

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005**

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Hank Prebys                      Vice Chair      7:00 PM

Meeting Location:              City Hall Meeting Room

Commissioners Present:      Hank Prebys, Brenda Rigdon, Joe Schultz, Ed Penet, Ron Rupert (late)

Commissioners Absent:      Jane Schmiedeke, Christian Overland

Staff Present:                  Karen Wieber, Planner I  
   Alexis Reynolds, HDC Assistant

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Additions:                      629 River – Study Item

Motion:                          Prebys (second: Rigdon ) moved to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval:                        Unanimous. Action carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS** - None

**PUBLIC HEARING** - None

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Redevelopment Ready Community Initiative (RRCI)**

Planner K. Wieber presented the latest resolution to the commission. Commissioner Schultz stated that the new resolution presented some of the issues discussed at the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. However, it seemed unclear about what the commission is in favor of. Redevelopment tends to create a presumption in favor of any redevelopment proposal. K. Wieber explained that it is difficult to say what projects did or did not occur. In the past, many developers did not look at the city of Ypsilanti for many reasons. Redevelopment Coordinator Brett Lenart's latest resolution takes into consideration the issues of appropriateness and inserts that level of reasonableness and judgment that the commission has the authority to determine. Commissioner Penet stated that the latest resolution is more agreeable than the prior versions. Commissioner Schultz stated that the commission needs to support something. He proposed that the words "districts and" be taken out of the resolution where it reads "redevelopment of vacant, blighted, and underutilized

districts and sites in historic districts.” He also proposed adding “property owners” to the resolution where it reads “Whereas the HDC recognizes the essential collaboration needed between government, property owners, and developers to encourage redevelopment in historic districts.” The commission’s goal is to work with property owners as well. Commissioner Rigdon agreed with the addition of “property owners.”

Commissioner Schultz stated what is really needed in a historic district is stewardship, not redevelopment. Commissioner Rigdon suggested adding “stewardship” to the end of the resolution so that it reads “such changes do not conflict with the stewardship duties prescribed to the commission.” Commissioner Prebys noted that “stewardship duties” is redundant since all the duties of the commission are stewardship.

Motion: Rupert (second: Rigdon) moved to pass the resolution as amended.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **302 N. Hamilton, Action Item**

Applicant: John Zdanowski and Bill Godfrey, Three Oaks Group (present)

Application: Demolition of garage

Discussion: Commissioner Prebys stated the guidelines require that the applicant has four grounds on which the HDC can look at demolition: hazard, deterrent to major improvement program, retaining resource is not in interest of majority of the community, and financial hardship. Mr. Godfrey explained the most compelling reason is for safety and hazard reasons. The trusses were broken by previous tenant prior to Three Oaks becoming owner of property. Parking and traffic issues are community issues that were raised at the Planning Commission meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup>. Three Oaks is owner of other properties in city. Mr. Godfrey stated that they are at the point in their budget where they want to put all the money into the house and not use it for the garage. Garage is built after 1950. The house was built in 1898. If garage is removed, there will be a better view of the house. The garage will be replaced with surface parking and nicely landscaped rock, not asphalt. Timber and shrubs will landscape and create barrier from street.

Commissioner Rigdon asked if the garage is in imminent danger of collapse. Mr. Zdanowski said it is leaning to the north and needs significant structural work.

Mr. Godfrey explained the garage was built after the date of historic significance and it is a safety hazard. Demolition will also get cars off of

Emmet Street and onto the site. Commissioner Prebys noted that the commission has received demolition applications before that state the need for more parking. The commission's purpose is to preserve the built environment. Mr. Godfrey stated that legally the site is in conformance with parking zoning requirement. In terms of investment, it makes more sense to have an exterior with curb appeal.

Mr. Godfrey noted that at their other historic properties, they have repaired garages at considerable expense to save them rather than take them down.

