The Town of Washington Grove *Historic Preservation Commission*
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MINUTES of June 16 MEETING of the Commission
(via Zoom)

Adopted: July 21, 2026

Meeting began: 7:30 p.m.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Members Present: Bob Booher (Chair), Bill Earl, Wendy Harris, David Stopak and Mimi Styles
Town Council Liaison: Barbara Raimondo
Members Absent: Kirk Greenway (Alternate)
Approval of Agenda: The Commission proceeded with an edited agenda.
Adoption of Minutes: Approved as written.

REVIEW SESSION

203 Grove Avenue - Driveway Expansion

The Commission reviewed a proposal for Johnny Schaefer at 203 Grove Avenue to expand the existing gravel driveway. The proposed driveway would have a maximum width of 20 feet and requires a public ways permit.

Actions:

- Mimi will prepare and send the public ways permit application using prior templates.

OLD BUSINESS

Commemorative Signage

The commemorative-sign working group reported progress on text and preliminary layouts for seven signs. Three text drafts were reported complete. Members discussed the tension between the amount of text and the space available in the proposed layouts, including the relative proportions devoted to photographs and narrative text.

The Commission agreed that drafts should be circulated with layouts and photographs before the text and images are merged into final designs. Members will provide written comments outside the meeting. Mimi suggested reducing photograph size where appropriate, so photographs and text receive more balanced space.

Actions:

- Wendy, Mimi, and Bob will continue developing the commemorative-sign text and images.
- Draft text, layouts, and photographs will be distributed to Commission members for written comments before final integration.

House Signage - National Register Plaques

The Commission reviewed three plaque concepts, including standard rectangular options and a personalized oval design similar to plaques used in Rockville. Some members preferred the third option for its simplicity and size, while noting that it would be more expensive.

Discussion focused on accurate wording. Some members emphasized that the plaque must distinguish between an individual property and the Washington Grove Historic District so that it does not imply an individual property is separately listed on the National Register when the listing applies to the district. The Commission also noted that Washington Grove is a National Register historic district, but not a local or Maryland historic district with separate historic-district zoning authority.

Actions:

- Mimi will contact the Maryland Historical Trust or the appropriate National Register representative to confirm acceptable plaque wording for contributing resources in a National Register historic district and will circulate the response by email.
- Bill will research National Register listings in Montgomery County, including the Washington Grove listing, and coordinate his findings with Mimi.

Preservation Exception / Preservation Waiver

The Commission reviewed proposed preservation-waiver ordinance language being developed with the Planning Commission. Members focused on aligning the draft with existing Town authority, accurately describing the roles of the two commissions, and creating a process that can be incorporated into a regular application rather than requiring repeated rejection and resubmission.

Members supported removing the phrase concerning "five periods of development" from the background discussion and deleting a paragraph on "geometric-based planning" that was considered confusing and redundant. Other proposed edits included changing "prescribed" to "recommended," correcting grammatical issues, and clarifying that the Planning Commission applies the zoning ordinance and Comprehensive Plan when acting on an application.

The Commission also discussed the difference between ordinary HPC review, which is advisory, and the proposed waiver procedure. Members emphasized that the draft should state clearly whether a favorable HPC recommendation is a prerequisite before the Planning Commission may grant a preservation waiver. The current comments will be forwarded for another draft and Planning Commission review.

Actions:

- David will send the Commission's comments and proposed edits to Georgette and the Planning Commission, ensuring that the language is clear and consistent with HPC's intent.
- Bill will request that the final ordinance language return to HPC for review if the Planning Commission makes significant changes.

Archives & Collections

Bob reported that the archive office is operational and most materials have been returned from storage. Pat Patula has been working on cataloging pre-1937 materials, while Marilynn Frey is working toward moving the PastPerfect database to an online platform.

The Commission discussed three immediate work categories: pre-1937 historical materials, records-management materials that must be processed under State requirements, and general Town records. Joanna Church and Emily Brown were identified as potential assistants. The proposed division of work would have Joanna concentrate on completing the pre-1937 cataloging, potentially for up to ten hours per week and particularly on weekends, while Emily would concentrate on records-management-plan materials after returning from her summer absence.

Members agreed that a working meeting is needed to define responsibilities, establish a practical cataloging and processing workflow, and coordinate the archive work with the Town's records-management obligations and PastPerfect transition.

Actions:

- Bob will organize a planning meeting with Pat, Marilynn, Town staff, Bill, and other needed participants to establish archive roles and workflow, including possible assignments for Joanna and Emily.
- Pat will continue cataloging pre-1937 materials while the broader work plan is developed.
- Marilynn will continue work needed to transition PastPerfect to an online platform.

5th and 6th Avenue Extensions

Further consideration of the 5th and 6th Avenue extensions was postponed while related legal negotiations continue. No action was taken.

Open Meetings Act Training

Members were reminded that Open Meetings Act training is an annual requirement and should be completed promptly.

Actions:

- Bob will send the training link to all HPC members and remind members to complete the annual training.
- Commission members will complete the training and report completion as required.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Procedures and Length

Wendy raised concerns about meetings running too long. Members discussed time limits for agenda topics, greater use of subcommittees, and parliamentary procedure. The Commission agreed to try estimated time allocations on future agendas and to have David serve as timekeeper. Barbara suggested that parliamentary training could be considered through the Town budget.

Members also discussed beginning future HPC meetings at 7:00 p.m. to better accommodate member schedules, but no change in the regular starting time was adopted at this meeting.

Actions:

- Bob will add estimated time allocations to future agendas and coordinate with David as timekeeper.
- Bob will consider whether a 7:00 p.m. starting time should be proposed for a future meeting.

COORDINATION

Bulletin - Mimi

Mimi will prepare an HPC article or project update for the Bulletin as time permits.

Planning Commission Report - Bill

The Planning Commission update centered on the preservation-waiver draft and the pending 5th and 6th Avenue matter. Related discussion and follow-up are recorded under Old Business.

Town Council Report - Barbara

Barbara reported that Anna Burke is the new Town Administrator and provided an update concerning recent budget transfers. No HPC action was requested.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.
Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 21, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom.