



Next item up for business was Certificates of Appropriateness for the Commission to consider. The first COA for consideration was from Roger Huckey. Mr. Huckey was not present. Chairman John Symonds tabled Mr. Huckey's COA until he could be present to discuss.

The next Certificate of Appropriateness was for Kristi Ellis, of 607 Main St. Her application was for signage. Kristi was present, and the Commission asked her to step up to the microphone for discussion. Dwight Hopkins had questions about the colors for the sign. The COA stated lettering for the sign would be painted in the color "Covered Bridge", which was located on the paint color chart for the Historical District. The color on the COA for the other lettering was "Canyon Gold", which could not be located on any paint chart. Kristi Ellis stated that she wrote the wrong color on the COA, and the correct color was "Curry Gold". Mr. Symonds posed the question to the Commission as to whether or not this COA would have any significant impact to any business adjacent to this business. Dwight Hopkins made the motion that it would not materially affect the adjacent structures. This motion was seconded by Ralph Irwin, and carried a unanimous vote. John Symonds stated the COA could now be considered. After discussion of the sign, and colors for the sign and the building, a motion to amend the COA was made by Dwight Hopkins to include the painting of the façade of the colors of "Flaxen Field" and "Sandy Bluff" on the columns. The amended COA carried a unanimous vote. The Commission now had before them COA from Kristi Ellis, which included the signage that she had proposed, plus the amendment to include the painting of the façade and rear with the colors in the amendment. Dwight Hopkins made a motion to approve the COA as submitted with the noted amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

John Symonds stated to those present that the adopted new guidelines last March include filling out future COA's in duplicate, one copy to be kept on file with the Building Inspector, and the other copy posted on the jobsite just as one would post a permit.

Richard Hodo, owner of the building where Kristi Ellis salon is going to operate from, approached the Commission with questions about the entry of the building, that contains tile work from the 1950's or 1960's, and included the name of an individual in the middle of the entry, tiled into the floor. Mr. Hodo asked for research to be done to see if he could move this tile, or if it should be left alone. Dwight Hopkins commented he could find nothing conclusive on the tile work for this building. After discussion, it was decided that the tile should be left intact, with more research done, and in the meantime Mr. Hodo could cover the tile to protect it and at the same make the entry of the building blend with the work being done to it for the opening of Kristi's Nail and Hair Salon.

Next item on the agenda was the Certificate of Appropriateness for Roger Huckey. Mr. Huckey was late getting to the meeting, and his COA was tabled until he came in. Mr. Huckey was requesting approval of putting up a barber pole in front of his

barbershop, Cowpolk's. Mr. Huckey found a replica of the type pole used in the 1800's, and brought the barber pole with him for the Commission to examine. After inspection and discussion, Dwight Hopkins made a motion that the pole would not materially affect the surrounding structures, which was seconded by Ralph Irwin, and motion was approved unanimously. Motion was made to approve COA for Roger Huckey. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Next was review of Historic District building repair and maintenance options. First to speak was Boyd Mahar of Dept. of Arkansas Heritage. Boyd stated historic preservation is good for heritage tourism. He stated that this ordinance was not only for these tourists, but for the property owners of Downtown Historic Van Buren. Mr. Mahar stated that if there is a buyer looking at property in Downtown Historic Van Buren, that buyer is going to be reluctant to sink his hard-earned money into a fragile neighborhood, whereas if a potential buyer knows the owners on either side of him are going to be maintaining their property up to a certain standard, the buyer can invest more comfortably. Mr. Mahar stated that this demolition by neglect clause exists in 6 of the 14 local Historic Districts in the state of Arkansas. Boyd also stated this ordinance was not about "sticking it to the good guys", but about folks outside the community that do not share the sentiments of people connected with the community. Boyd stated that "demolition by neglect" is a term his office uses. The commission reviews and approves all exterior changes in the district. Deterioration is an exterior change, and should be reviewed.

John Symonds stated that after the March 2005 City Council meeting that the Mayor wanted the Historic District Committee and the citizens in the Historic District voice their opinion and be part of any type of decision that would affect the repair and maintenance of the Downtown District. Mr. Symonds went on to ask those present for their input and ideas on what should or shouldn't be done. Mr. Symonds stated it was not the intent of the Historic District Committee to police the downtown. The chairman also pointed out that the Commission is made up of volunteers, and at this time Mr. Symonds once again invited citizens interested in serving on the Commission to please say so. He stated anyone interested would be welcome.

Next to speak was Roy Heberd, a business owner on Main St. Mr. Heberd first asked if this was a public hearing to which Mr. Symonds replied no it was not a public hearing. Mr. Heberd then asked if public hearings would be held, to which Mr. Symonds replied if citizens of the Historic District decide they want some type of ordinance, then yes, a public hearing would be held. Mr. Heberd asked if this meeting was to discuss whether or not to go ahead with an ordinance, to which Mr. Symonds responded this was a meeting to get some idea as to where to go from here. Mr. Heberd went on to say that if the Commission had the intentions of policing the Downtown Historic District, he was totally against it, as was anyone he had discussed the matter with. He went on to say that Commissioners on the board now were fine people, and would not be ones to abuse the ordinance, but who was to say what might happen in the future, when members of the Commission changed, and if

it was upheld by the wrong people, it might not be a good thing. Mr. Heberd stated the Commission needed to look at helping fill the buildings with retail shops, help get business going downtown, not at the upkeep of the buildings. Mr. Hopkins stated that it was not the Commission's area in any shape, form or fashion to get into the business area of any building in Historic District. Mr. Heberd thanked the Commission for listening and the Commission thanked Mr. Heberd for his input. Another issue mentioned by Mr. Heberd was the parking issue on Main Street. He stated there were lawyers and employees that park on Main Street all day and take up the parking, and the Commission should bring up putting up the signs about limited parking on Main Street to the City Council.

