IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF TIMOTHY MCMANUS	*	BEFORE THE
	*	HOWARD COUNTY
FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL TO MAKE EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS AT 8167 MAIN STREET ELLICOTT CITY, MARYLAND	*	HISTORIC PRESERVATION
	*	COMMISSION
	*	Case No. 20-76

* *

DECISION AND ORDER

Pursuant to Title 16, Subtitle 6, of the Howard County Code, notice having been properly published, the Historic Preservation Commission ("Commission") convened a public hearing on November 5, 2020 to hear and consider the application of Timothy McManus ("Applicant"), for a Certificate of Approval to make exterior alterations at 8167 Main Street, Ellicott City, Maryland (the "Subject Property"). The Commission members present were Allan Shad, Eileen Tenor, Drew Roth, Bruno Reich, and Erica Zoren. The following documents, incorporated into the record by reference, are applicable to this case: (1) the appropriate provisions of the Howard County Charter and the Howard County Code, including the Howard County Zoning Regulations; (2) the General Plan for Howard County; (3) the application for a Certificate of Approval and associated records on file with the Commission; (4) the Agenda for the November 5, 2020 Commission meeting; (5) the Ellicott City Historic District Design Guidelines, May, 1998 (the "Design Guidelines" or "Guidelines"); and (6) the general design guidelines listed in Rule 107 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

Summary of Testimony

Ms. Samantha Holmes, Staff to the Commission, presented the application, identifying the work proposed by the Applicant for which approval is requested, and the Staff's recommendation and the basis for the recommendation. Copies of Staff's recommendation and the application were provided to each Commission member and reviewed with the Commission by Ms. Holmes. The Applicant testified in support of the application.

Findings of Fact

Based upon the evidence, the Commission makes the following findings of fact:

A. The Subject Property

This property is located in the Ellicott City Historic District. According to SDAT, the building on the property dates to 1987, after the previously existing historic building was destroyed in a fire.

B. Proposed Improvements

The Applicant proposes to install a 38-inch high by 36-inch wide sign on an existing metal bracket. The round sign will have an average radius of 18.5 inches and will be a total of 7.5 square feet. The sign will be constructed of MDO wood with the graphic applied on top. The sign will consist of four colors: white, black, blue and gray. The sign will read on two lines: "Gamers Corps." A graphic of dice and a gear will be on top of the text in the sign. The sign will be cut out to the shape of a gear. The rendering in the application shows that there could be a solid white background between the dice and gear shape in the sign.

C. Staff Report

Chapter 11.A: Signs, General Guidelines

1) *Chapter 11.A recommends:*
    a. *"Use simple, legible words and graphics."*
    b. *"Keep letters to a minimum and the message brief and to the point. In many cases, symbols or illustrations that communicate the nature of the business can be used."*
    c. *"Use a minimum number of colors, generally no more than three."*

The sign will have simple, legible words and graphics, with minimal text as only the name of the sign will be spelled out. While the sign utilizes four colors, the white and gray are neutral and the blue and black stand out the most.

Chapter 11.A: Signs, General Guidelines

2) *Chapter 11.A recommends, "use historically appropriate materials such as wood or iron for signs and supporting hardware.*

The sign will be constructed from MDO wood and will utilize an existing black metal bracket.

Chapter 11.B: Signs, Commercial Buildings

3) *Chapter 11.B recommends, "If more than one sign is used to identify a building's tenants, use signs that are similar in scale, harmonious in style and color, and located symmetrically or uniformly on the building."*
4) *Chapter 11.B recommends against, "two signs where one is sufficient to provide an easily visible identification of the business."*

This building has multiple tenants, and multiple signs across the front façade. There are existing brackets on the building for projecting signs. The brackets are installed at equal heights above the sidewalk which ensures that signs will be located uniformly on the building. The majority of the signs approved have been of the same size and shape in order to look more uniform across the building façade. While the proposed sign will be installed on an existing

bracket and its location on the building will be consistent with the other projecting signs, its shape is not rectangular and will not be uniform.

The Applicant has window signs installed on the storefront windows, which constitute additional signs on the building façade.

