

Planning Commission  
May 20, 2004

Present: Scott Parker, Blaine Ewing, Hal Currey, Bobby Thompson, Billy Craver and Alice O'Dell  
Absent: Nona Hastie

Scott Parker gave the commission and members of the public an overview for the meeting. Since the last meeting Scott Parker has spoken with David Schneider who created the Historic Preservation Study List. David Schneider said that he would act on behalf of the Town and handle the 6 or so requests of residents who wish to have their house evaluated to be removed from the list. Those residents who have an issue should write a letter to the Town.

Scott Parker made a motion, seconded by Blaine Ewing, that Town Council enter into conversations with David Schneider to define the role that he will play in evaluating whether or not a house should be off the Historic Resource Study list. Motion carried unanimously.

Eddie Bellow from the City of Charleston and Bill Marshall with the Architectural Review Board of Daniel Island were invited to attend the planning commission meeting to offer their opinions and experience with regards to Design Review Boards.

Bill Marshall has been with Daniel Island for over four years. Daniel Island has pretty strict design guidelines that help steer a homeowner with setbacks, height, scale and mass. Daniel Island has five different ways of controlling building mass: 1) Building setbacks, 2) height restriction, 3) lot coverage percentage, 4) square footage requirements (which is a sliding scale depending on lot size-there are incentives to allow a homeowner to have a larger home than allowed) and 5) landscape screening. Design review board should not be made up entirely of Island residents. Have at least one member of the board be an off island design expert. Daniel Island's design review process has about six different stages, some of those are: 1) meet with homeowner to steer them in the right direction, 2) consent order that deals with height, scale and mass and general site design including landscaping, 3) during construction make periodic inspections to make sure house is being built according to plans, 4) final inspection after certificate of occupancy. There are 5 members of the board. The board is made up of several members of the staff of the Daniel Island Company. Eventually it will be turned over to the Homeowners Association.

Eddie Bellow is the city architect in the preservation office of the City of Charleston, administers the BAR and the design review board. The BAR deals with any exterior changes to a building. Charleston's zoning regulations are very strict restrictions for height, lot coverage and setbacks. There is a clear break in between the zoning regulations and what the BAR does. BAR looks at design as it relates to the context. Thinks the Town of Sullivan's Island should set up very clear restrictions regarding lot coverage, height etc. then design review is very easy. What is built on Sullivan's Island should work with its context. With regards to the preservation of historic structures you must hold your ground. There are lots of incentives for homeowner's to have their homes listed as national register. Mr. Bellow does a final inspection before a C.O. is issued. Every building is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. There are no written guidelines for the City of Charleston. Mr. Bellow makes a recommendation to the Board on his opinion of what should be allowed.

Alice O'Dell stated that there are two issues with her regarding design review: 1) height, scale and mass and 2) the design review capacity for the historic overlay preservation district. In the public hearings she has heard some consensus for the design review capacity for those issues. Feels preservation is very important.

Hal Currey believes that what we have is a preservation problem. Regulations need to control height, scale and mass; not the size. Houses need to be in context with their surroundings. Has a hard time dictating what someone is building. Must deal with the preservation issue with an iron hand.

Bobby Thompson, planning commission has been working on this for five years and has done a lot of research. Would like to see David Schneider brought in to help with looking at some of the houses on the historic list.

Blaine Ewing, we need a preamble to set something up for the design review committee to fall back on. In favor of limiting height, mass and scale, but must be taken into context of the neighbor it is in. Design needs to be taken into account if you are in a historic overlay district or not.

Billy Craver, for preservation of true historic structures, but concerned that we are using general guidelines and not determining what is historical. Does not want to dictate taste, concerned that you would end up with the taste of the design review board. Concerned about height, scale and mass, but does not feel we need a design review committee to have control. Would like to see the zoning issues tweaked to accomplish what they want to accomplish. Allow people to have two structures instead of one. This would encourage people to not tear down old structures. Not in favor of design review committee. Creating a design review committee will pit neighbor against neighbor.

Bobby Thompson feels that we can work on setbacks, work on scale and write them into zoning standards and not touch design review at all. Supports the historic designation and design guidelines.

Scott Parker is in favor of the design review capacity for the Town of Sullivan's Island. It is very important to establish an overriding understanding of what it is that makes this place unique and what everyone values. Tell the design review board what their mandate is. Have the board and a very key staff person attached to that group. Town should immediately move to find a staff person to support the design review board. The board should be made up of an off-island resident, planners and builders and residents. Feels that design review is critical in historic areas. Sense of place is key.

Next two meetings are May 27th and June 2nd.

Meeting was adjourned.