

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes
November 21, 2006
DRAFT

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

Members Present: Fred Decker, Vice Chair (Acting Chair); Nelson Nave; Bill Snyder; James Tribu

Members Excused: Linda DeYoung

Members Absent: Lisa Poole-Woldring, Bob Oudsema

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

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Decker called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA (November 21, 2006)

Ms. Ferraro requested that review of an application for a sign at 214 E. Michigan be added to the end of the agenda.

Mr. Snyder requested that a discussion regarding 414 Davis be added to the end of the agenda.

The amended agenda for the November 21, 2006 HDC meeting was approved by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

DISCLAIMER

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

618 W. Lovell (Case #: IHA 06-0100)

Jim Deditus was present to discuss the application. The application requests demolition of a tree-damaged garage.

Mr. Deditus advised that the garage is in back of the house. A tree limb fell on the garage and put holes in the roof. There is also a tree behind the garage that is pushing it forward. The garage, which has no footings, was built about 15 or 20 years after the house was constructed. Mr. Deditus consulted a contractor who advised that the cost to repair the garage would be more than it is worth.

Mr. Tribu inquired if the applicant had an estimate for the demolition, and he stated that he did not.

Mr. Nave inquired if both houses are rentals. Mr. Deditus stated he only owns the stucco house and it is a rental. He has owned the property for about 4 or 5 years. Mr. Deditus mentioned that the garage doors were held up by wire and he removed them for safety reasons. He told the renters to stay out of the garage because it's not safe.

Mr. Snyder inquired if the applicant would put up a barrier like a fence between his house and the back of the houses on South Street to stop trespassing if the demolition request was granted. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the only barrier in that location is the wall of the garage, and that doesn't block the entire opening. There is a garage at the house on the corner of South and Oak that does run behind that area.

Mr. Deditus stated that there was a fire in the garage and the west side is charred; there's a chimney in the garage.

Mr. Snyder suggested that the applicant be advised of the quorum rule. Ms. Ferraro advised that the applicant has the option of delaying review of his request until the next HDC meeting. When there are only four commissioners (quorum) present, there must be a unanimous vote in order for a request to pass. Postponing the application until the next meeting would provide an opportunity for more commissioners to be present to hear the request.

Mr. Tribu stated that it would be hard to vote without having a actual repair estimate. Mr. Deditus advised that he would provide those numbers to the HDC.

Mr. Snyder and Mr. Decker commented that the HDC tends to be against demolition. Accordingly, it would be helpful to have as much information as possible in order to make an informed decision.

Mr. Nave stated that he would be in favor of repairing the garage. It's one of the best looking garages in the historic district.

Ms. Ferraro inquired as to the name of the contractor who would be looking at the garage. Mr. Deditus advised that he had spoken with Mr. Tichenor about this project. He stated that he would like to postpone review of his application until the next HDC meeting. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would provide the applicant with a list of contractors who could provide estimates for the type of work that is being requested.

443 Stuart (Case #: IHA 06-0100)

Jay Bonsignore was present to discuss the application. The application requests removal of the chimney above the roof on the south side of the house.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that the bricks on the south side of the house are deteriorated at the level of the roof next door. The chimney hasn't functioned for approximately 25 years.

Mr. Tribu inquired as to the condition of the bricks below the roofline. Mr. Bonsignore stated that the bricks below the roofline are in good shape and he wants to leave them. There is a double recessed area in the brick below the roofline, which provides an interesting architectural feature.

Mr. Decker mentioned the quorum rule, and Mr. Bonsignore stated that he was going to request that review of his application be postponed to a later date.

Mr. Nave inquired if the chimney is usable. Mr. Bonsignore stated that the house has two fireplaces. The furnace used to be vented into the ash area of the fireplace and not out the chimney. On the first floor the wood on the floor extended from the hearth into the fireplace. When Mr. Bonsignore bought the house in 1983, the previous owner informed him that the upstairs fireplace was still in working order. Mr. Nave suggested that if the fireplace could be plugged, the building department might allow the chimney to be taken down to about three or four feet above the roof. Mr. Bonsignore was agreeable with that suggestion. Mr. Nave commented on the visual appeal of the chimney, and that removing it might have a negative impact on the overall appearance of the building.

Ms. Ferraro inquired if the applicant was trying to use the tax credit for the roof and the bay window, and Mr. Bonsignore responded in the affirmative. Ms. Ferraro advised that if the chimney were removed, the project might not be eligible for the tax credit. She stated that she would inquire of the building department if the chimney could be shortened. Mr. Bonsignore advised that the chimney project would not proceed until springtime. He stated that he would prefer to come back to the next HDC meeting after talking with Mr. Petrick (the building official). Ms. Ferraro advised that she would send the applicant information about the tax credit.

214 E. Michigan (Case IHA #06-0211)

Ron Osborn was present to discuss the sign proposed for this location. Pictures of the new sign placement were presented to the HDC.

Mr. Osborn stated that the sign will be flat against the wall. The transformer will be in the sign case so no one will have to go into the wall to service the light. There will be a clear plastic face on the sign to help eliminate damage from hail, rocks, bird nests, etc. The plastic face won't turn dark or yellow. The cabinet will be about 6" thick; it is designed to have an antique appearance. The sign will be attached with ¼" tack-ons. Mr. Snyder advised that the sign should be attached to the mortar joints, not the brick. Mr. Osborn stated that the lettering will be neon and the band of blue will be the only portions of the sign that will be illuminated. The back of the sign will be metal and there will be a metal filler around the outside of the cabinet to help keep out moisture, insects and animals, etc. The filler will be black and approximately 0.40 in thickness.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved to allow the sign for 214 E. Michigan as presented. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

414 Davis

Mr. Snyder inquired if Ms. Ferraro was aware of the problem with the rear door at this address. Ms. Ferraro advised that she had dealt with 130 violations this year, which is about three times the usual number of violations in that time period. She informed Mr. Snyder that she would have to check her files with regard to this address. Mr. Snyder stated that he'd mentioned the problem before; it's about a year old. Ms. Ferraro inquired if the door was missing a drip cap and trim, etc. Mr. Snyder stated that someone pushed out the frame and put in a new one. The door wasn't the issue, it was the header and trim. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would look into that problem.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Ms. DeYoung informed city staff that she would not be at the November HDC meeting.