Commissioner Prebys reviewed demolition/moving standards, stating the commission can take action if the structure proposed for demolition or moving is found by unanimous vote to have no historical or architectural significance. If that is the case, the commission may approve the demolition or moving at this first meeting without holding a public hearing.

Motion: Rigdon (Second: Penet) moved to designate that the structure has no historical or architectural significance.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

Motion: Rigdon (Second: Rupert) moved to approve the application for demolition of garage. Note that the commission would like a site plan submitted for area, showing how it will look after demolition.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **36 N. Huron, Action Item**

Applicant: Canne J. Ezelle and Diana Wilson (present)

Application: New sign installation

Discussion: Ms. Wilson explained that they have spoken with FASTSIGNS and decided to go with them. Material will be yellow with black paint for the text. The wood signboard is already painted yellow. Ms. Wilson asked about a permit for lights on the sign. Commissioner Prebys stated that the commission would like to see what the lights look like and where they will be placed prior to installation. Commissioner Rigdon suggested gooseneck lights.

Motion: Rigdon (second: Rigdon) moved to approve the application for a "Cali Look Nails and Fashions" sign that will be painted onto existing signboard with cream background and black text. The following Secretary of Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **133 W. Michigan, Action Item**

Applicant: Bernedia Word and Robbie Brant (present)

Application: New sign installation

Discussion: Ms. Word explained it will be 2'x4' sign. Originally they wanted the commission's input on sign colors. However, since the application was turned in, Ms. Word looked at the "Liberty Income Tax" sign on W. Michigan and that material looks appealing. The pink on the new sign will be more red. The sign will be made of alumalite and not illuminated. It will be below the former Citizen's Bank sign on the rear. K. Wieber explained that Citizen's Bank may propose to put a sign half the size of the previous sign and the Glemps sign would be below it. Ms. Word stated the sign is going on the back of the building. If they want a new sign for the front, they will submit a new application.

The holes are already in the wall for the sign. Commissioner Prebys stated his concern about putting new holes in the surface of the brick; any new holes should be in the mortar. Ms. Word noted that the colors will be pink for "Glemps" and royal blue for the rest of the text. The background color will be white. Commissioner Rigdon suggested making the logo larger.

Motion: Penet (second: Rupert) moved to approve the application for new sign installation as described in testimony. Colors will be pinkish-burgundy and royal blue on white. Sign is non-illuminated to be installed at rear of building in fixtures presently in the mortar. Not to be installed with new fixtures. Sign to be on alumalite or something similar. Painted by Glemps Company as described. The following Secretary of Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **620 Norris, Action Item**

Applicant: Louis Smith, Ascent Design PC (present)

Application: New house construction

Discussion: Mr. Smith explained that he has developed his practice in the past three years in response to people with disabilities. The proposed design is one that addresses issues of living with disabilities. The site which he is developing has posed challenges because it is not flat. The client has requested a walk-out basement.

Occupational therapists and advocates for the disabled suggest an attached garage; however, because of the sloping site a detached garage with a covered walk leading to the house has been designed.

Mr. Smith stated that he is looking for suggestions and directions from the Commission so that they may be incorporated in the finished plans. He made the point that the design of the house is not intentionally a copy of an historical style. It will be built using a light-weight concrete (aerated autoclave concrete [AAC] with stucco on the exterior and plaster on the interior walls. Modern materials are appropriate according to the Commission. The wooden trusses of the front porch could be built using metal gussets which would be cheaper than traditional joinery. The Commissioners saw no problem with that solution. He also proposed a cable based railing system for the rear deck. That too seemed appropriate to the Commission.

Commissioner Rigdon noted that overall it is a great idea; the proposed design of the house recalls a common mid-19<sup>th</sup> century house form that appears in the surrounding neighborhood. She pointed out that the finished plans would need to include samples of roofing material, paint colors and samples of the stone tiles for example.

