

Town of Odessa

Minutes from the Historic Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 12, 2024
7:00 PM Meeting

- I. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.
- II. Roll Call – All commission members were present: Debbie Buckson, Neeka Grove, Todd Nelson, Carla Pyle and Melissa Steeley. Also attending: Mayor Harvey C. Smith Jr., Town Secretary Amy Marie Ottinger and Town Solicitor Barrett Edwards. Representing K. Hovnanian Homes was Division President Mike Irons, Project Architect Maisha Gillman, Land Acquisition Analyst Kyle Spillane, Land Planning Specialist Collins Jones and Land Use Counselor Pam Scott of Saul Ewing LLP. There were (10) residents in attendance.
- III. Approval of the Minutes
 - a. Meeting Minutes from 7-25-24: There were no additions or corrections to the minutes.
- IV. New Business
 - a. Maureen Given
 - 401 Main Street
 - Parcel #24003.00122
 - 8' x 10' Shed constructed with T-111 wood with furring strips to give appearance of board and batten and black metal roof with gable roof design
 - **MOTION BY DEBBIE BUCKSON, SECONDED BY TODD NELSON, TO APPROVE THE PROJECT AS PRESENTED. MOTION WAS APPROVED. VOTE: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTAIN**
 - b. Timothy Jubilee
 - 205 North Sixth Street
 - Parcel #24003.00032
 - Interior Fence / Dog Yard constructed from 6' x 6' Black Aluminum Panels attached to 4' x 4' wooden posts painted black with a 5' Black Aluminum gate.
 - Exterior Valance Fence constructed from 6' x 6' dark stained dog ear panels on 4' x 4' wooden posts. Exterior valance fence is to be 3' outside interior dog fence.
 - Valance Fence and Dog Enclosure will be same height. Posts will be cut flush with the fence.
 - Neeka Grove suggested to the homeowner that he paint the dog ear fence versus staining it so that it will last longer.
 - **MOTION BY NEEKA GROVE, SECONDED BY DEBBIE BUCKSON, TO APPROVE THE PROJECT AS PRESENTED. MOTION WAS APPROVED. VOTE: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTAIN**

c. K. Hovnanian Odessa Commons Proposed Architectural Design Standards Manual

- Mike Irons, Division President, started off the presentation. K. Hovnanian Homes is the contract purchaser for the Odessa Commons property. He was here to present details of the site first, and then to discuss their proposed architecture and some of the architectural detailing that they have in their design standards manual, attached hereto as Attachment A (*10-page manual dated April 15, 2024*) that was submitted to the commission for review.
- Mike provided a PowerPoint presentation, attached hereto as Attachment B (*35-page presentation dated September 12, 2024*).
- Townhomes are all alley or rear loaded. The single-family homes all have garages in front. The PND Zoning has grid like streets, a mix of housing types, and is integrated with commercial use. There is connectivity between the residential and commercial areas. Mike stated that their entire site plan is code compliant with the PND zoning: lots sizes, density, etc. They are proposing to dedicate 0.52 acres of land to the town to be used for parking for the Memorial Park as shown on Page 8.
- Mike asked if anyone had any questions on the site plan being presented. Neeka Grove inquired about parking and if there would be any requirements for no on street parking. Mike stated that if it was the desire of the town to not allow on street parking, then they could make that a part of their HOA covenants and restrictions. He stated that each of the single-family homes will have a two-car garage and a two-car driveway. They are also proposing additional overflow parking.
- Mike continued with his presentation discussing the proposed architecture of the community. They are targeting a first-time or first move-up buyer. He gave a general overview of the different models that they are proposing and discussed the various layouts. He turned the presentation over to Project Architect Maisha Gillman who discussed their proposed materials. She stated that they are proposing vinyl siding which is consistent with some homes in the immediate area. In her opinion, it is a durable product and a maintenance free material that is easily accessible for building. They are proposing a vinyl beaded siding which they feel has a nicer texture profile and has better historical significance. It comes in a variety of colors. They are also proposing a textured shake in vinyl and a vinyl board and batten. Mike stated that vinyl is very maintenance free – no painting, no splitting, no cracking – it is very durable and helps to keep the neighborhood affordable for their target market. Maisha added that the beaded siding locks together which prevents buckling and wears better than Dutch lap siding which is nailed in. She continued with the presentation and materials, and prior to discussing the proposed commercial renderings, she asked if anyone had any questions.
- Neeka Grove provided comments. She stated that on a positive note the massing is approachable in that we could do some things and shift things to make things appear more traditional. There are elements in their designs that are not what we would see in traditional construction like their fronts and elevations. She suggested bringing the front of the buildings a little closer while pushing back some secondary elements. She suggested less gables stating that there are not layers of gables in traditional

architecture. Clipped gables are not necessary. She stated that the Historic Commission follows the National Park Preservation standards, and they do not approve any vinyl products: windows, siding, etc. The commission recommends Hardie siding which is their compromise on exterior options. The National Park Preservation Guidelines state that for new construction it should be authentic true materials: if it's a stone veneer its true stone veneer, not simulated stone. They are basing their recommendations on what the National Guidelines recommend.