Chapter 11.B: Signs, Commercial Buildings

5) *Chapter 11.B recommends, "Limit the sign area to be in scale with the building. Projecting or hanging signs of four to six square feet are appropriate for many of Ellicott City's small, attached commercial buildings."*

The proposed sign will be 7.5 square feet, which is larger than recommended for projecting signs. A reduction in the size of the sign would better comply with the Guidelines and would make the sign more compatible with the existing signs on the building.

D. <u>Staff Recommendation</u>

Staff recommends the HPC approve the sign, if reduced to a size that complies with the Guidelines and if the window signs are removed.

E. <u>Testimony</u>

Mr. Shad swore in Timothy McManus and asked if Mr. McManus had any comments on the staff report. Mr. McManus said he was willing to do whatever he needed to make the sign be in compliance with the Guidelines. Mr. Shad asked if Mr. McManus was willing to reduce the size of his sign. Mr. McManus said he was willing to reduce the size of the sign. Mr. McManus stated the window signs were put in temporarily because of Harry Potter fest and he wanted to ensure that patrons could find his location.

The Commission agreed that if the sign was reduced in size to be in compliance with the Guidelines and the window signs were removed the Commission would be in favor of the application.

F. Motion

Ms. Tennor moved to approve the application with incorporation of staff recommendations to reduce the overall size of the sign to 6 square feet and remove the temporary window signs. Mr. Reich seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Conclusions of Law

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Commission concludes as follows:

A. Standards of Review

The standards for review of an application for a Certificate of Approval are set forth in Section 16.607 of the Howard County Code and require consideration of:

> (1) The historic, architectural, or archaeological value or significance of the structure and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area;
> (2) The relationship of the exterior architectural features of such structure to the remainder of the structure and to the surrounding area;
> (3) The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used; and
> (4) Any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.

Section 16.607(c) of the Code further provides:

> It is the intent of this subtitle that the Commission be strict in its judgment of plans for contributing structures. It is also the intent of this subtitle that the Commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for structures of little historic value or plans for new construction, except where such plans would seriously impair the historic or architectural value of surrounding structures or the surrounding area.

Section 16.607(d) authorizes the Commission to adopt guidelines for its review of applications based on the standards set forth in the Code. Pursuant to this authority, the Commission has adopted the Ellicott City Historic District Design Guidelines. Chapter 11

sets forth the relevant recommendations for signs in the Historic District, as detailed in the Findings of Fact, part C.

B. <u>Application of Standards</u>

Applying these standards and guidelines to the Subject Property, the Commission finds that it does not contribute to Ellicott City's historic significance. Consequently, in reviewing the application, the Commission will be lenient in its judgment. The Commission finds that the Applicant's proposal would not impair the historic or architectural value of the surrounding area. The Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the Guidelines. The evidence supports this conclusion.

The Applicant seeks approval for the installation of a sign on an existing metal bracket to the exterior of a non-historic building dating to 1987. The Applicant agreed to amend the application so that the proposed sign is no more than six square-feet, and to remove existing temporary window signs. The Application is in accord with the Guidelines. It uses simple, legible words and graphics, and a minimum number of appropriate colors. The sign will be constructed of wood and will utilize an existing black metal bracket, which is in accord with Guideline recommendations for materials.

For these reasons, and for the reasons identified in the Staff Report, and the reasons stated by the Commission, the Commission concludes that the proposed work will not impair the historic and architectural value of the surrounding area. The application complies with the Guidelines and standards applicable to the Ellicott City Historic District.

ORDER AND CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, by a vote of 5 to 0, it is this 3rd day of December, 2020, **ORDERED**, that the Applicant's request for a Certificate of Approval to make exterior alterations at the Subject Property, is **APPROVED, as amended and detailed herein**.

HOWARD COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Allan Shad, Chair

Eileen Tennor / KH
Eileen Tennor, Vice-Chair

Drew Roth / KH
Drew Roth

BB
Bruno Reich

Erica Zoren / KH
Erica Zoren

APPROVED for Form and Legal Sufficiency:

HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF LAW

Lewis Taylor
Senior Assistant County Solicitor

ANY PERSON AGGRIEVED BY THIS DECISION AND ORDER/CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL MAY APPEAL THE DECISION TO THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR HOWARD COUNTY WITHIN THIRTY DAYS OF THE DATE OF THE DECISION.