



# City of Ann Arbor

301 E. Huron Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
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## Meeting Minutes Historic District Commission

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Thursday, December 8, 2011

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron Street, 2nd Floor

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### A CALL TO ORDER

*McCauley called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.*

*He welcomed the newly appointed Historic District Commission member, John Beeson, and asked him to tell the Commission a bit about himself.*

*John Beeson said he is a licensed architect and has been practicing for approximately ten years. He said he has a lot of experience in building science and green buildings and also holds a degree in civil engineering. He currently works for the Green Building Certification Institute in Washington D.C. which runs the LEED program for certifying building.*

*McCauley noted that Beeson has received an award from the Historic District Commission for work he has done on his own historic house.*

### B ROLL CALL

*Thacher called the roll.*

**Present:** 5 - Ellen Ramsburgh, Patrick McCauley, Thomas Stulberg, Benjamin L. Bushkuhl, and John Beeson

**Absent:** 2 - Kristina A. Glusac, and Robert White

### C APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**The Agenda was unanimously approved as amended, with the addition of Item; "Settlement of 617 West Madison Appeal". On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.**

### D HEARINGS

### E UNFINISHED BUSINESS

#### E-1 11-1495 Solar Energy Guidelines

*Jill Thacher explained that the draft version before the Commission was substantially the same as what was presented and reviewed at the last HDC Working Session.*

*Beeson asked if there was a definition included of what a solar panel might be. He explained that since there were different types of solar panels; some called modules, it might be helpful to include that information in the Guidelines. He offered to help add the referenced information.*

*The Commission agreed that the guidelines would need to change over time to keep up with technological changes.*

*Stulberg asked about Administrative Approvals, and how the 10% of roof surface covering had been decided upon.*

*Thacher explained that the language was existing and had been there since 5-6 years ago when the Administrative Approval list was developed by the consultant at the time. She said that the Commission could voice their concerns at this time if they felt any of the items on the list were arbitrary or needed change.*

*Stulberg added that he would like to see the 10% percentage increased since he didn't feel that people should need to come before the Commission to ask for approval for something that could be decided on by staff, if it was something that couldn't be seen from the street.*

*Bushkuhl asked if there was value to have a flat percentage in the guidelines or if they should use the guideline of 'not being visible from the street' instead.*

*Ramsburgh noted that 10% was a very small amount and might not be enough to offset much of the energy saving needs for a house.*

*Thacher mentioned that it might've had something to do with the added weight on a historic structure.*

*Thacher explained that she does require all applicants to complete the full HDC application even for Administrative Approvals, in order to protect the historic resource and reference as needed.*

*Thacher agreed that the percentage could be removed, and the final sentence on page 5 would read: "Installation of new solar panels on non-character defining roof surfaces not visible from the street or other character defining elevations, provided the solar panels are flat, do not extend more than 8" above the roof surface, and are similiar to the color of the roof material."*

*Thacher said that she would like to get together with Commissioner Beeson for the definitions as discussed before sending it for approval.*

*Beeson stated that it might be helpful to find out if the PACE program [Planning Access Clean Energy] would or could interface with the guidelines before the Commission. He explained that the PACE program could allow commercial, businesses, as well as multi-family dwelling owners [above a certain number of units] applicants to receive a loan through the City for the proposed work and that loan could be paid back through their taxes. These loans are intended for energy improvements.*

*Thacher responded tht she has been working with staff in City Hall who currently administer the PACE program, and explained that those going through the PACE program would first need a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HDC for the work that they are proposing.*

## **F      NEW BUSINESS**

**Motion made by McCauley, seconded by Stulberg, to postpone item "Settlement of 617 West Madison Appeal" until the end of New Business. On a voice vote, the Chair declaring the motion carried.**

**F-1**      [11-1496](#)      1407 Broadway Historic Marker Application

*Jill Thacher gave the staff report, adding that she highly recommends that Clifford Williams receive approval for a historic marker at 1407 Broadway Street, for all the historic renovations done on the house.*

**COMMISSION DISCUSSION:**

*Stulberg said that he has known the property when it was horrible and thanks the owner for doing a fantastic job with the renovations on the house. He asked what criteria is used for allowing applicants to put a historic marker on their property.*

*Thacher said that it is similiar with the Historic District Commission Awards in that it would be determined by the Commission with the condition of the house being the basis for such, along with the commitment of the owner. She added that there are many homes outside of the historic districts that could qualify for a historic marker as well. She noted that historic plaques are paid for by the applicants.*

