

**MINUTES
HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION
BELLE MEADE CITY HALL
OCTOBER 2, 2019**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mal Wall, Chairman, at 3:02 pm.

Commission members present

Mall Wall, Jeannette Whitson, Gavin Duke, Ron Farris, Bunny Blackburn

Staff members present

Beth Reardon, City Manager Doug Berry, City Attorney
Lyle Patterson, Building Official

Consideration of the Minutes

1. Minutes of the HZC meeting held September 19, 2019.

Motion to approve: Whitson Second: Farris Vote: All aye

Old Business: None

New Business

1. Draft Ordinance 2019-9, City Wide Conservation Overlay

Doug Berry stated no action can be taken on the Ordinance today because design guidelines must be established first. Ordinance applies a single neighborhood conservation overlay to all four zoning districts in the City and within the entire boundary of the City. He encouraged everyone to review the preamble, as it may change according to the context of the design review guidelines.

Point of interest brought up by Jeannette Whitson - has the City ever applied to be on the National Register of Historic Places? (No, it has not.) National Register nomination would go through the Tennessee Historical Commission. Having this designation would help to validate what the HZC is doing and it also would be nice recognition for Belle Meade. Ann Reynolds, who lives on Jackson Blvd., has extensive experience with this process, and would be a good source to assist the City.

2. Bullet Points from September 19th meeting

- R. Farris - when do public hearings begin?
- D. Berry - when guidelines are established.
- Charlie Atwood, implementation team member, suggested the guidelines be as simple and short as possible.
- D. Berry - Ordinance must have objective criteria and cannot be too general. Examples of guidelines from other cities have objective detail and illustrations.
- J. Whitson - To be fair to those renovating, building or purchasing homes in Belle Meade, guidelines need to have specifics, so people know what to expect and don't feel they are taking a risk. It is best to start with

guidelines from another neighborhood or city and take out and add to their model and make it fit Belle Meade.

- B. Blackburn - identify why HZC was established and what we are trying to accomplish.
- J. Whitson - read from Richland-West End Conservation Zoning Document:
Neighborhoods in more than two thousand towns in the United States use historic zoning as a tool to protect their unique architectural characters. There are quantifiable reasons for historic zoning: it gives neighborhoods greater control over development; it can stabilize property values; it decreases the risk of investing in one's house; it promotes heritage tourism; it protects viable urban housing stock; it preserves natural resources by conserving building materials. And there are less quantifiable, but equally important, reasons for conservation zoning -- it protects our past for future generations, it nurtures a sense of community, and it provides a sense of place.
- B. Blackburn - when writing guidelines, how do we prevent personal taste from controlling the rules? Don't want to be a "taste committee".
- J. Whitson - read from Richland-West End Conservation Zoning Document:
Continuous construction in the neighborhood during the early 20th century resulted in a variety of building types and styles that illustrate the evolution of architectural styles and technology over the years. New buildings should continue this tradition while complementing and being visually compatible with surrounding historic buildings.

We should recognize that Belle Meade has a tradition with building, and the guidelines should continue that and be tailored to support this tradition.

- R. Farris - encouraged everyone to look at River Oaks (Houston) document sent by Mal Wall. *River Oaks Architectural Review and Approval Process: encourages uniqueness, reinforces style, lists original developers' intent for their city, acknowledges the wide variety of architecture developed over the decades but is responsible for protection from any incompatible improvements.*
HZC should discourage repetitive design now and in the future.
- M. Wall - When evaluating plans to see if they are compatible with neighborhood and the other contributing homes, there are design elements that need to be looked at: form, function, line, mass, scale, proportion, texture, color, ornamentation. This would be a checklist for the Commission regardless of the style of the home.
- R. Farris - do plans need to identify the style of the house? Commission should not favor any style over another, but this is where the design process starts.
- Audience question - Gray Thornburg. Is the purpose of the HZC to prevent cookie-cutter homes from being built all over?
- L. Patterson - that is what started the discussion that brought us to where we are now.

- G. Thornburg - Could this Ordinance require original plans regardless of architectural style and use of high-quality building materials?
- D. Berry - Belle Meade has more eclectic architectural styles than many other historic districts, and we have zoning code controls. The HZC may want to engage a consultant to assist with creation of design guidelines.
- R. Farris - Guidelines have to grow with the times, and discourage repetitive designs lacking identifiable style. This sort of guideline will remain pertinent long-term, no matter what the latest housing fad is.
- Jane-Coleman Cottone (TN Historical Comm.)- Quality design can be encouraged/enforced through the Ordinance and specific design guidelines. Show examples of quality in newer infill with illustrations and photos.
- J. Whitson - Terminology often used to reinforce quality homes is the "rhythm and spacing of the immediate neighborhood".
- Audience question - Steve Horrell. Will the HZC be operating in a quasi-BZA manner? Will the two boards overlap?
- D. Berry - No, that should not occur. BZA reviews different things and has no authority for design review ever. City may need to revisit the zoning code and remove language relating to or suggesting design review.
- J. Whitson - Most renovations could be handled administratively by staff and be a consent item for the HZC.
- Jane-CC - Section in design guidelines should have criteria for demolition, including: not a historic house; heavily altered historic house; so many issues with house that it would create an economic hardship to applicant.
- J. Whitson - how to define "economic hardship"?
- Jane-CC - Base it on whether an owner can increase the value of home or property just by renovating - sometimes a non-contributing or neglected home really needs to be torn down. Definition can be modified for Belle Meade.
- R. Farris - all teardowns should come before HZC for review.
- B. Blackburn - should we compile a list of homes never to be torn down, especially those of sentimental or historical value? (comments - No)
- Discussion regarding what Building Official can administratively approve and what he needs to send to HZC consent agenda. Commission needs to define parameters.
- D. Berry again suggested the Commission consider working with a consultant on drafting design guidelines.
- R. Farris - Why not have someone help who does this every day? Consultant will expedite this process, especially since we have a moratorium in place that has a deadline.

Motion to recommend to Board of Commissioners to hire a consultant to establish design review guidelines for HSZ.

Motion to approve: Farris Second: Duke Vote: All aye

3. Establish Date for Next Meeting

Change meeting date from Thursday, October 17th to Wednesday, October 16th at 2:00 p.m.

Motion to approve: Blackburn Second: Duke Vote: All aye

4. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn at 4:32pm: Duke Second: Whitson Vote: All Aye

Other Business: None Scheduled

Chairman Mal Wall

City Manager Beth Reardon