

MINUTES
Regular Meeting
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
March 17, 2021

The City of Wyoming Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) met on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 remotely via the Zoom online video conferencing platform. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Cathy Ramstetter, Chair of the March 17, 2021 meeting. Attendance was as follows:

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Cathy Ramstetter, Chair
Gene Allison
Maureen Geiger
Zach Green
David Sparks
Jim Walton

STAFF:

Tana Pyles, Community Development Specialist

OTHER:

LaBecca Hall, Prospective HPC Member

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Allison moved to approve the February 17, 2021 HPC meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Sparks. All members voted yes. The motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF CHAPTER 1336: HISTORIC DISTRICTS, HISTORIC PROPERTIES, AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES; ALTERATION AND DEMOLITION GUIDELINES AND REPLACEMENT CONSTRUCTION CRITERIA

Ms. Pyles introduced the item which is to revise Chapter 1336 of Wyoming's Building Code, governing historic alterations and demolitions, based on the discussions from the January HPC meeting. She displayed a preliminary markup of Chapter 1336 that included comments from Mr. Allison and Ms. Ramstetter. The first major change shown in the draft ordinance is no longer referring to the review as an Alteration/Demolition permit application. It is more appropriate to call the review process "Historic Review" because the City does not issue an Alteration/Demolition permit after an application is approved by City Council; applicants must then apply for a zoning certificate or building permit.

The Alteration/Demolition thresholds are currently defined under the definition of demolition (which includes alteration), and have been moved to a new definition called "Changes". Under the definition of Changes, it includes any alteration, demolition, construction, removal, or reconstruction of any structure or building. The same thresholds

are also included under this section. Classifying improvements as a Change is less confusing than using the term Alteration/Demolition and is a more complete definition.

Ms. Pyles shared that the revisions include a major change to the review and approval process. Applications for Historic Review would no longer require approval from City Council unless it involves the demolition of an entire principle building. This allows the joint HPC and Architectural Review Board (ARB) to be the deciding body for most applications, streamlining the process. Appeals to a decision of the joint HPC and ARB would be made before City Council. She added these proposed revisions still need to be reviewed by the City Solicitor.

Ms. Pyles explained that she reached out to a couple applicants that recently went through the Alteration/Demolition review for feedback. Ms. Aschliman, local architect, shared with staff that she appreciates the historic review process, and recognizes the review is necessary and valuable. She thought the informal review/work session for the Maisel's project at 18 Wyoming Avenue was extremely helpful before completely redeveloping the plan set. She commented that the front façade definition is confusing and it does not specify how to measure the thresholds. During the review of the Maisel's application, it was the first time she heard of faux historicism. In all her previous reviews, she was told to blend or mimic the existing architecture. Lastly, there has been confusion from the HPC and ARB when variances are involved with a project and if/how they can weigh in.

Liz Galvin, local architect, shared feedback with staff on the Alteration/Demolition review process. She shared that an option for an informal review is important before the plans are fully developed, and that requiring 10 copies of the application and plans is excessive. During the review of 5 Clark Avenue, she expected more focus on the historical components of the house. She provided specific comments on the formatting of the ordinance, which staff will incorporate where appropriate.

Ms. Pyles asked the HPC if they want to consider decreasing the number of copies required for an application. Ms. Ramstetter said that 10 copies of application and plans is burdensome and unnecessary. Mr. Green added this requirement is not environmentally friendly and a core element of the Master Plan is sustainability. Ms. Geiger said that it is nearly paperless in the architecture and construction professions. Mr. Allison suggested we limit the number of copies to three and Ms. Ramstetter suggested one copy. Ms. Pyles said she needs at least two copies and a digital submission for her files, and will edit the ordinance to reflect this reduction.

Ms. Ramstetter asked how the HPC can better affirm an applicant's historical research on their property. Ms. Geiger suggested creating a checklist that summarizes points to go over in meetings to ensure they discuss all aspects of a project. Mr. Allison said that applicants should be asked to address how their proposed changes are augmenting or continuing the historic character. Mr. Walton agreed with those recommended changes. Ms. Geiger volunteered to draft the checklist and thinks it should be accessible to applications on the HPC webpage.

Mr. Allison reminded the Members of the major goals for this ordinance rewrite. One of the goals is to shorten the timeline of the process because we have had complaints by residents that three months is too long. Another goal is to try to simplify the language to make it clear to an applicant what is required.

Mr. Allison asked Ms. Pyles if she looked at any other municipalities to guide the rewrite. Ms. Pyles stated she referenced codes from the Village of Glendale, City of Montgomery, and City of Loveland. Wyoming's ordinance is unique and she has not come across another municipality using percent thresholds to determine which projects must be reviewed.

