

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Minutes**  
**July 17, 2007**

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

Members Present: Lisa Poole-Woldring, Chair; Jay Bonsignore; Linda DeYoung;  
Nelson Nave; Bob Oudsema

Members Excused: Fred Decker; James Tribu

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Poole-Woldring called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF ABSENCES**

Mr. Decker and Mr. Tribu contacted city staff to advise that they would not be able to attend the July 17<sup>th</sup> HDC meeting.

**Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the absences of Mr. Decker and Mr. Tribu from the July 17<sup>th</sup> HDC meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**AGENDA (July 17, 2007)**

Ms. Ferraro advised that the drawings for 702 S. Rose are not available yet. Accordingly, the property owner is not present tonight. She suggested that this item be moved to the end of the agenda for discussion.

**Ms. DeYoung, supported by Mr. Bonsignore, moved approval of the July 17, 2007 Historic District Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None

**DISCLAIMER**

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Poole-Woldring advised the applicants of the quorum rule (there are only four commissioners present so all decisions must be unanimous in order for applications to be approved) and offered them the opportunity to have their case heard at a subsequent HDC meeting where more commissioners are present. The applicants who were present decided to proceed with the current agenda.

**702 S. Rose (Case #: IHA 07-0203)**

This item was moved to the end of the agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1300 Grand Avenue (Case #: IHA 07-0216)**

No one was present to represent this property and the commission proceeded to the next agenda item.

**471 W. South – Marlboro Apartments (Case #: IHA 07-0234)**

Pam O'Connor, Mike Sackett, President of the Marlboro Condominium Board and Carol Schreiner, Secretary of the Condominium Board were present to discuss the application. The application requests removal of an unused chimney.

Ms. O'Connor stated that the Marlboro Apartments is in the third year of a multi-phase masonry renovation project. Approximately \$100,000 was spent during the first two years of the renovations. There is an abandoned incinerator chimney that the condo association would like to have removed. The photos provided were taken approximately 1 year ago and there has been further deterioration since that time. The chimney was reinspected during the last 12 months. The inspection revealed that in addition to the problems on the outside (a large bulge in the center about half way up between the roof top level and the coping around the top), the chimney has softer brick on the inside which absorbs water. Building Restoration has advised that as a result of the deterioration, the chimney is in danger of imploding. The water heater and basement furnace are no longer vented through that chimney. Also, there are chimney swifts nesting in the chimney.

Ms. O'Connor advised that the plan is to take down the chimney to the point where it is deteriorated (about 7 feet up from the roof level) and then do the interior and exterior repairs. It would then be recapped and left open. The hope is that the Chimney Swifts,

which eat bugs, would return. If the damage is too severe, then the chimney would have to be taken down the rest of the way. Any salvageable bricks would be utilized elsewhere in the building. Ms. O'Connor stated that the chimney is not considered to be a defining architectural element and it is almost impossible to see from most vantage points.

Mr. Nave inquired as to what would happen with the two existing vents in the chimney. Would they be added to the metal chimney near by? Mr. Sackett advised that the other metal chimneys nearby are fireplace chimneys. These will be shortened if the brick chimney is shortened or removed.

Mr. Nave inquired as to what would happen to the two vents if the chimney is taken down to roof level or below; would they look like the others? Mr. Sackett replied that they would not look the same since there will be four-inch plastic vents sticking out the top for the water heater and the fireplace chimneys.

Mr. Nave inquired about the different colored stovepipes near the edge of the roof. Ms. O'Connor advised that there are six groups of stovepipes on the roof top and they were redone at the same time the incinerator chimney was abandoned and the fireplaces were installed. The stovepipes won't be removed but will be lowered to the same height as the chimneys.

Mr. Nave advised that he didn't object to the chimney being lowered to the roof line since it isn't visible from the street. Mr. Sackett stated that the plastic vents will be coming out of the top of the brick chimney. Mr. Nave suggested that rather than using plastic vents it would be preferable to make the vents look similar to the others. He inquired if the residents used the roof for gatherings. Ms. O'Connor advised that the residents use about 20% of the roof, but that area is on the south end of the west wing, which is quite a distance from the area being discussed. Mr. Nave expressed concern that the work to be done should be aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Sackett stated that the chimneys will look the same, they will just be 7 feet lower.

**Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval to shorten the chimney at 471 W. South St. by 7 feet. If the chimney is deteriorated enough to warrant complete removal, the applicant is to return to the HDC before proceeding with said removal. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**415-417 Oak Street (Case #: IHA 07-0235)**

Wendy Denning was present to discuss the application. The application requests demolition of a two car garage and a three car garage and the repair of a single door garage.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that he has a conflict on this matter and that he would be abstaining from voting on this matter. Accordingly, there would not be a quorum of commissioners to vote on this application. Ms. Ferraro suggested that the commission proceed with a discussion on this matter.

Wendy Denning, Property Manager for Larry and Kathy Johnston, owners, stated that the applicants are requesting permission to demolish the two big garages and install a fence to help eliminate the walk through traffic from the Oak Street Market. They want to repair the small garage and use it for storing the lawn mower and other equipment. There is concern for the safety of the residents and their property because vagrants sleep in the garages, where evidence of drinking and drug use has been found. The intention is to reconfigure the parking of the entire lot. There are 30 units at this complex: the 605 West Lovell building has 20 units, the 611 West Lovell building has 7 units, and 415/17 Oak building has 3 units. There are currently 31 parking spaces at the complex. If the two big garages are demolished and the parking is reconfigured, that should allow for 5 to 10 additional parking spaces. The small garage is visible from Oak St. but the larger ones are not. Ms. Denning mentioned that the HDC granted permission for the garage at 618 W. Lovell to be demolished. Ms. Ferraro stated that permission had not been granted for demolition at 618 W. Lovell, that garage was neglected and it eventually collapsed.

Mr. Nave stated that he was in favor of the demolition. Mr. Nave advised that he had several questions/demands for the applicants if the demolition of the garage is approved:

1. What will the fence look like? It shouldn't block the view.
2. The little garage should have appropriate windows to match the existing one on the left. Black painted plywood could be placed behind the windows to prevent people from entering.
3. The shingles on the little garage should meet historic district standards (dark gray/black in color).
4. A historically appropriate door should be installed on the garage. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that if the garage is being used for storage and not for parking a car, a pair of hinged doors could be used. Mr. Nave commented that the little garage should be raised and concrete blocks added under it since it appears that the wood is sitting in dirt. The little garage should be trimmed out in wood to match historic district standards. He also suggested adding landscaping by the garage. The applicants suggested adding arborvitae on the south side of the property similar to ones growing on the north boundary of the property.

(5:30 p.m. – Mr. Oudsema arrived.)

Ms. Ferraro suggested that details regarding the fence be worked out at a later date. She also mentioned that this matter might be subject to the site plan review process.

Mr. Oudsema stated that he has no problem with what the applicants are proposing. However, he pointed out that the HDC denied a similar request from Dean Plichta regarding the property next door. Ms. Ferraro commented that the 5-car garage at the Plichta property was built to match the house; the garage at 415-417 Oak was not. Mr. Oudsema stressed the need for the HDC to be consistent and fair with their decisions. Mr. Nave suggested that city staff write a newsletter to encourage people to save their garages.

Ms. DeYoung inquired if the people at 415/417 Oak would have to park between the street and the fence. Ms. Denning advised that some people will have to park on the other street. The goal is to prevent people on Pearl and Oak Streets from having easy access to the property

**Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the application for 415-417 Oak Street, not including the fence. The five carports are to be demolished and the single garage is to be restored with windows to match and shingles to meet historic district standards. The Historic Preservation Coordinator is to work out the details of the door and trim, which are to meet historic district standards. With a roll call vote, the motion carried by a majority vote.**

**Ayes: DeYoung, Nave, Oudsema, Poole-Woldring**

**Abstain: Bonsignore**

**1553 Grand Avenue (Case #: IHA 07-0237)**

Bob Mondy and Vicki Gorrell were present to discuss the application. The application requests an addition at the rear of the house.

Mr. Nave advised that he is the architect who is working with the applicants, therefore, he will abstain from voting on this matter. Mr. Nave stated that the trim on the addition will match the existing trim. The lower horizontal siding will be lap siding. The second floor siding will be cedar shingles. The paint and shingles will be matched as closely as possible to what currently exists. The chimney is interrupted by the new roof so it will have new flashing at a higher point on the chimney.

Mr. Bonsignore expressed concern that the roof addition would intersect the chimney and meet up with the other roof; it looks like it will be very close to the valley. Mr. Nave advised that he thought that would not be problem. The new roof will be higher than the existing roof so the skylights will be covered. Mr. Nave advised that there will be a small porch on the back, which will conform to historic district standards. The plan is to have brick showing on the foundation, the same as the rest of the house. A basement will also be added. Windows have not been chosen at this point.

