

**GAINESVILLE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 11, 2012**

Members present: Chairman Dick Bachman, Vice Chairman Kevin Meyer and Commissioners Jim Walters and Jack Bailey

Members absent: Commissioner Cheryl Morrow

Staff present: Community Development Director Rusty Ligon, Special Projects Manager Jessica Tullar and Recording Secretary Judy Foster

Others present: Council Member Ruth Bruner

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was held in the Green Street Station Training Room and was called to order by Chairman Bachman at 5:30 PM.

MINUTES OF AUGUST 6, 2012 MEETING

Motion to approve the Minutes as presented.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Meyer
Motion seconded by Commissioner Bailey
Vote – 4 favor, 1 absent (Morrow)

NEW BUSINESS

A. Certificate of Appropriateness

- 1) Request from **RPC Partners LP** for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Major Work Project involving a site change on a 0.34[±] acre tract located on the south side of Ridgewood Avenue, 260[±] feet west of its intersection with Northside Drive (a/k/a **569 Ridgewood Avenue and 595-A & 595-B Northside Drive**).

Ward Number: Five
Local Historic District: Ridgewood Neighborhood
Tax Parcel Number(s): 01-025-008-002
Proposed Work Project: Remove a total of six (6) trees: five (5) along Ridgewood Avenue and one (1) along Northside Drive

Staff Presentation: Special Projects Manager Jessica Tullar made the following staff presentation:

- The applicant's request is for a site change involving the removal of six trees which range in size from 20-inches in diameter to 40-inches. Three of the six are split-trunk trees.
- The subject property, which is located in the Ridgewood Neighborhood Local Historic District, contains two residential-style principal buildings. According to the completed Phase One Historic Structural Survey, the house fronting Ridgewood Avenue is an English Vernacular-style, bungalow-type house that was constructed around 1947, while the duplex located on Northside Drive was built around 1960.

- The applicable design guidelines and previous COA requests were noted in the staff report.
- Supporting documents submitted with the application included: a written narrative of proposed work project; boundary survey/plat and tree removal plan; and photographs.
- There was no report from a consulting certified arborist.
- However, City Staff including the Senior Planner, who is a Georgia Registered Landscape Architect and ISA-certified arborist, visited the subject property and conducted a visual inspection of the six trees.
- The City's Senior Planner explained that he saw no visible signs of decay or disease exterior to the trees, but because the staff is not equipped with probing tools, the Senior Planner was not able to evaluate internal conditions of the trees. He did observe impact to the root systems of the trees fronting Ridgewood due to the existing concrete parking area, retaining wall, and walkway.

Applicant's Presentation: **Harvey Rooks**, Applicant, stated he has owned this property for over 50 years, noting the trees were not much of a problem back then. However, they have since become overgrown and there are too many trees for a third acre lot. He stated the trees are damaging a retaining wall, causing it to bow out; damaging a sidewalk leading to the back of the house, where the tree roots have lifted the sidewalk about three inches causing a safety hazard; trees roots are extending into a parking area; and trees are damaging the roof of the duplex. Since the staff report noted that the trees could be pruned, Mr. Rooks presented pictures from the neighborhood where trees had been pruned, noting they were not very attractive. Mr. Rooks reported that he recently spent \$3,700 on a new roof for the duplex which required all new decking because of damage from the trees. He stated that he has a very high deductible on his property insurance in order to cover all the properties he owns, therefore, the trees need to be removed in order to protect the property. He plans to repair the retaining wall once the trees are removed and replace the trees with smaller, more appropriate sized trees for the area and do some nice landscaping as other property owners have done in the area.

Favor: None

Opposed: **Steve McDaniel**, 600 Ridgewood Avenue, stated that he has lived in his home for about six months, noting the mature landscape in the neighborhood was what attracted him to the area. He stated that he was concerned with how the removal of the trees will affect the corner. There was discussion between Commissioner Walters and Mr. McDaniel concerning whether he would still be opposed if trees were replaced on the property. Mr. McDaniel stated it would be hard to tell until he sees the replacement trees.

Historic Preservation Commission Comments: Upon inquiry from Commissioner Walters, Special Projects Manager Jessica Tullar stated there was no recommendation from staff, noting however that the staff certified arborist commented that the trees could be pruned back, or if the Commission determined the trees could be removed, then he

offered some comparable, more appropriate trees to replant which are noted in the staff report.

Vice Chairman Meyer commented that the guidelines suggest that traditional landscape should be preserved and as such the removal of mature trees should be avoided unless dead, diseased or pose a safety hazard. While he felt the trees damaging the sidewalk and retaining wall did pose a safety hazard, he did not want to set a precedent of cutting down healthy trees as they contribute to the character of the district. Mr. Meyer also commented that some of the trees shown in the pictures Mr. Rooks presented may not have been properly pruned by a certified arborist and thereby are not aesthetically pleasing.

