

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Minutes  
April 19, 2005

City Commission Chambers  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
241 W. South Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Bill Snyder, Chair; Lisa Poole-Woldring, Vice Chair; Fred Decker;  
Linda DeYoung; Nelson Nave; Bob Oudsema; James Tribu

City Staff: Sharon Ferraro, Historic Preservation Coordinator; Amy Thomas,  
Recording Secretary

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Snyder called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

**DISCLAIMER**

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

**AGENDA (April 14, 2005)**

Ms. Ferraro stated the following changes to the agenda: Under public comment, Howard Lane will not be able to attend the meeting and a request was made to move this discussion item to the end of the agenda. The owner of 429 W. Dutton will not be able to attend the meeting and Ms. Ferraro will be representing the owner. Ms. Ferraro has information to present at the end of the meeting with regard to the proposed ramp for 1007 S. Westnedge.

**Ms. Poole-Woldring, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the April 14, 2005 Historic District Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**530 West South Street (Case #: IHA 03-0036)**

Larry Fuller and Christine Skandis were present to discuss the application. The application details a proposal for further work on the wall.

Mr. Fuller and Ms. Skandis gave a brief review of the history of this case and the controversy regarding the height of the wall. Ms. Skandis advised that she had proceeded according to the book she obtained outlining HDC standards.

Mr. Snyder and Ms. Ferraro provided a brief review of the Historic District Commission procedures. Ms. Ferraro advised that once the Historic District Commission renders a decision, the applicant cannot make changes without appearing before the Commission again for further approval.

Mr. Fuller advised that he had a petition signed by his neighbors who are in favor of leaving the wall as it is. Mr. Snyder advised that the decision of the Historic District Commission is based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines. Therefore, the petition is not relevant to the decision-making process.

Ms. Skandis presented drawings detailing the proposed changes to remedy the situation with the wall. She stated that the new proposal shows that the second column from the street has been shortened by 2 feet. Another schematic was provided showing how the landscaping might look. Ms. Skandis advised that the proposal had been modified to indicate that the urns would only be on the three columns that are on South St. rather than down the east property line. The proposed urns will be either 12" x 24" or 18" x 36". The columns are 7'1" tall and 32" square on top. Ms. Skandis stated that she would like to add lighting on the inside of the vertical surface of the columns and increase the height of the wrought iron to be more in keeping with the scale of the house. Mr. Fuller stated that he had spoken with the neighbors and they think that the proposed changes will increase the property value.

Mr. Nave inquired if taking the second section in the back from 8' to 6' would make sense for the homeowners. Ms. Skandis commented that such a change would compromise their privacy since there are 40 people working at the house next door. Mr. Nave mentioned that prior to the wall being constructed the entire side of the house was visible, as were the neighboring houses, which could all be viewed as a group. Mr. Nave stated that he was not opposed to the back section of the wall remaining as is but that he had concerns with the height of the second section of the wall. Mr. Nave commented that he would like to see the 24" urns in place, which would be more appropriate.

Mr. Snyder concurred with Mr. Nave regarding the sections of the wall. He suggested lowering the third section of the wall so there would be a level transition across the entire field of view. Mr. Snyder commented that plantings such as evergreen trees might be a solution for the area next to the last section.

Ms. Skandis expressed concern that landscaping would interfere with the view of the house which is exactly what the Commission has opposed. Mr. Snyder indicated that the view of the house is blocked by the wall, which is currently reminiscent of a more institutional setting. He suggested that if the applicant were to lower the wall that would make a difference. Ms. Skandis advised that removing a portion of the wall would be expensive.

Ms. Skandis inquired as to the details of the plantings that would be acceptable and suggested that they try adding plantings before altering the wall. Mr. Snyder advised that deciduous or evergreen plants may die and the next owner of the property might not replace them. He advised being consistent with the history of the house.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicant intended to bring the wrought iron portion of the fence up to the eight-foot level. Ms. Skandis advised that the cap on the wall is at the 4-foot level. The tall points are every 4 or 8 feet.

Mr. Oudsema inquired if the applicant was willing to reduce the third section of the wall from the street. Ms. Skandis stated that she would rather explore the option of adding landscaping before having to reduce the height of the wall. Mr. Fuller inquired as to what height the wall should be. Mr. Snyder advised discussing the possibility of dropping the third section to a more acceptable height and then reproducing the iron on the second section. Further discussion followed with regard to the details of the proposed changes.

Mr. Oudsema mentioned that there had been an easement in place in the 1980s stating that the site line could not be altered. Ms. Skandis stated that the easement has expired. Mr. Oudsema mentioned the significance of 530 W. South Street to the Kalamazoo area and he expressed concern for the changes that are being proposed. He referred to the original decision made by the HDC and the need for the applicants to adhere to that decision. Mr. Oudsema requested that the height of the wall be reduced by 2½ feet.

