

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

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

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

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

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Bonsignore called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES**

None

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**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. 521 S. Westnedge (Case #: IHA 10-0049)**

Rick Anderson was present on behalf of Pat O'Brien to discuss the application. The application requests installation of a sign on an inactive door as an alternative to removing the door (east-facing door on south side porch).

Mr. Anderson advised that inspector Collins asked that the non-functional, original door be removed. Mr. Anderson would prefer to have the door labeled as non-functional

rather than removing it. The door leads to studs and drywall at the back of a closet. The door is not visible from the street.

Ms. Ferraro advised that if a door cannot be used to access a building that would create issues with the fire code. Public Safety might try to use the door during an emergency. She does not think the door is original, but the opening is original. The door could remain in place as long as there was a sign indicating that it cannot be used to access the building.

Mr. Nave inquired about the sign to be placed on the door. Ms. Ferraro advised that the sign will be about 4" x 8" installed near the level of a doorknob. The wording needs to be worked out with the Fire Marshall.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Cinabro, moved to allow the non-functional door at 521 S. Westnedge to remain in place as long as an appropriate sign is placed on the door to indicate that it is non-functional. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**B. 405 Douglas (Case#: IHA 10-0062)**

Steve and Florence Denham were present to discuss the application. The application requests the addition of a deck with a roof to the west/rear side of the house with the intent that it will eventually be finished as a room.

Mr. Denham stated that the intention was to turn the deck into a three-season room at a later date. The existing west window on the kitchen will become a door. Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the deck would be off the first floor of the house; Ms. Denham responded in the affirmative. The deck would be constructed over the existing patio.

Mr. Tribu inquired if the applicants would lose the entry off the back. Ms. Denham advised that the entry would remain the same.

Nave indicated that the HDC would need more information in order to make a decision. Where will the deck/porch be located on the house? If the porch is added, it needs to look like a porch. The deck/porch should have footings and piers. Ms. Ferraro advised the applicant that if the deck is to eventually become a closed living space, the footings would have to meet the building code requirements for a room, not just a deck.

Ms. Denham stated that she discussed that with the contractor and he advised that piers would not be an issue. Ms. Bonsignore commented that the proposed addition would not necessarily require a foundation. Ms. Denham indicated that she envisioned that it would look like an existing enclosed porch on the second floor at the rear.

Mr. Bonsignore commented that the deck did not look historic in nature as shown in the picture that was provided. He stated that there was not enough information provided with regard to the railings, spindles, steps and dimensions. It is not clear what the final

construction will look like. Ms. Denham advised that she provided what the contractor gave her.

Ms. Ferraro suggested that she and the applicants meet with the contractor to further discuss the details of the project. Ms. Denham advised that all she is requesting at this point is a deck with a roof. She would like to do the porch enclosure next year. Mr. Bonsignore stated that the details provided don't mention a roof. The HDC would need to know the pitch of the roof, particularly since the windows on the enclosed porch upstairs are fairly low. The pitch of the roof will be affected by the location of the deck. Also, roofs on historic homes are generally steep. The HDC would need to have those details before a decision can be made.

Mr. Roussi inquired if the proposed porch would look like the porch on the front of the house. Ms. Denham stated that it would not. She envisioned that it would look more like the porch on the second floor, with just the windows around it.

Ms. Seaverson advised that she would feel more comfortable approving the whole project (the two year plan), rather than just approving a portion of it at this time. Mr. Nave suggested that a more detailed drawing be submitted. He offered to attend a site visit and provide a sketch for someone else to draft.

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that there are turned posts on the front of the house. Since the porch will not be enclosed for awhile, it would be preferable to have something that looks nice. Ms. Denham advised that she would prefer to not invest in the turned posts at this time; that part of the construction will be covered up next year. Mr. Bonsignore advised that if the porch is to be covered within a certain period of time, the HDC might be more lenient with regard to what the posts look like. It might be more economical to approach the project that way. Ms. Denham advised that she spoke with the contractor about putting up a half wall instead of rails because the deck will eventually be enclosed.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she would e-mail the applicant and work out a time to meet with the contractor to further discuss the details.

Ms. Denham advised that she would like to withdraw the application.