Chairman Bachman stated that if we had a certified arborist report, he would be more comfortable voting on the issue.

Upon inquiry by Commissioner Bailey, Mrs. Tullar confirmed that this Commission has never voted on the removal of apparently healthy trees.

Andrea Crozier, 641 Ridgewood Avenue, apologized for being late for the meeting and asked for the reason of the request in which Mrs. Tullar responded.

Mr. Rooks presented more pictures from Dixon Drive where a healthy tree fell and damaged power lines.

Commissioner Walters stated that it would be more aesthetically pleasing to have better landscape instead of too many trees and he did not see a problem with removing them as long as they are replaced.

Mrs. Crozier stated that she lives five doors down from the subject property and she was concerned that the property was being primed for a different use. Mr. Rooks confirmed that he has no intention of changing the use of the property.

Chairman Bachman stepped down as chair in order to make a motion. Vice Chairman Meyer conducted the meeting temporarily.

Motion to table the request to the November 5, 2012 HPC meeting pending the receipt of a Certified Arborist report on the condition of the six trees.

Motion made by Chairman Bachman
Motion seconded by Vice Chairman Meyer

Discussion was held on who would incur the expense of the Certified Arborist report and it was determined that it would be at the applicant's expense.

Vote – 2 favor, 2 opposed (Bailey, Walters), 1 absent (Morrow)

Motion did not pass.

Vice Chairman Meyer stepped down as chair and Chairman Bachman conducted the rest of the meeting.

Motion to allow the trees to be removed with the condition that the applicant must provide a replanting plan to be approved by staff.

Motion made by Commissioner Walters
Motion seconded by Commissioner Bailey

Vice Chairman Meyer stated that it is the job of the Historic Preservation Commission to uphold the guidelines which state that mature trees are to be preserved unless they pose a threat to public safety and/or are dead or diseased.

Commissioner Bailey asked if the guidelines can be stricter than they require. Mrs. Tullar stated that the Commission can recommend a certain number of trees to be replanted. Community Development Director Rusty Ligon stated the condition could be a one-to-one ratio as appropriate.

Commissioner Walters amended his motion to include the one-to-one ratio as appropriate.

Steve McDaniel asked what size trees would be planted as replacements. Commissioner Walters stated it would depend on what staff approved.

Mrs. Tullar states that there are some limitations along Ridgewood Avenue because of power lines, noting Georgia Power will have a say in regards to the replacement trees.

Vice Chairman Meyer stated he was still uncomfortable with setting a precedent in removing healthy trees without a Certified Arborist report.

Mr. Rooks stated that the trees were a problem in addition to the damage they have caused due to the fact that he cannot landscape properly.

Vote – 2 favor, 2 opposed (Bachman, Meyer), 1 absent (Morrow)

Motion did not pass.

Motion to table the request to the November 5, 2012 HPC meeting pending the receipt of a Certified Arborist report on the condition of the six trees.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Meyer
Motion seconded by Commissioner Bailey
Vote – 3 favor, 1 opposed (Walters), 1 absent (Morrow)

Special Projects Manager Jessica Tullar stated that the next HPC meeting is November 5th, however, if the report is received earlier, the HPC could have a called meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Vendor Packets

Mrs. Tullar asked each Commissioner to complete a Vendor Packet in order for them to be reimbursed for training.

380 Green Street Shingle Sign

Mrs. Tullar stated that she had sent an email about a new shingle on an existing sign at 380 Green Street. She stated that the sign is larger than the shingle which is currently there and is aluminum instead of wood. She stated it is relatively small, but based on the guidelines, she asked for direction of whether this would be a major or a minor work project. She stated that it did not obstruct the building and is not a principle free standing sign. There was discussion of the coating of the sign whereby they did not want it to be shiny. Mrs. Tullar stated that the tenant had already bought the sign. There was a general consensus that this would be a minor work project.

Model Design and Construction Guidelines

Mrs. Tullar stated that the proposals are in and are being reviewed at this time.

711 Green Street – Gardens on Green

Mrs. Tullar stated that the Hall County School Board building at 711 Green Street wants to add a sign similar to the National Register sign, to the right of the building where the Gardens on Green is located in order to bring recognition to the area. She stated that it was a small sign and there was 75' to 100' between it and their other sign. She wanted to know if this should be considered a major or a minor work project. There was a general consensus that it was a minor work project.

American Legion Pavilion

Mrs. Tullar gave an update of the progress on the American Legion Pavilion restoration.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Bachman, Chairman

Judy Foster, Recording Secretary