

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes
April 15, 2008
DRAFT

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

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

Members Excused: Fred Decker, Vice Chair

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

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Poole-Woldring called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Mr. Decker's absence was approved by unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA (April 15, 2008)

Ms. Ferraro requested that 718 Eleanor be removed from the agenda. The owner is pursuing other options. She also requested that 1312 S. Westnedge be added to the end of the agenda.

Commissioner Bonsignore, supported by Commissioner Nave, moved approval of the April 15, 2008 Historic District Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

DISCLAIMER

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

OLD BUSINESS

813 W. South Street (Case #: IHA 07-0198)

Richard and Carla Emig were present to discuss the application. Ron Osborn from Modern Sign Company was also present to answer questions. The application requests approval of the new sign in its current position in the front yard.

(5:10 p.m. – Mr. Oudsema arrived.)

Mr. Emig advised that the sign is a replica of the 1950's internally illuminated sign that hung over the street at 112 West South front of Spaman Jewelers, which is an 80-year-old business. The business was moved to 813 W. South St., which is near six other properties owned by the applicants. The sign size and copy, except the hours of operation, were approved by the HDC and the ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals). Mr. Emig advised that he thought the additional copy on the sign was part of the information approved by the ZBA. He mentioned that Dr. Prater's sign is similar and also has his phone number and other information. He advised that he spoke with Ms. Ferraro regarding calls from the neighbors. He stated that he would work with the neighbors regarding their complaints.

Mr. Emig stated that he would add a curved detail on the top and a granite planter at the bottom, which would be similar to details on the house. The sign was installed during the winter so the details were not added at that time. Also, work has not been completed on the rest of the property, so the overall appearance of the property is still in transition. Mr. Emig advised that the proposed changes should make the sign very similar to the previous sign. Mr. Osborn had the sign installed as close to the original location as possible. The Miss Dig signs, which identify the gas, sewer and water lines in the yard, were close to the location of the previous sign making it difficult to install the new sign in the same location. The supports for the new sign are 42" in the ground and supported by concrete footings. Mr. Emig advised that he wants to work with the HDC and the neighbors to make the changes at his expense.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the sign is too close to the street. Ms. Ferraro advised that the new sign complies with the zoning code, but it is not in the same position as the previous sign, and it is approximately six feet close to the street. The footings from the previous sign are still in the ground. Those footings would have to be removed in order to install the new sign in the same location.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the HDC previously approved the installation of this sign. Ms. Ferraro stated that in June of 2007, the HDC approved the sign as presented to be installed in the same position as the previous sign. However, the new sign was placed about six feet closer to the road in an attempt to avoid underground gas, sewer and water lines according to the owner.

Mr. Emig added that Pete Eldridge from the city's zoning department, advised that the code requires signs to be set back at least two feet from the sidewalk. The new sign is actually set back three feet from the sidewalk. The sign is in alignment with other signs on the street.

Mr. Oudsema commented that the new sign is effective but "in your face." He advised that if he voted to approve the sign that was installed, it was a mistake on his part. Mr. Emig stated that the sign at 813 W. South Street is the same as the sign downtown. He advised that granite details to match the building will be added around the sign. Mr. Emig stated that the building at 813 W. South Street has been untouched since the 1970's. Mr. Oudsema commented that he appreciated the improvements the applicant has made to the building, but the sign is causing bad publicity. Mr. Emig advised that he has only heard one negative comment about the sign; someone came into the store yelling and screaming about it.

Mr. Emig referred to 837, 839, 821, 711 and 723 W. South Street and what has been done over the past 20 years; it is important to look at the whole picture. Upgrades to the subject property have not yet been completed. Mr. Oudsema commended the applicant for the improvements he

made to the building. He inquired if there is a way to make the sign less objectionable. Mr. Emig advised that not everyone at the meeting has seen the photos viewed by the HDC. The HDC approved the sign. Moving the sign six feet is not the issue. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of the applicant's money has been invested in this property; there are no government dollars involved. Mr. Emig requested that he be allowed to finish the project; the final product will be better than what is shown in the picture.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that he received a couple of e-mails about the sign. One of the consistent objections is that the sign is too tall. He commented that the changes suggested by Mr. Emig will make the sign even taller. Mr. Emig suggested that people contact him if they have issues to discuss.

