

City of Kalamazoo  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
Minutes  
July 20, 2010  
*DRAFT*

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

Members Present: Jay Bonsignore, Chair; Erin Seaverson, Vice Chair; Robert Cinabro; Linda DeYoung; Chris Roussi; James Tribu;

Members Absent: Nelson Nave

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

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Bonsignore called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES**

Mr. Nave was not present at the meeting.

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**Ms. DeYoung, supported by Mr. Cinabro, moved approval of the July 20, 2010 HDC agenda as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None

**V. DISCLAIMER**

Ms. Ferraro read the disclaimer into the record.

**VI. OLD BUSINESS**

None

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. 131 South Prairie (Case #: IHA 10-0130)**

Robert DeHaan, DeHaan Remodeling, was present to discuss the application. The application requests removal of the existing two car garage and construction and reorientation of a 2.5 car garage to complement the house.

Mr. DeHaan advised that the applicants would like to construct a new garage that will match the house and be in proportion to the house. The proposed project has been approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that historic district standards do not allow creation of faux historic details. Therefore, the new garage should not match the house exactly. There should be indications that it is an addition and it should blend in with the house. For instance, the exposure on the siding could be different than the house, and the trim details could be different than the original structure. The shutters could be left off the garage. Mr. DeHaan stated that the applicants would like to match the Sheriff Goslin roofing and the vinyl siding on the house. Some of the frieze board detail will also be duplicated in the proposal submitted.

Ms. Seaverson commented that there is nothing wrong with the existing garage. Mr. DeHaan advised that it is not large enough for the applicants' needs. They would like to be able to get both vehicles in the garage and have an attic for storage. They would also like to move it into the corner of the property so there will be more yard space for their kids to play. The applicants are proposing to use aluminum-clad Pella windows like the ones in the house.

Mr. Roussi noted that there was no lighting included in the proposed plan. He inquired if there would be lighting on the exterior of the build. Mr. DeHaan stated that the existing lights would be replaced with flood lights and maybe a coach light. There is a security light on the existing garage.

Ms. Seaverson inquired as to the merit of taking down the garage. It appears to be a historic garage, distinctive to the time and place that it was built, and there is nothing wrong with it. Mr. Tribu inquired if the garage is original to the house. Ms. Ferraro stated that she was uncertain as to how long the garage has been there. It was built before the city required building permits so there is no record of how old it is. It is in the period of significance for that historic district.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the cars fit in the garage. Mr. DeHaan advised that the applicants park in the garage and the car port. Mr. Roussi indicated that the new garage was more aesthetically pleasing; the car port detracts from the overall view of the building. Replacing it with something that is substantially like the original building would be more true to the style of the house. Mr. Cinabro inquired if the car port was an addition to the garage; Ms. Ferraro responded in the affirmative. Ms. Seaverson

commented that if the carport is enough of an alteration to change the historic significance, it's valid to consider taking it down and constructing something new.

Mr. Bonsignore commented that the proposed garage is uncharacteristically large for the neighborhood. Ms. Ferraro referred to the site map and an adjacent garage at the far edge, which is large. Mr. Bonsignore advised that garage was built before the property was including in the historic district. Ms. Ferraro suggested the possibility of reconfiguring the door so the garage would not be facing the house. However, that would require changes to the legal easements, which could be complex.

Conversation continued with regard to the details of the proposed garage, which is 32' x 22'. The new garage is about three feet longer than the old one. The gable design makes it appear longer. The proposed garage roof will have a 10/12 pitch. Mr. DeHaan was uncertain as to the pitch of the house roof. If the new garage is constructed in its proposed location, it will be quite well hidden.

Mr. Tribu inquired if the corner trim detail should be eliminated completely. Mr. Bonsignore advised that if the trim detail was a slightly different dimension and style that would be fine. It would be preferable to leave the cornice return so there is some detail on the building.

**Mr. Roussi, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the application for 131 S. Prairie as submitted. The shutters are to be left off the garage to differentiate from the original structure. All details to historic district standards. With a roll call vote, the motion carried with a majority vote. Ms. Seaverson provided the only dissenting vote.**

Ms. Ferraro commented that there would be other details to differentiate the new garage from the house. For instance, the door will be framed in with a narrower molding than the house. The window framing is smaller and a different style than what is on the house.

