side; which might also be added as a later option.

Dr. Stone read an email from Board Member Sarah Love, which said if it was all appropriate, she would be in favor of the solar panels in historic districts as long as they don't detract from the historical view from the street.

Mr. Koenig felt the entire idea of the solar shingles was they were trying to accommodate the shape of the roof as much as possible; whereas the solar panels were units that would have to be put on top of an existing roof which would have more of an intrusive look. He thought they were all in agreement that the changing of a roof line regardless where it was on the house would be out of the question.

Mr. Trail felt solar shingles were a very expensive option.

Mr. Koenig wondered if there were any numbers regarding lifespan of solar panels/ vs roof.

Mr. Meek said there would be an evaluation an owner would need to make before the process was started. If a homeowner had a 15 year old roof and they wished to install something they would need to replace in five years, it would not make sense to do so.

Mr. Koenig felt maybe they needed to think about if a home owner could prove they were in the process of having to replace the shingles anyway that the process might could be different; and perhaps maybe they could do shingles and roof at same time regarding structure of roof.

Dr. Stone asked if it was the sense of the Board right now, if they were in favor of allowing solar panels in Historic Districts under certain circumstances. It seemed to be the consensus of the Board Members.

He asked was there a sense regarding what the Assistant City Manager mentioned about if it was out of sight of the public right-of-way regarding Minor Work Approval.

Mr. Ringo felt as long as long as no additional structure(s) were added and as long as it was reversible. He felt that sort of caveat needed to be added. Dr. Stone agreed with Mr. Ringo, as did the other Board Members that were present.

Mr. Koenig asked when looking at shingles also, how reversible would that part be regarding shingles without having to take down a whole roof at that point.

Mr. Ringo asked was that a Major or Minor Works to change shingles on a roof.

Dr. Stone said normally a new roof was a Minor Work.

Mr. Trail had a question about the slide of the home that already had the solar panels on the roof at 129 Phifer Drive regarding how the solar panels were attached.

Mr. Bush, City Building Official came forward and apologized for the error regarding the solar panels that got through the system. He said it was the Building Department's error, and they had not caught it this time; but typically they did catch such things. Regarding how they were attached, he said they were attached with brackets; and they always had to be engineered.

Mr. Turner had a question about what something was on one of the pictures in the slide with the solar panels that were already on the roof. Mr. Bush explained it was conduit that he had referred to in the slide.

Mr. Trail asked if the back of the home visible. Mr. Bush explained the back of the home was partly visible.

Dr. Stone felt between now and the June 9, 2016 HARB Board Meeting, the Board needed to develop some type of statement or written guidelines on how to proceed for Major Works regarding solar panels; and he read the Preservation Ordinance and wondered whether the Board Members had jurisdiction over the Design Guidelines or did they need to get the Guidelines amended by City Council.

Assistant City Manager Story said he believed any changes to the Guidelines would need to be approved in the form of a Text Amendment by the Mayor and City Council, and he would look into that matter. He did not feel that they had any amendments to the Guidelines previously.

Mr. Meek said there had been a clarification regarding major and minor works when they started having discussions about little narrow strips of driveways being paved, mail boxes, dog houses in front yard, etc., regarding did you need to get a Certificate of Appropriateness for a lot of different minor things. Finally they decided that light poles, flag poles, mail boxes, dog houses and little narrow paving strips were something that could be done as a minor work.

Assistant City Manager Story said, at Staff level the intent was to operate on an interim basis based on what the Board Members told them, as they worked through formulization.

The Assistant City Manager informed the Board Members they had one pending inquiry from a Hampton Heights resident about an installation that would not be visible from the public right-of-way.

Dr. Stone said they had gotten the consensus tonight that as long as it did not alter the roof line, was not visible, and as long as it was reversible it would be alright to approve as a Minor Work.

Mr. Joseph Kowal, resident and President of the Beaumont Village Neighborhood Association came forward and thanked the Board Members for all of their hard work in the Local Historic Districts. He said at their last meeting a gentleman had expressed an interest in installing solar panels.

Ms. Rosario explained the person Mr. Kowal had referenced had spoken to Staff, and he was aware that nothing had been decided at this point, and that he could not move forward until the matter was settled.

Mr. Kowal said personally as a resident of a historic district he would love to be able to have solar panels regarding his coal shed; but as President of the Neighborhood Association of Beaumont Village he did not think it was historic at all. He felt if they were going to allow the community the ability to make those types of changes regarding environmental energy changes, they should at least be able to replace windows without going before the Board Members. He said he would like to approach the Board at some future point to see if there was some type of leniency regarding replacing windows.

Mr. Meek said one of his concerns regarding solar panels was that conduit would need to come in through the attic and that exposed conduit would not allowed.

Dr. Stone agreed that whatever they ended up approved would need to include Mr. Meeks concern regarding conduit being concealed and he felt that minimizing impact would be the best thing.

Mr. Trail asked about the house that already had the solar panels in Beaumont again; and he asked would it stay that way.

Mr. Bush said the Building Department would not give the final permit approval regarding the installation until after this entire matter was settled.

Ms. Rosario felt depending on what the Board decided, they would need to at least require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Dr. Stone felt that anything you did in Beaumont Village was precedent valued; and he was also concerned that since the one application did get through the permit process, he would feel bad about making them go back and undo it.

Assistant City Manager said it had happened before and people do make mistakes and they would engage with the home owner directly and try to be as amicable with them as possible.