Next to speak was Patricia Howard. She stated that every merchant and building owner she spoke to on Main Street was totally against this proposed ordinance. She stated the ordinance puts the business owners at risk of being booted out of their homes and businesses. She stated she was not speaking on her own, but there were so many requests for her to come speak for the owners and merchants that she had to come and say these things to the Commission. Chairman Symonds stated the Commission appreciated the input, and that this meeting was to gather input and opinions from the people in Downtown Historic District. Ms. Howard stated that all needed to be working in the same direction. Mr. Symonds stated that this meeting was strictly to determine if the people want some type of protection as far as the deterioration of the buildings that may or may not occur, and that the Commission was open to listen to that. Ms. Howard stated if the City was willing to help pay for repairs needed, then an ordinance like this would be considered. Mr. Symonds stated the City was without funds to do such a thing, and Ms. Howard stated the City shouldn't ask merchants to do things that they (the City) were not able to do themselves, and if the citizens were asking for the merchants to make these repairs, then the citizens should be willing to pay for these repairs. She added the citizens were not going to do this, either. She stated if the citizens want to say when the buildings needed to be painted and repaired, then those citizens should pay for the paint and repairs. Mr. Symonds reminded Ms. Howard there is no ordinance in place that requires these things, to which she replied the merchants and owners do not want an ordinance of this nature.

The next opinions came from Lilly Aguliar, a former business owner in Downtown Historic District and a present resident of this district. Mrs. Aguilar stated the Commission should offer more avenues of help, instead of the proposed ordinance. She feels if people were approached with more information about possible funds to help them get where they need to be, and if there were more opportunity for information in this area, it could be a great help to the District. Mrs. Aguliar stated her love for Van Buren, and her desire to stay here. She also gave an example of a business owner in a battle with an insurance company, and damages to her building can't be fixed until settlement is reached. If she had to comply with proposed ordinance, she would be in violation of the proposed ordinance. Chairman Symonds stated this was a good point, something to consider.

Ms. Aguliar asked the Commission to please not impose on the owners an ordinance they can't comply with. Mr. Symonds thanked Ms. Aguilar for her input.

Next in front of the Commission was Sue Deaton. She stated the Commission was an advisory Commission only. She stated she lived in Oklahoma, and drove 100 miles to be at this meeting. Mrs. Deaton stated she is in a lawsuit with the City now. Mrs. Deaton stated she had her property up for sale. Mrs. Deaton stated she likes Van Buren and comes here for peace and quiet. She stated that the Commission was trying to take away people's buildings, and it wasn't right, and she would fight it every step of the way. She stated that the Commission should offer to help instead of telling owners what they can and can't do. Mrs. Deaton stated this proposed ordinance is bad from the word go. She again stressed she drove 100 miles to say she is against any such ordinance. The Commission thanked her for her input.

Mr. Richard Hodo was next to talk. Mr. Hodo stated if it weren't for the Commission, there wouldn't be a Downtown Historic District. He also stated the Commission, though good, has lost its flavor. Mr. Hodo stated that what the Commission's intent is, with the proposed ordinance, is what has people concerned. Mr. Hodo stated that the members on the Commission have to have a dedication to Historic Downtown to be serving on the Commission. Mr. Hodo stated no one wants to be forced to anything to their buildings that they don't want to do. Mr. Hodo stated that he felt the Commission should get all the property owners together, the business owners together with the Mayor, with someone with authority, and find out if there is any funding anywhere to help these people, is there anyone willing to do low-interest loans for these people. Mr. Hodo stated everyone needs to work together, and right now there is bad blood as far as the Historic District is concerned. Mr. Hodo stated whatever can be done to pull Downtown together we need to do.

Carl Gross was the next person to talk to the Commission. Mr. Gross stated about 49 percent of Downtown stands vacant, and this proposed ordinance would make it about 95 percent, if passed. Mr. Gross stated he would not own property where he was told how to take care of it, and anyone he spoke with felt the same way.

Dave Fant was next to address the Commission. Mr. Fant asked the Commission if they were going to have an oversight on the structural parts of the buildings as to their safety or soundness. Chairman Symonds asked Mr. Fant if he was referring to A possible ordinance or to guideline requirements, and Mr. Fant stated he was referring to the proposed ordinance being discussed at this meeting. Mr. Fant stated the City had the authority to come in and inspect his business for safety, and had the authority to shut him down if hazards were found, then why did the Commission need any such authority. Mr. Symonds stated that it would depend on the wording of and ordinance. Mr. Symonds stated if the merchants were looking for an avenue to protect the buildings from disrepair, the Commission certainly would not have the expertise to determine if the building is structurally sound or not, but the merchants could request from the Historic District that something of

**this nature be looked at, if that is the way the language was written. Mr. Fant stated the parking downtown was also a concern of his, as people use the parking for all day use, and he would like to see this addressed.**

**Another item brought up was the time of the Historic District Meeting. Alicia Fant asked the Commission to consider changing the time of the meetings from 5:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. Chairman Symonds stated this had been addressed during the public hearings on the guidelines, and in the guidelines the time for meetings was written for 5:00 P.M. There was no response in reference to changing the time for the meetings during the Public Hearings.**

**After more discussion, the Commission reached the decision to draft a letter to Mayor Riggs requesting that the 2005 repair and maintenance ordinance amending the 2-1998 ordinance which was presented to the Mayor and the City Council at the March 21, 2005 Council meeting, be withdrawn.**

**A motion was made to adjourn, motion was seconded and carried a unanimous vote.**

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**John Symonds, Chairman**

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**Cami Brown, Rec. Secretary**