Mr. Mondy advised that none of the windows are original. There are a mixture of wood casement windows, double-hung and vinyl windows. The new windows would have to be painted white to match the rest of the house. Mr. Mondy stated that he was not sure if

the windows are solid vinyl or vinyl clad. Mr. Nave commented that the only remaining original windows are in the living room on the first floor.

Mr. Oudsema inquired as to what currently exists in the back. Mr. Nave stated that there is a breakfast room on the back of the house with a sleeping porch over it, which will be removed. The house was remodeled about 10 years ago. Mr. Mondri stated that there are windows between the sleeping porch and the house so, presumably, that was an exterior wall. It appears that the sleeping porch was not there originally.

Mr. Oudsema inquired if the existing protrusion is the same depth as the addition. Mr. Nave stated that the existing protrusion is 8 feet and the addition will be 12 feet on the inside. The existing living room window with diagonal muntins and the window by the fireplace will be saved. The back wall of the house on the east side will stay the same. The area between the kitchen and the eating area will be opened up. The addition will not be centered on the back of the house in order to maintain the living room window.

Mr. Oudsema inquired if there was any thought about maintaining the width and centering the addition. Mr. Mondri advised that the objective is to have as much space as possible; another two feet will accommodate another row of cabinets. Mr. Nave advised that he set the addition back two feet to correspond to the overhang. Also, it is difficult to line up the new and the old portions of the building where they meet at the corner since it creates a line and the new siding doesn't match the old. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that an addition is supposed to be differentiated from the rest of the house and the setback accomplishes that goal.

Mr. Oudsema commented that the windows should be wood. He added that the HDC needs to be consistent with their decisions. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that the historic district standards prohibit the use of vinyl windows in the historic district.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the plans for the addition also call for a Bilco door on the basement access in the back. He requested input on the type of material to be used for the door. Ms. Ferraro advised that steel doors have typically been approved for similar applications on the rear elevations of houses.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he had no problems with the addition, but he would like to see more specific details and a depiction of how the outside of the house will look. Mr. Nave stated that he could bring the working drawings to the next HDC meeting. Ms. Ferraro suggested approving the footprint of the addition so the contractor, Andy Davis, can apply for a building permit.

**Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Oudsema, moved approval in concept of the application for the addition at 1553 Grand Avenue. Windows installed in the addition should be wood. More details about the project are to be submitted to the**

**HDC before the applicants can receive final approval. With a roll call vote, the motion carried by a majority vote.**

**Ayes: Bonsignore, DeYoung, Oudsema, Poole-Woldring**

**Abstain: Nave**

**1300 Grand Ave. (IHA 07-0216) City of Kalamazoo/W. Main Hill Neigh. Assoc.**

Install West Main Hill Neighborhood Association sign at the east end of triangle park bounded by West Main, Monroe and Grand.

Ms. Ferraro stated that she has been in contact with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding the sign request. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board also needs to approve the sign before it can be installed. It will be on their agenda on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The proposal is for a double-sided sign.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the sign as presented for 1300 Grand Ave. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**702 S. Rose (Case #: IHA 07-0203)**

The plans were not yet available for this project and the applicant was not present. The application requests reconfiguration of the exterior rear balcony and stair.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the owner would like to know if Ms. Ferraro can do an administrative approval of this request as long as the staircase meets historic district standards.

Ms. Poole-Woldring commented that the overhang will be removed and the balcony will remain. Ms. Ferraro stated that once the garage is gone, the staircase will be unsupported. Therefore, the applicants are requesting that the staircase be completely rebuilt. The applicants just want to work out the design details with Ms. Ferraro.

**Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval to allow the Historic Preservation Coordinator to work out the details of the exterior rear balcony and stair with the owner of 702 S. Rose St. and in accordance with the previous decisions of the HDC. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**615 W. Kalamazoo Ave.**

Ms. Ferraro advised that this property is owned by Rorick Brothers Auto Body and is adjacent to their business. There are auto parts in the garage, which is in bad condition. It appears that the garage originally served a house which no longer exists. The city is

asking that the owner have the garage demolished. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would prefer to have approval from the HDC for the demolition to proceed.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the garage demolition at 615 W. Kalamazoo Ave. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Nave suggested that the door be offered to the Heritage Company. Ms. Ferraro stated that the matter regarding 615 W. Kalamazoo Ave. was not on the July HDC agenda because the issue was brought forth by city staff just yesterday.