Mr. Meek said it looked like they had paired panels; and he felt they were pretty costly.

Mr. Bush said the total value of the job the contractor had filled out was \$6,600.00 on the permit.

Dr. Stone said some of the panels were a lot more expensive than that; but you could get a pretty good solar system right now from what he had heard regarding a lot of different tax credits that were available.

Mr. Kowal that spoke earlier asked would solar installation affect the homeowner's value of their home.

Assistant City Manager Story said typically the County Assessor would perform the tax assessment on the property and he explained he had a formula he went by for the process. He did not feel it would add a lot of value, however; he said it may make it a little more appealing to a potential buyer who was interested in decreasing utility costs.

Mr. Trail felt this was a good example for the Board to start with; but he wondered if this case had come before the Board to begin with, how the Board would have ruled on the matter.

Dr. Stone did not feel like the Board Members would have approved it.

Mr. Koenig asked a question regarding restrictions on installing and positioning the panels and all of the exposed conduit on the proposed case and wondered if repositioning might be a more approvable scenario.

Mr. Bush explained that it had to do with engineering by the solar contractor, in his opinion. He pointed out it may not be economical to put it on the front and back of homes. It also would probably depend on the slope of the roof.

Dr. Stone said just because every home in the historic neighborhoods may not be able to have a solar panel did not necessarily mean that any of them could not have one.

Mr. Story said Staff would move forward in the interim with Staff approved Minor Works with rear roofs, non-visible from the public r-o-way. Anything other than that would be a Major Works case. He said they would explore remedies regarding the current proposed case to see if there was some type of compromise, since that was on Staff.

Mr. Meek said he would call in to Dan Elswick, Architectural Advisor with the S. C. Department of Archives and History to get his input regarding what other historic communities were doing; and also to Brad Sauls, Federal Grants Coordinator regarding any grants that may had been done.

Dr. Stone said he would also like to know what other historic communities were doing.

Mr. Koenig asked about placing solar panels that would not be located on a roof, perhaps in the back yard, would that be an issue?

Mr. Bush said that was something that could come up, like an existing accessory structure. He asked if it was in the rear and not in public view, would that be approvable as a Minor Work.

Mr. Story said it would be considered an accessory structure would it not.

Ms. Rosario said if it was an addition and not visible from the right-of-way it would generally be a Minor Work, but not for coal buildings, which would be a Major Work.

Mr. Meek said coal buildings were a serious character defining element of the Beaumont Village neighborhood.

Dr. Stone said the material in the NAPC indicated as far as free standing or detached structure, on-site solar panels should be installed in an area that minimize visibility from the public right-of-way; (and he guessed we would say eliminated from the public right-of-way) and should be screened from the public right-of-way and they also had something about placement and design should not detract from the historic character of the site, and there was something about accessory structure (which they gave examples of some panels on an accessory structure).

Mr. Kowal, President of the Beaumont Village Neighborhood Association who spoke earlier asked about Section 3.2.4 of the Beaumont Guidelines that said solar panels would be denied; where did the Board stand on that as far as the meeting tonight.

Dr. Stone said he would let the Staff figure that one out. He felt from what Assistant City Manager Story said earlier, that this would either need to have City Council either delete that line from the Guidelines or add a clause regarding certain approvals.

Assistant City Manager Story asked the Board Members again if it was the Board's desire to allow them if they were not visible from the public right-of-way and reversible; and he said if Staff felt a Text Amendment was necessary, Staff could proceed with that as well.

Update on Approved Certificate of Appropriateness for Minor Works since the January 14, 2016 meeting – Julie Roland.

Ms. Roland said all the Board Members had the list of the approved Minor Works approved by Staff since the January 14, 2016 meeting.

Dr. Stone asked had anything happened with the house at 450 South Irwin, (the house with the missing porch).

Mr. Bush said explained the home had been in litigation, and he would need to check on the status.

Dr. Stone asked if he could email the Board Members regarding an update on that home.

Mr. Koenig said he had some questions regarding his own home on the back of the roof that he needed to install a solar panel somewhere on the outside regarding some solar driven fans.

Mr. Meek felt if he installed it on the back of his home it would be a minor work.

Mr. Bush explained if it was visible from the front and was an alteration he would need to get a Major Works.

Other Business – none.

Dr. Stone said Mr. Kowal had mentioned something at the CAC the other night regarding people that bought in to historic districts that were not told by real estate agents they were in a historic district. He said in the past Mr. Henderson would send a letter to home owners every couple of years or so, in order to remind home owners who lived in the two Local Historic Districts, and he thought he included a brochure.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Stone welcomed new Board Member Josh Turner to the HARB Board; and said they were really glad to have him.

Dr. Stone said his seat on the Board really needed to be occupied by a Professional Historian. He said Mr. Chewning was an Architect and his position would also be vacant but we already had one architect on the Board.

Mrs. Roland said she placed New Board Member Forms at everyone's place if they knew of anyone, she thought the City Clerk was going to announce the upcoming possible reappointments and vacant positions to the Mayor and Council at the May 23, 2016 meeting.

Mrs. Roland also welcomed Mr. Turner to the Board and explained that he would have one year from his appointment in which to take his required New Board Member Orientation Training.

She updated the rest of the Board Members regarding their continuing education training.

Mrs. Roland informed the Board Members they had received a new business case to go before them in June.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 P.M.



Dr. Phillip Stone, II., Chair

Minutes by Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant