

LANDMARK COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
March 25, 2025

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**MEMBERS' PRESENT:**

Christy Graham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson
John Dickinson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
Bill Enlow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
Dr. Dawn Ferrell, Maj. Gen. (retired)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
Noros Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
Janel Ponder Smith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
JD Dixon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member

Terry Floyd, Development Services Director	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City Staff
Monica Aguon, Assistant City Attorney	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City Staff
Karen Montgomery-Gagné, Principal Planner/HPO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City Staff

**ABSENT:**

Joel Hartmangruber	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice-Chair
John Yates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member
Whitney Flack	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Liaison

**GUESTS:**

Carlos Villalba, Blue Sun Services – 1712 Buchanan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative
Nick Gilleland, Davis Electric -1505 Buchanan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative

**I. Call to Order, Introductions and Welcome:**

Chairperson Christy Graham called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Ms. Graham did introductions of Commission members, and guests attending.

**II. Review & Approval of Minutes from February 25, 2025:**

Chairperson Graham called for review and approval of the February 25, 2025, Landmark Commission meeting minutes. Ms. Janel Ponder Smith made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Mr. John Dickinson seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**III. Action Item: Design Review Case – 1712 Buchanan:**

Request authorization to remove existing rear garage roof-mounted solar panels and replace with 40 new roof-mounted solar panels on two rear, detached garages; prior design review authorization expired June 30, 2023 (West Floral Heights HD)

Staff presented the case and explained the applicants were previously approved for solar panels that were installed but were informed the company was now defunct and system was no longer serviced. Current proposal would remove 37-existing panels and

install new system with some additional panels on three roof slopes instead of two roof slopes. Ms. Montgomery-Gagné indicated the new proposal is slightly modified from what had been previously approved and noted a key difference in this case versus the prior case is that the north slope of structure #2 did not have any solar panels. Pictures of the property were shown to the Board, and it was noted this property is along the southern boundary of the historical district and the solar panels are highly visible from Ave. H. Aerial photos, and inventory photos were shown of the 1925 Craftsman home and two accessory buildings on the property the house faces Buchanan and the optimal location for solar panels would be facing the south (outside district) or west (alley). Referencing the meeting packet, the Board was shown the proposal submitted to the Landmark Commission and approved in 2022. The heat map for the best locations to place the solar panels was referenced and there was some discussion at that time about having panels on the north slope of Structure #2 because it was going to face the district. During review of the prior solar panel case, there were also questions about having the panels directly visible from the district boundary street. Ms. Montgomery-Gagné informed the board, this was the first case for solar panels in the West Floral Heights district. She then showed the original proposed placement of the panels (which were installed as the plans had displayed) but pointed out the utility conduit/electrical lines used to connect the meters to the house did not reflect what the board had approved. The plans showed a trenched conduit, but installers ran the conduit across the roof slopes, the air gap between structures (which is not allowed), and across the house roof. The altered work was never presented to the Commission or the Historic Preservation Officer.

Staff focused on the current proposal, which referenced the existing panel layout, the requested layout and new trench location for conduit. Thirty-seven panels will need to be removed, and the owners are requesting to install forty replacement panels. Ms. Montgomery-Gagné showed images of structure #1 and structure #2 noting the north facing slope does not currently have solar panels, this proposal would add panels to the roof slope and would be more noticeable within the district. On structure #1 (facing east towards Buchanan), which is considered roof three, there will still be the same panel configuration but total number would change from thirteen to twelve. Photos from the alley and from the surrounding streets were shown, and there is clear visibility of the panels from the boundary street, Avenue H.

Staff provided the Commission with a detailed view of the panel design, cross section and roof attachment mechanism. In addition, some design scenarios to avoid based on 'best practices' from the CLG community were provided to the Commission as something to avoid on a Landmark property or in a historic district. The solar panels would need to be placed so it is not a primary feature of the structure that overpowers the architecture and aesthetic of the historic building. The proposal for 1712 Buchanan is an attempt at trying to avoid this scenario as solar panels proposed for placement on rear, detached structures. Staff referenced other CLG communities in Texas for best practices, and Fort Worth's guide recommends placing panels on non-historic structures, or accessory buildings at the rear portion of the roof (which is what is recommended in this case).