### **530 W. South St.**

Mr. Oudsema requested an update regarding the brick wall at 530 W. South Street. Ms. Ferraro stated that she had informed the owners that they would need to submit a plan to remedy the violations regarding the wall/fence in their yard. She was contacted by one of the owners who advised that their contractor had been injured and that is why the work had not been completed. The contractor is on permanent disability and the wrought iron that was to be installed on the top of the brick wall has disappeared. The owner informed Ms. Ferraro that it would take 3 to 4 months to reorder the supplies and they are anticipating being done with the wall by the end of the construction season in 2008. Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC has the option of pursuing this matter in court. The general consensus among the HDC members was that this matter should be turned over to the City Attorney's office.

### **Garage demolition**

Ms. Ferraro has set up an evaluation procedure regarding garage demolitions and is requesting feedback from the HDC regarding the proposed procedure. The new requirements stated that a garage slated for demolition must be free of debris on the interior and exterior. Garages must also be clear of snow in the winter time in order to facilitate the evaluation. Either a city building inspector can provide an inspection or the owner can arrange for an evaluation at their expense. It would be preferable to have another person's opinion regarding the evaluation. The HDC has been consistent with their decisions to preserve garages, but there are a lot of deteriorating garages in the historic district. Many of the properties have been converted to student rentals and the owners tend to lock up the garages and not maintain them. Eventually, the garages get cited by the city, but by that time they are often beyond repair.

Mr. Oudsema commented that it isn't practical to go to court every time the HDC wants someone to fix a garage. There should be a substantive architectural reason for saving the garage; it should be a carriage barn or a large garage etc. Garages will continue to deteriorate and become a hazard until the city requires them to be demolished or they will collapse. There should be consistency in the decisions that are made. Ms. Ferraro

advised that the proposed evaluation form was designed to help eliminate that problem. Sometimes during the course of the review, a property owner may decide to make the necessary repairs. The evaluation is designed to make the owners take a closer look at their situation and to give city staff a consistent means of evaluating the property. Each property must be considered on a case by case basis.

Discussion followed with regard to the definition of a carport vs. a garage. Ms. Ferraro advised that you can't store anything but a car in a carport. A garage has to have a door.

Mr. Oudsema commented that vinyl siding can look o.k. and it helps defer maintenance issues. Without vinyl siding, the structure would have to be painted every year.

Ms. Poole-Woldring suggested that any architecturally significant doors and windows, etc. be salvaged before the garage is demolished. Ms. Ferraro advised that the new form she's using covers those details. If it is appropriate to save the doors and windows, that suggestion will be made.

Mr. Nave stated that he wrote a letter to Pete Eldridge regarding the zoning for the Spaman Jewelers building on South Street. That address is in an office zone. Mr. Eldridge wrote a letter to the owner and received a response from the owner's attorney. Ms. Ferraro advised that the issue is whether there will be walk-in traffic at this address or if the customers will visit by appointment only. Mr. Nave advised that such an issue requires ZBA approval. The office district doesn't allow walk-in traffic at a retail establishment.

Mr. Oudsema commented that if there isn't a different approach to how historic districts operate, historic buildings will deteriorate quickly and severely. Many historic properties don't have adequate parking and there is no legitimate way to maintain the properties in the current economic environment. He expressed concern that they won't be able to generate enough rent to maintain the buildings. Use changes will have to be allowed in order to save buildings. Mr. Bonsignore advised that he didn't think the situation was that bleak. He stated that many people were saying similar things about the neighborhood he moved into in 1980. Many student rentals in the neighborhood were transformed and restored. Mr. Nave commented that the owners of the Spaman Jewelers would be allowed to have a retail use at the other end of South Street.

Ms. DeYoung inquired as to the activity she observed at Old Central High School. Ms. Ferraro stated that repairs are being made to the parking lot, including drainage and catch basins. Requirements of the school system are different than requirements of the city building codes.

Ms. Ferraro mentioned that certificate applications are up by almost 40%. Only a small number of them are from the West Main Hill neighborhood. They tend to be small projects but there has been a significant increase over last year. Most of the applications are for properties in the Vine Neighborhood.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired as to the status of the Senator Stuart house. He was told that someone was putting up drywall in that location. Ms. Ferraro advised she was unaware of anything happening at that property and that she would check into it.

**MINUTES (June 19, 2007)**

There were no changes to the minutes.

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the June 19, 2007 Historic District Commission minutes as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to adjourn the July 17, 2007 Historic District Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Recording Secretary)

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Staff Liaison)

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
(HDC Chair)