Mr. Bonsignore commented that his only hesitation at this point would be the height of the peak, which is 10 feet. The wall height is nine feet. Ms. Seaverson inquired if it would be possible to shorten the side walls. She suggested that the motion be amended to state that the pitch of the garage roof is not to exceed the pitch of the house roof, or the side walls of the garage should be lowered. She added that this was not a sticking point if the other HDC members were not opposed to the application as submitted. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the pitch is a differentiating detail.

Mr. DeHaan stated that the roof pitch was requested by the applicants to allow room to walk down the center of the attic. Mr. Bonsignore expressed concern that it appears to be almost 10 feet to the peak, minus the floor joists and rafters, which is substantial. Mr. Roussi advised that he would not be opposed to amending the motion as Ms. Seaverson suggested. Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the wall height could be lowered. Mr. DeHaan stated that he would ask the applicants if that would be acceptable. It might be possible to lower the walls to 8'6" on the main floor and keep the roof pitch as proposed.

However, the 6" difference may not be substantial enough to make a difference. Mr. Roussi advised that he would like to keep the motion as originally stated.

**B. 315-317 Douglas (Case #: IHA 10-0192)**

Lucille Eckert was present to discuss the application. The application requests the addition of 20' long Jersey-style concrete traffic barriers to the northeast corner of the front yard.

Ms. Eckert advised that over the past year, the steel and concrete bollards on the northeast corner of the front yard have been hit four times by cars from Kalamazoo Ave. A few years after she purchased in 1989 the front porch was struck by a car that was out of control. She installed the bollards at that time. In June this year, the posts were hit hard enough that they were laying flat on the ground. Contractor Reggie Iervolina from Kal-Trek was present to answer questions. He advised that he would set the existing posts deeper. Ms. Eckert is proposing to have the contractor add a 3,600 pound concrete block between the posts to deter further damage to the porch and house and protect the tenants.

Mr. Cinabro commented that he was trying to visualize what the yard would look like after the proposed work was completed. Ms. Eckert advised that there are five posts and only one lateral block will be added closest to the corner. The posts will be sunk deeper into the ground but will remain in the same location.

Mr. Roussi inquired as to why concrete was being proposed in addition to the posts. Ms. Eckert advised that drivers are hitting the posts more often and she is concerned for the safety of her tenants. Mr. Roussi expressed concern that the 3,600 pound piece of cement could cause damage to the vehicle and possibly the driver. The posts will stop the car, but they won't kill the driver. Ms. Eckert advised that the damage caused by the vehicles has been getting worse.

Ms. Seaverson inquired if the HDC has jurisdiction over this matter. Ms. Ferraro advised that it is private property. Therefore, the HDC has jurisdiction but they can only rule on aesthetics. Ms. Eckert stated that the posts weigh as much as the block. The new block would be the same as what is already there. (Concrete barriers were put into place in the yard in late June.)

Mr. Cinabro referred to the comments from the city's traffic engineer and commented that the liability would be on the property owner. The members of the HDC are not traffic engineers and cannot give their stamp of approval regarding the safety of the requested changes. They are trying to rule on what is compatible with the historic district. Ms. Ferraro inquired if Ms. Eckert had consulted with her insurance company regarding potential liability issues. Ms. Eckert stated that she would consult with her son-in-law who is an attorney.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that the cement blocks are not compatible with the historic district. Ms. Eckert suggested planting bushes in front of the cement block for camouflage. Mr. Bonsignore commented that the landscaping is not on the agenda today, therefore, a decision cannot be rendered on those details at this time.

Ms. Eckert advised that the blocks were not there when she purchased the house, Kal-Trek installed them 10-15 years ago. She stated that no one had struck the house since the posts were installed. Mr. Cinabro commented that the posts are accomplishing what they were designed to do.

Mr. Tribu commented that he would like to see a fence or bushes, but the applicant would need to provide a plan for that. She would assume the liability for what she places behind the fence. Ms. Eckert advised that she couldn't wait that long because she needs to have the posts reset. The contractor advised that he could put four railroad ties in front of the cement block. The ties could be filled with dirt and flowers, which would serve as a buffer. Mr. Roussi advised that the HDC would need to see a plan for how that would look. The contractor suggested that the posts could be installed at an angle with the railroad ties in a diamond shape to deflect vehicles. Ms. Ferraro expressed concern that such an arrangement might also launch a vehicle into the air. The HDC might consider alternatives but they would need to see a more complete plan. Ms. Eckert advised that the insurance company didn't reimburse her for the repairs the last time.

