

CITY OF YPSILANTI
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES of May 1, 2007

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Jane Schmiedeke Chair 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: City Hall Meeting Room

Commissioners Present: Jane Schmiedeke, Hank Prebys, Ron Rupert, Christian Overland, Brenda Rigdon, Ed Penet, Joe Schultz

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Richard Murphy, Planner I
 Cristin Moody, HDC Assistant

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Penet (Second: Prebys) moves to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS - None

PUBLIC HEARING - None

OLD BUSINESS

114 N. River, Action Item

Applicant: Richard Katon, SOS Community Services (Not Present)

Discussion: No discussion.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Penet) moves to table the application for work at 114 N. River pending additional information.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

110 N. River, Action Item

Applicant: Emmons Peer, contractor (Not Present)

Discussion: This application requests amending a previous approval to paint the building red. The building has been painted, but the applicant would like to change the color to Desert Sand.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Penet) moves to amend the approval of October 3, 2006 to change the paint color to Desert Sand.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision:
#10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

NEW BUSINESS

32 E. Cross, Action Item

Applicant: Terry Morrow, Queen of Hearts Bakery (Present)

Discussion: Application is for the installation of signs on building and one sandwich board sign for Cross Street sidewalk. For the façade, or north side, the proposal is for lettering on the existing sign board and a projecting heart-shaped sign above. On the west side at the front, or north, end of the building above the sign board a flat sign with the business's logo is proposed as well as lettering in that side's sign board.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Rigdon) moves to approve the sign application for 32 E. Cross to include the installation of proposed signs on the building and one sandwich board sign for the sidewalk as shown in the application and attached illustration dated April 9, 2007.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision:
#10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

4 N. Adams, Action Item

Applicant: Michael Harback, Iron City Books (Not Present)

Discussion: Application is for the installation of three signs on the building. Commissioner Prebys asks about the dimensions of the signs and whether they comply with the sign ordinance. Information on building frontage is not known and as that information will determine if the signage is compliant, the Commission must delay a decision until it is confirmed.

Motion: Rupert (Second: Penet) moves to table the sign application for 4 N. Adams pending further information regarding whether the proposed signs comply with the sign ordinance.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

321 High, Study Item

Applicant: Jill Dieterle, owner (Present)
Mike Pyle, contractor (Present)

Discussion: This property fronts High Street and has an alley at the rear. The applicant would like to remove an existing chain link fence and install a new fence of treated lumber around the rear of the property. The proposed fence would be forty-two inches high and stained with an opaque stain tinted to match Sherwin Williams Sealskin (2140).

Motion: Rigdon (Second: Prebys) moves to approve the application for work at 321 High to include installation of a new fence. The fence shall be composed of treated lumber and stained with an opaque stain tinted to match Sherwin Williams Sealskin (2140). The construction and location of the new fence shall be as specified in the proposal and site plan drawing from Michael Pyle dated April 2, 2007 and the style shall match that shown in the lower picture on the First Fence of Georgia printout (submitted with application).

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #9 – Contemporary designs shall be compatible and #10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

402 S. Huron, Action Item

Applicant: Paul and Brynn Raupagh, owners (Present)

Discussion: Application is for the following rehabilitation work:

- Repair and repointing of the stone foundation.
- Replacement of damaged soffit and fascia; installation of soffit vents.
- Removal of shingles from second story and patching underlying cedar shingles where necessary.
- On the front porch, replace ceiling beam trim, wrap four-by-four posts, patch and replace bead board ceiling.
- Remove exterior kitchen door and roof above it; cover opening with clapboards and patch cedar shingles as needed.
- Remove second story door on west side and cover opening with clapboards.
- Replace screen in round opening on second story of east side with a window.
- Enlarge existing first story door on south side and install new door.

Applicants show Commission several mortar samples in different shades and indicate a preference for the darkest of them. Applicants state that the existing tooling was not done correctly and he intends to do it right. The second story round opening on the east side appears to have originally been an open porch with an entrance to a second story bedroom that had been boarded over. Commissioner Prebys suggests that it may be easier to install a rectangular window behind the round opening so that the frame would be attached on the interior and not visible from the exterior. The center post in the opening is not original and should be removed. This would return the appearance of the feature from the exterior since the glass would be at the back of the opening and its depth would be apparent. The new window can be made operable if desired. Since the kitchen door is being removed for better use of the interior space, a new exterior door will be added on either the west or south side. Commissioners indicate that either location would be acceptable, but the west side might be better for security. The door in the new location is proposed to be the existing kitchen door or a new fiberglass door. Commissioner Prebys states that the existing door would be preferable. Commissioner Rigdon suggests the applicants consider widening to thirty-six inches if they choose to expand the doorway.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Rigdon) moves to approve the application for work at 402 S. Huron to include items one through eleven as proposed in the permit application and clarified in discussion. Clarifications include the removal of the kitchen door on south side; removal of the screen from the round opening on east side and installation of a single light window behind the entire opening, which may be