Public Comment

Christopher Roussi, 729 W. South Street, advised that he sent an e-mail outlining his thoughts on the sign. He advised that he doesn't object to signage in general. However, the guidelines for signs in historic districts around the country are outlined in the e-mail as follows: 1. They should be unobtrusive, simply designed, and read easily; 2. They should be made of materials appropriate to the district; 3. The number of, and particular, colors should be chosen to blend with adjacent structures; 4. The sign should be small enough to not conceal surrounding building details; 5. They should be low to the ground. Mr. Roussi advised that he would like to see the sign made smaller and less noticeable.

Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired if Mr. Roussi would be willing to sit down with Mr. Emig to discuss this matter. Mr. Roussi responded in the affirmative.

William Coombs, 806 W. South Street, advised that he lives across the street from 813 W. South Street. He mentioned that he was in Mr. Emig's store to discuss the sign with him. However, he did not yell or swear as the applicant mentioned. Mr. Coombs suggested that the HDC and other city board/commissions should arrange their hearings to coincide with the ZBA and other organizations which should work together. The HDC approved the sign in June of 2007. However, the ZBA didn't meet to discuss the appeal regarding the retail use on South Street until November of 2007. There are different legal issues decided by these two boards. The ZBA voted 4 to 2 to grant the appeal. Mr. Coombs suggested that the HDC shouldn't have approved anything until the ZBA granted the appeal and the definition of the business had been clarified. He stated that the original decision of the City of Kalamazoo's Zoning Department was correct. Mr. Coombs stated that he thought the case was not strong enough to prove that this is not a retail business. Since last year (2007-2008) Spaman's Jewelry had an ad in the yellow pages, which had all the earmarks of an advertisement for a retail business. Mr. Emig says the sign approved last June was based on the sign in the yellow pages. The telephone number and the words, "by appointment" were added to the sign later. Mr. Coombs advised that he didn't know about the sign until January. The sign is very large and it is located on a one-way street. The same design and wording are on both sides of the sign. Mr. Coombs stated that he admires the applicant's investment in the property, but the sign is intrusive and ugly and he wishes it were gone.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC requires two sided signs to accommodate pedestrian traffic on the one-way street.

Pat Hirsch, 610 W. South Street, advised that she was on the Planning Commission for many years. She stated that she was troubled that the HDC voted on the sign before the zoning issue was heard in front of the ZBA. She expressed concern that the process had a negative affect on the citizens. South Street is an entry to the downtown. Ms. Hirsch advised that she attended the ZBA meeting and spoke at the public hearing. Mr. Emig advised that only 20% or less of his business would be walk-in customers, the rest of his business is consulting. The citizens of South Street have contributed to the look of the street, which is important to them. They are disappointed with the decision made by the ZBA. Ms. Hirsch commented that Mr. Emig has done great things for South Street, but the objective is for the homes in that neighborhood to be single-family, residential. The huge, non-historic sign makes the area less appealing. Ms. Hirsch advised that she would be willing to have a discussion with Mr. Emig about the sign.

Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to reject the application on the grounds that the sign is in a different location than what was originally approved by the Historic District Commission. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Oudsema commented that large structures consume large amounts of money. He stated that he has no problem with someone working on the house and using it for a business. This property has been used as office space for quite some time. Moving the sign back six feet might be less obtrusive to traffic. Mr. Oudsema suggested working on a compromise; the owner has real needs and so do the neighbors.

Mr. Tribu commented that the sign that was installed is larger than what was approved by the HDC. Mr. Oudsema advised that the sign approved by the HDC was 8' x 3' and the sign that was installed is the same dimensions. Mr. Bonsignore stated that he thought the sign should be lower than three feet off the ground. Mr. Osborn advised that he was told 3' x 8' was the maximum size this sign should be, and that it should be no more than six feet from grade to the top edge of the sign. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that the sign is six feet from grade. Mr. Osborn advised that the sign conforms to the regulations, but it was relocated because of the flags marking underground utilities. Mr. Emig advised that he can't put the sign in the exact location of the prior sign because the footings are still there, and the underground utilities are also in the way to the east.

