



**Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes  
Meeting - January 16, 2020**

The Historic Preservation Commission met on Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 6pm at the City Council Chambers, 305 Gay Street.

**Commissioners Attendance:**

Present: George Vojtech, Chairman, Susan Morgan, Vice Chair, Commissioner Laura Oliphant

Absent: Comm. Sharon Smith and Hershel Johnson

**Liaison:** Commissioner Steve Rideout (present)

**Other Representatives Attending:**

Herve Hamon, Planning and Zoning, Planner I and Historic Preservation

Chairman George Vojtech called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. He began the meeting by conducting a roll call, issuing a welcome, and swearing in the people planning to testify.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Review of December 19, 2019 HPC Meeting Minutes. Chairman Vojtech made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and without revisions, Comm. Morgan seconded; all approved unanimously.

**Old Business:**

**400 Race Street – Blue Ruin Bar Sign – Appropriateness Determination**

Mr. Hamon presented the background of the case, including all prior determinations from Planning & Zoning Commission (Oct. 1, 2019), Historic Preservation Commission (Oct. 17, 2019) and Board of Zoning Appeals (Nov. 20, 2020) which corroborated the fact that the current 67 sf graphic panel at Blue Ruin Bar constitutes a sign.

Mr. Dodd, attorney for Mr. Kyle, then presented his case, explaining that with such small letters, and being so general, the sign as it exists now was “the worst possible advertising” for Blue Ruin, and instead should be considered an artistic expression and celebration of the revitalization of downtown Cambridge.

He then asked that the Commission show leniency and approve the oversized graphic panel as is. Branden Spear took to the podium and testified that the panel was art.

Brian Roche also expressed that even though this was a difficult decision, the Commissioners should consider the positive impact of the graphic panel before its non-compliance or the lack of proper approval process.

Commissioner Oliphant agreed with Vice Chair Morgan, and stated that as an artistic expression, the panel was very attractive, but also explained that approving it as is, after the fact, and

accepting the non-compliant process of installation would not be showing consistency nor fairness to the rest of the businesses of Cambridge, would set up a precedent not acceptable. Chairman George Vojtech then presented a few legal cases with illustrations, where courts made determinations about “commercial speech” versus “murals”.

He read through the associated findings to confirm that even without the label “Blue Ruin” the graphic panel featuring a bottle and saying “Cambridge, where good people drink good drinks” being located on the side wall of the Blue Ruin Bar would continue to constitute commercial speech (i.e. a sign), therefore falling under the regulation of a maximum of 50 square feet (per UDC Section 6.5.7.D).

Mr. Hamon reminded the Commission and the public than even if the sign was considered “art” (or a mural), a full review and approval by HPC PRIOR to installation would have been required.

Chairman Vojtech made a motion to deny the sign “as is” and requested that the sign be either trimmed to the compliant 50 square feet (if cutting borders was the desired action) or be removed entirely and be resubmitted as a new sign (of similar design) reduced proportionally to fit within the 50 sq. ft. maximum.

The applicant was given 10 to 20 business days to come into compliance (weather permitting; i.e. temperatures allowing installation). Vice Chair Morgan seconded the motion. All approved unanimously.

### **New Business:**

#### **HPC 2019-035 104 Choptank Avenue**

This is an application to demolish and replace the deteriorated garden shed and build a new shed. The proposed scope of work was reviewed, and the following was approved:

- 1- Remove the existing backyard shed, too deteriorated to be salvaged
  - 2- Build a new 12' x20' Amish shed with roof slope matching the main house, and 5” horizontal vinyl siding - color matching the house, all trim and openings to be white
- Note: the proposed location of the shed showed in the application was preliminary, the final location of the shed in the rear yard will be applied for and reviewed at time of Building Permit application

Vice Chair Morgan made a motion to approve the application as submitted, Chairman Vojtech seconded, all approved unanimously.

#### **HPC 2020-036 103 Willis Street – Porch Roof Renovations**

This is an application to replace the existing front porch roof (asphalt shingles) with standing seam metal.

Commissioner Oliphant made a motion to approve the application as submitted, Chairman Vojtech seconded, all approved unanimously.

**HPC 2020-037 305 Mill Street – Porch Renovations**

This is an application to remove and replace the existing front porch random width wood floor boards with even width (3-1/4”) mahogany floor boards.

Chairman Vojtech made a motion to approve the application as submitted, it was seconded by Vice Chair Morgan; all approved unanimously.

**Commission Elections:**

- Chairman Vojtech was re-elected unanimously as Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission
- Vice Chair Morgan was re-elected unanimously as Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission

**Discussion Items:**

Chairman Vojtech announced that Ms. Janice Olshesky resigned as Alternate to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Chairman Vojtech also provided an update on the rules and procedures of the Commission, explaining that an updated amendment text was recently provided to the city attorney for review. The text, still preliminary, addresses the issue of Demolition by Neglect, and once formatted will be presented to Council for review.

Chairman Vojtech asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion by Vice Chair Morgan to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Commissioner Oliphant and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Herve Hamon  
Planning & Zoning  
Planner I & Historic Preservation

Signature:  Date: 20 Feb 2020 HPC Chairman