Historic Resources Commission of Asheville & Buncombe County
Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2026
1st Floor North Conference Room
City Hall (70 Court Plaza)
4:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Will Hornaday, Celesta Gorman, Amy Gharst, Jenny Bowen, Robert Mays, Leslie Humphrey, Hans Skouby
Absent: Vice-Chair Sioux Oliva, Cecil Holt, Shannon Watkins, Amy Moxley, Bill Roberts
Staff: Alex Cole, Matt Holloway, Haley Mahoney

Administrative

- Ms. Gorman moved to approve the minutes and the Findings of Fact & Conclusions of Law of the December 10, 2025 meeting, with an amendment to add a note that Chair Hornaday had recused himself from the vote for the case hearing of 71 Starnes Avenue. This motion was seconded by Mr. Mays and carried unanimously.
- After Chair Hornaday explained the public hearing rules, all those present in the audience and staff who anticipated speaking were sworn in.

Public Hearings

1. Certificate of Appropriateness - 123 West Chestnut Street (PIN 9649123772) - Construction of new one-and-a-half story, 1,085 square foot accessory structure. Applicant: Donald Nicholson

Historic Resources Planner Alex Cole presented the following staff report and oriented the commission to the property.

Owner/Applicant: NUALART JAIME;GREENE ELEANOR/Donald Nicholson
Subject Property: 123 West Chestnut Street
Hearing Date: January 14, 2026
Historic District: Montford
PIN: 9649123772
Zoning District: RM8

Property Description: 0.27 acre parcel containing an early 20th-century asymmetrical stucco dwelling with wide eaves, Montford brackets, stone foundations, molded detail, bay windows.

Certificate of Appropriateness Request: Construction of a one-and-a-half story, 1,085 square foot accessory structure with stone veneer foundation, painted pebbledash and wood shake siding, and CertainTeed Landmark asphalt shingles in Colonial Slate color; windows will be Marvin aluminum clad 12/1 and multi-lite casement SDL in Wineberry color; pedestrian doors will Reeb wood multi-lite over panel and garage doors Carriage House Door Company wood

panel with multi-lite transoms; entry on south elevation will be set within an engaged porch with wood flooring, steps, ceiling and handrail matching primary structure; structure will have painted wood brackets at roof overhangs matching primary structure. Site work, including removal of one 12" DBH Cherry tree and replanting of one 2.5" caliper tree of same or similar species from the Montford Recommended Species List prior to the end of Fall 2027, construction of brick walkway between primary structure and new accessory structure; construction of a 12' long x max 18" tall stone veneer retaining wall, and installation of 28" x 37" x 15" mini-split unit adjacent to east elevation of new structure; ground cover must be established within 15 days after completion of construction, and the remainder of the landscaping must be installed within 3 years. If archaeological resources are discovered during site work, work will cease until City staff have been notified and have inspected the site. All work will be in accordance with attached and approved drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

HRC Staff Concerns per the Applicable Standards & Submittal Requirements:

1. Keep the proportion of new accessory structures compatible with the proportion of the main house (primary structure) in terms of height, footprint and massing. New accessory structures should be no more than 30% of the scale of the main house (# 6, p. 35); square footage of the proposed new structure is nearly 50% of the square footage of the existing primary structure.
2. Staff has asked the applicant to provide the following additional information for review:

    - Perspective rendering illustrating the structures as viewed from southwest (West Chestnut St/Cumberland Alley)
    - Manufacturer specifications for door on south elevation
    - Dimensions for proposed retaining wall

The standards for Carriage Houses, Garages and Accessory Structures found on pages 34-35, Landscaping and Trees on pages 40-41, Lighting on pages 42-43, Walkways, Driveways and Off-Street Parking on pages 50-51, Fences and Walls on pages 36-37, Archaeology on pages 32-33 and Utilities and Mechanical Systems on pages 82-83 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

Staff Recommendation - Staff does recommend approval of the request for the following reasons, provided concerns have been addressed:

1. Proportion of new accessory structure is compatible with the proportion of the primary structure in terms of height, footprint and massing, and is not more than 30% of the main house and not taller than one-and-a-half stories.
2. New accessory structure is sited in a location so as to be in keeping with the historic pattern in terms of relationship to primary structures, traditional location of ancillary buildings, orientation, setback, retention of green space and spacing between structures.

3. New accessory structure has a traditional roof form, materials and details compatible with the main building.
4. New mechanical unit will be inconspicuously located and screened with shrubs.
5. Retaining wall will be constructed of stone veneer and will be sited in locations that are compatible with the traditional historic relationship of walls and walkways to historic properties in the district.
6. Walkway will be constructed of brick and is compatible with the site and district in terms of dimension, configuration, materials, color and texture.
7. Tree being removed is leaning; replacement tree will be the same or similar species from the Montford Recommended Species List.

Ms. Cole presented the application for construction of a new one-and-a-half story, 1,085 square foot accessory structure located at 123 West Chestnut Street, which is at the intersection of West Chestnut Street and Chestnut and Cumberland Alley. She said that because she had not been present at the December meeting, she had listened to the hearing on this application to better understand the discussion around interpretation of the accessory structure standards and why the application had been continued. She explained that it was important to consider both the overall square footage comparison between the new and existing structure in conjunction with the overall form and design. Ms. Cole clarified this was somewhat subjective, and these elements are considered holistically rather than relying solely on numerical comparisons.

Ms. Cole noted that the plans were essentially unchanged from last meeting. She noted that the garage doors appeared to be different and said she would like the applicant to clarify which doors were being proposed. In addition to the garage doors, Ms.Cole acknowledged that the lighting plans and specifications lacked two key details—which specific fixtures would be used and where exactly they would be installed on the structure. Ms. Cole explained that this information would need to be provided, but could be conditions on the approval.

She noted that the applicant had submitted models to better demonstrate the relationship between the existing and proposed structures, and Ms. Cole stated that these models have helped her to feel more comfortable with the scale of the new structure. She added that the accessory structure seems to be in scale with other structures along the alley. Ms. Cole sought to clarify on the differences between how the City calculates square footage allowances for accessory dwelling units or ADUs versus how square footage calculations are considered for accessory structures under the design standards. She explained that the underlying zoning ordinance restricts a detached ADU to 70% of the primary structure's size or 800 square feet, whichever is lesser; this square footage allowance excludes unheated square footage. When considering a proposed accessory structure against the design standards: from a design review standpoint, Ms.Cole clarified that the entire above-ground structure, regardless of whether the space is heated or unheated, should be considered as this approach ensures the review focuses on the physical form and massing of the building rather than just its internal utility or floor area.