- Debbie Buckson provided a historic perspective stating that stone was not used in this region. Brick and brick with frame was the building style of choice for homes in this area. The commission is recommending no masonry on the homes unless it is brick.
- Mike Irons stated that they did not feel as though their project was subject to National Park Preservation guidelines. Maisha added that they tried to make a good effort to meet the Towns architectural standards but still allowing for some material deviations on products that are more readily available to them. Mike stated that Hardie Board siding would increase the price by \$30-40k, and they need to be compatible with other homes in the area. They felt their plans, materials and products were very compatible with the area. He stated that the Mayor and Planning Commission members had expressed some concerns about the success of the community, being able to finish the project, and offering the homes at affordable price that they can sell. When competing with Middletown and communities in the County that are offering vinyl and vinyl windows, he felt it would drastically impair their ability to market these homes due to the cost being cost prohibitive for their target market.
- Amanda Russell, Planning Commission Chairperson, spoke up and stated that her concerns were not with K. Hovnanian and whether they would finish the residential portion of the project, but rather that the commercial portion of the project would not be completed. The towns original agreement was that residential and commercial would be completed at the same time, and since there is no buyer for the commercial portion of the project, her concern is that the commercial portion will fall thru. The Mayor mirrored the same concerns.
- Land Acquisition Analyst Kyle Spillane read from the PND code pertaining to Deviations from PND standards (Section 85.4, Section A (1)) which reads "In order to afford the applicant sufficient flexibility to design a high-quality New Urbanist community, waivers from the requirements of this section may be granted pursuant to the procedures and required findings set forth in this subsection." Mike Irons stated that what they presented to the town was their design standards manual for this community, and as far as they understand it, they are not part of the historic district and therefore some of the architectural requirements that are required in the historic district don't apply to their project. They are proposing materials that are in general compliance with as many of the codes as they think they are able to, while still trying to reach their target market.
- Pam Scott stated that the PND zoning requires its own set of standards and that the language of the PND ordinance is very specific and allows the developers and designers flexibility (Section 85.6, Section C, Item 8a(ii)). The code states "In designing new buildings, consideration should be given to the dominant architectural features

of existing buildings in the immediate vicinity, as applicable. However, strict adherence to existing architectural styles is not the predominant goal of this ordinance.” In putting the whole plan together and looking at what is in the surrounding area and trying to comply with the PND requirements, that is how her client K. Hovnanian came up with what is being presented. She stated that the idea is that specific standards are designed for this community, and that they be flexible. K. Hovnanian reiterated that they came to the town looking for guidance and recommendations on their proposed design standards.

- The recommendation of the commission was to not use vinyl siding and windows. The commission recommends Hardie board siding and wood clad windows with exterior mutins. The commission was agreeable to architectural asphalt shingles, steel front entry way and garage doors, standing seam metal accent roofs, PVC solid trim and porch and railings. The commission would not like to see board and batten on the homes as that is mainly used in barns. Debbie Buckson added that consistency of materials is important – colors and designs. They would like all four elevations wrapped in the same materials. They would prefer that if the shutters are not the width of half of window, that they not be installed. They requested that the windows be true simulated divided light like the Anderson 400 Series. The commission would prefer 2 over 1 or 2 over 2 windows (minimum divided lights, no 1 over 1 windows: meaning the windows must have some grills/divided light).
- The commercial renderings that were provided to them by the property owner were reviewed last with a brief explanation on proposed uses: a hotel, a stand-alone restaurant, and four buildings of apartments over retail. Pam Scott stated that the current owner is planning on retaining the land, developing it and then leasing the office/retail space.
- Debbie Buckson stated that the Town of Odessa is a National Historic District and its important that the things around us complement that, rather than detract from it.
- Mike Irons requested that the commission provide a written response with feedback. He stated that they have already gone thru PLUS with the State and if they can reach some common ground on materials and architecture with the town, then they will proceed with their preliminary plans. Their agreement with the sellers is conditional upon approvals from the town. They would not close until they had all their approvals.
- John Batulis, Diemler Street resident, wanted to know why the Odessa Woods residents did not have to conform with the standards of the historic district when they were built over 20 years ago. Carla Pyle stated that there was no historic commission at the time that the houses were built nor were there architectural standards at that time.
- Shelley Perry, Main Street resident, stated that the heart of our community is the historic section and that there is a shortage of historic areas that are preserved and being taken care of. She requested that the character of the front of these homes reflect something that we can be proud of on all sides of the town, something that can't be found a few feet down the road, is different, and will connect the new homes with the existing homes in the town.

- Carla Pyle thanked K. Hovnanian on their willingness to compromise and talk about this project. She stated that one of the reasons why people are drawn to Odessa is for the character of the town, the walkability of the town, and the sense of community that we have here. She felt that even if the materials cost a bit more, the appeal of living here and the walkability of the area will help to make up for the additional cost.
- Meghan Mahoney, Odessa Heights resident, inquired about the HOA and who would manage and maintain the guidelines set by the HOA. Mike Irons stated that typically they hire a property manager who would collect the monthly dues for the common area maintenance and would be responsible for enforcing the covenants and restrictions of the HOA. He added that the residential streets would be controlled by the town so ultimately it would be the responsibility of the town to enforce.
- Amanda Russell stated that the town wanted a parking lot to address the safety concerns over parking at the Memorial Park. The Mayor added that his hope is to create a paved parking lot in which you drive in and the area leads to the park; he is not looking for a large parking lot. Amanda added that if there is not a parking lot for the park, the users of the park are going to park in the new neighborhood and on their streets. Mike said that they are trying to follow the requirements of the original annexation agreement. Amanda stated that what they were proposing in their drawing on Page 8 was not what was agreed to. Mike added that quite a few parking spots can be placed in a ½ acre parcel of land, and that any parking area would need to be approved by DeIDOT first.

V. Old Business – There was no old business.

VI. Public Comment – There were no additional public comments.

VII. Next Meeting Date and Time – Next scheduled meeting is Thursday, October 10, 2024 @ 7:00 pm.

VIII. Adjournment – There was a motion by Neeka Grove to adjourn and it was seconded by Debbie Buckson. Motion was approved. Vote: 5 Ayes, 0 Nays. The meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.