Mrs. Emig commented that the new sign was to be a duplicate of the sign that has been at the business for 56 years. The applicant has retained the name of the previous business. They didn't design the sign, they just chose to carry on the tradition.

Mr. Oudsema inquired if the applicant would move the sign back six feet and add a garden border underneath it. Mr. Emig responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Poole-Woldring commented that she thought it would be less obvious there is a retail business at this location. She added that she could see several viewpoints on this situation and that she took full responsibility for her prior vote.

Mr. Oudsema advised that he looked at what was submitted in June and that appears to be the same as what was installed. Maybe there needs to be a discussion regarding the office hours that were added to the sign after it was approved, but the sign is substantiallyly what was approved. The sign is in a different location than what was approved, but moving it back six feet might help with the concerns that have been expressed.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Bonsignore, moved approval of the sign as depicted in the latest presentation for 813 W. South Street with the stone planter underneath, a crest added to the top as shown in the picture and with the whole sign to be installed at least one foot shorter than it is now, provided that the sign is relocated to its original, approved location.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if Mr. Oudsema's motion would supercede the HDC's previous approval. Mr. Oudsema advised that his motion denies the request for approval of the sign in its current location. Ms. Ferraro added that the current motion would amend the June, 2007 decision.

Mr. Nave commented that the current sign has destroyed the image of the drive down South Street. There used to be a view of lawns, trees and historic homes and historically compatible signage; that image has been changed by the existing sign. He suggested a different sign in a different location to be more compatible with the historic district.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he wouldn't mind seeing a more historically compatible sign in that location. However, the HDC already approved a sign, which looks similar to the one that was installed. Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the previous approval of the sign by the HDC has been voided because the sign was not installed in the approved location? And, if so, does the applicant need a new approval for the sign. Ms. Ferraro advised that it only voids the new application that is before the HDC. Mr. Bonsignore commented that his interpretation is that the applicant could install the sign that was already previously approved. Ms. Ferraro stated that Mr. Oudsema's motion was to amend the previous decision.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that he would like to see a shorter sign in that location and Mr. Oudsema concurred. Mr. Oudsema added that the applicant appeared in front of the HDC in June of 2007 and the commission voted in favor of the sign. Mr. Oudsema advised that, after viewing the installed sign, he felt that the HDC made a mistake by approving it. He advised that if the applicant agrees to move the sign back to the original location he would have a difficult timing denying the sign.

Mr. Tribu mentioned that the HDC decision was based on a small picture, which was a mistake on the part of the HDC. There is a lesson to be learned from this, since the full impact of the sign doesn't register until you see it. Mr. Tribu advised that he appreciated the improvements the applicant has made to the property, but the discussion needs to focus on the sign. He added that he would like to see a smaller sign in that location but, at the very least, the sign should be moved to the approved location.

Ms. Poole-Woldring advised that she was looking through the June 2007 HDC minutes to determine what had been approved regarding the location of the sign. The minutes only refer to "front yard." Ms. Ferraro advised that the original application states that the sign is to be installed in the location of the previous sign.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the proposed addition to the top of the sign will make it even higher. Mr. Tribu mentioned that the HDC originally approved a six-foot tall sign. He inquired if the suggested changes could be made within the six-foot limit, from grade to top. Mr. Nave advised that Mr. Oudsema's motion is for approval of the sign as presented, but moved back to the approved position. Mr. Nave commented that he was hesitant to approve the addition of the stone planter box details to the sign because he was not sure how it would look. The sign currently

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presented is not the sign that was originally approved. This is a new sign with more information on it, and the shade of yellow is brighter than what was approved. Ms. Ferraro advised that the scanned picture of the sign did not reproduce the true color of the sign.

Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired if the HDC had any comments about the sign advertising a retail store open for business from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC has no jurisdiction over what the sign says.