Addressing the Wichita Falls design guidelines, a specific section (mechanical equipment) outlines recommendations for solar energy system placement. Some of the best places for placement include: rear portion of roof slopes, ground mounted in less visible yard areas, or the roof of an outbuilding/accessory building. When looking at the guidelines of the attachment mechanism, staff believed this solar panel request was attempting to adhere to the City's guidelines by placing the replacement panels on rear accessory buildings, although there is still some question of the level of visibility. The big concern is the visibility from the primary street, Buchanan and then secondary is Avenue H (the district boundary). There was discussion regarding visibility of the panels from the alley vs from Buchanan and Avenue H. Also discussed was whether there would be a loss in performance of the panels if moved to the alley side, and it was stated by the solar company representative (Mr. Villalbo) there would be an effect on overall production because the panels would be facing north/west vs facing south/east (but currently unknown what the exact percentage of energy loss). The representative also clarified to the Commissioners that no trees will be removed for this project.

Mr. Noros Martin introduced a motion for the Commission to authorize the owner of the property at 1712 Buchanan for removal of the existing 37-solar panels on two rear detached accessory structures along with the exposed roof-top electrical conduit and replace with 40 solar panels on three roof slopes of the rear, detached accessory structures and bore underground for the electrical conduit to meter boxes on the house. Proposed layout: Structure 1 - 12 panels (Roof Slope #3 - east facing); Structure 2 - 28 panels (Roof Slope #1 - south facing and Roof Slope #2 - north facing). Ms. Janel Ponder Smith seconded the motion. The Commission determined the removal and new construction were in accordance with the Wichita Falls Design Guidelines for Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts under Sec. 4 Mechanical Equipment standards (item 9) for solar installation and under New Construction standards.

Chairperson Graham asked if anyone from the public would like to make any comments, and no one came forward with questions or comments. Chairperson Graham took the motion to a vote; motion passed unanimously 7-0.

#### **IV. Action Item: Design Review – 1505 Buchanan**

- 1) Request authorization to install a ground mounted solar array in rear yard consisting of 24 modules; mounting under 8ft height.
- 2) Request to replace the chain-link fence with an 8ft wood privacy fence to limit solar array visibility. (West Floral Heights HD)

Staff explained this case was requesting new construction involving solar panels. However, it was the first case to request a ground mounted solar panel system. Staff showed photos of the area and stated there are three properties involved with this owner applicant. The subject of the design review is 1505 Buchanan, and the panels are proposed on the northern section of the double lot. From aerial photos, it was illustrated the applicant also owns 1507 and 1509 which are vacant. The home is a prairie style built in 1923. From inventory photos, it was shown the house has not changed much

since 2007, except for the exterior paint color. This case is before the Landmark Commission because of the visibility from Buchanan through the side yard to the alley. Currently there is chain link fencing in the north side yard so any proposed ground mounted solar panel system would be highly visible. Ms. Karen Montgomery-Gagné presented a schematic of the proposed plan and showed where the chain-link fence is requested for replacement with an eight-foot wood privacy fence.

The solar array will be ground mounted, and will not be attached to the contributing structure; only alteration to the building will be the required new meters/connection. The utility conduit from the panels to meter box will be underground. Staff referenced the Commissioner's meeting packet, stating on page 102 there is a site plan illustrating the proposed ground mounts in relation to the house and new fence placement. It is anticipated once the privacy fence is erected, the ground mounted solar system should not be visible from Buchanan there may be some visibility from the alley. Staff added that using a ground mount system, as opposed to being pole mounted, is an ideal option. Staff have been looking at some of the best practices around the state regarding solar panels, especially since they are a newer element and requests are increasing. It is important to look at how alternative energy can be harnessing yet still make sure contributing historic structures are not permanently altered/impacted. In this case, the ground mounted system adheres to the guidelines and there should be very limited visibility. Ms. Karen Montgomery-Gagné pointed out if the Commission approves this case, it will trigger building and electrical permits.