**C. 812 Oak (Case #: IHA 10-0063)**

Mike and Colin Maloney were present to discuss the application. The application requests demolition of the single-car garage (built circa 1925).

Mike Maloney stated that Colin Maloney purchased the house in December, 2009. The former owner (J.T. Adams) is still listed on some of the records. The applicants would like to demolish the one-car garage and use the space for parking.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicants intended to tear down the garage when they bought the house; Mike Maloney responded in the affirmative. He stated that the garage is

located so close to the back porch that is very difficult to get cars in and out, especially in the winter time. Mr. Nave advised that most of garages that the HDC reviews for demolition are in worse shape than the garage at 812 Oak. The HDC rarely approves garage demolitions.

Mr. Nave inquired if the applicants had considered moving the garage back on the lot. Mike Maloney stated that he had entertained the idea of replacing the single-car garage with a three-car garage. There are four cars parking on the property, so it doesn't make sense to have a one-car garage. Mr. Nave advised that the HDC would not likely be in favor of the proposed demolition. Moving the garage or constructing a three-car garage, might be possibilities. The existing garage is a great example of garages in Vine.

Mr. Tribu inquired as to how many cars would be allowed to park in the back yard. Mike Maloney advised that the house next door has five cars parking in the back yard. Mr. Tribu questioned if the code would allow that many cars to be parked there. Ms. Ferraro stated that at least 25% of the lot has to be a permeable surface. Which means that the house, other buildings and paving can only cover up to 75% of the lot. Parking spaces would have to be paved or be covered with gravel; parking would not be allowed on the dirt. Most of the yard at 812 Oak is grass, the property next door is mostly covered in asphalt.

Mike Maloney advised that there is 13 feet between the back of the garage and the back of the lot. There is some gang tagging on the fence on the west property line.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved to deny the application for demolition of the garage at 812 Oak Street. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he would be voting in favor of the motion, particularly since there is no plan for what would be done with the property after the proposed demolition, other than paving the back yard and using it for parking. Mike Maloney advised that there is no access to the garage other than the eight-foot door, there is no personal door. Mr. Bonsignore advised that would not make a difference regarding his decision. From a historic standpoint, there is no reason to tear down the garage. Colin Maloney commented that there is barely enough room to open a car door wide enough inside the garage to get out of the car. Mr. Bonsignore commented that the structure is in keeping with other structures in the neighborhood, it reflects the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Tribu concurred that there appears to be nothing wrong with the structure of the garage. If it isn't practical to use the garage for parking, it could be used for storage.

Mr. Roussi mentioned that if the garage was moved back so that it was in alignment with the garage next door, you could still park a car in front of that building. It might also be possible to park two or three other cars to the side of the garage. That would open up space to allow more than one vehicle to be pulled in/out so that one vehicle wouldn't

block the entire driveway like it does now. Mr. Roussi agreed that tearing down the garage is unjustified at this point.

Ms. Seaverson commented that she understood the applicants' desire to take the garage down. However, the HDC is in charge of ruling as to whether or not this is a historic resource worth saving. Judging from everyone's comments, the garage at 812 Oak Street is a historic resource, it is in excellent condition, and it is worth saving.

Mr. Nave suggested consulting with the city's zoning department to determine how many parking spaces would be allowed on the subject property. The HDC would not rule on that information.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she would provide the applicants with information about appealing the decision if they wished to do so. She offered to meet with them to discuss other options. They could return to the HDC with plans for a three-car garage.

Mike Maloney advised that he would look into getting an estimate for moving the garage back. Ms. Ferraro commented that the garage is in very good condition; it might not be very expensive to move it.

**D. 1223 Grand (Case #: IHA 10-0074)**

Fred Einspahr was present to discuss the application. The application requests the addition of steps from the west/side porch door.

Mr. Einspahr advised that the exterior staircase was removed before he bought the house in 1976. The door was off a small breakfast nook. Mr. Einspahr found all of the original railings and posts in the garage and plans to reinstall them on this entry landing.

Mr. Nave suggested the possibility of installing Trex on the floor of the porch and on the steps, since the porch/steps are in the back and hidden from the street. Mr. Einspahr advised that he doesn't have the decking and stair components (treads and risers).