Mr. Fuller advised that certain changes occurred after the first meeting which influenced the construction of the wall: the property next door was sold and a hot tub was installed. This created the need for more privacy and the wall was built higher.

Mr. Snyder suggested that the motion could include instructions that the HPC work out the details of the wall and that separate motions be made regarding the details of the lighting and the urns. Further discussion followed with regard to the scale of the wall.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved to instruct the applicant for 530 W. South St. to reduce the height on section 3 of the wall to approximately ½ way between the height of sections 4 and 2 (within a brick) and top the wall with the proposed wrought iron. The total height of the wall is not to exceed 8 feet. The columns are to be dropped consecutively down to correspond with the height of the fence. The height of sections 1 & 2 of the wall are to be reduced a similar distance. The top of the wrought iron fence is to line up approximately with the bottom of the stone cap on the columns. Further details of the fence/wall are to be worked out with the Historic Preservation Coordinator. All work is to be done to historic district standards. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Snyder inquired if Mr. Nave would be willing to work out the details with Ms. Ferraro and the owners. Mr. Nave responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Snyder requested further information regarding the finial and the lighting. Ms. Skandis stated that the proposed lights are 24" from top to bottom. Mr. Nave calculated that the globe portion of the light would be approximately 14" tall. Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired as to the type of glass to be used in the fixtures. Ms. Skandis advised that the fixtures had textured glass.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved approval of the lights as presented for 530 W. South Street. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Discussion followed with regard to the proposed urns. Ms. Skandis advised working on a cardboard full size mock-up of the urns to see how they would look on the columns and then making a decision.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved to defer approval of the urns at 530 W. South Street to Ms. Ferraro and Mr. Nave. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Nave and Ms. Ferraro will arrange a site visit to work out details with the owners for the wall height and the size of the urns sometime in May.

**701 W. Walnut (Case #: IHA 05-0054)**

Bob Miller appeared to discuss the application. The application requests review of the details regarding the storefront, windows and the fence for the parking lot at 621-629 W. Walnut.

Mr. Miller commented that there had been questions at the last Historic District Commission regarding the details of the windows, the window ledges and the spacing of the windows. Mr. Miller presented a sketch providing further details. There are some changes in the roof angles. The computer drawing is not totally accurate; the column on the north facade should match the column on the south facade.

Mr. Snyder advised that the Zoning Board of Appeals granted the variance for the parking lot with the condition that the applicant conform to the decision rendered by the Historic District Commission. The Zoning Board of Appeals tied both projects together: work on the house cannot proceed without the parking lot and vice versa.

Mr. Miller advised that the north façade is in good condition. The area under the three large display windows on the east elevation will be covered with stucco or smooth concrete. According to Robb McKay, this should not interfere with the tax credit.

Mr. Miller provided proposed details for the ten storefront windows. Mr. Miller confirmed that the 2 x 6 transom rail has a horizontal surface. Mr. Nave stated that he had never seen it done that way and he expressed concern with regard to water permeating the wood and causing damage. Mr. Nave inquired about the dimensions of the windows. Mr. Miller advised that the storefront windows are in the range of 42" to 45" wide and they are approximately 84" high. Mr. Nave advised that the glass in most storefronts is ¼" plate glass not 3/16". The thicker glass is less likely to break. Mr. Miller is proposing to use tempered glass because it is stronger than safety glass. Mr. Nave advised that tempered glass is not necessarily stronger but it is required by code.

After a brief discussion, it was decided that the parking lot and landscaping at 621 W. Walnut would be dealt with separately due to the complexity of the issues. Mr. Snyder advised that the parking lot has not been approved for use by the Historic District Commission.

**Mr. Oudsema moved to deny use of the corner lot at 621-629 W. Walnut for parking. There was no second and the motion failed for lack of support.**

Discussion followed with regard to the viability of using the lot for parking and the prior decisions made by the HDC with regard to removal of the '50's addition. Mr. Miller stated that Robb McKay advised that the '50's addition would need to be restored in order for 701 W. Walnut to be eligible for the Federal historic tax credit. Mr. Miller advised that he could not afford to proceed with the project unless he received the tax credit. Ms. Ferraro commented that the National Parks Service made the final determination as to the eligibility of this project for the tax credit, not Mr. McKay. Mr. Snyder mentioned that the Historic District Commission could not take the tax credit into consideration when rendering a decision on this project.

Mr. Decker inquired if this would be the first parking lot in the Vine neighborhood if it were approved. Ms. Ferraro stated that there are several informal parking lots where buildings have burned down. Ms. Poole-Woldring stated that it is the position of the Vine Neighborhood to not allow parking on empty lots; green space would be more appropriate in those areas. Density is a concern in the Vine neighborhood because of the high number of rental units in that area.