Ms. DeYoung referred to the Secretary of the Interiors Standards and Guidelines #2, which states that the historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. A yellow sign this size does not do that.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the six-foot maximum is set by the historic district or if it is in the zoning ordinance. Ms. Ferraro advised that signs are considered on a case by case basis; there are no specifics in the standards. Six feet was proposed by the applicant and the HDC approved it. Mr. Oudsema inquired if there was anything in the historic guidelines about the dimensions of signs. Ms. Ferraro stated that the size of the sign needs to be in scale with the building.

Mr. Oudsema inquired as to the dimensions of the details to be added on top of the sign. Mr. Osborn advised that the proposed details would add 12" to the top of the sign. The sign would have to be lowered to accommodate the new details and stay within the required six-foot dimensions.

Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired as to what the applicant would be allowed to do at this point. Ms. Ferraro stated that the sign could be moved to the original location and the information regarding hours should be removed.

Mr. Nave commented that neither the minutes nor the original sketch say anything about the height of the sign. Mr. Bonsignore advised that the overall dimensions are noted as 3' x 8'. Ms. Ferraro clarified Mr. Oudsema's motion as follows: motion to amend the June, 2007 HDC approval to require the sign to be located back six feet to the original location, with a crest or pediment added to the top and a granite planter built around the bottom. The sign should be six feet tall from the existing grade of the ground to the top of the new crest. The six foot measurement does not include the height of the planter.

Ms. DeYoung referred to a picture of the sign that was on the business at the downtown location. Ms. Ferraro advised that she didn't supply such a photo. Ms. DeYoung mentioned that the minutes from June stated that the applicant will replicate the sign from the business downtown. Ms. Ferraro advised that the color printing does not provide an exact duplication of the color of the sign. Ms. DeYoung stated that there are more words and numbers on the new sign.

Mr. Oudsema inquired if it would make a difference if the sign were reduced from six feet to five feet and Ms. Poole-Woldring responded in the affirmative. Mr. Emig commented that the HDC asked him to move the sign. There would be additional expense for a new sign and that would be unfair. Mr. Oudsema advised that he asked the applicant if he would be willing to reduce the height of the sign, and Mr. Emig responded in the affirmative. Mr. Oudsema suggested reducing the height of the sign and putting a planter under it.

Ms. Poole-Woldring commented that she thought she voted in June to have the original sign replicated. Mr. Oudsema suggested the following changes to the sign: information referring to office hours should be removed, the sign should be moved back six feet to the position of the original sign, the height should be lowered by one foot, a finial would be added to the top, and a planter would be added underneath.

Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired if a new sign would have to be made to conform to the requested changes. Ms. Ferraro advised that a new sign would not be necessary. Mr. Oudsema stated that removing the wording regarding the hours and "by appointment" would not require a new sign to be made. He stated that the suggestions at this point are to either have the existing sign (with the aforementioned wording removed) moved back six feet to the location of the original sign or to leave the information regarding the hours etc. as is, but lower the sign by two feet, move it to the location of the original sign, add a finial to the top and a planter at the bottom. Mr. Oudsema commented that he thought the second choice would be a good compromise.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Bonsignore, amended the motion to state that the sign at 813 W. South Street will be lowered to five feet tall, rather than six feet tall. With a roll call vote, the motion failed with a tie vote.

Ayes: Oudsema, Bonsignore, Tribu

Nays: Nave, DeYoung, Poole-Woldring

Ms. Ferraro advised that she would provide Mr. Emig with a letter outlining the details of the decision and the appeals process.

NEW BUSINESS

1450 Prospect (Case #: IHA 08-0075)

The application requests the construction of a new, two-story, gable front garage. (The application for an end gable garage was denied in October 2005. The owner was encouraged to design a gable front garage.)

