

KALAMAZOO HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes
March 16, 2010

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

Members Present: Jay Bonsignore, Chair; Nelson Nave; Chris Roussi; James Tribu

Members Excused: Bob Cinabro; Linda DeYoung, Erin Seaverson

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Roussi, moved approval of the absences of Commissioners Cinabro, DeYoung and Seaverson from the March 16, 2010 Historic District Commission meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms Ferraro requested that a discussion regarding the appointment of judges for the Historic Preservation Awards of Merit be added as item C under Other Business.

Mr. Roussi, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the March 16, 2010 HDC agenda as amended. 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. 1013 Oak (Case #: IHV 10-0001)

Chris Grimes was present to represent the property. The application requests replacement of the windows with all wood windows on the north, east and south sides (not front/west side).

Mr. Bonsignore advised that due to the number of commissioners absent, the quorum rule indicates that there must be a unanimous vote among the four commissioners who are present in order for a motion to be approved.

Mr. Grimes stated that he is seeking retroactive approval for the windows that were installed and the windows that he hopes to install. There are a total of 30 windows in the house; 24 of the windows were already replaced. The applicant would like to replace the other six windows.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired as to what type of windows were in the house, and what type of replacement windows were being used. Mr. Grimes stated that there were solid wood windows in the house with sash pins in the upper sashes but not the lower ones. The windows in the entire house were in very poor condition with non-historic aluminum storms on the old windows. The replacement windows are solid wood, double-hung windows, similar to the windows that were replaced from Pella. There were a couple of different vintages of old wood windows in the house; four of the windows were vinyl.

Mr. Nave inquired if the replacement windows were sized to fit the openings, or if they were a stock size. Mr. Grimes stated that the replacement windows were ordered to fit the exterior casings. The exterior casings, sills, sub-sills and crowns were all there. The new windows are the same size as the old windows.

Mr. Tribu inquired if the applicant installed trim around the insert windows. Mr. Grimes explained that he took the entire original windows out, including the sash and jambs. The outside casings remain, and most of the sills remain, with the exception of a couple sills that were bad. Mr. Tribu inquired if the window inserts lined up exactly with the existing exterior moldings or if new trim was added on the outside. Mr. Grimes stated that he was not planning on adding any trim. The inside of the new windows does not fit exactly up to the old casing, leaving a slight reveal. That space is where the screen clips go for the new windows, but there will still be a slight reveal.

Discussion continued at the dais. Mr. Bonsignore commented that the new sills are sitting on top of the old sills, and the jamb sticks out about 7/8' inside the casing.

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Mr. Nave commented that some of the outside trim was replaced on the window casings on the north side of the house. Mr. Grimes advised that he tried to save as much of the casings as possible, but some of it was so bad he had to replace it. He used 5/4" x 4 cedar to replace the trim.

Mr. Nave mentioned that he had spoken with the applicant, who advised that he obtained a building permit, and then had to pull another permit for the work he was doing on the inside of the house. Mr. Grimes had already replaced some of the siding. Mr. Nave inquired as to why the permit process would not have revealed that work was being done in the historic district. Mr. Grimes advised that a stop work order was issued when it was discovered that the entire interior was gutted and the work would have to be brought into compliance with the building code as a commercial property. The permit was later reopened. Ms. Ferraro stated that a permit was issued for the interior work, which would not have indicated that there was a problem. Ms. Ferraro approved the repairs on the front porch, but not the siding, trim and windows. One window on the north side has been made taller and the second one is new. It was determined that there had been a door opening in that location on the north side. Mr. Grimes advised that there were doors on the north and south sides.

Mr. Nave pointed out that the windows that have been replaced are similar to the house on South Street that didn't have any weights, just pins. The HDC didn't set a precedent when they agreed to allow replacement windows for the house on South Street.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he would not have approved the method of window replacement at the subject property. The HDC wouldn't have agreed to putting the new sill on top of the old sill. This is a problem because the applicant has already replaced 24 windows. The replacement windows should look as much as possible like the windows that were removed, and they should be trimmed to match what was there. Mr. Nave concurred. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that the original pin-style windows are still in place in the front of the house.

Discussion followed with regard for the need to install storm windows to provide protection from the weather. Mr. Grimes advised that he didn't intend to leave the windows as is.

Mr. Bonsignore stated that he was trying to figure out a way to modify the replacement windows. Mr. Grimes suggested a way to modify the sills so they would appear as one piece. This would involve raising part of the sill. The windows are flat where the sash comes down, and there is an angle under the 1/4" lip. He could make that into one piece so that where the angle extends down, it would continue out. There will be a joint in the sill but it can be caulked. Mr. Bonsignore commented that the sill would be thicker than it was originally, but it would look like it was all one piece.

