

**Minutes
Historic Zoning Commission
City of Belle Meade
January 12, 2021 by "Zoom"**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Mal Wall at 3:00pm via "Zoom"

Commission members present

Chairman, Mal Wall
Bunny Blackburn

Vice Chairman, Jeanette Whitson
Ron Farris Gavin Duke

Staff members present

Beth Reardon, City Manager Doug Berry, City Attorney
Lyle Patterson, Assistant City Manager and Building Official
Edie Glaser, City Recorder

Consideration of the Minutes

Minutes of the HZC Commission held December 8, 2020

Motion to approve: Duke **Second:** Whitson **Vote:** All aye

Old Business:

1. The application for a certificate of appropriateness for DAC Properties, LLC (20121) 717 Westview Avenue, to construct a new-single family home on a vacant lot. **DEFERRED**

New Business:

1. The application for a certificate of appropriateness for Province Builders (21011) 903 Lynwood Boulevard, for the demolition of existing home (Property of Conservation). Returning later with plans for a new single-family home.

Presentation: John Swift with Province Builders, current owner of 903 Lynwood Boulevard, we are requesting to demo the house. We feel it does not have any historical significance in terms of its architecture currently. We would like to demo the house and put a new single family residence in its place.

Board Questions and Comments:

Whitson, what is the date on this home?

Patterson, 1945, Property of Conservation is between 1940 and 2000.

Blackburn, are we ok with talking about demolition only today and not about what is going back in its place? There are two on the agenda today. Is this what we are going to start doing?

Farris, last time this came up I got comfortable with making a call knowing that the applicant still had to bring a design back to the board. We still have the oversight of anything that is going to go in its place.

Patterson, whoever the current owner is the maintenance part of the ordinance applies to them. They will have to keep the yard cut, the shrubs trimmed, etc. If there is any erosion problem whatsoever, they will have to put up a silk fence or a straw waddle to contain it.

Blackburn, do you monitor that?

Patterson, yes.

Blackburn, what if there is a basement? Are they required to fill that whole in?

Whitson, it comes before code violations. It is a valid point to be brought up. When this happens, we should indicate that this is going to be reviewed, and be put on a list to be reviewed, to make sure that the property is kept up. I am comfortable with the bifurcated process. Legally I don't know that we have the ability to withhold deciding on the first phase because it is not contingent on the second phase.

Duke, are there any trees on this lot that are significant in value?

Swift, there was a survey and there were not any trees noted.

Duke, hope you can save the boxwoods on the front of the house. I don't see anything of real detail or architectural significance with this house.

Farris, I don't put a category of significance on this style of house. It is a ranch, respectfully done, but I don't find it as a contributing style to the City.

Blackburn, how big is the lot?

Swift, it is a half-acre.

Blackburn, I do not see anything about this house that makes me think it is a house that needs to be saved.

Public Comments:

Steven Mason, 901 Lynwood Boulevard, if this home is approved for demolition, what happens if the home that is proposed is not acceptable? What happens to the lot?

Wall, can we approve a demolition but not allow it until approval has been made on the new construction?

Berry, it is not in our guidelines to do that. The control is when it is new construction is will have to comply with the HZC guidelines. The other matters are matters of codes enforcement. We do not have the power to defer action until they have a new plan. There are other factors that would affect that, and our jurisdiction of this commission is pretty limited.

Farris, in general the City has clear and distinct requirements for the maintenance of properties, be it with a home on them, or an empty lot. They have to maintain simple, high standards of erosion control and stormwater requirements have to be in place. The city's ordinances and their guidelines of property maintenance, that have long been in place, protect citizens of the concern of Mr. Mason.

Whitson, could you speak to the process of where your plans are now?

Swift, we have preliminary plans drawn and prepared to submit to the board.

We have a prospective buyer now. We would be looking to submit the plans and go through the process with the board to get approval as soon as possible to move forward with construction. For the concern with the lot and the basement. That would be not only a hazard for the neighbors, but it is also a liability for us as well. If there was a scenario where we had a hole out there, we would fill it in temporarily until we got through the process.

Mason, I am glad to hear they are planning on going forward with the plans and building shortly after the demolition.

Board Discussion:

Whitson, should we consider as a board establishing a time limit between applying for a demolition permit and applying for a new home?

Patterson, once you get approval from the BZA you have one year to build. After you pull that permit you have one hundred and eighty days to begin construction.

