**LAYTONSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes**

**November 28, 2016**

**Roll Call:** Chair Sheree Wenger called to order a meeting of the Laytonsville Historic District Commission (HDC) at 7:38 p.m. Commission members Charles Hendricks, Jill Ruspi, and Lisa Simonetti were present. Commission member Michele Shortley joined the meeting early in the discussion of application HDWP 04-16.

**Public Attendance:** Also present were Gary Brent of PMIG 7000 LLC, Chris Wilkinson of 7000 Brink Road, and Benjamin Crisafulli and Danny Faulkner of NV Homes.

**Minutes:** Member Hendricks had prepared and provided to commission members minutes of the meeting of October 17, 2016. Member Ruspi moved to approve the minutes as presented. Member Hendricks seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Hearings:**

21611 Laytonsville Road (St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church): Chair Wenger next reopened the public hearing on the portion of application HDWP-03-16, proposing repaving and expanding the parking areas and driveways of St. Bartholomew’s Church, that the commission had continued at its meeting of October 17, 2016. Commission members discussed the status of the application that the church had subsequently made to the Board of Appeals for a variance to provisions in the town’s zoning ordinance to accommodate additional parking spaces between the church and the Town Hall. Chair Wenger and Member Hendricks observed that Board of Appeals had requested that the church provide a more detailed survey of the proposed changes. As no representatives of the church were present at the November Historic District Commission meeting, Member Hendricks moved to continue the hearing on the unresolved portion of application WP-03-16. Member Simonetti seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Hendricks subsequently commented that the church had reduced the proposed width of its landscaping strip or setback from the town’s property to one foot in its application to the Board of Appeals. Wenger commented that after the last Board of Appeals meeting, she had requested its chairman, Jacob Cecere, to ask the Laytonsville Fire Department if the width of the driveway in the church’s proposal was satisfactory from a safety standpoint.

21625 Laytonsville Road (Service Station): Chair Wenger read the preliminary statement for consideration of permit application HDWP-04-16, for the replacement of the manually operated sign announcing current prices of gasoline products at the corner of Laytonsville Road and Sundown Road with a new light-emitting display (LED) sign at the same location. Gary Brent, representing the property’s owner, PMIG 1007 LLC, provided drawings of the proposed sign. He said that the sign would emit about 300 lumens but would be very energy-efficient and use low voltage. The owner also wants to apply Citgo decals to the pumps but does not now plan to erect a Citgo sign. Wenger stated that the firm may apply the decals to the pumps without further approval from the commission.

Brent stated that the proposed LED sign would advertise two types of gasoline, as required by state law, but would eliminate the posting of the price of the mid-grade product. Member Ruspi observed that the size of the numbers would be larger than in the current sign, but Brent said that the difference would be only one inch larger for the premium price, although it would be seven inches taller for the regular price. He said that the sign could be turned off and that the time of its operation could be made a condition of its approval. He also suggested that the station owner would be willing to dim the light emitted by the sign if requested.

Christine Wilkinson of 7000 Brink Road testified that she had lived across Laytonsville Road from the gas station since 1986 and that the lighting there had grown brighter over the years and now operated all night. The lights are now higher than before and shine into two of her bedrooms. She said that the addition of an LED sign would just increase the station’s light output, which appears suited for a high-crime neighborhood of a major city. In answer to a question from Member Hendricks, Wilkinson said that she did not approve of LED signs in the historic district. Brent said that he did not know why the lights were on all night and thought adjusting the timing of the lights’ operation might be possible.

In response to a question from Member Ruspi, Brent declined to argue that the service station was entitled to an LED sign because the fire station had one. Ruspi observed that changing the prices on the current sign was not difficult. Wenger commented that the present sign fits its context nicely, and Hendricks said he found the present sign easy to read at night. Wenger observed that the Rockville sister station of the Laytonsville service station also has a manually operated sign.

Member Ruspi moved that the application HDWP-04-16 be denied. Member Hendricks seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously, 5–0. Brent and Wilkinson left the meeting.

6924 Sundown Road (Green residence): Chair Wenger reported that Dustin Green is very busy building two facilities for Bar-T Ranch. She said that she had asked him to provide details on his request for solar panels by the commission’s January meeting or have the commission reject that item and added that Green did not object. Member Hendricks made a motion to continue the hearing on the portion of application HDWP 01-16 relating to the installation of solar panels. Member Ruspi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ruspi complained that Green was leaving holes for his approved new wall unfilled. Wenger agreed to talk to him about that too.

**New Business**

7015 Higgins Road: Danny Faulkner, Area General Manager of Sales, NV Homes, and Benjamin Crisafulli, the NV Homes sales representative for Laytonsville Preserve, introduced themselves. Faulkner reported that Matt Honacki, who had previously represented NV Homes before the commission, had transferred to the Maryland East Division of NV Homes in Howard County. Faulkner stated that the Mayor and Council had recently approved the marketing of Elevation C of the Empress II model in Laytonsville Preserve. He asked the HDC to approve this elevation for Lot 8, Section C, of Laytonsville Preserve, at 7015 Higgins Road, a lot that adjoins the Historic District. The Mayor and Council had earlier approved, at the recommendation of the HDC, Elevations B and D of the Empress II model for lots in Laytonsville Preserve that adjoin the Historic District, but the HDC had not made a recommendation regarding Elevation C of that model.

Chair Wenger observed that the back of the house on Lot 8, Section C, of Laytonsville Preserve would face the Historic District and recommended that commission members focus on its appearance. Faulkner said that the rear of Elevation C would differ only in one corner from the rear of approved Elevation B. Chair Wenger and Member Ruspi said they had no objection to the altered rear of Elevation C, and Member Shortley said she thought it had a nicer appearance. Member Simonetti moved that the HDC recommend approval of Elevation C of the Empress II model for Lot 8, Section C, of Laytonsville Preserve. Member Shortley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Faulkner observed that NV Homes does not intend to start construction on Lot 8, Section C, until the construction of the roundabout is begun, as each project will require about four months and the home cannot be occupied until the roundabout is completed. Faulkner said that utility companies will need to move some poles and wires before roundabout construction can begin.

Faulkner asked Wenger if NV Homes could now build an Elevation C version of the Empress II model on Lot 3, Area C, at 7402 White House Lane, which has not yet been sold, and Wenger said no. Hendricks asked if Lot 7, Area C, at 7025 Higgins Road, had been sold, and Crisafulli said no. Faulkner and Crisafulli departed.

Shortley expressed disappointment with the massing and height of the homes under construction at 7401 White House Lane and 7110 Brink Road, both of which face Brink Road. Hendricks observed that those houses are being built on artificial mounds. Wenger said that town attorney Stan Abrams had reviewed the height of the new buildings and approved them as less than 35 feet above grade. Shortley said that the completion of the siding and the installation of landscaping had improved the look of the large new houses completed on White House Lane and that the houses under construction should look better when they are finished. She added that she was pleased by the windows on the sides of the new houses. Chair Wenger observed that her husband, Eric Wenger, was examining the landscaping in Laytonsville Preserve.

**Adjournment:** Member Simonetti made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Member Shortley. Upon the motion’s unanimous adoption, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Hendricks