Ms. Cole reiterated that the new models made her feel more confident with the overall design, and noted that when comparing the existing primary structure to the proposed

accessory structure, the existing structure had more exposed foundation beneath the first floor. She remarked that it gave the building more height within the landscape, whereas the accessory structure had very little exposed foundation wall on the backside of it.

Ms. Humphrey offered that when the commission discussed the proposed structure in December, they were trying to figure out which rules applied and the definition of massing in terms of whether it was the square footage, the footprint multiplied by the height, or just the heated space, etc. She then asked Ms. Cole to clarify the zoning interpretation about the allowable size of accessory structures. Ms. Cole confirmed the max size for an ADU is 70% the square footage of the main dwelling or 800 sqft, whichever is the lesser, and the maximum size for an accessory structure is an 800 square feet footprint (*for lots measuring 1 acre or less*). She reiterated that for the purposes of HRC review, the commission should be looking at everything above ground as it relates to the portion of the primary structure that is above ground.

Mr. Mays noted that what was discussed most regarding this case at the last meeting was the 30% scale of the main house. Ms. Cole commented that she was unsure where that standard came from, but that the existing standards were created in 2015, before she started with the City. She added that the standards were made more restrictive than what was in place previously, and that while she was on the periphery of those changes as she was only volunteering with the City at the time, she remembered it being a contentious process. Ms. Cole noted that it was her understanding that there were a couple of accessory structures that had been approved that were pretty big (*e.g. two story buildings with three-car garages*), and this had concerned some people in the neighborhood. This led to the standards being amended to make them more restrictive to one-and-a-half stories and no more than 30% of the overall size of the existing primary structure. Ms. Cole said she was unsure of how the 30% standard was intended to be interpreted when adopted, but her predecessor, Stacey Merton, guided her to look at the quantitative number as 30%, but to also factor in the site, form, massing, etc., to create a holistic picture versus a hard number.

Mr. Mays relayed that he had an unrelated comment regarding the front and back facades. He asked Ms. Cole to display the schematic for the structure's final design, and posed whether it seemed unusual that it was one solid surface with no midband or flare. Ms. Cole replied that it was common for there to be a trim board at least between the upper and first story, and that if there were a prominent break in the materials one would be needed here. In this case, it was not something that stuck out to her, but she noted that the north elevation felt a little bit vacant in terms of fenestration. However, she added that it may just be the positioning of the stairway on the interior of the structure. She also noted that there were a number of accessory structures on the alley that did not have a ton of windows or doors.

Chair Hornaday asked Ms. Cole if she got the information she needed for the retaining wall, and she confirmed that she cleared things up by reading the December minutes. Ms. Cole ended her presentation by reiterating that the exact lighting specifications and pedestrian door specifications were needed for review.

Mr. Donald Nicholson, builder and applicant, explained that the electrical plans showed the location of the lighting. He explained there would be two sconces that flank the double doors on the western facade, and a third sconce next to the door on the southern facade. Chair Hornaday asked the applicant to clarify the locations of the scones, and he confirmed there

would be one on each side of the double doors and one on the porch to the right of the door. Chair Hornaday then asked Mr. Nicholson for clarification on the garage doors, and Mr. Nicholson responded that the previously proposed door opening was wider.

Ms. Humphrey asked about the change from carriage doors to French doors on the west elevation and what motivated it, as the carriage doors looked more appropriate. The applicant explained that the owners do not actually plan to park a vehicle in the unconditioned space, so the French doors made more sense from a building envelope and light perspective. The doors are wide enough to get a vehicle through, but end-use is not geared toward a vehicle. The French doors present a more user-friendly and energy efficient option.

Ms. Cole wondered whether there could be a second door on the exterior door that might appear more consistent with a carriage door. In response to Mr. Nicholson, Ms. Cole explained that her idea was to add some sort of covering to the French doors that could act as a type of shutter. Mr. Nicholson said he thought it was an interesting idea, but that he could not comment on a shutter option, as he did not want to speak on behalf of the property-owner without their input.

Chair Hornaday said the solid glass doors may be incongruous with the neighborhood and alley on a new structure, and that there may be an option that is more in line with typical garages on this street. Mr. Mays asked if the doors were half or full glass, and Mr. Nicholson said he was unsure. He noted that even though they called it a garage it was more of an unconditioned studio space, and it is not their intent to represent that a vehicle would go through the doors. He went further to express that they had looked for examples within the district for what was allowable, and saw mostly full glass doors. However, he reiterated that they were seeking approval and would be willing to change the design back to the carriage doors if needed.

Mr. Mays asked Mr. Nicholson if there had been any other major changes since the December hearing, and he verified there were none. Mr. Mays inquired as to whether Mr. Nicholson had run any calculations to determine the total volume of the structures, and Mr. Nicholson said he had not.

Mr. Mays questioned whether the Applicant intended to change the plans back to a carriage style door, or if he planned to move forward with the French doors. Ms. Cole reiterated that she thought it would be more appropriate for the doors to be more consistent with carriage doors. In response to Mr. Nicholson, Ms. Bowen said she thought that if the French doors had multiple lites they would be more appropriate. Mr. Nicholson stated that there may be some aftermarket options to dress up the glass doors. Chair Hornaday noted that the applicant would not be able to use an aftermarket option that is “clip-in,” but rather they would have to be physically divided lights; Ms. Cole clarified they would need to at least be simulated divided lights.

Mr. Skouby asked if Mr. Nicholson was proposing something along the lines of a fifteen (15) lite French door, and he replied that they would go with whatever option the HRC thought was appropriate and was in line with his clients needs. Chair Hornaday noted that what would be an appropriate number of lites should be driven by the windows around it, and this detail could be staff approved. Chair Hornaday then turned to the Commission to gauge their

willingness to approve with the condition that staff would approve the final window design (*i.e. number of divided lites*). Ms. Gorman questioned whether this meant that the door would still be full glass, top to bottom, and Chair Hornaday confirmed that these doors usually have a bottom rail. Mr. Nicholson added that the doors have a bottom and top rail, but he was not sure of their thickness.

Ms. Humphrey asked whether the client had considered privacy, since the doors would be so close to the alley. She noted that other structures up against the alley had privacy features, such as fences. Mr. Nicholson responded that his clients preferred the light of the glass doors over privacy considerations.

Chair Hornaday opened the floor for public comment at 3:32 p.m., and when no one spoke, he closed the floor for public comment.

There was no further discussion on the application.

