
City of Reading City Council

**Public Hearing
October 28, 2009**

**HARB Appeal Hearing
Council Chambers
5:00 pm**

Council President Spencer called the HARB Appeal Hearing to order at 6:29 pm.

COUNCILMEMBERS

Council President Spencer
Councilor D. Sterner District 3
Councilor S. Marmarou District 4

OTHERS PRESENT

City Clerk L. Kelleher
Legal Specialist T. Butler
Historic Preservation Specialist A. Johnson

I. Purpose

Council President Spencer stated that the purpose of this hearing is to take testimony on the appeal of the application for a certificate of appropriateness submitted by Allegheny East Conference of Seventh Day Adventist, owner of 47 South Sixth Street. The owner is appealing the denial of their the application to install white vinyl siding to the exterior of the upper northern, western, and southern building facades from the base of the second floor front windows to the third floor roofline. Council President Spencer explained that the hearing will have three components as follows: 1) Presentation by the property owner or his representative 2) Presentation by the Historic Preservation Specialist: 3) Council cross examination. City Council will adopt a resolution either approving or denying the appeal at their November 9th or November 23rd regular business meeting.

II. Swearing of all parties providing testimony

Legal Specialist T. Butler administered the oath to Historic Preservation Specialist Amy Johnson and Everett Thomas, representing Allegheny East Conference of Seventh Day Adventist, owner of 47 South Sixth Street.

III. Findings and Facts

Testimony from property owner/ applicant

Everett Thomas, representing Allegheny East Conference of Seventh Day Adventist, distributed photographs of the building displaying the appearance of the building pre and post construction. The photographs are marked as Exhibit 1. He explained that the church purchased this building 15 years ago. The Church requested permission to install the siding because the “soft” brick requires frequent maintenance. He stated that the upper and sides of the building were not previously covered.

Findings of Fact from Historic Preservation Specialist

The Historic Preservation Specialist stated that white vinyl siding was installed on the front and both sides of the building, without the required Certificate of Appropriateness or building permit. She explained that when she received a complaint about the installation of the siding, a stop work order was issued. The applicant then applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness. She submitted photographs of the building marked as Exhibit 2.

Ms. Johnson explained that the building is a circa 1930s storefront, with glass display windows flanking the center entry doors. She stated that the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) approved siding on the first floor of the building around the storefront, as a similar covering was previously used. However, HARB denied permission for siding on the upper floors of the building. As the brick façade was uncovered.

Cross Examination

Council President inquired if the applicant knew that the building was located within a Historic District. Mr. Thomas stated that the church was not made aware that the building was located in a Historic District.

Council President Spencer inquired if the applicant was aware of the need to obtain building permits before undertaking construction projects. Mr. Thomas stated that the church retained the services of a contractor who agreed to obtain the required permits.

Mr. Thomas stated that he did not follow up with the contractor as he assumed that the contractor would follow through and comply with the City's regulations.

Mr. Thomas also explained that HARB offered several suggestions for applications that would be permissible; however, cost was a factor. He stated that covering the "soft" brick with siding would ease the maintenance needs of the building and provide insulation. Mr. Thomas also described his good working relationship with the Historic Preservation Specialist.

Council President Spencer inquired if the parties wished to enter any additional testimony. Mr. Thomas and Historic Preservation Specialist A. Johnson both declined to offer additional testimony.

Legal Specialist T. Butler entered the agenda with its attachments into the record as Exhibit 3.

Legal Specialist T. Butler announced that Council will adopt the Resolution with approving or denying the appeal at the Regular Business meeting for either Monday, November 9 or Monday, November 23, 2009 at the regular business meeting held at 7 pm in Council Chambers.

The hearing was adjourned.

Linda Kelleher CMC
City Clerk