Blackburn, we have no obligation to approve a new build just because someone has torn a house down.

Patterson, we have 180 days after a permit is pulled to begin work on a project what if we did 180 days? The house could be dormant, if you will, until you actively begin pursuing approval from this board?

Berry, you would want to formally amend your guidelines to say that. They would have to come back to the board within 180 days to give us a status report. Is that what you are suggesting?

Patterson, yes, it gives them 6 months instead of a year to get their plans together and complete with elevations. They then come back to this Board.

Berry, if they don't bring their plans back what happens? I think it is unnecessary to regulate this any further than it is already regulated.

Farris, I am comfortable with the sequential step. I think it affords all applicants a fair hearing, versus the process of having to put together a full design before you can determine if a house can be demolished. I have not seen a site plan on this property, but I would caution any applicant prior to tearing something down to understand what that means to your building envelope.

Duke, being a half-acre, it is going to be pretty restricted.

Motion to approve the demolishing application: Whitson **Second:** Duke
Vote: All aye

2. The application for a certificate of appropriateness for Jeff Mobley (Trustee), (21012) 407 Westview Avenue, for the demolition of existing home (Property of Conservation). Returning later with plans for a new single-family home.

Presentation: Wes Turner, Attorney for Jeff Mobley Trustee, Mr. Mobley would like to demolish the house and build back a single family residence for their personal home. Assuming they do get the approval for the demolition they would like to do this immediately. There would be no delay in this process. Their intention is to engage an architect who is experienced and well recognized in Belle Meade architecture that would incorporate the design, materials, and scope, you are looking for in Belle Meade properties to give respect to the historic nature of the city, and what is needed in the historic guidelines, and to preserve things like the boxwoods and so forth, that were discussed in the previous application. The house does not lend itself to renovation. It is a log house. The option for them is to demolish it to do what needs to be done for their personal family home. We have asked the Commission to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the demolition.

Board Questions and Comments:

Wall, when was the house built?

Turner, 1932

Whitson, is there an architect of record on this house?

Turner, there is not at this point.

Wall, does it possess integrity of design materials, workmanship, setting, location, etc. defined for the eligibility for listing on the National Register?

Turner, it is probably not a house, we don't think, that's of that significance. We are not aware of any historical events that would bring it to that level.

Whitson, if it were not a log house it looks very much like the house we just ruled on.

Blackburn, the age is the difference. We need to give it the same amount of scrutiny that we would any other home build in 1932.

Whitson, they have checked no for all the items on the list. I did go see this house. The house has been altered over the years.

Wall, does it embody such other qualities and characteristics that in our judgement should be considered significant in the history and architecture of Belle Meade?

Patterson, there are only two log homes in Belle Meade.

Farris, if the City of Belle Meade was right with numerous examples of this that carried a broader historical context, I would start to be more concerned about tearing them down. I have worked on log homes before, several of them, I have not found a log home that possesses materials, workmanship, of a high standard. They don't possess the means to do any modernization to them without a lot of challenges. You cannot insulate them. You can not put doors and windows in them. The primary component that starts to drive whether or not a log home makes sense to renovate is in the quality of the logs that were used in its construction. I can not advise on the quality of these. In general, you have such movement with those logs and through the seasons that they create lengthy issues with the chinking and the opening and closing of joints. I don't see it possessing design, materials, or workmanship.

Whitson, I would agree, and there is no way to open up walls in a log house and modernize it.

Wall, there is clearly some disutility in this property. It has been for sale every two years for the last ten years.

Blackburn, it is unique but has always been out of place. By 1932 the log home had been abandoned basically unless it was built for the uniqueness. If Belle Meade was known for preserving its log cabins maybe, we would look at preserving it a little more closely. We want to be sensitive and take seriously the demolition of anything prior to 1939 but also look at the homes and ask do they really offer us anything historically to preserve. The disutility is the key word to go back to. I don't think we can ask someone to live in this house the way it is. I don't know that we have the right to say we acknowledge that this house can't be renovated or improved but we expect you to live in it.

Board Discussions:

Motion for demolition: Duke **Second:** Blackburn **Vote:** All aye

City of Belle Meade Historic Zoning Commission retreat dates to be scheduled by Assistant City Manager and Building Official Lyle Patterson.

Meeting adjourned 3:49pm

Chairman Mal Wall

City Recorder Edie Glaser