MOTION TO APPROVE CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Chairman, based upon the evidence presented to this Commission, including Exhibit A - application and project description (3 pages); Exhibit B - site plans and elevation drawings (4 pages); Exhibit C - owner affidavit; Exhibit D - new construction worksheet and materials list (5 pages); Exhibit E - window and door specifications (5 pages); Exhibit F - additional material specifications (20 pages); Exhibit G - brick, stone, and wood shake material images (3 pages); Exhibit H - photographs (4 pages); Exhibit I - property card (added by staff November 25, 2025); Exhibit J - updated application (2 pages - received December 17, 2025); Exhibit K - updated site plans and elevation - drawings (20 pages - received December 17, 2025); Exhibit L - lighting plan (19 pages - received December 17, 2025); Exhibit M - massing models (8 pages - received January 5, 2026); and the Commission's actual inspection and review of subject property by all members;

I move that this Commission **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness based on the following:

1. That the application is for construction of a one-and-a-half story, 1,085 square foot accessory structure with stone veneer foundation, painted pebbledash and wood shake siding, and CertainTeed Landmark asphalt shingles in Colonial Slate color; windows will be Marvin aluminum clad 12/1 and multi-lite casement SDL in Wineberry color; pedestrian doors will Reeb wood multi-lite over panel and multi-lite French doors; entry on south elevation will be set within an engaged porch with wood flooring, steps, ceiling and handrail matching primary structure; structure will have painted wood brackets at roof overhangs matching primary structure. Site work, including removal of one 12" DBH Cherry tree, construction of brick walkway between primary structure and new accessory structure; construction of a 12' long x max 18" tall stone veneer retaining wall, and installation of 28" x 37" x 15" mini-split unit adjacent to east elevation of new structure; ground cover must be established within 15 days after completion of construction, and the remainder of the landscaping must be installed within 3 years. If archaeological resources are discovered during site work, work will cease until City staff have been notified and have inspected the

site. All work will be completed in accordance with approved and attached drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

2. That the standards for Carriage Houses, Garages and Accessory Structures found on pages 34-35, Landscaping and Trees on pages 40-41, Lighting on pages 42-43, Walkways, Driveways and Off-Street Parking on pages 50-51, Fences and Walls on pages 36-37, Archaeology on pages 32-33 and Utilities and Mechanical Systems on pages 82-83 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

3. This application **does** meet the design standards for the following reasons:
    a. Proportion of new accessory structure is compatible with the proportion of the primary structure in terms of height, footprint and massing, and is not more than 30% of the main house and not taller than one-and-a-half stories.
    b. New accessory structure is sited in a location so as to be in keeping with the historic pattern in terms of relationship to primary structures, traditional location of ancillary buildings, orientation, setback, retention of green space and spacing between structures.
    c. New accessory structure has a traditional roof form, materials and details compatible with the main building.
    d. New mechanical unit will be inconspicuously located and screened with shrubs.
    e. Retaining wall will be constructed of stone veneer and will be sited in locations that are compatible with the traditional historic relationship of walls and walkways to historic properties in the district.
    f. Walkway will be constructed of brick and is compatible with the site and district in terms of dimension, configuration, materials, color and texture.
    g. Tree being removed is leaning; replacement tree will be the same or similar species from the Montford Recommended Species List.

4. That the action and improvements proposed in the application before us for a Certificate of Appropriateness **are** congruous with the special historic character of the Montford Historic District.

Motion by: Ms. Gorman

Second by: Mr. Skouby

Vote for: Mr. Skouby, Chair Hornaday, Ms. Bowen, Mr. Mays, Ms. Gharst, Ms. Gorman

Vote against: Ms. Humphrey (Ms. Humphrey was not in support of the French doors.)

Based upon the foregoing findings and for the reasons set forth therein, I move that a Certificate of Appropriateness be **issued** with the following conditions:

1. Exact light fixture specifications and pedestrian door specification for door on south elevation will be submitted for staff review and approval.
2. Revised door specifications for French doors on west elevation will be submitted for staff review and approval.

Motion by: Ms. Gorman
Second by: Mr. Mays
Vote for: Mr. Mays, Chair Hornaday, Mr. Skouby, Ms. Gharst, Ms. Gorman
Vote against: Ms. Humphrey, Ms. Bowen

A copy of the written decision approving the Certificate of Appropriateness is attached hereto and incorporated by reference.

2. Certificate of Appropriateness - 255 Cumberland Avenue (PIN 9649046297) - Replacement of two windows on east elevation of house. Applicant: Griff Gamble

Historic Resources Planner Alex Cole presented the following staff report and oriented the commission to the property.

Owner/Applicant: SMITH PATRICK SHANE/Griff Gamble
Subject Property: 255 Cumberland Avenue
Hearing Date: January 14, 2026
Historic District: Montford
PIN: 9649046297
Zoning District: RS8

Property Description: 0.37 acre parcel containing the John A. Campbell House: an early 20th-century two-and-a-half story vernacular stucco dwelling with irregular massing, bay window, and a recessed porch with molded and paneled porch posts.

Certificate of Appropriateness Request: Replacement of two non-original vinyl windows on east elevation; modification of existing openings and installation of new ganged pair of Marvin Ultimate TDL 12/1 wood windows. All work will be in accordance with attached and approved drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

HRC Staff Concerns per the Applicable Standards & Submittal Requirements:

1. Staff has asked the applicant to provide the following additional information for review:

    - Clarification on number of divided lites proposed

The standards for Windows and Doors found on pages 84-85 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

Staff Recommendation - Staff does recommend approval of the request for the following reasons:

1. Windows being replaced are not original or historic.
2. New windows will be wood, and compatible with the overall design of the building.

Ms. Cole stated the scope of work proposed was replacement of two existing non-original windows on the east elevation. She oriented the commission to the subject property, and remarked that it may look familiar, as the property has been the subject of other recent HRC reviews. Ms. Cole explained that the bumpout where the windows were located was not original to the structure. She noted that the initial submittal had included 9/1 double-hung windows but she pointed out to the applicant that the rest of the windows on the house were 12/1, so they had amended the application so that the new windows would match the existing.

Mr. Griff Gamble, builder and applicant, confirmed that the new windows would match the original pattern found throughout the rest of the residence. He noted that the trim would also match.

Chair Hornaday opened the floor for public comment at 4:44 p.m., and when no one spoke, he closed the floor for public comment.

Mr. Mays made note that this property was the one where the commission had recently approved a Tesla solar roof. He said it had been installed if any of the commission members wanted to view it. Chair Hornaday remarked that it was “invisble-ish,” and Mr. Mays commented that he had driven past it several times before noticing the installation.

There was no further discussion on the application.