Discussion continued as to the original use of the building at 701 W. Walnut (residential or retail). Mr. Snyder inquired if there was a motion for conceptual approval of the parking lot.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Decker, moved approval in concept for the use of 621 W. Walnut as a parking lot for 701 W. Walnut. With a roll call vote, the motion carried 4 to 3.**

**Ayes: Decker, Nave, DeYoung, James**

**Nays: Poole-Woldring, Snyder, Oudsema**

Mr. Miller advised that he is hoping to have 12 parking spaces with a turn around space. Ms. Ferraro commented that the proposal for the parking lot had already been through site plan review.

Mr. Snyder expressed concern that cars might destroy the fence because there is no buffer. Mr. Miller commented that a suggestion had been made to have an open fence on the west and north sides in order to allow good visibility into the parking lot. However, code dictates that a six-foot tall, opaque fence be installed next to the houses on the east and south sides. Ms. Ferraro advised that other options are available within the historic district. She added that the windows on the east side of the house are approximately 6 feet off the ground. Accordingly, they are too high for most vehicle lights to shine into them. Concern was expressed that an opaque fence might cause more problems with crime in the area.

Mr. Miller mentioned that the original idea was to have a 3-foot tall poured concrete wall but he was told that he needed a 6-foot tall fence. He inquired if he could put a 42" tall fence on top of the poured wall. Ms. Ferraro commented that, if the fence didn't hide illicit activity, it might be a good idea.

Mr. Nave inquired as to the type of lighting Mr. Miller was proposing. Mr. Miller advised that he would prefer lights similar to the lights at Rose Place. Mr. Snyder inquired as to how many lights there would be. Mr. Miller stated that he wanted four lights, 35 watts and shielded. The fixtures would be black. mercury lights might tie in with the fence detail. The posts will be 5' 8 1/2" with lights on top. The fencing is available in 6' and 42" heights. The light fixtures are 31 1/2" tall and they sit on top of the fence. Accordingly, the total height will be approximately 80".

Mr. Nave inquired about the acorn-style lights. Ms. Ferraro advised that the lights on Rose Place were chosen because Consumers Power will maintain them. Discussion continued with regard to the lights. Mr. Snyder suggested coming back to the HDC with further details about the project. Mr. Miller stated that he hoped to put the building back into service within a year.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **717 West South (Case # IHV 05-0006)**

Jeff Muller was present to discuss the application. The application requests permission to cover the newly installed vinyl double hung basement windows on the NW corner with wooden frames and screens to match existing basement window frames and screens.

Mr. Muller stated that there was water damage in the basement and possibly the foundation. A tenant who owed the landlord money and felt he could do the work removed an interior wall and put in new windows in an attempt to stop the water from coming in. The windows are below grade. Mr. Muller inquired as to what his options are.

Mr. Nave commented that the original windows were 8/8 and they could have been repaired. The preference would be to repair and reinstall the original windows or to replace them with something that closely resembles the originals.

**Ms. Poole-Woldring, supported by Mr. Nave, moved to deny the application for 717 W. South Street as proposed, based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines numbers 2 and 6. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**Ms. Poole-Woldring, supported by Mr. Decker, moved that the new wooden replacement windows at 717 W. South St. be replicated to match the original wooden windows that were removed. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Ferraro mentioned that replacement with wood windows would be helpful if the applicant were to seek the historic tax credit. It was suggested that the applicant confer with Building Restoration, Inc. for advice on how to repair the foundation.

**1216 Merrill (Case # IHA 05-0067)**

Bruce DeDee was present to discuss the application. The application requests the addition of a dormer to the north roof to increase the height over the attic steps.

Mr. DeDee provided pictures to show the inside of the house where the attic ceiling is low and you have to duck down in order to access the attic. He also provided pictures of the outside of the house where the dormer would be. The applicant advised that he wanted the dormer to look as though it had originally been there. Mr. Nave advised that the pitch of the dormer should be the same as the existing roof.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved approval in concept regarding the addition of a dormer to the north roof at 1216 Merrill in order to increase the height of the space over the attic steps. Details of the dormer are to be approved by the Historic Preservation Coordinator. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Nave offered his assistance with working out the details of the dormer.

**921 W. Kalamazoo (Case # IHA 05-0066)**

Robert Williams was present to discuss the application. The application requests replacement of non-original half circle brick and concrete steps with a straight flight of concrete steps and handrails on each side.