Mr. Nave mentioned that the bottom porch columns are rotting out. Mr. Grimes advised that he intends to repair the columns.

There was a brief conversation at the dais regarding what the rail will look like. Mr. Grimes expressed concern about what he would be able to do with the railing height because the house is a rental. Ms. Ferraro advised that she could approve a rail height waiver. Mr. Grimes has searched for spindles at Heritage Company and other sources. He would prefer to have turned spindles. Mr. Nave mentioned that the applicant wouldn't need a 4" space between the spindles if the rail waiver is issued. Ms. Ferraro was uncertain if the existing handrails were original. Mr. Nave suggested that the applicant could save money by alternating one turned spindle with a straight spindle in between.

Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the subject property is a four-unit rental and would need a barrier-free ramp. Mr. Grimes stated that a ramp with a 90-degree turn will fit in the back of the property.

Mr. Tribu, supported by Mr. Nave, moved for retroactive approval of the 24 windows previously installed at 1013 Oak. The windows are to be modified so that the sills become single plane thickness on top. The remaining six windows on the front of the house are to be replaced with single-sill, Pella wood windows to match the rest of the windows in the house. The window casings are to be in their original positions. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Bonsignore mentioned that the siding has been replaced and the trim may be replaced in the future. The beveled, wood siding that was used for the most recent repairs is acceptable.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved to allow retroactive approval of the replacement siding and trim at 1013 Oak to match the original siding and trim in dimension and materials. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ferraro confirmed that the existing 2 x 4, non-historic railing should be removed. She will take a look at the spindles on the front steps to determine if they are original.

B. 608 Oak (Case #: IHA 10-0041)

Jim Kindle was present to represent the property on behalf of owner, Pat Palus. The application requests installation of glass block in the two north facing basement window openings.

Mr. Kindle advised that the property owner wants to have glass block installed in the window openings for security reasons. Thieves have broken into the house through these windows. The window openings are facing the building to the north; there is a space approximately six to eight feet wide between the two buildings. The windows are not very visible because they are located in window wells.

Mr. Nave inquired if the standards cover the use of glass block. Ms. Ferraro stated that a “standard” would indicate that the use of glass block could be approved administratively. Use of glass block in the historic district is covered under guidelines rather than standards. The guidelines require that the glass blocks be inset far enough that they are not even with the plane of the outer wall. A false screen or storm window should be installed in front of the glass blocks so they are not visible from the street.

Mr. Kindle stated that the owner would also like to replace the two basement windows to the south with windows similar to what is already there. Mr. Nave commented that something could be added to the inside of the basement windows to provide security. Ms. Ferraro stated that there is already a bar on the inside of the windows. It would have been preferable to have two bars over the windows so there wouldn't be enough space for thieves to access the house. There are adjustable bars designed to keep children from falling out of upstairs windows, and those can be placed between the screen or storm and the inner window. The adjustable bars are about 4 inches apart. The windows in the subject property are in bad shape.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the glass block would have ventilation. Mr. Kindle advised that has not yet been determined. He suggested that it would be better if the glass block was not ventilated because the vents are usually vinyl and they aren't big enough to provide much ventilation.

Discussion followed with regard to the basement wall, which is approximately eight inches thick and constructed of concrete block. The glass blocks would sit on the inside four inches of the wall. The false windows would be installed over the glass blocks, on the outside portion of the wall. The existing wood window frames would remain in place around the glass block. When false storm windows are installed, the look of traditional windows will be retained.

Mr. Nave suggested using something that won't rot because water can get behind the screens and become an issue. Ms. Ferraro advised that there are metal screens on the rest of the house; the metal screens would also be appropriate for the basement windows. She mentioned that she doesn't like the glass block in her basement windows because it doesn't provide adequate ventilation.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the installation of glass block in the north side basement windows at 608 Oak Street, on the inside 4” of the basement wall. Wood screens or storms are to be installed on the outside of the glass block to have the appearance of the original windows. The screens/storms should be set back about ¾” from the opening. The south-facing basement windows are to be repaired to match the existing windows. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Nave mentioned that he installed hardware cloth on the inside of the basement windows at his house to deter thieves from breaking in.

C. 806 Davis (Case #: IHA 10-0014)

The applicant was not present to discuss the application. The application requests that a new garage be built on the site of the demolished garage (built in 1961 and razed with HDC review in June 2008). Final review of details.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she discussed this application with the Historic District Commissioners via email. The applicants have proposed an appropriate design.

Mr. Nave referred to the retaining wall on the east side of the property, which is visible in the aerial photo. The applicants are planning to re-use the slab from the demolished garage. Mr. Tribu mentioned that there had been some discussion about turning the garage in a different direction. Mr. Nave indicated that there is not enough room to change the orientation of the garage.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the construction of the proposed garage at 806 Davis, with the inclusion of the details that were previously discussed. The position, size and style of the garage are approved per the sketch provided. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Nave inquired if there would be an apartment in the upstairs of the garage. Ms. Ferraro advised that there would not be.