Commissioner Prebys pointed out that while the application was submitted as an action item, the Commission would postpone any action until complete information was submitted. Mr Smith explained that he is looking for provisional approval before developing the details. Prebys stated that the Commission would also need specifics on doors, windows, railings as well as other exterior details.

Commissioner Penet stated his concern with the amount of light entering the building. He suggested a way be found to bring in more light. Commissioners Prebys and Rigdon stated the need for windows at the front façade. Mr. Smith pointed out that the lack of windows, at least on one side of the front façade was the result of kitchen cabinets being raised off the floor for handicap access. The area above the cabinets could contain windows he acknowledged. He would prefer that they not have mullions. The Commissioners agreed. There was a brief discussion about the pitch of the roof. The Commissioners would prefer it being made steeper. The Commission also stated that any decorative detail not replicate historic detailing, but that historic detailing might be suggested or recalled. Mr. Smith also stated that a geothermal heating source is anticipated.

Motion: Rigdon (second: Penet) moved to table the application for new house construction pending further, detailed information. The proposal as presented is potentially approvable. Need details and color scheme.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **214-216 Maple, Action Item**

Applicant: Clark M. Brown

Application: Install steps and concrete base

Discussion: K. Wieber stated she has no further information.

Motion: Prebys (second: Rigdon) moved to table the application for lack of information.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **302 S. Huron, Action Item**

Applicant: DD & K Construction

Application: Rear porch re-build

Discussion: Commission agreed that further information is needed for materials, paint, and railings.

Motion: Penet (second: Rupert) moved to table the application for further information showing the structure, materials, need for railings, and paint.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **STUDY ITEMS-**

**215 W. Michigan** – Pamela Stuckman, landscape architect with Adams Outdoor Advertising, explained that Adams has discontinued its association with state and national outdoor advertising associations. It felt that this type of action was long overdue. Adams is trying to go through different communities and remove its billboards where they don't belong and improve the appearance of the ones where they do belong. The sign is an eyesore, an accessory to the building, and probably has no historical significance. She is looking to the commission to determine its significance. Prior to having the property sold, removal of the billboard will be a benefit to the community. Ms. Stuckman estimates that it was built in the 1950s or 1960s. Commissioner Rigdon suggested passing a motion that it is not a historic structure. Ms. Stuckman explained that there is very little attachment to the building. It is held by only a few bolts.

Motion: Rupert (second: Rigdon) moved to indicate that the signage on the roof of 215 W. Michigan has no historical significance or value.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

Motion: Penet (second: Rupert) moved that the sign can be removed under administrative approval as a sign removal. The Adams sign company can work with the city to remove the sign.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**629 N. River** – Carl Babcock, owner of CB Custom Homes and general contractor for the project, explained that the house was originally the same house as the one adjacent to the north. It is a post and beam structure. There was a shed roof off to the side that went over the two bedrooms. Everything has sagged significantly. As a result of the sag in the center, the structure is listing to the side. Once it is shored up, we don't have to demolish any exterior walls. The proposal includes putting new windows in the bedroom to meet egress requirements. On the rear elevation, eliminate cobbled porch/roof additions, raise the wall plate, and incorporate that into the home. Proposal will keep the architectural details and the integrity and feel of a vintage home.

Commissioner Prebys mentioned that the rear of the home is the least of the commission's concerns. If it makes the place more livable, then demolition is fine. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> century windows on the front with fixed pane over pane should remain the same. Mr. Babcock explained that there would be new windows necessary for egress purposes or to replace windows in a state of disrepair. Commissioner Rupert noted that windows are typically clad either in vinyl or metal (aluminum). The commission does not even consider vinyl windows. The divide/muntins must be at least on the outside of the window. The commission would not approve a metal or vinyl door. Instead, the door should be wood with panels and appropriate to the structure. The siding could be fir, redwood, or composite lap siding. The reveal should remain the same.