Ms. Pyles displayed the preliminary markup of Chapter 1336, which included review comments from Ms. Ramstetter and Mr. Allison. A new definition called "Changes" is added to the ordinance to capture all projects (replacing the term Alteration/Demolition) which may meet the review thresholds. Mr. Allison suggested stating that it is recommended an applicant request a preliminary review to help guide this review process. Ms. Geiger said that information for requesting a preliminary review is on the website and recommendations should not be included in a codified ordinance. Ms. Ramstetter agreed that recommendations should not be in the ordinance and these preliminary reviews should be promoted whenever possible. Mr. Allison suggested changing the sentence to say that applicants may schedule a preliminary review to help guide this process.

Ms. Pyles explained that an "Addition" is not currently defined and is only included under the definition of alteration. The draft ordinance defines an addition to help simplify this section and make it clear which types of projects require review. Ms. Geiger stated "or process" can be struck from the definition of addition. Ms. Ramstetter suggested addition be struck from the definition of alteration for clarity. Ms. Pyles pointed out the last sentence in the definition of alteration was included to allow for ordinary maintenance like a roof being replaced like for like. This language was also found in ordinances from Glendale and Montgomery.

Mr. Allison began the discussion on how to determine the percentage of an elevation. He said that as he worked through different scenarios it became difficult to calculate. He stated that the threshold should include the exterior walls and roof in the percentages. Mr. Sparks asked whether we need to have threshold and what is it trying to accomplish. Ms. Pyles explained that the thresholds are trying to strike a balance between preserving the City's historic resources and allowing property owners to make some changes without needing historic review. The HPC was very thoughtful when updating these regulations in 2019. The front façade threshold was reduced from 50% to 25% because major alterations were being made without triggering Alteration/Demolition review. Mr. Sparks suggested the threshold for the front façade remain 25% but any changes to the roof structure would require review. He added the slope of the roof is the hardest part to measure.

Mr. Allison explained he realized that if the roof had gables then a lot of airspace would be included in the calculations if you draw a rectangle around it, and therefore 25% would not

be as restrictive as we want it. We need to define how an applicant measures their percent of change in order to have consistent measurements and a clear understanding of what meets the thresholds. Mr. Sparks proposed making the threshold 25% of modifications below the roofline, and any modifications to the roof because usually those are significant.

Mr. Allison stated that we need to consider modifications to the side and/or rear elevations that changes the presentation of the front façade. Ms. Pyles explained that the new definition of front elevation includes anything *to be* oriented to the public way, which would include changes to the side and rear elevation that are visible in that plane. This tries to protect against rear additions that create an almost a new front elevation.

Ms. Ramstetter asked if the thresholds and measurements should be included in the definitions section. She explained that creating a new subsection with the review thresholds and how to calculate it would make the ordinance easier to understand. The definitions section should only include definitions. Ms. Pyles said that Ms. Galvin made a similar formatting comment, and she will include this revision in the next draft.

Ms. Geiger said we have made some good progress and suggested they tackle the calculations and thresholds at the next meeting. Ms. Pyles summarized that she will incorporate tonight's comments in the next draft, and the Members will need to determine how to measure the thresholds for the exterior walls and/or roof structure.

Mr. Green expressed that the HPC has made this process too difficult and he has heard frustration in the community from architects and residents alike. He wants to see the ordinance simplified and made a lot looser than what has been discussed tonight. Ms. Ramstetter explained that is what we are trying to do with these upcoming revisions. Mr. Green suggested simplifying the process to three or four circles using a couple colors and bullet points. For example, red could mean this is a change you cannot do (like a demolition), yellow is something that might need historic review, and green are changes you can do outright without historic review.

Ms. Ramstetter said Mr. Green's suggestion could be incorporated in the review checklist. Ms. Pyles said that is something that could be easily added to the HPC webpage.

Ms. Ramstetter recommended the Commission continue the review of Chapter 1336 at their next meeting. Ms. Pyles said she will update the code rewrite document and include it with the April meeting materials. Once the HPC is finished with their review, the ARB will review the proposed changes. Mr. Allison asked if Council is aware of these changes, and if not, do we want to present it to them before it is finalized. Mr. Green said to present the final ordinance as the HPC wants it and Council can provide feedback at that point.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Pyles shared the next regularly scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, April 21st. Since we are rotating the Chairperson, Mr. Sparks will Chair the April meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Allison moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Sparks. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tana Pyles,
Community Development Specialist
Secretary of the March 17, 2021 Meeting

Cathy Ramstetter,
Chair of the March 17, 2021 Meeting