MOTION TO APPROVE CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Chairman, based upon the evidence presented to this Commission, including Exhibit A - application (7 pages); Exhibit B - project description (2 pages); Exhibit C - owner affidavit; Exhibit D - window specifications (3 pages); Exhibit E - photographs (2 pages); Exhibit F - 1951 Sanborn map (added by staff December 18, 2025); Exhibit G - Google street view (added by staff December 18, 2025); Exhibit H - revised window specifications (3 pages - received January 13, 2025); and the Commission’s actual inspection and review of subject property by all members;

I move that this Commission **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness based on the following:

1. That the application is for replacement of two non-original vinyl windows on east elevation; modification of existing openings and installation of new ganged pair of Marvin Ultimate TDL 12/1 wood windows. All work will be completed in accordance with approved and attached drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

2. That the standards for Windows and Doors found on pages 84-85 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

3. This application **does** meet the design standards for the following reasons:

    a. Windows being replaced are not original or historic.

    b. New windows will be wood, and compatible with the overall design of the building.

4. That the action and improvements proposed in the application before us for a Certificate of Appropriateness **are** congruous with the special historic character of the Montford Historic District.

Motion by: Ms. Gorman
Second by: Mr. Mays
Vote for: Unaminous
Vote against: None

Based upon the foregoing findings and for the reasons set forth therein, I move that a Certificate of Appropriateness be **issued**.

Motion by: Ms. Gorman
Second by: Mr. Mays
Vote for: Unaminous
Vote against: None

A copy of the written decision approving the Certificate of Appropriateness is attached hereto and incorporated by reference.

3. Certificate of Appropriateness - 53 Birch Street (PIN 9639826325) - Replacement of existing partially collapsed stone retaining wall. Applicant: Patrick Haramija

Historic Resources Planner Alex Cole presented the following staff report and oriented the commission to the property.

Owner/Applicant: City of Asheville/Patrick Haramija
Subject Property: 53 Birch Street (Riverside Cemetery)
Hearing Date: January 14, 2026
Historic District: Montford
PIN: 9639826325
Zoning District: RS8

Property Description: 49.09 acre parcel comprising historic Riverside Cemetery.

Certificate of Appropriateness Request: Replacement of approximately 80' long x 6' tall section of existing stone retaining wall adjacent to eastern property boundary damaged by Tropical Storm Helene; replacement wall will be constructed of concrete faced with a ____ stone veneer and stone cap; four (4) mature trees will be removed to accommodate wall replacement; ___ long section of existing chain link fencing will be removed to accommodate wall replacement. All work will be in accordance with attached and approved drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

HRC Staff Concerns per the Applicable Standards & Submittal Requirements:

1. Replace in kind any portion of a historic wall that is damaged or deteriorated beyond repair. Match the original in design, configuration, texture, material and color as closely as possible (#3, p. 37); staff has concerns regarding proposed veneer and stone wall materials as they do not appear to be native stone and do not appear similar to existing materials in design, configuration, texture, material or color.
2. Staff has asked the applicant to provide the following additional information for review:

    - Approximate length of fencing to be removed and clarification as to replacement fence material

The standards for Fences and Walls found on pages 37-38, Landscaping and Trees on pages 40-41 and Archaeology on pages 32-33 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

Staff Recommendation - Staff recommends that the commission give feedback to the applicant on proposed stone materials.

4. Certificate of Appropriateness - 345 Montford Avenue (PIN 9649040738) - Replacement of existing partially collapsed stone retaining wall. Applicant: Patrick Haramija

Historic Resources Planner Alex Cole presented the following staff report and oriented the commission to the property.

Owner/Applicant: City of Asheville/Patrick Haramija
Subject Property: 345 Montford Avenue (Montford Park)
Hearing Date: January 14, 2026
Historic District: Montford
PIN: 9649040738
Zoning District: RM8

Property Description: 4.28 acre parcel containing Montford Park.

Certificate of Appropriateness Request: Replacement of approximately 185' long x 4' tall section of existing stone retaining wall adjacent to western edge of tennis courts damaged by Tropical Storm Helene; replacement wall will be constructed of concrete faced with a ____ stone veneer and stone cap. All work will be in accordance with attached and approved drawings and plans. **All permits, variances, or approvals as required by law must be obtained before work may commence.**

HRC Staff Concerns per the Applicable Standards & Submittal Requirements:

1. Replace in kind any portion of a historic wall that is damaged or deteriorated beyond repair. Match the original in design, configuration, texture, material and color as closely as possible (#3, p. 37); staff has concerns regarding proposed veneer and stone wall materials as they do not appear to be native stone and do not appear similar to existing materials in design, configuration, texture, material or color.

The standards for Fences and Walls found on pages 37-38 and Archaeology on pages 32-33 of the Montford Historic District Design Review Standards, adopted April 14, 2010 and amended December 11, 2019, were used to evaluate this request.

Staff Recommendation - Staff recommends that the commission give feedback to the applicant on proposed stone materials.

Ms. Cole presented the applications for the replacement of an existing partially collapsed stone retaining wall at Riverside Cemetery (*53 Birch Street*) and Montford Park (*345 Montford Avenue*). She explained that while these are two different sites, both applications were part of

Helene recovery work being covered by the same consultants with crossover in proposed materials. Ms. Cole began with the wall at Riverside Cemetery, and explained that an 80-foot section of the wall had effectively collapsed into adjacent private property, and because the wall backs up directly to cemetery land, there is a potential for burial sites to be located in close proximity to the work area. Special care must be taken during reconstruction to account for the sensitivity of potential burial sites adjacent to the wall.

Ms. Cole displayed photos showing portions of the wall that remain somewhat intact alongside the failed sections. She noted that she was unsure of the exact wall dimensions at its tallest point, but that due to the size and height of the wall, as well as proximity to the gravesites, the consultants had proposed an engineered wall with a stone veneer.

In terms of project funding, Ms. Cole said that these projects were to be federally funded. She explained that FEMA Public Assistance money can be used to restore damaged infrastructure to pre-storm conditions, which requires the project to undergo Section 106 review. She said she was unsure if the applicant had yet applied for the Section 106 Review.

Before discussing the proposed materials, Ms. Cole transitioned the presentation to the wall located at Montford Park. She introduced the commission to the site by explaining that there were a couple of different sections of retaining wall in the general area adjacent to the tennis/pickleball courts, but that the portion of the wall proposed for repair was on the west side of the courts. She also noted that there was another section of wall that had partly failed that was not included in this scope of work, and she would like clarification from the applicant as to whether this section was damaged prior to the storm and is included in the scope of work.

Ms. Cole noted that the standards require replacement materials for walls to match the existing as closely as possible. However, due to the cemetery site’s structural and environmental constraints, Ms. Cole explained that the commission may want to consider supporting a veneer wall. She said she thought the damaged park wall could be repaired with the existing materials since it was not very tall and didn't involve the same site constraints as the cemetery.