Mr. Bonsignore advised that there is a tongue and groove AZEK Product available. It is expensive but the area is small. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that a composite decking material was installed on the front deck at 213 Elm was removed. It is not supposed to be exposed to ultra violet light. Mr. Bonsignore advised that the AZEK product will withstand light and rain. Ms. Seaverson mentioned that the applicant has proposed using Cedar or Redwood; the HDC would not object to those materials.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Mr. Cinabro, moved approval of the steps for 1226 Grand as submitted.**

The motion was later amended as follows:

**Details of the piers/pilings are to be worked out with the Historic Preservation Coordinator. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Einspahr requested the option to use alternate materials. Mr. Tribu suggested that a tongue and groove product be used to facilitate drainage. A brief discussion followed with regard to the pros and cons of using that type of product. Mr. Einspahr commented that requiring a tongue and groove product would eliminate the use of Trex. He would prefer to not have that limitation. Ms. Ferraro advised that with a porch that small, Cedar, Cypress or Redwood would be good choices. There is a vendor on 9<sup>th</sup> Street that offers a tongue and groove Cypress product.

Mr. Einspahr expressed concern about maintenance issues with a tongue and groove product. Mr. Nave mentioned that the HDC has always required a tongue and groove product on the front and sides of the house. Mr. Nave mentioned that he used Trex at his house and it looks great. However, mold grows on Trex similar to the way it grows on wood. Mr. Einspahr added that the steps he is proposing to reinstall will not likely be used, they are being installed for appearance. Only the first floor apartment could be accessed through this porch, but they put things in front of the access. The kitchen has limited space and the tenants use that area for a pantry.

Ms. Ferraro mentioned that this is another issue with a door that doesn't lead anywhere. It looks like a door from the inside so there needs to be something on the outside if you exit through the door. Another alternative would be to eliminate the door, but the historic bracketed overhang would look odd on the outside if there were no door in that location.

Ms. Seaverson commented that the HDC standards and guidelines indicate the materials that the applicant is suggesting. She suggested approving the application as it was submitted.

Discussion followed with regard to the necessity of wrapping the posts. Mr. Einspahr advised that the posts are original. Ms. Ferraro stated that the conversation is about the piers under the porch. Mr. Bonsignore suggested using 6 x 6 chamfered piers; the piers will be about a foot and a half long. It would be preferable to have a pressure-treated product in contact with the ground. The details can be worked out with the Historic Preservation Coordinator.

**E. 620 Potter (Case #: IHA 10-0075)**

Mike Fleckenstein was present to discuss the application. The application requests steps from the west porch. There is currently a door on the south side with no steps. The applicant would like to reverse the configuration and bring the steps down the north side so they don't block the driveway.

Mr. Fleckenstein provided color photos of the subject property. The basis of the application is the need to move the doorway and steps to the north in order to accommodate parking. The room at the back of the house was likely used as a mud room

at some point. When the upgrades were made last year, that room was closed off from the house and a driveway was added. Moving the door will preserve the use of the driveway and the room. The room will be used as storage for bicycles, etc.

Mr. Fleckenstein provided pictures of the area where he would like to move the door. There is at least ten feet in that area, which should easily accommodate a landing and steps. The area where the door is currently located would be re-sided. There is also some consideration to putting a window up high where the door was.

Mr. Fleckenstein intends to use treated materials for the posts and the stringers, and cedar for the handrails and guardrail. He intends to put a handrail on the outside of the steps only, rather than on both sides of the steps. He will work with Ms. Ferraro to come up with a reasonable design. The area in question is not visible from the front of the house.

Mr. Nave inquired as to the location of the steps. Mr. Fleckenstein advised that the steps would extend to the north, along the dining room wall. There is about ten feet of space in that location, so there is enough room for the landing and the steps. Mr. Bonsignore questioned if a landing would be required and advised that the inspector he spoke with stated that a landing would not be necessary. Mr. Fleckenstein stated that he is agreeable with having a landing.