Mr. Snyder, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of Ms. DeYoung's absence from the November 21, 2006 Historic District Commission meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES (October 17, 2006)

Mr. Snyder referred to the top of page 8 and requested that the two incomplete sentences be stricken. Page 10, under 820 W. Lovell, strike, "they put on another storm door," and insert, "they began installation of an inappropriate storm door." Strike the sentence which refers to Mr. Snyder being the chair of the HDC and insert, "prior to its

installation, Mr. Snyder talked to the installer, explaining that he was the Chair of the HDC, and that the door was inappropriate and would not be allowed.” Page 12, strike the reference regarding changes to be made.

With a voice vote, the October 17, 2006 Historic District Commission minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Other Business

Mr. Nave inquired if the front steps on the house next to 618 W. Lovell (on the corner) were supposed to be painted. He also mentioned that there is a broken basement window at that location. Ms. Ferraro responded in the affirmative. She stated that she may consult with the attorney’s office about the \$200 worth of fines that have been assessed against this property. Mr. Snyder expressed concern that the vinyl gutters and other repairs were done deliberately before the owners were caught. Ms. Ferraro stated that the aforementioned changes predated her employment with the city. She thinks that the owner’s office is no longer in that location. Ms. Ferraro stated that she cannot send a violation letter to anyone other than the person directly responsible for the violation. However, the City Attorney’s office gave her permission to send letters to realtors regarding violations. The letters would indicate that the violations must be remedied by the next owner, and they need to reveal that as part of the disclosure.

Mr. Snyder inquired about the old Britigan Building on South Street. The front porch still doesn’t have a roof. Ms. Ferraro advised that Richard Emig has applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness and a building permit. He said the rail would be replaced above the roof and the roof will be restored to look like it did before; nothing has been done at this point. Mr. Snyder stated that it has been that way for over a year. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would talk with inspector Nancy Hess regarding the blue tarp and have her look into the situation. Ms. Ferraro advised that the owner said the rail and other parts are still in storage.

Ms. Ferraro stated that she had been working with the owners of 902 W. North regarding the porch. She spoke with a contractor who was finishing a bid to repair the porch. The contractor inquired as to what he should do about the bolsters. Ms. Ferraro advised that it would be the preference of the HDC to just have them removed. The concrete steps were done without a permit and they should also be removed and replaced with wood. Mr. Nave expressed concern that the porch might collapse soon if something isn’t done to support it.

Mr. Nave inquired if there was a strategic plan for the wall at 530 W. South Street. Ms. Ferraro advised that it was up to the discretion of the HDC. Mr. Nave suggested that the work be done between May 1st and July 1st. Ms. Ferraro proposed that the work plan be submitted by March 31st with work to be done by June 30th. Mr. Nave urged city staff to

proceed with further action on this property. He suggested having the city attorney write a letter to the property owners.

Ms. Ferraro stated that she has written many letters to the property owner at 719 W. Cedar with regard to the steps at that address. The owner added risers with treated wood, which prompted Ms. Ferraro to send another letter. Mr. Snyder cautioned against issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for this project.

Mr. Nave mentioned that there are now three chimneys on the house across the street from where he lives. There had originally been only two chimneys, but one was added to create a pair of chimneys. Mr. Nave provided an explanation of the pictures he presented. The information was provided for informational purposes only; no action was requested.

Ms. Ferraro referred to an address on Douglas Ave. where a car wound up in the basement of a house. Mr. Snyder suggested contacting Kevin Radke (sp?) to repair the masonry that was damaged. Ms. Ferraro advised that the house is holding together without the foundation in that corner. She provided the owner with a COA for the repairs. Mr. Tribu suggested contacting Dick O'Day as another possibility for repairing the masonry.

Ms. Ferraro referred to 605 Douglas and commented that it isn't acceptable to replace inappropriate material with a replica of the inappropriate material. The owners rebuilt the front steps and reinstalled the inappropriate, pseudo wrought iron handrail. Ms. Ferraro referred this matter to Inspector Hess because the handrail is too short to meet code. Mr. Snyder stated that this matter should be brought before the HDC to ask permission to keep the inappropriate material once it's removed and they want it reinstalled.

Mr. Snyder inquired if the rail waiver at 920 W. Lovell was denied because it's too steep. Ms. Ferraro stated that the waiver pertains to the second floor, front porch. Mr. Snyder questioned if that information pertained to 916 rather than 920 W. Lovell rather. A brief conversation followed regarding the details of the two properties. Mr. Snyder requested that Ms. Ferraro let him know what happened regarding 920 W. Lovell.

Mr. Nave requested an update regarding 920 Wilrad. Ms. Ferraro advised that Tim Fish bought the property and it needed a new roof. The anti-blight team requested that he fix the roof. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the house across the street was cited regarding the treated deck on the front porch. The owners are supposed to remedy the situation in the spring.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Snyder, supported by Mr. Decker, moved to adjourn the November 21, 2006 meeting of the Historic District Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Prepared by: _____ Dated: _____
(Recording Secretary)

Reviewed by: _____ Dated: _____
(Staff Liaison)

Approved by: _____ Dated: _____
(HDC Chair)