*McCauley stated that the date of construction mentioned in Historic District Study Committee reports might be approximate since there is often not enough information to get the exact year.*

*Thacher agreed and suggested that it would be safer to say the date of construction is circa 1840's.*

**Motion made by Ramsburgh, seconded by Bushkuhl, that the Historic District Commission allow for the property at 1407 Broadway Street, to include the historic name and the year in which the house was constructed.**

**F-2**      [11-1498](#)      Retreat Scheduling

*Thacher said she is working with the Michigan Historic Preservation Network to get an advanced speaker/trainer for March 17th. The training would be held around 8:30 or 9 am to 12:30 or 1 pm on a Saturday. She asked the Commission if that date would work for them.*

*Ramsburgh mentioned that traditionally the retreats had been held in February.*

*Thacher said the only day in February that would work is February 11th, but the Network didn't believe they would have an advanced trainer available until March or April.*

*Thacher said she would verify with the Commissioners that weren't present at the evening's meeting as well as re-visit the issue with the Michigan Preservation Network.*

**F-3**      [11-1497](#)      Historic District Commission By-Laws Review

*Jill Thacher noted that the Standing Rules had been rolled into the newly revised Draft Bylaws.*

*Chris Frost, from the City Attorney's office explained that the Attorney's office has been working on revising and incorporating standard issues that have been encountered over the past years. He noted that in Article VII, Section 8, there was an error and explained that it will read "...all members present".*

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Ramsburgh asked about changes proposed in Article IV Membership.

Frost explained that these are standard provisions currently scattered in the City Charter or Code that are standard to all City Boards and Commissions. He noted that these don't change the current law in any way, they are simply being incorporated into the HDC bylaws.

Ramsburgh asked if there had been any changes made to Article III Purpose, Objectives, and Duties.

Frost responded that there had been substantial changes made that incorporated provisions of the code and/or the State Enabling Act. He reiterated that the changes are requirements that come out of code and doesn't substantially change the bylaws from the way they currently are.

Bushkuhl asked about the reference to the word 'history' in Article IV Membership, Section 1, last sentence.

Frost said he would look into it before presenting them with a final draft copy.

McCauley asked if they needed to take any action on the bylaws at this meeting.

Thacher responded, no, and that they would be back on the agenda at the next HDC meeting.

**Settlement of 617 West Madison Appeal**

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Ramsburgh stated that she feels that her motion covers what the HDC has pervue over at this time.

General discussion continued regarding the appeal process.

**Motion made by Ramsburgh, seconded by McCauley, that the Commission settle the pending administrative appeal of Louis Breskman and Meredith Newman vs. City of Ann Arbor Historic District Commission by extension of the deadline for removal of the split-rail fence at 617 W. Madison that is the subject of the appeal to May 1, 2012, and to authorize the City Attorney to take all necessary steps to effect such a settlement. On a roll call vote, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried.**

**Yeas:** 5 - Ramsburgh, Chair McCauley, Vice Chair Stulberg, Secretary Bushkuhl, and Beeson

**Nays:** 0

**Absent:** 2 - Glusac, and White

**G PUBLIC COMMENTARY - (3 Minutes per Speaker)**

**H APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

H-1 [11-1488](#) Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes of October 13, 2011

**Seeing no objection, the October 13, 2011 HDC Meeting Minutes were Approved by the Commission and forwarded to the City Council. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.**

**I REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS / COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS**

I-1 [11-1494](#) Sign Committee Report

*COMMISSION DISCUSSION:*

*McCauley said he worked with Susan Weinberg to compile the list that was presented to the Commission. He asked for input and discussion from the Commission.*

*Thacher added that she hasn't had a chance yet to check the signs for non-conformity. She explained that the sign code is currently under-going revisions.*

*Ramsburgh said she wanted to do a drive-by of the signs on the list.*

*The Commission asked the public to provide Jill Thacher their suggestions of signs that they feel should be on the Nonconforming Sign List. Thacher provided the email address.*

**J ASSIGNMENTS**

J-1 **Review Committee: Monday, January 9 at Noon for the January 12, 2012 Regular Session**

*Ramsburgh and Stulberg volunteered for the January 9, 2012 Review Committee to meet at noon.*

**K REPORTS FROM STAFF**

K-1 [11-1493](#) October - November 2011 Staff Activities

*Thacher provided the Commission with new Commission Handbooks.*

**Received and Filed**

**L CONCERNS OF COMMISSIONERS**

**M COMMUNICATIONS**

**N ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:00 PM.**

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