Lee Taylor, caretaker, was present to represent owner David Taylor, II. Mr. Taylor advised that he wants to remove the existing garage and replace it with a two-car garage. The bricks and roofing and other building materials will match the house as closely as possible. The intent is to make the garage look like it was original to the house, which was built around 1925.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicant has hired a contractor for this project, and Mr. Taylor responded in the affirmative. He stated that the brick will look similar to the original and it is readily available. Mr. Nave requested a description of the proposed windows. Mr. Taylor stated that the garage windows would match the double-hung, wood windows in the house. The overhead garage doors will look like carriage barn doors. The dormer on the east elevation will be sided with clapboard. There is a small bedroom to the north end of the upper level, but it is only 7.5 feet wide. The window will be lined up for use with that area so it could be living space in the future. The only way into that space would be through the existing home on the second level. The room over the garage will not be an apartment.

Mr. Nave inquired if the garage would affect the existing windows. Mr. Taylor stated that the window disappears under the connecting roof, which has a 12/12 pitch. The roof will connect approximately two feet below the eyebrow windows. Mr. Taylor advised that one of the other windows will be reconfigured into a door for access to the upper level.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if there will still be an egress window from the bedroom. Mr. Taylor advised that the bedroom will become a hallway after the remodel so the egress will no longer be required.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Oudsema, moved to accept the application for 1450 Prospect Place as submitted. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

806 Davis (Case #: IHA 08-0086)

Timothy and Kimberly Van Order were present to discuss the application. The application requests demolition of the deteriorated garage/carport built in 1961. The applicants would also like to extend the existing fencing.

Ms. Van Order advised that she would like to have the garage/car port demolished and extend the fence. The garage is leaning, there are holes in the roof, and the door is missing. The windows are broken out. Rain comes down Austin Street and down the driveway and collects in the garage.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicants have a plan for the empty lot. Mr. Van Order stated that he hopes to build a new garage in that location next summer. Mr. Nave inquired if this is a double or triple lot. Ms. Ferraro advised that it is a full depth lot that hasn't been subdivided. The garage was built in 1961.

Mr. Bonsignore expressed concern that deferred maintenance on the garage may have led to the current state of neglect. Mr. Van Order stated that the garage was in this condition when they purchased the property 2 or 3 years ago. The applicants live next door at 916 Austin and they hope to move to 806 Davis in the future.

Ms. Poole-Woldring inquired if the subject property is a single-family residence. Ms. Van Order advised that it was configured as a duplex when they purchased it, but it has been used as a single-family residence recently.

The applicants would like to extend the six-foot privacy fence between the house and the garage overhang, which they would like to take down. They are proposing to take down the existing picket fence. Mr. Nave inquired as to how the applicants would repair the area where the overhang is removed. Mr. Van Order advised that they would keep the aluminum siding for now, patch the area with similar material, and then paint the house.

Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the application as submitted for 806 Davis. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Tribu inquired about the foundation. Mr. Van Order stated that the foundation would remain for now. He hopes to raise the grade eventually to solve the drainage issue. For now, it will just be a parking spot.

618 McCourtie (Case #: IHA 08-0014)

Duane McIntyre was present to represent the property. The application requests removal of the unused, deteriorated chimney and replacement or repair of the front door.

Mr. McIntyre stated that mortar is missing from the chimney, and the resulting leaks have caused damage to the plaster inside. He is installing a new heating system and would like to resolve the issues with the chimney. It appears that the front door has been kicked in many times, and the glass has been replaced with Plexiglas. Mr. McIntyre advised that he used to teach woodworking and it would take a lot of time and money to repair the damage. He advised that he intends to install a wooden door.

Mr. Nave commented that fixing the door or replacing it with a similar wooden door would be acceptable. Polycarbonate, which looks like glass, would also be acceptable for the window. Mr. Nave suggested installing a full storm door with a deadbolt. He stated that the chimney didn't look bad; it could be sealed with a clear sealer. Metal flashing could be added to the top of the chimney.

Mr. McIntyre advised that the chimney is sinking and needs to be jacked up. He's been jacking the house up in the center about 1 1/2". There are major problems with the footings and that's why the house is leaking. The flashing is buckled on the sides because the house is sinking.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the removal of the existing chimney at 618 McCourtie and replacement of the front door with a wood door of similar design. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

1008 W. North St. (Case #: IHA 08-0124)

The application requests the addition of a barrier-free ramp to the front yard of this very tight lot.