Mr. Nave suggested using Wolmanized wood for the structure, and then wrapping it with a different kind of wood. Since the deck and steps are located in the back of the property, Trex could be used for this project. Mr. Tribu mentioned that installing a gutter in that location would also be helpful.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Roussi, moved approval of the request to move the door from the south side to the north side of the west porch at 620 Potter. The siding is to be replaced. A porch landing and steps are to be added to the north side of the porch. A railing is to be added on the west side. The trim/casing on the door is to match the house. All work is to be done to historic district standards. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Fleckenstein advised that he has all of the wooden storm doors for the house. He wants to repair them and put them back in place. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the same company is still making that type of screen door; the doors cost about \$500 each.

**F. 1621 Prairie Place (Case #: IHA 10-0081)**

Zolton Cohen was present to discuss the application. The application requests installation of nine solar photovoltaic panels on the south face of the roof.

Mr. Cohen advised that the photovoltaic panels are approximately 39" x 65". He would like to install them on the back of his house; they would not be seen from the front or side of the house. A secondary meter that would feed the power generated by the solar panels back into the Consumers Energy grid, and a small PVC tube with a wire that would pass

the power from the panels back into the meter would be the only items visible from the front/side of the house. Those items would be unobtrusive.

Mr. Bonsignore advised that due to his personal and professional relationship with Mr. Cohen, he would be recusing himself from all discussion and voting on this matter.

Mr. Cinabro inquired if the HDC currently had a policy regarding this type of installation. Ms. Ferraro advised that there is no formal policy in effect at this point. She attended a seminar a couple of years ago in Grand Rapids, and spoke with individuals from SHPO regarding this topic. The HDC does not yet have a written policy. The criteria used for an addition can be used for this application. For instance, is it changing the original house? If it is removed, is the house essentially unaltered? The slope of the roof will not be changed, etc.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the roof has silver shingles. He inquired if the applicant would be replacing the shingles in the future. Mr. Cohen advised that the solar panels weigh about 44 pounds. They will be lag bolted into the roof. The panels can be removed at any time. Mr. Nave mentioned that when a new roof is needed, the historic district requires a darker roof than what is currently there. He inquired if lag bolting the panels into the roof would create leaks. Mr. Cohen stated that he has been advised that there should not be a problem with leaks. A boot, similar to what is placed over a plumbing vent pipe, will be placed over each of the attachment points. The boot will be integrated into the shingles.

Mr. Nave inquired as to the color of the panels. Mr. Cohen advised that the panels are very dark, almost black. The sides are generally aluminum (silver), but that is a very small part of the panel and it will be approximately 25 feet up in the air. At an angle you can barely see the roof from the back yard because the land slopes down, and the roof is about a 12/12 pitch.

Mr. Nave advised that he drove up Grove Street. He could see the back of the house from that street and from the neighbors' houses, but you have to be looking for it. He inquired if the panels would lay flat on the roof. Mr. Cohen advised that they would be almost flat. The optimum solar collection angle in this area is 42.9 degrees and a 12/12 pitch is 45 degrees, so they are virtually flat to the roof. Mr. Roussi commented that the panels will have an approximately three degree pitch off the roof. Mr. Cohen advised that each panel is 65 inches long. There will be three panels next to each other. A diagram was provided with the HDC packet.

Mr. Tribu inquired if there was only one wire that would be attached to the meter. Mr. Cohen stated that Consumers Energy will install an additional meter that is about the same size as the existing meter. The meters will be side by side and the wire will be attached to the new meter. The distinction is that the power generated by the solar panels will not go back into the house, it will be fed back into the power grid and sold back to the power company. Consumers advised that they will buy the power back at 65 cents per kilowatt hour. Consumers charges their customers 10.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Tribu inquired as to how much power the solar panels could generate at full capacity. Mr. Cohen is proposing to generate approximately 2,700 kilowatt hours per year. He uses approximately 3,100 kilowatt hours per year. Mr. Tribu inquired as to how long it would take for a payback to result from this arrangement. Mr. Cohen stated that the payback will likely result in five to six years. The installation will cost approximately \$10,000 and will generate approximately \$1,800 income. About \$260 of that will be offset by the additional property taxes that the applicant will have to pay to the City of Kalamazoo for property improvements. Consumers Power has agreed to buy the power back at the rate of 65 cents per kilowatt hour for the next 12 years.

