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MINUTES

November 18, 2020
Historic Landmarks Committee
Regular Meeting

3:00 pm
Zoom Meeting
McMinnville, Oregon

Members Present: Mary Beth Branch, Mark Cooley, Joan Drabkin, John Mead, and Hadleigh Heller – Youth Liaison

Members Absent: Christopher Knapp

Staff Present: Chuck Darnell – Senior Planner

Others Present: Jeb Bladine and Dave Rucklos

1. Call to Order

Chair Branch called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

New Youth Liaison Hadleigh Heller introduced herself. The Committee members introduced themselves as well.

2. Citizen Comments

Jeb Bladine, McMinnville resident, discussed the history of the News Register buildings and how they hired consultants to look at renovating one of them. They were told it would be a financial hardship to bring the building up to code. They were getting an estimate from the consultant, but he wondered what level of proof was needed to demo and reconstruct a historic building. He also asked how the Building Code and City's local regulations came into play in this situation.

Committee Member Drabkin asked how old the building was.

Mr. Bladine said it was from 1904.

Chair Branch directed him to staff to discuss the situation and possible application.

3. Discussion Items

A. Continued Review of Downtown Design Standards Chapter

Senior Planner Darnell introduced Dave Rucklos, Executive Director of McMinnville Downtown Association, who would participate in this discussion as a partner in the downtown area.

Mr. Rucklos said MDA had put together a Design Committee and they had been meeting monthly for the last six months. Most of the items they discussed had to do with the Urban Renewal Façade Improvement Grants. So far there had been 18 of these projects that had been approved. They were also working on creating an email list of property owners in the downtown core. They wanted to be a conduit between the City and property owners on projects. The Design Committee could provide input on the downtown design standards. They were also interested in digitizing the standards so they were easily accessible on the web as well as pictures and color pallets. He suggested this be done once the standards were updated.

Chair Branch planned to attend the next Design Committee meeting to discuss the standards.

Senior Planner Darnell said the downtown design standards applied to Third Street and overlapped with the historic preservation code. Over the past few years there had been some difficulties with the standards. They were adopted in 2003 and were somewhat outdated. At the last discussion on the standards, the Committee had asked for maps identifying boundaries they worked within including the downtown design area and downtown historic district. There were several other downtown overlays as well. He explained the maps of these areas. The Committee had reviewed the first few sections of the downtown design chapter. They discussed comparing the purpose statement with other community's purpose statements and Oregon Main Street organization's purpose statement. In the Applicability section, they discussed having a boundary map for clarification and adding alterations to signs as an applicable activity subject to the standards as well as standards for public improvements to be coordinated with these standards. They also discussed items that were not regulated and comparing them with the definition of alteration and how it applied to historic preservation. There was concern about using "similar to" in the language as it was hard to interpret and apply and there were questions about the section where the Director reviewed certain activities. For the Review Process, the Committee discussed defining the scope of different levels of projects and coming up with different requirements for the application submittal. They also discussed different levels of review for different types of applications. This was an attempt to make the process more user-friendly. They also talked about pre-approving certain items such as colors or standards that if followed could be a staff over-the-counter review instead of coming to the Committee. They discussed the definition of alteration as well and when it should be a decision of the Director and when it should come to the HLC. Notice should be provided to the Committee when alterations were reviewed and approved by staff. He had also provided example standards from other communities.

Chair Branch suggested that the downtown design boundary was too large. She thought it could be changed to primary and secondary zones. This was especially important for items such as building height.

Committee Member Mead thought having two zones would be appropriate.

Committee Member Cooley asked about the maximum height for the C-3 zone.

Senior Planner Darnell said it was 80 feet.

Chair Branch had concerns about that height in the downtown core, especially on Third Street.

The Committee then reviewed the Building and Site Design Standards.

Chair Branch did not have an issue with the building setbacks, although it might be different on 2nd and 4th. She also thought they needed to allow outdoor space as part of the design. Regarding building design, she questioned the language about building massing and configuration “similar to adjacent or nearby historic buildings on the same block”. If those buildings were not well done or attractive, they might not want it to be similar to that. She thought it could be more general to say “similar to historic buildings in the district” instead. She also questioned whether they wanted two-story buildings on street corners or intersections. She thought there should be a height restriction in the Third Street core.

Committee Member Mead thought they could survey the tallest buildings in the district to see what was existing and use that as a starting point for the height discussions.

Committee Member Drabkin did not want the difference in height to be so substantial that it impacted the look and feel of the downtown core.