Mr. Williams advised that he wants cement steps without a brick face or wing walls. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the current steps are not original to the house. The applicant also advised that he wants a wrought iron railing on each side of the steps.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval for replacement of the non-original, non-historic brick steps at 921 W. Kalamazoo Ave. to be replaced with straight cement steps with a wrought iron railing on each side. With a roll call vote, the motion carried by a majority vote.**

**Ayes: Decker, DeYoung, Snyder, Oudsema**

**Nays: Nave, Poole-Woldring, James**

Mr. Nave inquired as to why the applicant chose wrought iron railings. Ms. Ferraro stated that the iron railings are not common but they do exist, particularly on masonry buildings; she gave 229 W. Walnut as an example. Mr. Nave expressed concern with regard to the style of the iron railing. Ms. Ferraro mentioned the prototype for iron railings by Eric Lee, a local artisan, and suggested that railing might be an appropriate style for 921 W. Kalamazoo Ave.

**429 W. Dutton (Case # IHA 05-0054)**

The applicant was not available to represent the property. The application requests demolition of the deteriorated garage.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the structure is not original to the house and it is in bad condition.

Mr. Decker mentioned the 6" cove siding on the garage and commented that it is hard to find. He suggested requiring the applicant to save the siding if the building is demolished. Ms. Ferraro suggested having the applicant offer the siding to the Heritage Co.

Mr. Snyder expressed concern with regard to the loss of another garage in the historic district. However, he added that this structure is in severe disrepair and he would be voting in favor of the applicant's request to demolish.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to approve demolition of the garage at 429 W. Dutton with the stipulation that the siding be salvaged and taken to the Heritage Company. With a roll call vote, the motion carried by a majority vote. Ms. Poole-Woldring voted no.**

**806 Elmwood (Case # IHA 05-0057)**

Ms. Ferraro represented the applicant. The application requests replacement of a pair of double hung dining room windows on the north wall with French doors with one fixed unit and one hinged. Doors lead into yard surrounded by a privacy fence.

Discussion followed with regard to the information provided by the applicant and whether or not a site visit would be necessary. Ms. Ferraro advised that the applicant would like to install a door similar to the door that leads to the original sun porch. The applicants have agreed to store the existing windows in the basement so that a future owner could use them.

Mr. Nave mentioned that if doors were installed, the applicant would need to construct a landing outside. Ms. Ferraro advised that it would be only one step down. Discussion followed with regard to the fact that the proposed wooden door will fit within the confines of the existing window. The new door should be trimmed to historic district standards.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Oudsema, moved approval of the application for 806 Elmwood with the stipulation that the trim on the proposed door match the trim around the existing windows and doors and that the windows to be removed will be stored as stated in the proposal. Any structure outside the door should be reviewed by the Historic District Commission. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**1007 S. Westnedge**

Ms. Ferraro stated that this property was on last month's agenda but the applicant has been unable to attend the meetings. The application requests the addition of a barrier free ramp on the front of the house. The ramp will be a freestanding structure. The steps will be moved forward and can be moved back into place when the ramp is removed.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the applicant has provided more details in writing with regard to the proposed project. Concern was expressed that the applicant was not present to

answer questions. Ms. Ferraro explained that Mr. LeClear is a therapist for Community Mental Health. The application is from Community Mental Health because this project is being funded through a state grant. The landlord supports the project.

Mr. Oudsema mentioned that there is limited parking in the back of the building but that he had concerns about putting a ramp on the front of the house. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the back porch could not be modified to allow for the ramp.

Mr. Snyder commented that he had been advised that there is an ordinance that dictates the amount of green space that must remain. Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired as to why the ramp was so large. Ms. Ferraro advised that there should only be a 1" drop per foot to allow a wheelchair to easily roll up and down the ramp. The proposed ramp will have a slightly steeper pitch. Ms. Ferraro advised that the 17-year-old tenant who needs the ramp, is currently being carried in and out of the house by his mother and being placed into the wheelchair. He is unable to ambulate on his own.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved to deny the ramp at 1007 S. Westnedge based on Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines numbers 2 and 9. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

A brief discussion followed with regard to alternate living arrangements for the tenant. A suggestion was made that Mr. LeClear might be able to assist the tenants with finding a barrier-free unit that would be more suitable for their needs.

### **Minutes (March 15, 2005)**

Mr. Snyder requested the deletion of Ms. Ferraro's comment on page 4, paragraph 4 regarding the color of the house.

**The amended March 15, 2005 Historic District Commission minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.**

### **Miscellaneous**

Ms. Ferraro inquired if anyone was interested in attending the commissioner training to be held on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the community room next to the commission chambers. Mr. Decker, Ms. Poole-Woldring and Mr. Tribu expressed interest in attending the training session.

### **Adjournment**

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved to adjourn the April 19, 2005 meeting of the Historic District Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_