

Historic Preservation Commission of Decatur, Alabama

April 14, 2022 4:00 pm

Approval of March 10th 2022 Minutes

Expedited COA approvals since March 10, 2022:

- 506 Ferry (Fournier) Replace 6' tall rear fence (#25 & 26 for the CoA)
- 651 Moulton (Hopkins) Rebuild rear deck (removed earlier with approved CoA for siding repair in kind) (#9 for the CoA)
- 309 Canal (Hahn) Repair fire-damaged rear building. Wood windows and door, new roof (siding will be a separate CoA with the commission) (#4 for the CoA)
- 904 Line (Balbuena) Repair exterior chimneys in-kind (#9 for the CoA)
- 911 Line (McCormick) New roof (#47 for the CoA)
- 1041 Jackson (Reeves) New roof (#47 for the CoA)
- 602 Line (Bowling) Removal of rear tree too close to foundation (#61 for the CoA)
- 311 Canal (McKee) New roof (#47 for the CoA)
- 651 Johnston (Stewart) Repair outbuilding (#4 for the CoA)
- 214 Canal (Digges) Structural stabilization of chimney (#9 for the CoA)

CoA #1: 309 Canal (Hahn, Adam Dumas is the contractor)

Background: This one story Craftsman was built circa 1924 and is a contributing structure within the Bank Street/Old Decatur NR district. A fire caused significant damage to a one story historic building at the rear of the property in May of 2021. Staff has been working with the applicant to fast track as many repair items as possible. A new roof, wood door, and wood window have been approved. The majority of the building was damaged by the fire.

Action Requested: Applicant would like to use HardiPlank synthetic shingles. 48" long, height exposure is 6" tall. Straight edged panel. Weblink: [Fiber Cement Shake & Shingle Siding | HardieShingle Siding | James Hardie](#)

Decatur's Design Review Standards: *1. Exterior Siding 5. Synthetic Siding may be appropriate for use on ancillary buildings and for other new construction that is not readily visible from the street. ... Such materials should generally match the visual character of the traditional wood siding found in the district.*

Staff Findings: The building is not visible from the front of the house and appears to meet the standards required for synthetic siding. Commission should confirm the dimensions of the proposed siding to ensure it will match closely the historic siding and that the entire building will have the same siding.

CoA #2: 651 Moulton (Hopkins, Krystal Junge is the contractor)

Background: This is a one story Victorian era cottage built circa 1900. House is located at the intersection of Moulton and 8th. The seven (7) front porch supports are Post WWII era, and a flat metal columns typical of that era.

Action Requested: Owners would like to replace the 1950s era porch supports with seven (7) fiberglass square columns.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: *3. Porches 3. Replace Missing or Deteriorated Components in Kind. In cases where historic components are completely missing, it is recommended that new components match documented historic conditions based on historical documentation (photographs, etc.) If such documentation is not available, components should be chose that are appropriate to the building and surrounding neighborhood.*

Staff Findings: There are no known historic photographs of the building. As a Victorian era house, the house most likely had turned porch posts, similar in design to the image in the CoA file. It is also possible that the house was more Free Classic in its Victorian styling, and would have originally had slender Tuscan columns. Staff has communicated that information to the applicants, but at the time of the agenda additional discussion had not occurred. Square porch supports are more common mid to late 20th century replacement posts. There are square porch supports in the neighborhood on two Craftsman homes, directly across the street, likely replacements for the original Craftsman era porch supports.

Since the original column design is unknown, focus should be on how the new column intersects with the underside of the porch. Care should be taken to prevent significant extension of the column tops, which would make the columns look over-scaled. The selection of an appropriate porch support may very well rest on the size ratio of the porch to the support.

Staff has reached out to the applicants for additional information on porch entablature width to share at the commission meeting. That will impact what type of support goes in, a wider column or post will overhang the sides, something appropriately sized will fit under the roof better.

CoA #3: 701 Line (Sandifer)

Background: House is a one-story Victorian era cottage, built circa 1905 and is a contributing structure within the Old Decatur district. Applicant would like to expand the living space in her house and met for a pre-design meeting with the commission in January. Applicant is still working on plans for an addition, and would like to move forward with the plans for the historic house at this time.

Action Requested: Add six (6) skylights into the attic.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: *5. Roofs. 7. Skylights. Skylights may be allowable if they will not be readily visible from principal street. In such cases, the use of low-profile flat skylights is recommended.*

Staff Findings: House is on a corner lot, the commission has historically treaded both sides as principal, but has on occasion given consideration to the rear portion of the house on corner lots, starting at approximately the halfway mark of the elevation.

The skylights on the northeast and northwest elevations do not appear to be readily visible from the principal streets, Line and Vine. The single skylight proposed on Vine Street will be readily visible from Vine. Staff could find no comparable CoA in files, and suggests that the commission consider how readily visible and intrusive the skylight will be from Vine. Any motion should address this consideration and how it would impact the character of the property.