Ms. Cole clarified that wall repairs were typically handled administratively via minor work review However, because the proposed materials differ significantly from the existing historic materials, staff referred the application to the commission. While Ms. Cole remained open to a veneer solution at the cemetery, the material options submitted so far do not match the existing material closely enough. Ms. Cole said she also was not in support of the proposed caps for the walls, as it was more formal than the existing walls.

Chair Hornanday asked Ms. Cole to clarify whether the cap is being proposed for both walls, and Ms. Cole said she thought so but would defer to the applicant.

Ms. Cole went on to present the three natural stone options provided by the applicant, and noted that one sample appears to have the most natural look. However, she explained that the park wall featured a broader mix of colors, while the cemetery wall featured more brown tones and is likely composed of native stone, given its older age. Ms. Cole suggested investigating the original source of the cemetery stone to better inform the selection of a replacement material.

Mr. Mays asked if the cemetery wall was visible from the street, and Ms. Cole answered that it may be visible this time of year, however, in the summer it was not. Chair Hornaday remarked that he experienced difficulty locating the wall during a site visit. Mr. Mays expressed that if the wall was not publicly visible, then perhaps the commission could be more flexible with their review. Ms. Bowen added that the cemetery was older than the park, as it existed before the Montford neighborhood was established. Ms. Cole affirmed that the cemetery wall was older than the park wall. Mr. Mays stated that just because it's in the cemetery doesn't mean it's as old as the cemetery, and Ms. Cole agreed.

In addition to the previous considerations, Ms. Cole added that tree removal was another point to contemplate. The current proposal for the cemetery noted four (4) trees to be removed, and if plans change to require more extensive excavation, then more trees may need to be removed. Lastly, Ms. Cole spoke to the chain-link fence located along the top of the cemetery wall. She explained that the applicant would need to clarify how long the section of fencing was and what the replacement material would be.

Mr. Patrick Haramija, project consultant, started by providing a technical overview of the failed structures, explaining the existing walls were constructed of stacked stone without modern engineering or internal reinforcement. He further noted that, while these walls performed well historically, they lack quantifiable structural properties required for modern safety and stability standards, particularly after a disastrous event like Hurricane Helene. With this in mind, the applicant identified two options: (1) construct a structural support system behind the existing wall and restack the original stones as a decorative facade, or (2) replace the existing wall with a reinforced concrete structural wall finished with a stone veneer.

Mr. Haramija proposed proceeding with option two. This recommendation was based on site constraints, including the proximity of grave sites, project costs, and limited equipment access. He stated the goal was to select a veneer that closely matches the existing stone. Chair Hornaday asked Mr. Haramija which of the material samples presented a match, and he explained that a final match had not yet been determined.

Mr. Haramija requested that the HRC approve the wall type (*i.e concrete with veneer*) at this time, with the final selection of the specific stone veneer to be delegated to staff approval at a later date. Chair Hornaday and Mr. Mays discussed the role of the commission, and questioned whether the applicant was seeking approval or feedback. Ms. Cole responded that it was her recommendation that the commission provide feedback on the proposal so that they can use information to inform revisions to their application.

The commission discussion focused on balancing structural requirements, historic preservation standards, and severe site constraints. Chair Hornaday expressed support for the park option that involved constructing a structural wall with the stacked stone wall rebuilt in front of it, and asked the applicant to confirm whether he was willing to go with that option. Mr. Haramija expressed that it was possible, but it was a more expensive option, as rebuilding these requires support beyond simple dry-stacking, such as sheet piling or a separate structural backing. He clarified that walls exceeding three to four feet in height were classified as structural.

Chair Hornaday asked Mr. Haramija if the scope of work included the other damaged wall, and Mr. Haramija said that it was not included in this scope as it had been damaged prior to the storm. Mr. Mays noted that a specific section of the wall near the tennis courts—exceeding 4.5 feet in height—is currently leaning forward and presents a safety risk. Mr. Haramija explained that, while only a portion of the wall had collapsed, the applicant is coordinating with the City and FEMA to replace a larger section. According to the applicant, the engineering team determined that the wall functions as a single structural unit and should be addressed holistically. Mr. Mays continued the discussion by clarifying that there are two distinct walls that originate near the new ADA-accessible park entrance—one shorter wall runs toward the tennis courts, while a second, longer wall extends to the west side of the park. He went further to emphasize that if one section is replaced, it should match the remaining original wall to avoid a disjointed appearance. He also remarked that these walls were likely built to support historical park features that no longer exist, such as old fountains, playgrounds, or stages. While their original purpose may have changed, Mr. Mays noted that any reconstruction must prioritize matching the existing stonework and profiles of the neighboring wall structures.

The commission deliberated on the conflict between funding constraints, site logistics, and the required design standards for historic wall restoration. Ms. Cole mentioned that she was hoping the project manager from the Parks Department could have been present to add to the discussion. She clarified that, per the commission's bylaws, project cost cannot be a deciding factor in the approval process, and that, while FEMA funding is tied to pre-storm conditions, the commission must evaluate the project based solely on the design standards. These standards require replacing historic walls in kind, matching the original design, texture, material, and color as closely as possible. Ms. Bowen added, and Ms. Cole confirmed that the City must be held to the same standards as a private homeowner; no special accommodation should be made regarding the in-kind replacement rule simply because the applicant is a municipal entity.

Despite a general preference for stacked stone, Ms. Cole acknowledged that a veneer might be the only viable solution for the cemetery wall. This potential concession is due to the extreme complicating factor of excavation, which would likely disturb the cemetery or require encroaching into the neighboring property. Ms. Cole also expressed skepticism regarding the quality of stone veneers, and noted that many veneers fail to replicate the authentic texture of historic stacked stone, potentially resulting in an artificial appearance.

Mr. Mays brought up "pre-cast" or "cast-in-place" products as a potential middle ground. He explained this option involves concrete blocks with stone set into the face during the curing process to better simulate a natural wall. The applicant confirmed that their proposal was essentially a cast-in-place concrete wall with a thin-cut stone veneer (*natural stone cut flat on one side*) inserted into it, rather than a full-depth stone assembly.

The commission discussed the possibility of reusing the existing stone versus the logistical realities of the site. Ms. Bowen questioned why the original stones could not be salvaged and restacked in front of a new concrete support structure, as reusing the existing material was suggested as the most effective way to ensure an identical match in texture and color. Mr. Mays noted that to use the original stone as a veneer against a concrete wall, each stone would need to be individually sawn flat on one side. Pointing to another barrier, Mr. Haramija explained that there was insufficient space to accommodate both a new structural concrete wall and a full layer of stacked stone. Implementing both would require encroaching

onto private residential property or excavating into the cemetery. Ms. Bowen added that they do not know where all the gravesites are in this cemetery, which presents further challenges. Lastly, Mr. Haramija noted that alternative methods, such as using thin sheet piling to save space, would require heavy machinery. Due to the site's limited access, this would lead to significant tree removal and increased disruption to the neighboring property owners.