Ms. Seaverson mentioned that the applicant doesn't need HDC approval to reset the posts. She can have the posts reset in the same position but deeper.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved to deny the application for 315-317 Douglas as submitted.**

Mr. Bonsignore inquired regarding the rules for landscaping versus structure. Ms. Ferraro stated that man-made elements such as cement would be considered structural Elements and the HDC would be able rule on that. However, a natural element such as a rock or boulder or a berm and bushes would be considered landscaping and it would not be within the purview of the HDC to rule on that. Ms. Eckert suggested putting a huge stone between the posts. She requested that her application be withdrawn.

**C. 415 Bellevue (Case #: IHA 10-0196)**

Kathy Wayman was present to represent the property on behalf of Linklater-Wayman Group. The application requests removal of the deteriorated porch and roof. The applicants plan to rebuild the porch and roof within two years.

Ms. Wayman advised that she would like to have the deteriorated porch roof removed for safety reasons. She is not planning to rebuild or remodel it for two years. The porch roof would be removed and the pillars would be kept in the house until the remodeling begins. She would like to reconstruct the porch the way it should be. Linklater-Wayman bought ten houses on this street and redid seven of them. At this point, the applicant is trying to

get through the inspection process and start earning income from the houses. Ms. Ferraro commented that she thought the porch roof would not last through another winter.

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the siding is coming off the walls and the handrail does not meet the housing or historic district standards. He inquired if the entryway would be redone. Ms. Wayman advised that the home would be painted and refurbished inside and house to historic requirements. She will consult a builder regarding the entryway, which may be reroofed for temporary protection. No one is living in the house, so not having access through the front door would not be a problem. There is a back door and a side door that are accessible.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the exposed wood will be covered with felt. He expressed concern regarding what it will look like for the next two years. Ms. Wayman commented that the city would want her to tear the house down because of the condition it is in. She can only do part of the work now. Ms. Ferraro suggested putting a layer of plastic or plywood over the felt to protect it until the work can be completed.

Mr. Bonsignore expressed concern that the job may take longer than two years to finish. He inquired as to what assurance the HDC has that the applicant will stay on track with the two-year timeline. That is a long time to allow the project to remain unfinished. Ms. Wayman advised that two years was her guess regarding the time needed to complete the project. Mr. Bonsignore commented that it might be difficult for the HDC to track the project for that long. Also, the applicant may not be associated with the project in two years.

Mr. Roussi suggested removing the entire porch and leaving the entry. The salvaged materials from the knee wall guardrail could be used to patch the exposed part of the house once the roof is removed. Ms. Wayman advised that she was not opposed to that idea. Mr. Bonsignore suggested putting a gable roof over the entry and patching the hole with wood siding so the tar paper isn't visible while the project awaits completion. It would be beneficial to have the intention in writing that the porch will be returned to its original configuration. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would put a reminder on permit system to contact the applicant in two years.

Mr. Tribu mentioned that once the roof is removed, the porch will be exposed. He inquired if the porch would be demolished also. Ms. Wayman advised that she had not intended to demolish the porch. She was not certain as to the condition of the porch floor; that was not the issue when she originally looked at the house. The porch roof is pulling away from the house. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would meet with the applicant. If the floor is bad it might be safer to tear it off and start from scratch. Mr. Tribu commented that if the porch floor is in good enough condition to save at this point, it would probably not be good enough to save after two years of exposure to the weather.

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that he didn't see any scuppers on the porch; the siding may be an addition to the porch. Ms. Ferraro advised that this porch has the only sided rail (rather than spindles) on the block so it might be an alteration. The spindle rails may still be under the siding rail. Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the siding below the pillars may be contributing to the rotting on the porch because it prevents water from draining off the porch. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would research this matter and try to find evidence of what was there. If the porch had a spindle rail, it could be reconstructed when the porch is restored. Paint shadows from the spindle rails may be visible when the siding is removed.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to allow removal of the front porch. The Historic Preservation Coordinator is to meet with the applicant to work out the details of saving, posts, spindles, decking, etc. A gable roof is to be built over the entry vestibule. Siding from the porch is to be patched in on the house. The time limit for completion of this project is two years. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**D. 921 W. Kalamazoo (Case #: IHA 10-0199)**

Bob Williams was present to represent the property. The application requests the addition of K-style brick colored metal gutters to the front entry to blend with the tile roof and a tan colored downspout to blend with the brick.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that he is a friend and neighbor of the applicant and, therefore, he will abstain from voting on this matter.