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

512 Oak (Case #: IHA 08-0014)

Ron VandenBos was present to represent the property. The application requests demolition of a severely deteriorated garage.

Mr. VandenBos advised that he recently purchased the property for his son who is attending college. The garage is collapsing and is a safety hazard. He wants to tear it down.

Ms. Ferraro advised that this garage is one of the worst she's seen that is still standing. The siding is a material that you don't often see. It is a pressed metal embossed to look like brick. There is no sheathing and the metal is not structural. Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the garage is leaning against the house next door.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the demolition of the garage at 512 Oak St.

Mr. Nave advised that he couldn't get in the garage but he looked in the window. It appears that the only thing wrong with the garage is that the roof is leaking and could have been fixed. If the garage is demolished, Mr. Nave suggested that the siding should be recycled or given to the Heritage Company. Ms. Ferraro added that the siding is a rare material that isn't made anymore, and it could be helpful to someone.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Tribu, amended the motion to advise that the applicant should give the siding to the Heritage Company if the garage is demolished. With a roll call vote, the amendment was approved unanimously.

512 Oak (Case # IHA 08-0014)

Ron VandenBos was present to represent the property. The application requests the addition of a 24" x 36" basement egress window to the south side. Mr. VandenBos advised that his son spends time in the basement and he would like to install an egress window.

Mr. Tribu inquired as to how the applicants access the basement. Mr. VandenBos advised that there are stairs by the side door, which goes directly to the outside. The lot extends about 10 to 12 feet behind the garage.

Mr. Oudsema advised that he is not in favor of the egress because that would allow the basement to become a bedroom in the future. Mr. Nave suggested that the applicant could install a bulkhead door rather than having an egress window. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the bulkhead door would have to be installed in the back of the house by the porch. An opening would have to be made through the foundation to allow installation of the door.

Mr. Tribu stated that the door on the side of the house should be safe for the use the applicant is suggesting. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the basement could be used as a workout room or a laundry room but not as living space under the current conditions. However, if the house is not a rental, those terms don't apply. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that if there is more than one unrelated person living in the house with the applicant's son, the property would be classified as a rental and it would need to be certified with the city's inspection department. Having a living space in the basement would require at least one egress window in the basement.

Mr. Oudsema, supported by Mr. Bonsignore, moved denial of the request for an egress window in the basement at 512 Oak St. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the applicant will need a demolition permit and that process provides for removal of the garage from the property assessment.

715 Pioneer (Case #: IHA 08-0125)

There was no one present to represent the property. The application requests that the fascia and soffit be wrapped with a white coil stock.

Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Mr. Nave, made a motion to deny the application for 715 Pioneer. The motion passes unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he went by the house, and he could see no reason to cover the soffits and fascia. Ms. Ferraro commented that covering the soffits and fascia could mask further damage. She stated that it would be less expensive to repair the broken pieces.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the white garage to the west is part of this property. There is no door on the garage and the window is missing. He expressed concern that the garage will continue to deteriorate if the repairs are not made shortly.

1312 S. Westnedge

Andrew Gyorkos was present to discuss the application. Mr. Gyorkos advised that he is a licensed contractor and he owns property in the downtown area. He would like to enclose the side porch and extend the kitchen into the newly enclosed area. The new area will be sided with cedar siding to match the rest of the house, and the rotten wood will be repaired. The addition will be trimmed to match the existing structure. The existing door is to be used on the back of the house. The existing kitchen is only 6' x 8' feet and they want to expand it another 4' x 10'. The porch is in bad shape so they decided to wall it off and make room for a refrigerator and some cabinets. They might be able to reuse the door but, if not, they will find a door that matches.

