CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

Historic Preservation Commission

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) met on the 15th for a work session and regular session. The work session was one of many that they have had over the past few months to work on new Design Guidelines for the Cambridge Historic District.

The Commissioners have been meeting with city staff in open work session on a regular basis recently in order to be able to meet timelines set by the Maryland Historic Trust for completion of this project. There were 3 meetings this week and 2 are scheduled for next week. They have been reviewing the different parts of the current Design Guidelines and working with a consultant to help improve the Guidelines and find ways to expedite the HPC process while maintaining the integrity of the Historic District.

The residents who are your commissioners and are volunteering a significant amount of time to this project are Herschel Johnson, Ron Berman, Sharon Smith, Susan Morgan, and George Vojtech and substitute member Janice Olshesky. City Staff are Pat Escher, City Planner, and Herve Hamon, Assistant City Planner. They are doing the work of pulling information together.

A number of important dates are approaching that those living in the Historic District or are interested in historic preservation need to put on your calendars. Some are set and some are tentative, but here they are.

The first date is April 12th. That is the day that the second draft of the proposed guidelines will be put on the HPC page of the city website – [www.choosecambridge.com](http://www.choosecambridge.com). There will be a place there for anyone to offer comments regarding this draft. The deadline for receiving comments will be April 19th. At the HPC work session meeting on the 19th at 6 p.m. the Commissioners will review those public comments and discuss responses and next steps.

Between the 19th and the 26th of April, any additional public comments may be submitted on the HPC page of the City Website. In addition, on the 26th there will be the Public Hearing where any additional email comments or public comments made by people attending the meeting will be considered.

Between April 26th and May 17th, the final draft of the Design Guidelines will be developed where a final draft will be presented to the HPC and, hopefully, approved. From there the Guidelines will be submitted to City Council for review and comment on by the end of May.

The goal is to then approve a final version on June 21st that will go to the Maryland Historic Trust for comment and development into the final document to be presented to City Council in, hopefully, August.

As you can see the timeline between now and August is tight and engagement of the public is an important part of this process that will result in Design Guidelines that will help the current and future HPC Commissioners and those who own property in the Historic District to ensure the integrity of the Cambridge Historic District.

I urge those of you who will be impacted by these Design Guidelines to take the time to read and review this second draft when it is posted and provide your insight or questions. I can tell you that the focus of the Commissioner’s work has been to make these Guidelines more user friendly and easier to understand with more administrative decisions, where possible, to improve the process while ensuring that the historic character of the Cambridge Historic District is maintained.

Following the work session on the 15th, the HPC held its regular meeting where a number of matters were quickly heard and approved including the signs on Poplar and High Street for the Ava’s Pizzeria and Wine Bar and on High Street for Justine’s Ice Cream Parlor. Both businesses have existing locations in St. Michael’s and are about to open new operations here in Cambridge. Be sure to welcome and support them.