Minutes of May 19, 2011

Call to Order: Ms. Lynch called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Opal Stroup Chancellor
Cristine Lynch Lee Hill
Karen Pitts Battlefield
Clifton Vaughan Courtland
Betty Bazemore Berkeley

Members Absent: Tina Lance Livingston

Staff Present: Andrew H. Deci, Planner I
Paulette Mann, Commission Secretary
Wanda Parrish, AICP, Director of Planning

Determination of Quorum: A quorum was present.

Review & Approval of Minutes

Motion and vote: Ms. Pitts made a motion, seconded by Ms. Stroup to approve the minutes of April 21, 2011. The motion passed 3-0, with Mr. Vaughan abstaining due to his absence.

Announcements: None

Unfinished Business: None

Certificate(s) of Appropriateness:

HP11-0001 Virginia Community Bank

Mr. Deci presented the case. The applicant is proposing to demolish the structure. No improvements are planned for the site at this time.

The Spotsylvania Courthouse Area Historic Architectural Guidelines do not provide sufficient guidance related to demolition of structures within the historic overlay district. As such, the 1989 guidelines have been used to structure this analysis. The guidelines ask seven questions, in order to facilitate the decision of appropriateness for the demolition of a structure:
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What is the reason for demolishing the building? Is demolition the only means of fulfilling the stated need?

The parcel and building are owned by Virginia Community Bank. The bank has non-specific plans for the redevelopment of the parcel as a branch of the main bank. The rear porch of the structure has recently been demolished, by the request of the Building Official, as it was structurally unsound. The applicant has provided an engineer’s report concerning the safety of the structure. At this time, the Building Official has not identified the primary massing of the structure as being an unsafe structure.

What is the relative quality of original design, uniqueness of design, frequency of design in the district, and importance of the designer or architect?

The structure is a twentieth-century vernacular structure with no remarkable traits or particular uniqueness of design. The architect of the structure is unknown.

How old is the structure and what is its association with important events and/or persons either locally, regionally, or nationally?

The “Red Book”, DHR’s Data Sharing System, local site files, and other known resources were reviewed for information about the structure and property. None of the sources possessed information about the history, significance, or integrity of the structure.

A limited “informant history” was investigated by staff. Based on accounts by local citizens, the structure was constructed in the late 1940s as a post office for Spotsylvania—replacing an older structure located near the present-day Fastmart convenience store (that structure was moved to behind Mt. Zion Methodist Church, where it stands today as their church office). The post office was located at 7400 Brock road until 1972, when it moved to a site adjacent to the present-day 7-Eleven. The structure was used as a dentist’s office (Dr. Williamson) until the early-to mid 1980s, when it was purchased by Bill Vakos. The building was then leased to Spotsylvania County, who used it for a brief time as the County Attorney’s office. The property was subsequently purchased by Virginia Community Bank, who leased it to the Pear Tree Gift Shop until 2010. Since then, the structure has been vacant.

Eight informants were contacted about the parcel. The structure is not located within the National Register District.

Based on a site visit to the property and an examination of the exterior of the structure, it appears that the structure dates to the second quarter of the twentieth century (1925-1950), outside of the period of significance for the district and during a time in which many vernacular structures were constructed within Spotsylvania County.
Is the building a significant structure in the District? Would its elimination be detrimental to the overall scale, rhythm, design and importance of the district?

Although on the periphery of the district, the property is immediately adjacent to the Spotswood Inn and within the viewshed of Chewning’s Store. The Courthouse Historic District lacks a consistent pattern of massing or orientation; as such, the elimination of this particular structure would not be detrimental to the overall scale, rhythm, and design of the district. Future development on this property would need to be sited and designed to limit its impacts on the character of the district and the immediately adjacent properties.

Based on a site visit of the property and the limited informant history conducted, the age of the structure is likely outside of the period of significance for the district. The demolition of the structure would not affect the character of the district.

Is the district now, or could it be, a place of interest for tourists, new businesses, and increased real estate values, and would the elimination of the structure diminish that potential?