Mr. Nave inquired if the addition to the kitchen will be in the location of the existing porch. Mr. Gyorkos responded in the affirmative and advised that the porch is not original to the house. Where the porch is now, there will be an exterior wall. Siding will be added to match the rest of the house.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicant would construct a 3 ½ foot foundation under the new construction. Mr. Gyorkos responded in the affirmative and advised that he spoke with Frank Springer, Building Inspector, who advised there may be a foundation in that location. If there is no foundation he will consult with Frank when constructing the new foundation. Mr. Nave commented that the sketch implies that the same block will be used on the addition. Mr. Gyorkos advised that cinder block was used on the addition, but there is a textured block on the original part of the house. He will use matching block if he can find it. This project should only require two to three courses of block. Beveled cedar siding will be installed to match the existing siding.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the vertical siding on the gable matches the siding on the front gable. However, it is missing the drip cap that the front porch has. Mr. Gyorkos advised that he would leave the existing roof and framing. No windows will be installed since the new cabinets will be taking up the wall space. The door will take the place of a window. The one existing boarded up window will become a door.

Mr. Nave referred to the door in the sketch and commented that it must be higher than indicated since the floor is up about 24 to 30 inches. Mr. Gyorkos estimated that it is actually about 18 to 24 inches. It wouldn't be the same as the side porch because the grade of house changes. There will be a couple of steps and a handrail to satisfy the code requirements. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that a rail may not be necessary since the steps are low to the ground. The applicant will save the sashes from the window on the west side in case someone wants to use it in the future. The door from the current kitchen that faces north will be re-used in place of the window. The applicant

had not planned on having a cover (roof overhang) over the top of door. Mr. Nave suggested that a storm door be installed to protect the wood door.

Mr. Tribu expressed concern that without a window, the proposed addition might look like a boarded up porch. He inquired if a window could be incorporated on the driveway side. Mr. Gyorkos stated that there is only 10 feet of space so there is no room for a window. The refrigerator and cabinets will be added in that area, which is not visible from the street.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the gutters on the porch do not meet historic district standards. Mr. Gyorkos advised that he will replace the gutters on the entire house.

Ms. DeYoung, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the application as submitted for 1312 S. Westnedge. The vertical bead board is to be left in place at the west end of the existing porch roof and other details are to be worked out with the Historic Preservation Coordinator. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Nave referred to 718 Eleanor and advised that there appears to be nothing wrong with the siding. Ms. Ferraro advised that it has split along the bottom edge and is expanding. There is enough ongoing damage that the owner would like to have it removed. Mr. Nave referred to the thick, black felt that was removed. He commented that there appears to be $\frac{3}{4}$ " of wood showing by the foundation. Ms. Ferraro stated that having the Upson board set back deep along the window frames is an indicator that there is nothing behind it. There may be some skirt boards and other details still there, but most of the original material is gone. There is probably sheathing under the black felt. The house next door is very similar. The Upson board was probably added in the 1940's or 1950's when the original porch was removed. Ms. Ferraro suggested that the owner work on one side of the house at a time.

1008 W. North Street (Case #: IHA 08-0124)

No one was present to represent the property. The application requests the addition of a barrier-free ramp in the front yard of this very tight lot.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the ramp will be removed and reused when it is no longer needed. This would be a temporary installation on an owner-occupied property. The door on the back of the house is at grade and there is a stair inside. The rear addition would have to be demolished or substantially altered to make room for a ramp in that location.

Mr. Oudsema referred to another property where the ramp was supposed to be temporary but it has been there for many years. Ms. Ferraro advised that the ramp to which Mr. Oudsema referred was not built by an organization that needs to reuse the ramp at another location.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC could deny the ramp, but they would be faced with opposition from the Fair Housing Association. Mr. Nave advised that the ADA specifically says historic, religious and financial problems can be reasons for denying a ramp. Ms. Ferraro recommended approval of the ramp, and added that Senior Services contacted her about it and they have been cooperative. Senior Services wants to reuse the ramp for someone else in the future. They will put the ramp on footings rather than a foundation. The ramp will be used for an owner-occupant.

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Mr. Bonsignore and Mr. Nave commented that the ramp will be on the street and that is not the best location for it. Mr. Bonsignore inquired if this is an ADA approved ramp and if the door is big enough to accommodate a wheelchair. Ms. Ferraro commented that Lee Larson, Building Inspector, advised that the door/ramp are ADA compliant in terms of slope, landings and door width.