operable or not; a new exterior entrance will be created on the rear or west side of the house and will utilize the door currently in the kitchen doorway.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #2 – Do not destroy original character. #5 – Preserve distinctive features and #6 – Repair do not replace.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

216 W. Michigan, Action Item

Applicant: James Marks, VG Kids (Present)

Discussion: Application is for the installation of a sign and sign board lighting, consisting of five gooseneck lights, on façade. The lighting is similar to existing lighting in other downtown locations. The fixtures will be mounted above the drip guard and sized appropriately to bow around and light the sign without blocking it. The sign will be steel lettering attached to the sign board and appear as shown in the illustration submitted with application.

Motion: Rupert (Second: Overland) moves to approve the application for work at 216 W. Michigan to include five gooseneck lighting fixtures, style and placement as illustrated in the application materials and shown in photograph dated May 1, 2007, and a steel sign mounted to existing sign board.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #10 – New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

16 N. Washington, Action Item

Applicant: Devan Swanson, Biggie's Fine Foods (Present)

Discussion: The application is for the installation of an awning on the front of the building. The business, Biggie's Fine Foods, is moving into this property from their former space on Harriet Street and would like to bring their existing awning to the new location. Commissioner Prebys identifies two issues that would make the existing awning inappropriate for the new location. First, its shape, which is compatible with the modern building on Harriet, does not comply with the awning standards in the Historic District. Commissioner Prebys explains that the HDC only approves awnings with a triangular shape in cross-section. The second issue is with the fact that the existing awning is back-lit and used as a sign, which is also not permitted in the District. Applicant asks whether the awning could be used instead at the rear entrance of the building. Commissioners clarify that the awning standards apply to all sides of a building. Applicant is given a copy of the Signs and Awnings Fact Sheet. Applicant asks whether there is any way the awning can be used, even temporarily, since they are opening soon and need some way to identify the business. Commissioners suggest using just the sign portion of the awning, cut out and stretched over a board as a flat sign, which could be placed temporarily over the existing sign board in the rear. The applicant can also remove the "Sunday's" sign currently in the front sign board and place a temporary sign in the front window. A temporary banner permit should be obtained from the building department for the rear sign.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Overland) moves to table the application for work at 16 N. Washington pending further information.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

400 Market Place, Action Item

Applicant: Gary McKeever, Depot Town Association (Present)

Discussion: Application is for removing existing roof of the caboose, repairing underlying structure as needed, installing a new copper roof, and painting the caboose "railroad red." The paint color to be used is the original color of the caboose and is described by the applicant as a deep plum-red. Commissioner Overland expresses concern about the proposed sandblasting of the caboose surface. Applicant is informed that this would seriously damage wood and would cause deterioration. Existing paint can be removed by scraping, sanding, wire brush or even chemical methods, but no sandblasting or powerwashing. Applicant notes that proposal includes using a chemical treatment on the copper roof to add patina, but this step will be omitted and the patina will be allowed to develop naturally over time.

Motion: Overland (Second: Prebys) moves to approve the application for work at 400 Market Place to include reroofing and painting as described in the project specifications from Radford's Roof Repair with the exception that the wood shall not be cleaned by sandblasting or powerwashing. Items 9, 13, and 15 on Radford's list shall not be performed.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #5 – Preserve distinctive features and #7 – Clean building gently, no sandblasting.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

STUDY ITEMS

One South Huron, Study Item

Applicant: Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Solar Project (Present)
Bill Bohlen, City of Ypsilanti Department of Public Works (Present)

Discussion: The applicant has submitted a plan to equip Ypsilanti City Hall with solar power. The proposal calls for a row of twelve solar panels to be attached to the south wall of City Hall above the fourth story windows, as well as a sign. The applicant had noticed that the south wall of the building was bare and has no shade, so recognized it as an excellent location for solar panels. In addition, as the wall faces inbound traffic to the city, the prominent and visible placement of solar panels could serve as a demonstration project, which would also involve adding a meter to the City's website showing the amount of power generated from the panels. Mr. Bohlen adds that this project would dovetail with a recent project to improve the City's energy efficiency undertaken by his department in partnership with Honeywell. In conjunction with other efforts, such as improving insulation, Honeywell has offered to help fund the solar panel installation, since its visibility would have a greater impact on public awareness than insulation. Commissioner Rigdon asks if any of the available photovoltaic skin products have been considered instead of panels. These would have a minimal effect on the building's appearance. Applicant states that since the skins are mounted onto a building

flat, they would reduce power generation. The ideal setup for maximum efficiency is to have a 38 degree angle, or perpendicular to the sun's rays.

