

# City of Takoma Park -- Façade Advisory Board Regular Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2017

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The City of Takoma Park Façade Advisory Board met on Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park Maryland.

**Members Present:** Jim DiLuigi, William Fischer, Anne Fothergill, Lucy Moore, Lorraine Pearsall,  
**Members Absent:** Eric Sepler, Malcolm Williams  
**Staff Present:** Roz Grigsby  
**Visitors:** Sue Immerman, Charlotte Schoeneman

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## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

## 2. Concept Review: 7322 Carroll Avenue – MAD Fitness sign

Sue Immerman requested board approval to relocate the MAD Fitness sign that the Board had approved earlier for the 7302 Carroll Avenue address. MAD Fitness is moving to 7322 Carroll Avenue and wants to use the same sign in the new location. The pediment on the building has been secured, the old awning has been removed, the masonry has been repaired and repointed, and the windows have been retained. The sign will be centered on the building, and the Board suggested factoring in the features of the building in the placement of the sign. MAD Fitness expects to be open in the new location in January.

The Takoma Park Façade Advisory Board passed the following resolution:

**The Board voted to approve the installation of the existing sign in the new location at 7322 Carroll Avenue. Moved by Moore, seconded by DiLuigi, passed unanimously.**

## 3. Minutes of September meeting

The minutes were corrected and approved.

## 4. Discussion of Project Review for 6935 Laurel Avenue fence

The Board was asked to discuss the review the Board had approved retroactively in July of the fence because it was coming back up before the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission on November 15. The original FAB project review stated:

*The proposed work includes:*

- *Cleaning and grading the existing fence, removing overgrown vegetation;*
- *Installation of a 6 foot, pine board fence separating the subject property from the adjacent parcel along the southeastern boundary*

*The Takoma Park Façade Advisory Board passed the following resolution:*

***The Board voted to approve the proposal as presented.  
(FAB Project review, July 12, 2017)***

HPC voided the first HPC approval due to procedural errors, including notification of adjacent property owners. Charlotte Schoeneman, an adjacent property owner, raised her objections to the fence:

--- The new fence runs parallel to an existing chain-link fence, which Schoeneman wanted removed. The HPC staff report recommends removing the old fence. The chain-link fence operates as a retaining wall.

--- Schoeneman stated that the new fence is too tall. The fence measures 36” at the front, steps up to 73” above grade, according to the HPC staff report. Schoeneman states that the fence is over 96” at the back of the adjacent property. Also, the 36” fence at the street blocks the view of cars backing out of the driveway.

--- Schoeneman stated that there are drainage problems on the lot. The HPC staff report notes that “several locations along the fence have been filled with soil. The applicant indicated that filling occurred to improve drainage....This has, however, raised the grade on the site so the fence is taller on the neighboring property.” Schoeneman indicated that it has created new basement flooding and she feared that the dirt will erode. She wanted the drainage improved.

The Board has a practice of only reviewing a project when the applicant is present and the Board does not get involved in enforcement. The Board members discussed which issues were within the Board’s purview and which issues come under the Department of Permitting Services. The bigger issue was doing retroactive reviews, which are problematic. The Board acknowledged that the adjacent neighbor was not notified as required in the County process.

The Board identified a discrepancy between the Board letter and the fence as built. The grade change was not part of the proposal brought before the Board in July and a property owner can’t change the grade on a property that has an adverse impact on neighboring property. The Board discussed which side of the fence was finished.

The Board discussed the possibility and ramifications of rescinding the letter the Board sent to HPC in July. An option was for the Board to send a letter to HPC rescinding the July letter, saying the FAB review was based on incomplete information, as a way of putting it on record.

The Takoma Park Façade Advisory Board passed the following resolution:

**The Board voted to rescind the July 12, 2017 project review letter with the following explanation: “The Board is concerned that the information provided at the time of the review may have been incomplete or inaccurate.” Moved by Fischer, seconded by Pearsall, passed unanimously.**

Board members advised Schoeneman on methods of presenting her concerns to HPC at the November 15 review.

The Board discussed what kind of information and process they want in place moving forward. The Board wants more information, the complete HAWP as well as elevations, designs, photos, etc. The information will be needed by an applicant in order to get the required permits. Members of the Board asked staff to get more information in advance from applicants and get the agenda packet out earlier, balancing it with the need to be flexible to enable businesses owners to get through the process in a timely manner. The Board discussed the process of applicants getting on the agenda. Staff said that if someone asks to be on the agenda, staff adds them; there are no criteria to be added.

The Board discussed problems with retroactive permits. The Board could refuse to approve retroactive permits; ideally the Board role is to facilitate conversation with the applicant. The applicant can still get a permit if the Board notifies HPC that FAB chose not to weigh in on an application.

Fothergill mentioned that the HPC staff member, Scott Whipple, resigned and Phillip Estes is filling the position on an interim basis. She suggested inviting him to come meet the Board in the new year.

**5. Review of Façade Advisory Board proposed code changes**

The Board quickly reviewed the previously discussed code changes for the Façade Advisory Board. After discussing at the September meeting, staff was asked to return with a clean version, which was presented. DiLuigi mentioned that the Chapter 8.40 revisions make no mention of the Façade Advisory Board, which staff will correct.

**6. 2018 Meeting Dates**

Board members received the 2018 scheduled dates in the agenda packet. Staff will send calendar invites to Board members.

**7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned.

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Rosalind Grigsby, staff

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Lucy Moore, Chair