Laytonsville Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting, October 16, 2023

**LAYTONSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Videoconference Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, October 16, 2023**

**Present:**

Jen Sizemore, Chair

Kris Bradsher

Andy Drouliskos

Rebecca Saah

Patrick Murray\* (**\*sworn in by Mayor during the course of the meeting, as noted.)**

**Absent:**

None

**Attendees:**

Charles Hendricks, Mayor

James Schneider, secretary

**Opening:**

Chair Sizemore called the meeting to order at 7:31. The meeting was held by Zoom video conferencing. Chair Sizemore noted that a quorum was present and that the meeting was being recorded.

The first order of business was to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2023, meeting. Member Bradsher requested an edit regarding her comment concerning police presence. The amendment was accepted, and Member Bradsher moved to approve the Minutes as amended. Member Drouliskos seconded. The Minutes were approved, with Sizemore, Brasher, and Drouliskos voting in favor. Saah abstained. (Murray had not yet been sworn in so did not participate in this portion of the meeting.)

New HDC member, Patrick Murray, was sworn in with Mayor Hendricks administering the Oath.

**Consideration of tree removal authority:**

The HDC considered the Zoning Ordinance and its relationship with the Tree Ordinance. Discussion centered on providing more clarity and less ambiguity for residents so they know what is expected and what role the HDC actually has. It was noted, that as currently written, there is an apparent overlap between the Tree Commission’s authority and the HDC’s responsibility. The Members noted that the HDC’s responsibility with respect to landscape issues should focus on hardscape (structures such as decks, sheds, walkways, driveways) and agreed that landscaping including tree planting should not need HDC approval.

The Mayor noted that the Tree Commission is advisory to the mayor and that if the Tree Commission determines that a tree is “dangerous,” the Mayor has the authority to have it removed without consulting the HDC. Discussion followed concerning the aesthetic value of trees for the Town and that the Tree Commission is only involved with trees greater than 12 inches in diameter. Member Murray inquired regarding which Commission had authority to determine which trees are greater than 12 inches in diameter. Member Saah noted that the Tree Commission is the first step when considering any involvement with large trees. Members also discussed whether to require a work permit application for removal of smaller trees.

Member Bradsher noted that routine maintenance of trees should not require HDC approval. Discussion followed concerning State responsibility for roadside trees, as well as PEPCO’s involvement in certain circumstances. Member Saah suggested that property owners should be aware of which regulations apply.

Members discussed revision of language in the Zoning Ordinance to make the application more clear for Residents. The Members determined that more work and consideration of the Zoning Ordinance would need to continue.

**HDC secretary position:**

Chair Sizemore stated that the HDC is still looking for a secretary and welcomes any recommendations from HDC members.

**Open forum on Laytonsville historic preservation issues:**

None at this time.

The next HDC meeting will be on Monday, November 6, 2023. This meeting will include a public hearing.

**Adjournment:**

Member Murray moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Saah seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Schneider, Secretary