Ms. Humphrey transitioned into a technical inquiry regarding the physical footprint and construction methods of the proposed wall versus the original. She asked whether Mr. Haramija could provide the depth or thickness of the two options he presented. While exact measurements were not available, the Applicant estimated that the original stacked stones are approximately 16 to 18 inches deep, backed by soil. He also approximated that a poured concrete wall would be approximately 12 to 16 inches thick. Ms. Humphrey figured that the new assembly (*concrete plus veneer*) would likely result in an additional depth of less than two feet. However, the Applicant clarified that the construction process requires extra space for dual-sided forms (*front and back*) rather than pouring directly against the earth.

Ms. Gorman raised a question regarding what the stacked stones would look like on both sides, and whether the original stones would need to be stacked decoratively on both the front and back of the structural support. Mr. Haramija clarified the construction of the "stacked stone over structure." A metal sheet pile would serve as the structural barrier, holding back the earth between the upper and lower elevations. The historic stones would be stacked against the "low side" (*visible face*) of the sheet pile. Because the wall functions as a retaining structure with a high side and a low side, the Applicant confirmed that only the front face would be visible; the back side would be obscured by the earth and the structural piling.

Ms. Gharst inquired about the long-term integrity of a wall where the stones are no longer the primary load-bearing element. The Applicant responded that in this scenario, the stones would effectively become a "dry-stack" veneer, and the structural responsibility would shift entirely to the metal sheet piling. The discussion touched upon how this system would age compared to a traditional gravity wall, noting that while the aesthetic would match the historic condition, the stones themselves would no longer be "holding the earth back."

Ms. Gharst asked what this would mean in the event of another storm. The Applicant clarified that while the decorative stones might shift, the sheet piling itself would be engineered to withstand modern structural loads and storm surges, providing a level of protection that the existing historic walls currently lack. Ms. Gharst suggested that if the stones are merely stacked in front of a metal sheet pile rather than serving as the load-bearing gravity element, they may be less stable than the original configuration. Because the stones cannot be easily anchored to the sheet piling, they would remain susceptible to toppling during heavy rains or seismic shifts.

Ms. Gorman investigated the root causes of the recent wall collapses to determine if the proposed designs addressed the correct issues. Mr. Haramija stated that the majority of the damage—specifically the collapse near the tennis courts—was caused by water-driven landslides and hydrostatic pressure rather than direct impact from falling trees. While a tree was identified at the top of the cemetery wall, the Applicant noted there was no clear evidence that the tree falling was the primary catalyst for the failure; rather, saturated soil conditions appeared to be the prevailing factor.

Ms. Humphrey asked about the depth of the proposed versus the original wall. The applicant estimated the original stacked stones were 16-18 inches deep with soil backing, and a poured concrete wall would be 12-16 inches thick. The applicant clarified that the concrete plus veneer assembly would require extra space for dual-sided forms, not just two feet of additional depth.

Ms. Gorman inquired if the stacked stones would be visible on both sides. Mr. Haramija explained that the proposed stacked stone over structure uses a metal sheet pile as the structural barrier. The historic stones would be stacked only on the low, visible face, while the high side would be obscured by earth and the sheet pile.

Ms. Gharst questioned the long-term integrity of a wall where the stones are merely a dry-stack veneer, with the metal sheet piling carrying the structural load. The applicant stated that while the aesthetic would match the historic wall, the stones would no longer be load-bearing. In the event of a storm, the sheet piling would be engineered for modern loads, protecting against failure even if the decorative stones shifted. Ms. Gharst suggested that if the stones are not load-bearing and cannot be easily anchored to the sheet pile, they might be less stable than the original wall and susceptible to toppling during heavy rain or seismic shifts.

Ms. Gorman asked about the cause of the wall collapsing. Mr. Haramija attributed the majority of the damage, particularly near the tennis courts, to water-driven landslides and hydrostatic pressure, not falling trees. While a tree was identified at the cemetery wall, the prevailing factor for failure appeared to be saturated soil conditions.

Chair Hornaday asked whether the applicant planned to have some sort of cap for the wall, and Mr. Haramija confirmed that a finished cap would be required if a structural concrete and veneer system was used. Mr. Haramija discussed two options for caps: (1) utilizing a distinct material, such as limestone, to create a defined border at the top of the wall, or (2) using the same stone veneer material to wrap over the top edge of the concrete, creating a more continuous appearance. It was noted that the existing walls did not feature formal caps; the stacked stones simply terminate at the height of the upper grade. The applicant clarified that if the committee required a traditional stacked stone approach , no cap would be installed, maintaining the original aesthetic where the stones simply stopped at the top.

Ms. Cole asked what the maximum height of the wall at the cemetery was, and Mr. Haramija replied that it maxes out at about six feet. Ms. Humphrey inquired about the transition points between the new construction and the original sections of the wall that remain intact, and emphasized the importance of a seamless transition to maintain the appearance of a single, continuous system. She also asked the applicant if they planned to work with contractors that were familiar with historic stone work. Ms. Humphrey expressed that there had been subpar work done in Montford in the past, and she guessed that was based on pricing. Mr. Haramija explained that under public bidding laws, the city is generally required to award projects to the lowest qualified bidder. Qualification is largely defined by holding a valid contractor’s license, which does not always guarantee specialized historic expertise. Ms. Humphrey questioned whether the City would have the right to reject the bid, and the applicant clarified that the City could reject *all* the bids, and put it back out for proposals. However, they cannot reject one bid for the next lowest qualified bidder. Mr. Haramija noted there were procurement strategies they can use to help ensure quality, and Chair Hornaday moved the discussion forward.

Ms. Bowen addressed the impact of the wall project on the existing mature tree canopy, particularly along the cemetery border. She highlighted that these trees provide a critical visual buffer and privacy screen between the cemetery and adjacent private properties. Mr. Haramija clarified that he would need to defer to City staff, as the tree removal along the cemetery border was originally designated as a City-led task separate from the structural engineering contract. Chair Hornaday asked if there would be an application for the tree removal to be submitted, and Mr. Haramija reiterated he would need to defer to the City for a response on the tree removal.

Ms. Cole clarified that the City does not apply to itself for tree removal, but the City Arborist will be consulted and will let her know if they would be removing trees. She also made note that there were some trees which may not be able to be removed due to site constraints. Ms. Bowen reiterated the importance of the cemetery trees for screening, and sought additional information. Ms. Cole explained that staff would work with the City Arborist to determine if a replanting plan exists and whether replacement trees can be sited appropriately to restore the privacy buffer for both the cemetery and the neighboring residents. However, any trees removed will not be required to be replanted in the same space, nor is there a particular Montford Historic District standard that requires properties within the district to protect their neighbors from cemetery uses.