Dr. Dawn Ferrell inquired if there are any problems with reflections from the panels, and the project representative Mr. Gilleland explained the panels are black and now constructed with low-reflectivity. He then added there were prior studies conducted about 18 years ago with the flight lines from the airplanes, and they didn't find any issues.

Ms. Ponder Smith asked which sides of the property would have privacy fencing, and Mr. Gilleland indicated the north side. The height of the fence was discussed, with questions regarding visibility and the aesthetic of an eight-foot fence with such a low-profile roof and one-story house. It was also mentioned that if the owner of the properties ever wanted to change, or remove, the chain-link fence that runs south across the two vacant lots on the other side of the house, they would have to submit a design case to the Landmark Commission.

Chairperson Graham made the motion to allow the placement of a ground mounted 24-panel solar array system at 1505 Buchanan in the north side/rear yard in addition to the replacement of existing chain link fence that runs parallel with Buchanan St between the house and the north property line with an 8ft wood, privacy version to reduce visibility of the solar panel system. Mr. John Dickinson seconded the motion. The Commission determined the new construction was in accordance with the Wichita Falls Design Guidelines for Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts under Sec. 4 Mechanical Equipment standards (item 9) for solar installation and under Landscape & Streetscape Features (item g) along with New Construction (item 12 - Independent Fences and Walls) as the fence will be in keeping with established standards in the West Floral

Heights Historic District. Chairperson Graham asked if there were any comments from the public, and none were made. Chairperson Graham took the motion to a vote; motion passed unanimously 7-0.

#### **V. Other Business:**

- Chairperson Graham reported that Wichita Theatre is getting ready to put on Titanic – the musical. They are currently running “Agatha Christie Mousetrap” through April 12<sup>th</sup> at the Stage 2 Dinner Theatre.
- The Backdoor Theater held a youth workshop, which went well and was sold out. Their youth musical is called “Back to the 80’s”.
- Art walk begins April 3 through September, 5:00pm to 9:00pm.
- Kemp Center for the Arts will present 2025 Cowboy True Exhibit Mar. 28<sup>th</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Wichita County Heritage Society - 16<sup>th</sup> Historic Home Tour April 12<sup>th</sup>. Homes included were built 1920's -1930's, in the Morningside, Floral Heights and Country Club areas. Encourage supporting this ongoing preservation event in Wichita Falls.
- Reminder, May is our historic preservation month, so we will be developing community projects involving the Landmark Commission; one event is the annual historic marker demonstration day – training & hands-on work to restore a marker
- May 3<sup>rd</sup> is Loco Cinco, a Hispanic celebration held at 806 Travis Street.
- St. Patrick’s Day Event - great turnout even though it was cool, and rained that morning. Everyone had a great time.
- Cajun Fest - April 26<sup>th</sup> in Bud Daniel Park, located at 9<sup>th</sup>/Ohio.

Ms. Janel Ponder Smith stated there were no West Floral Heights Historic area updates, but did report that one of the homes is 1500 Hayes Street, will be featured on the Heritage Society Homes Tour, Carolyn and Bill Looney home, and she was one of the people that initiated our area becoming a historic district, starting out as just a neighborhood watch, then it morphed into a lot of work and got declared the city historic district. Ms. Ponder Smith expressed they are still struggling at trying to get the word out about design standards/district status to everyone that lives in the historic district and to realtors.

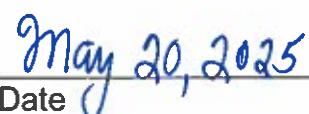
Ms. Montgomery-Gagné discussed coordinating with Wichita Falls Alliance for Arts and Culture for a collective national preservation month proclamation in May with the goal of raising community awareness, help encourage people to recognize the importance of history in our community and involve families/organizations. She's also looking for projects/ideas in the community to help put a focus on preservation.

#### **VI. Adjourn:**

Chairperson Graham adjourned the meeting at 12:58 pm and stated the next scheduled meeting would be April 22, 2025, at 12:00 pm.



Christy Graham, Chairperson



Date