Chair Branch thought how it looked as people approached the district in their vehicles was important to consider in terms of scale. The scale and massing needed to be appropriate to the district.

Committee Member Mead agreed the decision for the height on the areas outside of the historic core needed to relate to the downtown in a sensible way.

Committee Member Cooley thought they needed more information about height and how it related to use planning and economic feasibility.

Chair Branch suggested they survey the widths of the buildings to make sure that the numbers in the standards were still valid. Regarding the bays, she thought the language should be that the bays be “similar in scale to the district” not other adjacent historic buildings.

Senior Planner Darnell agreed the language could be clearer and they could include images that would help with clarity as well.

Committee Member Mead suggested adding illustrations for storefronts that depicted all of the requirements.

Chair Branch thought there should be more discussion about the materials, such as for the belt course and transitions from the first floor to the second floor.

Senior Planner Darnell thought there could be further clarification regarding the bulkhead as well.

Chair Branch suggested a definitions page as well as pictures that would be examples, and good and bad examples of the items. She thought the orientation of rooflines language made sense as well as the primary entrance and windows language.

Senior Planner Darnell asked about the specificity of the recessed doors and windows. Staff could look into options for that language.

Committee Member Mead thought the “scale and proportion of altered or added building elements shall be visually compatible” was difficult to enforce. It needed to be more clearly defined.

Chair Branch thought they needed to reword the language, "Buildings shall provide a foundation or base, typically form ground floor to the lower windowsills." She suggested a subcommittee work on examples of the building design items and determine if anything was missing.

Chair Branch and Committee Member Mead volunteered to be on the subcommittee to review all of these standards and bring back recommendations.

Chair Branch thought there needed to be different categories for Building Materials, such as windows, trim, siding, etc. Photos should be included as well. They needed to review current day building materials that were available and evaluate which ones would be allowed and which ones would not. They also needed to look at what other cities, the National Park Service, and SHPO were doing.

Committee Member Mead said regarding colors, he thought black should be allowed on the façade of the building, especially for trim.

Chair Branch thought the section on colors needed more detail and more categories as well, such as awnings, trim, doors, etc. but there should not be black brick. She liked the idea of a pre-approved color pallet. She suggested creating a list of pre-approved colors that staff could approve or it could be approved by the Committee via email with a week turnaround time instead of a formal review that could take two months.

Committee Member Cooley suggested using a pantone pallet.

Committee Member Mead suggested having five different pallets of body color, trim color, accent color, and door color that were pre-approved and could be a staff approval.

Chair Branch agreed that for applications that were only a painting project, they needed to streamline the process to save the applicant time and money.

Committee Member Cooley suggested changing the language to say if they were using a pre-approved pallet it would be considered a maintenance activity and did not need HRB approval.

Senior Planner Darnell said for Surface Parking Lots, the language "prohibited from locating on Third Street" needed to be clarified.

There was discussion regarding how to change the language and to what specificity.

Committee Member Cooley suggested defining it in terms of separation, that the parking lot must be separated from Third Street by one of the following, and then list the items.

Chair Branch thought for a hedge or wall, it should be stated the minimum was 30 inches in height. She thought it might be better to have the minimum be taller than that. She did not think they needed to specify the buffer strip size. The height was the most important. The language about street trees and spacing should also be removed.

Committee Member Cooley said they wanted a maximum spacing, not a minimum.

Committee Member Mead said for the section on Awnings, he thought black awnings should be allowed especially since several businesses currently had black awnings. He also did not think they should prohibit metal as an awning material.

Chair Branch thought the materials should be updated to make sure they were intended for outdoor use.

There was discussion regarding what “internal illumination of awnings” meant. Chair Branch thought the language should be changed to “prohibit up lighting of the awning from below”.

Senior Planner Darnell said for the section on Signs, there were a number of sign types listed that were not defined in the City’s Sign Code. He also thought the language stating “sign materials shall be compatible with materials used in the building” should be clarified.

Chair Branch said for the language stating “where two or more businesses occupy the same building”, it should say “occupy the same entrance” instead. She also suggested clarifying “Wall signs shall not exceed the height of the building cornice.”

Senior Planner Darnell said monument signs were not listed and should be added.

Chair Branch thought they should take out “historically incompatible canopies and awnings” as part of the prohibited list. She thought they needed to address folding signs, such as sandwich board signs, that people put on the sidewalk.

4. Committee Comments

None

5. Staff Comments

None

6. Adjournment

Chair Branch adjourned the meeting at 5:18 p.m.