

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MANCHESTER HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION (HZC)

6 February 2025

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Historic Zoning Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the city hall Board Room with Chair Rick Cook presiding. In attendance were Codes Director Brittany Fiske, Sara Adams, Ellen Briggs, City Planning Commissioner Ken Seuberling, Mayor Joey Hobbs, and Norm Vetter. Absent were Alderman James Threet, Ray Amos, and Will Painter.

Minutes Approval

Minutes of the previous meeting (December, 2024) were read and approved as submitted.

New Business

Mr. Philip Calahan, President and CEO of People's Bank and Trust, attended in response to a previous request to be given the opportunity to provide additional information specific to the proposed LED signage to be erected as part of the planned and approved new construction of an ATM at the corner of **West Main and South Irwin Streets**. (See minutes from December, 2024 HZC meeting.)

At this meeting, Mr. Calahan distributed a dimensioned drawing of the proposed sign and pointed out that while it's similar to the design of the sign at the bank's main office in Hillsboro Hwy., it is in fact smaller. He assured the group that apart from the business' name, no advertising specific to the business itself would be programmed to appear. He expressed his desire for the sign to contribute to the downtown area of Manchester by displaying various and timely information specific to the area such as the "Safe on the Square" event, etc.

Mr. Joel Lawrence, Project Manager from Cook Neon Signs & Service, interjected additional detail stating that the sign could be programmed to change the information on the display without animation, color change, flashing light, change in intensity, etc., as forbidden in the Historic Zoning ordinance.

Ken Seuberling responded stating that while the monument portion of the proposed sign is "Wonderful. Classy", the LED component does not contribute to the historic fabric of the Zone. Furthermore, it is the Commission's charge to maintain that historic, visual quality and therefore he was opposed to the deployment of the LED component.

Ellen Briggs reminded the group that the wording of the ordinance specifically prohibits signs that "change" as part of its design. She reminded both Mr. Calahan and Mr. Lawrence that our (the Commission's) responsibility is to enforce the ordinance as worded.

Opening the floor to public comment, Rick Cook acknowledged a request from Larry McIntosh, President and Board Chair of the Coffee County Historical Society (CCHS) to read a letter from the CCHS Board specific to the proposed signage under discussion. The content of that letter is included here.

To the Manchester, Tennessee Historic Zoning Commission, Rick Cook, Chairman

The Board of the Coffee County Historical Society is pleased to welcome Peoples Bank back to the Historic Manchester Square. Peoples was an integral part of the life of downtown Manchester for many years and will no doubt continue its good service to the city's citizens and visitors with its new ATM to be built on the corner of Irwin and Main Streets and bordering US Highway 41. This location is within Manchester's Historic District.

While we recognize the bank's long history of service to the Manchester community, the Board of the Coffee County Historical Society asks the members of Manchester's Historic Zoning Commission to deny Peoples' request for a variance to City Ordinance 14-621, which establishes the city's Historic Zone as well as the procedures for the zone's implementation. The moving lights of the proposed digital/LED sign at the Peoples Bank ATM are in conflict with City Ordinance 14-621 subsection 7 (g) 1. which prohibits signs with lights that flash, scroll or change colors. Furthermore, since granting a variance can only be accomplished through changing the current language of the ordinance and would require approval by the Manchester Board of Mayor and Aldermen, this change would set an untenable precedent of changing the ordinance on an ad hoc basis.

The Society's Board foresees the ATM as a positive addition to the square that will be a complement to the local shops and restaurants in the downtown area and is pleased that the ATM has been approved by the Historic Zoning and City Planning Commissions.

Respectfully,

*Coffee County Historical Society Board
Larry McIntosh, President and Board Chair*

Norm Vetter requested clarification from Brittany whether it is or is not within the purview of the Commission to issue a variance to the ordinance. Brittany confirmed it is not and stated that if any variance is to be obtained, that at the very least the City Planning Commission must review the request. Ken, speaking as a member of that group, stated that it is very unlikely that a variance would be issued based upon the narrow scope of previous cases wherein a variance was issued.

Norm moved the portion of the previously submitted COA specific to the proposed LED be denied while affirming that Mr. Calahan has the right to appeal to the Planning Commission. Ellen seconded the motion and the motion passed with unanimous voice approval.

Old Business

Ken Seuberling commented that the current wording of the ordinance specific to lighted signage is in need of clarification. Norm suggested this be included in the next meeting's agenda, and the Commission take action from there and not in response to any single COA either past or future.

Election of new Commission Officers will be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Adjournment

There was no further business to discuss so the meeting was adjourned at 5:51. Next meeting: 6 March, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Norm Vetter, Secretary