Mr. Bonsignore suggested taking out the window in back, putting in a 3-foot wide door and adding an ADA ramp in that location. He questioned if the proposed configuration with the 4 foot ramp would extend out into the shared driveway. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that the proposed ramp should not infringe on the shared driveway.

Ms. Poole-Woldring expressed support for having the ramp in the back yard and double checking to make sure the door openings are large enough to accommodate the suggested use. Mr. Bonsignore stated that the doors should be at least 36" wide. The configuration proposed by the applicants would be a tight turn for a wheelchair. The ramp needs a proper foundation so that it doesn't shift. Also, there is concern that the ramp could be hit by a car if it were located in the shared driveway.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC can require the balusters and railings be as minimal as possible. Details regarding the handrail are still being discussed. Ms. Ferraro advised that it might be preferable to use painted 2 x 4's if the ramp will only be there for a couple years. If the ramp will be there for a longer time, it would be advisable to make it more aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the HDC could specify that the ramp be used only for the person for whom it was built, and Ms. Ferraro responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Poole-Woldring requested more information about the shared driveway, and if the space between the porch and the driveway is big enough to accommodate a wheelchair. The application indicates there is 4 feet of space there but it doesn't appear to be that wide. Ms. Ferraro stated that the door is inset so there would be more space (about 10 to 12 inches) than what there appears to be. The door might have to be re-hinged to open in the other direction to allow room to maneuver, and the doors might need to be wider. The HDC can request more information and postpone approval to the next meeting. However, the applicants need to have the ramp installed as soon as possible.

The general consensus was that it would be appropriate to postpone the decision until further details are provided. Ms. Poole-Woldring suggested having a special meeting so the applicants don't have to wait another month. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would communicate with Senior Services regarding the need for more information and whether or not a special meeting would be necessary.

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that there must be other ramps around that the applicant has built. He suggested they provide pictures of other ramps for the HDC to review.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she approved a black metal ramp to be used on a temporary basis. She stated that she would contact the applicant and report back to the HDC.

MINUTES (March 18, 2008)

Ms. DeYoung referred to page 4, paragraph 4, line 3 and advised that the word “who” be added after “Mr. Gallagher”. On the paragraph below, remove the bracket.

Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved approval of the March 18, 2008 HDC minutes as amended. The motion carried by a majority vote. Mr. Oudsema abstained due to his absence from that meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Ferraro announced that in 2010, Grand Rapids will host a conference of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. The Historic Preservation Commission is in support of that idea. Ms. Ferraro inquired if the Historic District Commission would also support the planning of that conference. She advised that voicing support for the conference is not a commitment for funding, it just signifies that that the HDC is in favor of the idea. The conference is held in July every other year.

Mr. Oudsema referred to the violations at 530 W. South Street. The original certificate was extended for six months. Ms. Ferraro advised that the owners have approval for the extension. If they don't obtain a permit shortly, this matter can be turned over to the City Attorney's office by June. Mr. Oudsema commented that this situation has existed for three years. If it is allowed to continue until September, that might be too late in the building season to complete the necessary work. Ms. Ferraro advised that the next letter will say that the HDC would like to hear from the property owners by the May 2008 HDC meeting or this matter will be turned over the City Attorney's office.

Mr. Oudsema expressed concern regarding the sign at 813 W. South Street. The applicant agreed to move the sign back six feet, reduce the height by two feet and add the requested details. He commented that when the motion to approve these changes failed, it was a hollow victory for those who voted against it because the suggested changes would have been a good compromise.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

After a brief discussion, it was suggested that the election of officers be postponed until Mr. Decker could be present.

Mr. Bonsignore, supported by Ms. Poole-Woldring, moved to postpone the election of officers for the Historic District Commission until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The April 15, 2008 meeting of the Historic District Commission adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
(Recording Secretary)

Dated: _____

Reviewed by: _____
(Staff Liaison)

Dated: _____

Approved by: _____
(HDC Chair)

Dated: _____