Commissioners ask how the panels would be attached to the building. Applicant states that aluminum brackets would be bolted to the masonry and the panels would be mounted on the brackets. Commissioners express concerns with this approach since it would involve damage to the bricks and suggest the applicant investigate the possibility of attaching panels to brackets that would hang from the parapet wall. This would minimize the need for drilling into the masonry, as only a few bolts would be needed to stabilize the brackets. Commissioners ask whether the applicant has considered installing the panels in other locations on the building such as on the roof or lower on the south wall. The applicant explains that he has considered all of the options and while they are possible each has its own drawbacks. A roof installation could result in damage to the roof membrane, would reduce efficiency of power generation due to shadows created by existing objects and, since counter weights would need to be used, the structural load would be greater. Mounting the panels lower on the south wall creates the potential for vandalism and again would reduce efficiency due to afternoon shadows.

Commissioner Schmiedeke states that she supports the installation of solar panels in the District in locations where they are not visible. This project as proposed is both very prominent and on a public building, so Commissioners agree that it must be considered very carefully. It will likely be seen as a precedent and would therefore influence public perception, possibly causing property owners in the Historic District to believe they could receive approval to install solar panels on visible areas of their buildings. Commissioner Rigdon notes that in the past, when the HDC has approved a project with special circumstances, an explicit statement was included in the motion indicating the approval is unique to that particular project. In this case, some consideration could be made for the public nature of the building and education value of the project. As this is a relatively new issue that is likely to become increasingly common, the Commission would like to thoroughly look into all of the various issues, including structural issues relative to installation of panels and concerns about the intentional visibility for demonstration purposes and how this will affect the decision as a precedent. Commissioners express the need for a greater understanding of alternative energy developments and how they might be applied to buildings in the future as well as an exploration of how this issue has been handled in other historic districts. Commissioner Rigdon offers to contact the State Historic Preservation Office to learn their approach to these issues and to do more general research so that the HDC can work to create guidelines and a Fact Sheet for future situations. Commissioner Overland would like this project to become an example of how solar panels can be handled appropriately, in order to create a standard that can be applied in the future.

OTHER BUSINESS

Administrative Approvals – None

Property Monitoring

- **119 N. Hamilton:** Staff spoke with the owners of 119 N. Hamilton, who have installed unframed and unpainted porch skirting without HDC approval. Owners stated that they would

submit an application to bring this work in line with the HDC's standards.

- **205 S. Washington:** At previous meeting, owner and contractor noted that neighboring houses had new installations of vinyl siding, and HDC had asked staff to investigate. Staff could not find any houses in the vicinity that appeared to have recently installed vinyl siding – existing vinyl siding appeared old, and matched pictures on file for the properties.
- **534 N. Huron:** Inappropriate lighting still in place. Staff hopes to have public streetlight issues resolved to address safety concerns expressed by owners, and will then pursue the removal of the inappropriate lighting. Public Works department is following up with DTE.
- **Starkweather House:** Owner backed out of a sale, telling buyers that he planned to give property to the City. No such arrangement has yet been made with the city; if owner does approach the City again with an offer, the City will most likely solicit bids from private buyers to purchase and rehabilitate the property. Two HDC members and staff toured the Starkweather House on April 27, 2007, at owner's invitation.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

Approval of the minutes from the April 17, 2007 meeting.

Motion: Penet (Second: Rigdon) moves to approve the minutes of April 17, 2007 as presented.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

Staff states that the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority is applying for the Blueprints for Michigan's Downtowns program administered by MSHDA. This program would provide technical assistance to the DDA to generate a new economic development strategy and action plan; the DDA's existing plan is from 1992. The DDA is seeking letters of support from various boards and community groups.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Schultz) moves to have staff provide a letter of support on behalf of the Historic District Commission to the Ypsilanti DDA's application for the Blueprints for Michigan's Downtowns program.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Approval: Unanimous. Motion Carries.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:00 PM