Mr. Babcock explained that the siding may be the only thing keeping the structure from falling. There are four bearing points of the house; the critical bearing point has a 1x1 holding it up. The bottom of many of the studs have dry-rotted. New studs will be installed in the interior and exterior walls of the family room. A new steel beam in the basement will be centerlined to pick up the bearing point load.

Commissioner Prebys explained that the commission will want drawings, descriptions of windows and doors, light fixtures, and porch details. Commissioner Rigdon stated if the existing porch is the original porch, then it should be kept. Commissioner Rigdon then added that consideration must be given to whether the porch is a defining characteristic of the house. Commissioner Prebys reiterated that there are few concerns with the changes to the rear of the building.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS -**

**207 N. Hamilton** – Re-roofing

Motion: Penet (second: Rigdon) moved to support the administrative approval granted.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**PROPERTY MONITORING**

**314 E. Forest** – K. Wieber sent letter to Rick Suave on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005. She spoke to Mr. Suave and he plans to have the foundation poured within the month and have it completed this construction season.

**111 N. Adams** – No update.

**302 N. Hamilton** – No railing issue.

**310 N. Park** – No update.

**416 N. Huron** – K. Wieber explained that the resolution states that work has not been done, this is problem, and a process needs to be started. She will use the resolution to write a letter to the owner saying the commission is beginning the process. Commissioner Schultz asked if Jack Gilbreath, Assistant City Attorney, is comfortable with the commission asking the city to pursue construction of a replacement carriage house. K. Wieber stated most of the text of the resolution is taken directly out of the court order. Commissioner Rigdon will draw a sketch of the new carriage house.

Motion: Penet (second: Rigdon) moved to approve this resolution by the Historic District Commission of the City of Ypsilanti regarding 416 N. Huron.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**417 N. Adams** – No update.

**212 Washtenaw** – Planner Wieber explained that she sent a letter to all new property owners in the historic district at the end of 2004. Commissioner Prebys noted that Ms. Cloyd offered money to help pay. It might be a useful issue to offer to take up. The offer is negotiable and not a final offer. K. Wieber stated that accepting the offer is a possibility. Commissioner Prebys suggested creating a fund for commission mailings. Commissioner Rupert noted that Ms. Cloyd hires someone who has done work in this city before and he applies untold pounds of pressure to her mortar. Many people come before the commission who have hired

contractors and architects who should know better. He cited the Allied Mortgage building on Pearl as an example.

Commissioner Prebys noted that it is the homeowner's responsibility to see that the permit is there. Planner Wieber noted that maybe the property owners should be informed that when they go to a contractor, these are the good things to look for. Commissioner Prebys suggested doing the letter to new property owners more than one time per year. Additionally, in the property sales column of the Ypsilanti Courier, possibly divide that into property sales into historic districts and a statement about the district. Commissioner Rupert suggested having the Ypsilanti Courier do interviews with Commissioner Prebys or the like.

**Thompson Building** – K. Wieber explained that Beal will meet with Jack Gilbreath on a monthly basis. The next step is stabilization of the building including roof and façade.

**107 E. Cross** – K. Wieber stated that Mr. Kircher is appealing the administrative decision to deny the zoning approval to his building permit. The court is requiring him to exhaust all administrative remedies. He is appealing [the decision] in that in order to restore a non-conforming use, which is a duplex, in a single family zoning, he would need to provide bids from two licensed contractors to show that restoration is less than 100% of the SEV. He has done this and the bids are very low. The bids are low because they are not adequate. They are much less than the fire marshal's estimates. He did not provide accurate bids for restoration so zoning approval for the building permit had to be denied.

**402 S. Huron** – K. Wieber sent letter to Deutsche Bank National Trust on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005. She has not received a response.

## **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - None**

### **HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS**

#### **Approval of the minutes from the April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005 meeting.**

Motion: Penet moved (Second: Rigdon) to approve the minutes as submitted.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion: Penet moved (Second: Rigdon) to adjourn the meeting.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:25 PM**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_