Although the district is a place of interest for tourists and new businesses, the structure is not a tourist destination, nor does it contribute to a sense of place that is marketable. The elimination of the structure does not diminish the potential for future heritage tourism opportunities.

Has there been a professional feasibility study for rehabilitating or reusing the structure? Has the building been offered for sale for the purpose of rehabilitation?

A feasibility study has not been conducted and the building has not been offered for sale for the purpose of rehabilitation.

Is it possible for the owner to receive a fair market rate of return on the structure or is the retention of it causing a true financial burden to the owner?

The most recent assessment of the property for tax purposes was $195,700 ($38,900-improvements/$156,800-land). It is unknown what financial burden the structure places on the owner.

Mr. Deci stated that although knowledge of the property is limited, both in the way of documentation and history of the property, the current state of the structure and its importance within the district are clear.

The structure appears to not be from the period of significance for the district and does not have any notable connections with significant persons or events within Spotsylvania history. Demolition of the structure will not impact the character of the district.
Staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness, with conditions dated May 19, 2011

1. The applicant shall notify, in writing, the Director of the Spotsylvania County Planning Department of the date of demolition, at least one week (seven days) prior to the date of demolition.
2. The applicant shall provide access to the property (interior and exterior to the structure) for the purpose of documenting the structure, at the convenience of the Spotsylvania County Planning Department, prior to the demolition of the structure to the Spotsylvania County Planning Department.

Mr. Deci stated that he met with Mr. Waddy at the site this morning and Mr. Waddy is in support of the demolition of the structure.

Ms. Parrish stated that staff has provided a pattern motion for the Commission to use.

Mr. Vaughan stated that in the future, should a new building be proposed, he would like for the Commission to consider the setback of the building. He stated that he would like for the new building to be set closer to the roadway with parking to the rear. He inquired how the Commission could handle this in the future.

Ms. Parrish stated that the applicant would have to follow the zoning ordinance’s defined setback. She stated that it would not become part of the guidelines, but rather a code amendment if the Commission wanted to see a smaller setback than what the zoning code allows for.

The Commission directed Mr. Deci to consider setbacks as part of the guidelines revision.

Mr. Vaughan stated that he is happy to see this demo occurring and inquired if it was advertised.

Ms. Parrish reminded the Commission as part of the streamlining process the advertisement provision was removed a few months back.

Ms. Lynch inquired about how Mr. Deci plans to document the building.

Mr. Deci stated that tomorrow morning, should this application be approved, he will go over and take pictures of the inside and the outside of the building, as well as the parcel and prepare a DHR site form for the property.

Ms. Pitts stated that she has a great deal of curiosity about this. She inquired what is motivating the property owner to move forward with the demolition.
James Christopher, representative for the applicant: He stated that it is his understanding that the applicant may in the future build a branch bank on the parcel. He stated that they may sell the property. Mr. Christopher stated that they have had inquiries from Mr. Hicks about the parcel. He also stated that they have had a structural engineer look at the building and although the County Building department states that it is structurally sound, they have a report stating that there are a lot of problems with the building.

Ms. Parrish stated that the applicant is interested in moving forward with the demolition perhaps as soon as Friday or Monday. Considering this, staff suggests that condition #1 be modified to read the following:

1. The applicant shall notify, in writing, the Director of the Spotsylvania County Planning Department of the date of demolition.

**Motion and vote:**

At a meeting of the Spotsylvania County Historic Preservation Commission held May 19, 2011 on a motion by Mr. Vaughan seconded by Ms. Stroup and passed 5-0, the Commission adopted the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION NO. COA-20110001**

**Approve - HP11-0001**

**WHEREAS,** the applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the structure located at 7400 Brock Road, Tax Map Number 47((A))65A; and

**WHEREAS,** staff has reviewed the subject application and recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness as stated in the staff report, dated May 19, 2011; and

**WHEREAS,** the Historic Preservation Commission held a meeting on May 19, 2011 and considered the six standards of review for Certificates of Appropriateness:

1. Whether the applicant's proposal is architecturally compatible with the motif and character of the historic overlay district or historic landmark;

2. Whether the applicant's proposal conforms to the criteria set forth by the secretary of the interior or other preservation guidelines subsequently adopted by the historic preservation commission;

3. The extent to which the applicant's proposal will affect the overall character, visual impact, and continuity of the historic overlay district;
4. Whether the height, proportion, openings, spacing, roofs, walls, fences, landscaping, 
ground cover, scale, and orientation of the applicant's proposal are visually 
compatible with the surrounding community;

5. Whether the materials and textures of the applicant's proposal are compatible with 
the historic overlay district's character; and

6. In the case of a building or structure to be razed, demolished, or moved, the extent 
to which the loss of same will detract from the historic overlay district and the 
purposes of this division; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that the Spotsylvania County Historic 
Preservation Commission does hereby approve HP11-0001 with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall notify, in writing, the Director of the Spotsylvania County 
Planning Department of the date of demolition.

2. The applicant shall provide access to the property (interior and exterior to the 
structure) for the purpose of documenting the structure, at the convenience of the 
Spotsylvania County Planning Department, prior to the demolition of the structure to 
the Spotsylvania County Planning Department; and

BE IT FINALLY ORDAINED that the Spotsylvania County Historic Preservation 
Commission’s approval and adoption of any conditions does not relieve the applicant and/or 
subsequent owners from compliance with the provisions of any applicable ordinances, 
regulations, or adopted standards.

HP11-0002, Spotsylvania County Capital Projects Management

Mr. Deci presented the case. He explained that the applicant proposes the erection of 
three types of structures. They include the following:

Proposal A - One (1) monument sign (‘map sign’), for the purpose of displaying a map 
of the government campus.

Proposal B - Twelve (12) post signs, for the purposes of directing vehicles and 
pedestrians, displaying parking lot rules, and displaying building rules.

Proposal C - One (1) monument (with accompanying bench), for the purpose of 
memorializing fallen police officers.

Mr. Deci provided elevations of two of the three proposals and a ‘sign layout diagram’ 
showing where the proposed signs and monument are to be located.

With the new Circuit Court and Public Safety buildings nearing completion, the applicant is
seeking a certificate of appropriateness for the erection of signage and a monument/memorial. Signage is necessary on site, to direct traffic and pedestrians to the right location within the government complex, and to provide necessary advisement to clients of the two buildings (rules indicating the prohibited items within the structures, appropriate parking lot behavior, etc.).

**Proposal A**

The monument-style sign is shown in an elevation included as part of Attachment A. The structure is 4’-8” tall, 6’ wide, and 1’-2” deep. The massing is brick, with a sign panel set within the brick structure. A water table is provided approximately 12-15” above grade, mirroring the Circuit Court building.

The proposed monument-style sign is appropriately scaled, considering its location in proximity to the Circuit Court building.

The proposed monument-style sign is composed of materials that are used on the Circuit Court and Public Safety buildings.

The sign is designed to mirror the architectural treatments provided on the new buildings. The design of the buildings (and sign) is sympathetic to historic courthouse, both in the choice of materials and the treatment of those materials.

The sign is a free-standing monument-style sign; the sign will not adversely affect historic fabric.

The sign will not be lit.

**Proposal B**

No elevations have been provided by the applicant for the eleven signs proposed throughout the parking area; however, the applicant has indicated in their narrative that the signs will meet the stipulations of the ground-mounted sign standard in the Zoning Ordinance.

The twelve signs are placed throughout the parking field and approaches to buildings. The signs do not block views of structures or vistas.

By using the ground-mounted sign standard and conforming with the general sign standards, the applicant has insured that the materials and textures are compatible with the character of the district.

The proposed signs are simple, with decorative finials at the top of both posts.
The signs are free-standing monument-style sign; the sign will not adversely affect historic fabric.

The signs will not be lit.

Proposal C

The Spotsylvania Courthouse Area Historic Architectural Guidelines do not outline recommended treatments for public art and memorials. However, the massing of the memorial’s structure appears to be appropriate, given its proximity to the Public Safety building.