Chair Hornaday turned to the commission to see if they had further questions on the cemetery before they transitioned back to the discussion of the park wall. Mr. Skouby inquired whether the two retaining walls (*i.e. Park and Cemetery*) were going to use the same sheet piles for their design, and the applicant verified that, while they had planned on using the same ones for both projects, it would depend on the decision of the HRC. Mr. Skouby pointed out that the park site offered significantly more freedom of movement and equipment access compared to the cemetery, which is constrained by private property and burial sites.

The commission then explored a more historically accurate approach for the park wall, given its better accessibility. Mr. Skouby questioned whether it would be possible to salvage the original full-thickness stones from the park wall and restack them against a new structural backing, rather than using a thin veneer. He suggested that the park wall could utilize a CMU or poured concrete core with the original full-depth stone anchored to the front. Mr. Haramijia agreed that using full-thickness stone at the park was a possibility, provided the stones could be safely anchored or mortared to the structural wall to prevent future toppling. Mr. Skouby noted this was a pretty standard practice for masonry restoration. Chair Hornaday asked if this design would have a base under it, and the applicant confirmed that a concrete base or stone footer could be used. Mr. Skouby asked Mr. Harajima to clarify whether a design that utilized the existing stone is only viable for the park, and he affirmed the potential for the park alone.

Chair Hornaday asked the Commission if they had further questions for the Applicant, but there were none.

Chair Hornaday opened the floor for public comment at 5:20 p.m.

Ms. Helen Robinson came to the podium to provide public comment. Chair Hornaday swore her in. Ms. Robinson introduced herself as a neighboring property owner whose land was directly impacted by the cemetery wall collapse. She outlined her and her husband’s concerns

to the commission, noting that approximately seven feet of her property is currently covered by debris from the collapsed wall. Ms. Robinson explained that she had been working with the Parks Department Project Manager, Tracy Wyman, and had the impression she and her husband would be included in the design review process. She expressed frustration that existing project documentation (*referencing 53 Birch Street*) contained inaccuracies regarding her address and ownership. Ms. Robinson voiced concern that the process had not been going how they expected up to this point, while acknowledging that it was a complex project, and requested to be more involved and informed with the process moving forward.

Lastly, Ms. Robinson referred to a previous agreement that cited a start date of September 1st with a 120-day completion window; however, she indicated no meaningful work had commenced. She reported poor site management, noting that a tree on her property was cut down and debris was left scattered without further action or communication. Concerns were reiterated by Ms. Robinson regarding the potential trampling of her private property during construction and the loss of mature trees on her land, which currently serve as a buffer between her residence and the cemetery. She again asked to be more included in the process.

Ms. Cole thanked Ms. Robinson for sharing her concerns, and clarified that while the commission's specific role is to evaluate the design standards of the wall, the procedural and communication concerns noted were valid. Ms. Cole committed to reaching out to Ms. Wyman to make sure that Ms. Robinson was better looped in moving forward, and apologized for the lack of communication. Ms. Robinson added that to be looped in moving forward, especially regarding the appearance of the wall, and the logistics and schedule of how the construction work will physically take place on or near the private property, would be especially helpful.

Ms. Cole asked Ms. Robinson if there was anything else she wanted to add, and she said no. Mr. Matt Holloway with the city's Legal Department, added to the conversation by explaining that the project is currently in a very preliminary stage, and it is unknown what the exact plans were at this time. He mentioned the City's intent to secure formal permission for property access, and noted the purpose of the current meeting was to receive channel markers and high-level design feedback from the commission rather than finalizing a specific construction plan. Mr. Holloway apologized for the lack of direct notification to the neighbors, and acknowledged that the adjacent property owners should have been informed sooner. In response to the neighbor's concerns regarding the lapsed 120-day timeline previously provided, Mr. Holloway recognized that the initial estimates were likely overly optimistic. He apologized again, and reassured Ms. Robinson that there would be better communication moving forward. Ms. Robinson expressed her appreciation for being given a chance to be heard.

Mr. Mays asked if Ms. Robinson had seen the proposed plans and if she had any comments on them. Ms. Robinson confirmed that, while she had seen the proposals, she did not have any comments at this preliminary stage. She expressed a lack of expertise to review the wall at this juncture, but a desire to still be included in the process. Chair Hornaday asked Ms. Robinson for her opinion as to whether the wall was about six feet tall, and estimated it to be much taller (*10-12 feet tall*). She then gave a visual description of the wall's height. He then apologized for experience with this process, and thanked her for being understanding.

Chair Hornaday turned to Mr. Skouby to discuss the idea he proposed earlier, which would reuse existing stone to marry into a concrete structure, and Mr. Skouby chimed in to explain. He outlined a hybrid approach using a structural core (*e.g. poured concrete or CMU/cinder block*) with a facade of salvaged original stones. It was noted that this method would be more efficient than a traditional gravity wall. Mr. Skouby determined that, while a historic dry-stack wall might be two or three stones deep, a hybrid wall would only require one layer of original stone to be anchored to the structural backing; this would reduce the total volume of salvaged material needed and eliminate the requirement for industrial sheet piling. Ms. Cole commented that the project team could look at this option in terms of feasibility, and if it is not the best option, they could come back and propose something else, and maybe look at other veneer options as one path for the cemetery. However, she also indicated that if the applicant can successfully implement the reuse of original materials, both wall projects could potentially be approved administratively. Under this scenario, a return to the full commission would not be required.

To provide the applicant the necessary time for technical review without risking a denial, Ms. Cole suggested that Mr. Haramija requests a continuance. Chair Hornaday asked for clarification as to why the application would not come back to the HRC for review, and Ms. Cole said that if the walls could be rebuilt with existing materials then only minor work review would be required.

Chair Hornaday turned to the commission to see if they had other suggestions, and Ms. Bowen asked for clarification as to whether veneer is being recommended for Riverside Cemetery. Ms. Cole clarified that they know the wall at the park can be rebuilt mostly as-is, and so its review can potentially be minor work. She also explained that if the cemetery wall can be rebuilt using the hybrid method—utilizing a structural core while reusing the original stone for the facade—it could be considered to have maintained its historic appearance, and could also potentially be reviewed as minor work.

Ms. Cole reiterated her concerns about veneers, and recommended that the applicant ask for a continuance. Chair Hornaday asked if they should vote on the park, and Ms. Cole again suggested that the applicant regroup with their project team and figure out what can be handled administratively (*if anything*), and what needed to come back to the HRC.

Ms. Gorman reiterated that the options presented for the Cemetery, thus far, have not had the same look or feel of the existing materials, and that the Commission would like to see more options.