Ms. Seaverson inquired if the gutter would be at the bottom of the Mansard roof. Mr. Williams responded in the affirmative. He stated that he would like to install the gutters on the sides and front of the house and two downspouts against the brick wall on the corner.

Mr. Williams stated that there have been ongoing issues with ice building up on the entry porch steps and he is trying to correct that problem and minimize the deterioration. The gutters would be mounted on the fascia, under the roofing tile; the gutters will not interfere with the shutters on the front wall. The downspouts will extend past the bushes so there should be no need for a spill block to protect the foundation.

Mr. Tribu expressed concern that the proposed gutters would not be aesthetically pleasing. However, they could be easily removed in the future and they are not a detriment to the building.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Mr. Roussi, moved approval of the application as submitted for 921 W. Kalamazoo Ave. With a roll call vote, the motion carried by a majority vote. Mr. Bonsignore abstained from voting.**

**VII. Approval of Minutes (May 18, 2010 and June 15, 2010)**

**May 18, 2010**

The May 18, 2010 HDC minutes were inadvertently omitted from some of the HDC packets. Therefore, it was suggested that approval of the May minutes be postponed until the next HDC meeting.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to postpone approval of the May 18, 2010 HDC minutes until the next HDC meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**June 15, 2010**

There were no changes to the minutes.

**Mr. Roussi, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the June 15, 2010 HDC Minutes as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the motion (bottom of page 2) regarding the open porch included construction details, which would be covered by the building permit. Those details are not within the purview of the HDC and should not be included in future motions.

**XII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Ferraro advised that the City Commission approved two new historic districts and eliminated the S. Burdick Historic District at their meeting last night. As of July 29<sup>th</sup>, the HDC can make official rulings regarding the Rickman House and the 100 block of E. Michigan.

Mr. Cinabro inquired if the recent updates included the ordinance changes. Ms. Ferraro advised that the noticing procedures can be adopted as part of the HDC's procedures, and that will be a brief update to the ordinance. The HDC already has the power to make procedural changes. When there are costs associated with the procedural changes, that requires an additional amendment to the ordinance, which would have to be approved by the City Commission.

Ms. Seaverson referred to the violations report regarding a garage being constructed on Austin. Ms. Ferraro stated that the garage was approved by the HDC, and it is behind a house on Davis Street.

Mr. Tribu referred to the house with the leaking tile roof in the West Main Hill Historic District. He inquired if they pursued other alternatives. He found a product called Decra, which is a stone-coated steel roof. Ms. Ferraro advised that she sent the owners that information before the HDC meeting. They have decided to sell the house as is. The new homeowners can use the historic tax credit if they repair the tile roof.

Ms. Ferraro advised that it has been difficult to keep up with the violations due to the increased number of foreclosures. Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that he is on the Stuart Area Restoration Association Board. There are several houses in that neighborhood that are in peril; some are open to casual entry. He is concerned that if someone contacts the city regarding these issues, the houses might be condemned. Ms. Ferraro advised that the city can close the houses to casual entry and monitor them.

Ms. Ferraro stated that she would be visiting the stucco-sided house on the corner of W. Cedar and Locust with the Anti-Blight Team Thursday. The City Attorney's office has ordered that the repairs be done or the house will be sold. Ms. Ferraro and members of the inspection staff will evaluate the building to see what needs to be done.

Ms. DeYoung referred to the Willis and Willis Law Office building on the corner of South St. and Westnedge. Ms. Ferraro advised that building is not in the historic district. The historic district ends at the Upjohn Institute property. None of the buildings on the corner of South and Westnedge are in the historic district.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she is still in need of volunteers for the NAPC (National Alliance of Preservation Commissions) conference in Grand Rapids. Volunteers can attend the conference for the discounted rate of \$50 for the entire conference. There will be a bus tour of downtown Kalamazoo in conjunction with the NAPC conference. The tour will include lunch at the Metro Transit office and a tour of the Transit Center, a visit to the Arcadia Festival site, the 100 block of E. Michigan and possibly East Campus. The tour will focus on preservation in downtown Kalamazoo over the last 40 years. Anyone wishing to join the tour mid-day can stop by the Transit Center around 1:15 for the walking tour through the downtown sites.

Ms. Seaverson mentioned that Lynn Houghton will be conducting a walking tour of the Winchell Neighborhood on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. The tour will begin on the corner of Winchell and Aberdeen.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Cinabro, supported by Ms. Seaverson, moved to adjourn the July 20, 2010 meeting of the Historic District Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Recording Secretary

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Liaison

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
HDC Chair