Ms. Ferraro inquired if the solar panels would qualify for the energy tax credits. Mr. Cohen advised that the \$10,000 installation fee is after the energy credits have been deducted. It would be almost \$14,000 without the tax credit.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the applicant was in phase II or III. Mr. Cohen advised that Consumers started with a first-year rate of 65 cents per kilowatt hour. Now it's 55 cents per kilowatt hour. Mr. Cohen has applied to get into this program but has not heard back from Consumers. There is a possibility that he will not be accepted into the program.

Mr. Nave inquired if the pipe would be intermingled among the panels. Mr. Cohen was unsure about that. The panels will be mounted side by side. The microinverters are on the underside of the panels. The only thing anybody would see would be the panel array and the one wire coming down into the meter. The wire will be painted to match the color of the material next to it.

Ms. Seaverson inquired as to how high the panels sit off the roof. Mr. Cohen advised that the panels are approximately two inches thick. At one point, they will be anchored almost flat to the roof. They will be tilted up on the bottom a little bit, but will be very close to being flush with the roof.

Mr. Nave inquired if the flashing/boot on the top would prevent leaves, etc. from going under the panel. Mr. Cohen was uncertain about those details. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that birds might nest under the panels also.

**Mr. Roussi, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the application for the installation of nine solar photovoltaic panels on the south face of the roof at 1621 Prairie Place. The motion carried with six ayes and one abstention. Mr. Bonsignore abstained from voting.**

Ms. Seaverson advised that she would be supporting the motion. It appears that the installation of the panels will minimally impact the house, and the panels will be removable in the future. Also, Mr. Nave went by the house and advised that the roof where the panels are to be installed is not very visible to the neighbors or from the street, so there is minimal impact to the historic character.

Mr. Tribu inquired if there was a time limit. Ms. Ferraro stated that the approval is good for six months but it can be renewed.

Mr. Bonsignore commented that it is important that the solar panels not be visible from the street so as to not detract from the historic nature of the neighborhood. The fact this is not visible from the street and it is fairly close to the slope of the roof is important.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the qualifications for the solar panels are very similar to what is acceptable for skylights. It is important to keep them low and out of sight.

## **VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (March 16, 2010)**

There were no changes to the minutes.

**Mr. Roussi, supported by Ms. DeYoung, moved approval of the March 16, 2010 HDC minutes as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried with six ayes and one abstention. Mr. Cinabro abstained due to his absence from the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

## **XII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC currently has no Vice Chair. Mr. Oudsema was the previous Vice Chair. A Chair and Vice Chair need to be nominated at this time.

**Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Cinabro, nominated Mr. Bonsignore to serve as chair of the HDC. Mr. Bonsignore accepted the nomination. With a voice vote, the motion carried with six ayes and one abstention. Mr. Bonsignore abstained from voting.**

**Ms. DeYoung, supported by Mr. Tribu, nominated Ms. Seaverson to serve as Vice Chair of the HDC. Ms. Seaverson accepted the nomination. With a voice vote, the motion carried with six ayes and one abstention. Ms. Seaverson abstained from voting.**

Ms. Seaverson requested an update regarding the 100 block. Ms. Ferraro advised that the project is 98% financed. They are still working on the last few details of the tax credits.

Mr. Cinabro requested an update regarding the proposed noticing procedure for demolitions. Ms. Ferraro advised that she hasn't had time to follow up with that information. It is still on her list of things to do. She suggested meeting with Mr. Cinabro to further discuss that issue. Mr. Cinabro suggested that the noticing procedures for demolitions could be incorporated into the ordinance for the new district. Ms. Ferraro stated that she was advised by the City Attorney's office that the HDC could empower themselves to make procedural changes. The ordinance may reflect that change.

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Ms. Seaverson advised that there is some wording for motions to which the HDC should adhere. For instance, the standard on which a denial is based should be stated in the motion. That is helpful for maintaining uniformity.

Ms. Ferraro advised that there are over a dozen contractors in the Kalamazoo area trained to do window rehabilitations. She is trying to make sure they are on the city's bid list. The City of Kalamazoo has 12.1 million dollars in NSP money, and some of that will be spent on rehabilitation.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

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

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

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