Ms. Humphrey also wanted to know if the applicant was proposing a CMU retaining wall; since the sheet piles involve so much heavy equipment and invasive processes, it seems like the impact could be lessened by going with a CMU wall. Mr. Haramija asked whether Ms. Humphrey was referring to the park, cemetery, or both, and she responded that she did not think he was using sheet piles at the park. Mr. Haramija said that the sheet piles would be preferred at the cemetery, and maybe even necessary. He explained that there may be other options to consider for the park, so long as they were not doing a poured in place concrete wall. Ms. Humphrey remarked that she hoped that the applicant helps the adjacent property owner visualize the impact of the overall construction process at the cemetery.

Chair Hornaday asked the applicant if they would like to request a continuance to a future hearing date. The applicant asked if they could request February, and then go with a later date if they are unable to get their revised application turned in by the next deadline.

Chair Hornaday motioned to move this application to February's meeting. Ms.Gorman seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Comments from Commissioners, Public and Staff

Mr. Mays inquired about upcoming outreach efforts and the progress of proposed amendments to the Montford Historic District guidelines, specifically whether there would be a presentation at the upcoming Montford Neighborhood Association Meeting.

Ms. Cole explained that, while the MNA tentatively allotted 45 minutes for the presentation, specific topics of interest had not yet been clearly defined by the association, and have requested further clarification from the MNA to ensure adequate preparation. She confirmed attendance at the neighborhood association meeting on the 28th, with other City staff members to be present. Ms. Cole remarked on topics from past presentations at Montford Neighborhood Meetings, and Mr. Mays asserted that he had thought she would be presenting on the work on the Montford District historic standard amendments. Ms. Cole stated that they have not formalized an engagement plan for this work yet. She said she'd be prepared to provide a brief overview of the intended timeline for engagement on the amendments, and said there would likely be several opportunities for the public to weigh in.

Ms. Cole confirmed that the Executive Committee of the HRC meets this upcoming Tuesday at 9:30am, and the meeting will be virtual. In response to Mr. Mays about attending the meeting, Ms. Cole said that the meetings were technically for just the committee members and staff. She noted that the meeting would be livestreamed. Mr. Mays said he understood that any member could attend, and Ms. Cole said it had not come up before that a member not on the committee had wanted to attend a meeting. Mr. Mays stated his recollection that when a slate of officers was proposed to be elected to the Executive Committee, he had expressed that he thought a Montford resident should be on the Executive Committee, and was assured that other commission members could always attend the meetings and participate. Ms. Cole noted that the rules and procedures of the board hold that the Executive Committee is to be made up of elected board members, and they have a specific purview and function. She explained that this does not mean that others do not have valuable voices to add to these conversations, but noted that public comment wasn't taken at the meetings.

Mr. Mays expressed concern that specific proposals, particularly regarding fence guidelines, might be fully workshopped and finalized at the Executive Committee level before being presented to the full body for a simple up or down vote. He also noted that per the existing guidelines, any member may propose an amendment at any meeting. Mr. Mays emphasized that internal business procedures should not disempower individual members from being meaningfully involved in the substantive drafting and discussion of new or revised standards.

Ms. Cole remarked that a full commission work session was held in November specifically to ensure all members were engaged early in the process and to avoid a top-down approach.

Mr. Mays clarified that the focus was on ensuring that from this point forward, all commissioners—regardless of their status on the Executive Committee—had an opportunity to contribute their specific desires and technical feedback for the amended guidelines before they were presented for a final vote. He requested clarification on whether regular members could attend Executive Committee meetings, and noted a discrepancy between previous statements—that members were always welcome—and recent feedback suggesting their attendance might be inappropriate.

Ms. Cole clarified that she did not mean to imply attendance would be inappropriate, but rather that the Executive Committee is composed of elected officers with a specific mandate defined by the bylaws; the committee is designed to handle preliminary drafting and organizational tasks to streamline the workload for the full commission and reduce the administrative burden on staff. She reiterated that the November work session served as the primary vehicle for full-commission engagement. Moving forward, the Executive Committee will determine when a draft has progressed sufficiently to require another session with the full body.

Mr. Mays expressed further concern about the process, especially relating to the guidelines surrounding fences and the community engagement involved. Ms. Cole invited any commissioner to submit their own "redlined" drafts or specific wording suggestions directly to staff. These submissions will be shared with the Executive Committee for consideration and integration into any working drafts. Additionally, she encouraged commissioners to attend and participate in the upcoming community engagement opportunities alongside the public.

Chair Hornaday reiterated that the HRC has a goal of understanding how the guidelines (*e.g. fences*) are, or are not, working in the community. Mr. Mays remarked that he had spent a lot of time researching fence standards and history within the Montford neighborhood, and he wanted to provide his analysis to the commission on his findings. Moreover, he wanted to have the opportunity for a substantive discussion on what the standards should be moving forward, as he feels there has not been enough conversation amongst the full commission.

Ms. Gorman reflected that the decision to task the Executive Committee with the design standard analysis process was made approximately eighteen months ago, prior to the appointment of several current members. The current Executive Committee is not the same group that initiated this work. However, the mandate for the committee to spearhead these revisions remained in effect, and was likely the most efficient way to complete this work. Ms. Gorman clarified that nothing was currently set in stone. The goal of the current work was to produce a draft to facilitate broader discussion, not to bypass the full commission's expertise and authority.

Ms. Cole reiterated that performing detailed drafting work during regular monthly meetings would be impractical, and would prevent the commission from completing its standard agenda. It was clarified that a working group of the full commission would constitute a quorum, requiring formal public notice and a full-body commitment for every drafting session. Utilizing the

smaller Executive Committee allowed for a more nimble and efficient workflow. Ms. Cole also emphasized the importance of reaching a general consensus before engaging the neighborhood. While individual members may differ on minor details, the goal was for the commission to operate as a team to the extent possible when presenting proposed changes to residents.

Ms. Cole reaffirmed that the expertise of every individual commissioner was highly valued. The commitment moving forward was to ensure that all opinions were heard and integrated, fostering a sense of shared ownership over the final proposed amendments.

Mr. Mays wondered about the possibility of a volunteer workshop to look at his research on fences, and Mr. Holloway cautioned against that, as it may lead to a quorum. However, he remarked that there should be a way for Mr. Mays to present his findings. Mr. Mays reiterated that the discussion surrounding Montford fence standards was important, and needs to be had.

Announcement by Chair Hornaday

South Asheville Cemetery and Hood Huggers were facilitating a MLK Day community workday at South Asheville Cemetery on Monday, January 19, 2026. Chili will be provided.

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Adjournment

At 5:59 p.m., Ms. Gorman moved to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Mays and carried unanimously.