Mr. Deci stated that staff recommends approval of the three proposals, with conditions dated May 19, 2011 (provided below). The proposals have been developed by the applicant, in consultation with staff, using the adopted signage guidelines.

1. One (1) monument sign is permitted, to be located and built as identified on sheet A01.1 of the plan entitled “Circuit Court Building and Public Safety Building, Spotsylvania County, Virginia”, dated July 28, 2008. The sign shall not be lit.

2. Twelve (12) directional and rule signs are permitted, to be located as identified on the hand-marked plan submitted with the application. The signs shall be constructed and installed in accordance with the General Sign Standards [§23-4.3.2(b)(1)] and Ground-Mounted Sign Standards [23-4.3.2(b)(2)] in the Zoning Ordinance, except that the maximum sign sizes shall be as indicated on the hand-marked plan.

3. Development of the monument, plaza, and benches shall be in conformance with the plan entitled “Public Safety Memorial”, dated 5-4-2011 and other documents submitted with the application.

Ms. Lynch inquired about the material for the monument.

Mr. Deci stated that it would be made from black granite and that it is very similar to a monument located in New Jersey. He stated that in his analysis, the guidelines do not speak to memorials so he chose to use the signage design guidelines instead.

Ms. Pitts expressed concern about not being able to see the type face and etching and stated that she would really like to know what it will look like before she approves the memorial.

Ms. Golden spoke and tried to further clarify the design and what would be on the monument.

Mr. Vaughan stated that he understands and appreciates recognizing fallen law
enforcement but this monument appears to be somewhat overstated. He stated that he is prepared to vote for a monument sign but maybe not one this substantial. He said that you almost have to search for the names of the fallen with everything else that will be etched on the monument. He inquired how many fallen law enforcement will be listed on the monument.

Ms. Golden stated that right now, there are two names that would be etched into the monument. She stated that the sheriff wants this area to be a place for meditation.

Ms. Parrish reminded the Commission that they do not have authority to dictate content.

Mr. Vaughan stated that he believes the concept is a great idea but this monument is too busy in his opinion.

Ms. Stroup stated that art is a personal thing.

Ms. Pitts stated that she only wants to ensure that the proposal meets the historic nature of the district. She stated that she does not feel that she has enough to go on and needs more details.

Ms. Golden went back to her office to get the sketches of the proposed design.

Ms. Lynch stated that 13 signs seem excessive and would like to see fewer signs.

Mr. Deci stated that the original proposal was for 20 signs.

Ms. Parrish drew the Commission's attention back to the signage guidelines. She stated that this provides a baseline. She further stated that while this is in the historic district, they are surrounded by modern buildings and she doesn’t feel as though the monument detracts from the district.

There was discussion regarding the cost of the monument and Ms. Golden advised the Commission that a smoking deck was eliminated and the savings from that were applied to the monument.

Ms. Parrish reminded the Commission that their task is to determine if the proposal is appropriate or not appropriate. She stated that the content detail that the Commission is requesting is getting to be a slippery slope.

**Motion and vote:** Ms. Stroup made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitts to approve HP11-0002, with serif type on the monument. The motion passed 5-0.

The Commission thanked Ms. Golden for her time.
Discussion topic(s):

Historic District Tour
There was discussion that there are several interested citizens that would like to attend the tour.

Ms. Lynch stated that Ms. Brenda King has also expressed interest.

Motion and vote: Mr. Vaughan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Stroup to call a special meeting for the Historic District Tour on May 27, 2011. The motion passed 5-0.

Guidelines Update

Mr. Deci thanked the Commissioners for their comments on the guidelines. He stated that he is continuing to compile them and revise the document and hopes to bring it back to the Commission at the next meeting.

Ms. Lynch stated that she believes it is important for staff and the Commission to take the time to get the document right.

Adjournment

Motion and vote: Ms. Stroup made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitts to adjourn. The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:37.

___Paulette L. Mann_____
Paulette L. Mann Commission Secretary

Approved: _July 21, 2011_