Mr. Tribu inquired if there would be windows in the garage doors and on the east and west sides of the garage; Ms. Ferraro responded in the affirmative. Mr. Bonsignore suggested using 5/4" trim.

Mr. Nave inquired if the door on the east would create a stairway up the retaining wall. Ms. Ferraro advised that it would not because it is flat to the retaining wall. Mr. Nave inquired if the applicants would need to come back to the HDC for review of the steps and railings. Ms. Ferraro suggested that it would be sufficient if the steps and railings meet historic district standards.

The motion was amended to state that the trim on the garage at 806 Davis should be 5/4" and the windows in the dormers should match the house (one over one). The steps are to be built to comply with historic district standards. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ferraro advised that she would work with the owners regarding the details of the lighting. There will be minimal lighting over the doors.

MINUTES

(November 17, 2009)

There were no changes to the minutes.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Roussi, moved approval of the November 17, 2009 HDC minutes as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

(January 19, 2010)

There were no changes to the minutes.

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved approval of the January 19, 2010 HDC minutes as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Nave requested an update regarding the proposed sign for the 100 block of E. Michigan. Ms. Ferraro advised that Peter Eldridge (Project Coordinator, City of Kalamazoo) spoke with Mr. Dally about the sign. Mr. Dally may apply to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a variance to allow the sign. There was a photo from the 1950's showing a sign in that location. There is no evidence to indicate that the sign was there during the period of significance, which ended in 1915. This may create an issue with the historic tax credits. The ZBA meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of the month. Mr. Dally may attend the April HDC meeting to officially approve the details of the project.

Mr. Nave inquired if the owners of the Argos East building (141 E. Michigan) didn't want their building to be part of the historic district. There are currently no standards for reviewing non-historic buildings in the historic district. There are approximately 15 non-historic buildings in historic districts in Kalamazoo, and it would be helpful to have some clarification about the decision-making process for those buildings. Ms. Ferraro composed some possible rules for dealing with that situation. There may be further discussion about this topic at next month's HDC meeting. There are already rules stating that non-historic buildings should not be changed to look historic, but they should not diminish the historic character of the buildings nearby.

Every building in the Haymarket Historic District is subject to two reviews, one by the Downtown Design Review Committee (DDRC) and another review by the HDC. There has been discussion about changing the ordinance so that buildings in the Historic District are exempt from DDRC review. The Historic District standards are more strict than the DDRC guidelines. There may be some text for the HDC to review next month with regard to how non-contributing buildings would be reviewed.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYI Report

None

B. Approve Annual Report (Item D)

Ms. Ferraro advised that the Annual Report for the HDC will be submitted to the City Commission.

Mr. Roussi referred to the meetings section of the report, and mentioned that it should state that 42 applications were approved. It appears that the administrative approvals totaled 490 rather than 498, but the numbers need to be reconciled.

Ms. Ferraro advised that applications are down about 20% this year, which is likely attributable to the economy.

Mr. Roussi, supported by Mr. Nave, moved approval of the HDC Annual Report as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

C. Judges for Preservation Awards

Ms. Ferraro stated that two members of the HPC have volunteered to assist with the judging. She inquired if anyone from the HDC would be willing to help. The judging will likely take place on Wednesday, March 24th in the evening. Mr. Tribu, Mr. Roussi, and Mr. Bonsignore were unavailable on that date. Mr. Nave volunteered to help with the judging. Ms. Ferraro will check with the HDC members who are not present to determine if any of them are available on that date. Ms. Ferraro posted the nominees for the Preservation Awards on-line last month with the HPC agenda. She will provide the link to the HDC members for their review and feedback.

Mr. Bonsignore inquired if the HDC thanked Mr. Oudsema for his service on the board. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would compose a letter to Mr. Oudsema on behalf of the HDC.

Mr. Bonsignore requested an update regarding the work being done on the Stuart House. Ms. Ferraro advised the owner of the house that he needs to submit an application for the work that is being done. Mr. Bonsignore expressed concern that windows have been removed from the house; the HDC has not approved the work that is being done. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that she had not issued approvals for the work. Discussion followed with regard to communicating with the owner, who is difficult to contact. Mr. Tribu mentioned that the owner might be attending the upcoming window workshop, and it may be possible to contact him there.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nave, supported by Mr. Tribu, moved to adjourn the March 16, 2010 meeting of the Historic District Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
(Recording Secretary)

Dated: _____

Reviewed by: _____
(Staff Liaison)

Dated: _____

Approved by: _____
(HDC Chair)

Dated: _____