CoA #4: 411 Walnut (Kennedy)

Background: Mr. Kennedy has been in front of the commission on June 10, July 8, and August 12 of 2021 for unauthorized construction of a brick wall in the front of his property. He had an approved CoA from August 12th to construct a low brick retaining wall no higher than 12" in the same location as the pre-existing wall that he removed, wall would be L-shaped, running along the sidewalk and turning back at the front driveway corner. Mr. Kennedy did not follow the CoA and was issued a second and third stop work order on July 26th and August 6th respectively. He appealed to council and council has sent him back to the commission.

Action Requested: This CoA is a new CoA showing what Mr. Kennedy is proposing for the site. Mr. Kennedy proposes leaving all construction intact as seen from the photographs and site visits. He also proposes the addition of two quarter circle brick fans, to transition from the tall brick walls on each side of the house down to the lower wall, making the lower brick wall taller in that section.

Decatur's Design Review Standards: *12. Fencing: Within the districts cast iron and wooden picket fences are typically found along principal street vantages. Brick, chain-link, wooden plank, and other wood fences are generally located at secondary vantages.*

1. *Height: Fences at principal street vantages should be no higher than three feet. Fences on readily visible secondary vantages should be no higher than six feet.*

4. *Other Fences: The use of chain-link, wire, wood plank, vinyl, solid brick or open weave fences along street vantages is not appropriate at principal street vantage. The use of these fence materials is appropriate at secondary vantages or where not visible from street vantages.*

11. Landscaping: 7. Garden Structures.: Garden structures such as ... retaining walls... should be located so as to not be readily visible from public vantages ...

Staff Findings: In past reviews of this project the commission has indicated a brick wall in the front yard is not appropriate based on the commission's standards. Nor do they feel the width of the brick columns is appropriate (they are 26" square). Those details have not changed with this submission. Although the plan lists the brick wall as 36" high, the eastern wall is approximately 55" high. Staff could find no precedent for the commission approving brick quarter circle "fans" on brick walls in the districts.

Notes on the submitted plan: Everything highlighted in yellow is currently on the site and is already built. The small areas highlighted in pink are proposed. The red numbers written on the plan were given to staff by Mr. Kennedy when he delivered the CoA.

The downspouts buried underground are outside of the scope of the HPC's regulatory overview. As such, the HPC should not include in its consideration the buried downspouts shown in the plan submitted with the CoA for the April HPC meeting by Mr. Kennedy.

Commission Business Item #1: Deadline for Mr. Dickey to bring porch posts back into compliance

Background: Commission ruled at their February 10, 2022 meeting that Mr. Dickey's (217 Church Street) CoA for new porch posts would be amended to require turned wood posts like those removed by the applicant and to add the scroll cut saw work to the side of each bracket. No deadline was given to complete this task.

Action Requested: A formal vote by the commission giving a deadline for Mr. Dickey to bring his front porch posts back into compliance.

Staff Findings: Staff suggests setting a deadline of June 30th, 2022.

Commission Business Item #2: Formal Partnership with the Historic Decatur Association

Background: The Historic Decatur Association has a tree-planting program which has planted trees in the Old Decatur and Albany residential districts. The program is designed to replace the vanishing character defining old-growth tree canopy within the district.

Action Requested: Because the program involves CoAs, city right-of-ways, urban forestry practices, and has key components reviewed by Park & Recreation and the Legal Department, the Historic Decatur Association would like to partner with the HPC on the program. The HDA would providing the funds (approximately \$14,000 at this time) and join HPC on community outreach, and the HPC via their staff and a committee would work with city hall on appropriate locations, and longer-term issues of character defining streetscapes within the districts and survey tree locations.

Staff Findings: The city ordinance that created the HPC states that: *“the intent of this article to establish a uniform procedure for use in providing for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, landscape features, and works of art having a special historical, cultural or aesthetic interest or value...”* (Sec 28-21). HPC partnering with the HDA would help standardize the tree planting program and provide staff to work directly with other city departments and to consult with other municipalities on best practices. Sec 18-45 (8) the HPC is authorized to *“Make such investigations and studies of matters relating to historic preservation...”* The design review standards for the districts mentions the *“large shade trees such as oaks and maples along streets in both districts.”*

The Historic Preservation Commission Policies state: *“The HPC may establish committees as it deems advisable and assign each committee specific duties or functions. The Chair shall designate the members of each committee and shall name the Chair of each committee.”*

Commission Business Item #3: Vote to suspend streaming and recording HPC sessions

Background: The HPC, at the request of the city, began having meeting sessions live-streamed during the pandemic. This action supported pandemic related legal changes which among other things allowed commissioners to dial in without being present, and vote. The legal framework that allowed for that meeting flexibility has expired and has not been renewed by the state. Commission members must meet in person now to cast votes.

Action Requested: Streaming the meeting requires resources from the IT department. Some commissioners have asked if the commission still needs to utilize municipal resources for our meetings.

Staff Findings: Staff queried the legal department and was told there is no legal requirement to continue streaming the meetings. The commission can vote to stop recording and streaming the meetings.

Preservation Month Planning (May)

Staff Updates:

CoA/Compliance Updates:

Carport

Drewery

Tax Credits:

Simpsons

Decatur April Walking tour:

April 16, City Cemetery, Phil Wirey

April 23, Albany, Caroline Swope

April 30, Streetcars & Railroads, David Breland

NAPC 2022 Meeting in Cincinnati

Realtor Training

Trees and Municipal Legal Issues