



MINUTES

City of Ypsilanti HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION In-person Meeting

Tuesday, April 11, 2023 (approved 4/25/23)
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Pettit Welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.
Meeting called to order at 7:02pm

Commissioners Present: Alex Pettit – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
James Chesnut - Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
James Ratzlaff - Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Stefan Szumko – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Commissioners Absent: Delrhea Byrge – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Staff Present: Ellen Thackery, Preservation Planner

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Discussion: Audience members (homeowners at 411 N Adams) would like to add a study item to the agenda—they are planning painting, which can be approved administratively, but would also like to discuss a potential garage.

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Szumko) moved to add 411 N Adams to agenda as a study item and approve the agenda as amended.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four
Nays: None
Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS—none

PUBLIC HEARING—none

OLD BUSINESS—none

NEW BUSINESS

312-314 W Cross

**Rebuilt like-for-like rear small deck.*

Applicant: Lillianna Blair, homeowner - present

Discussion: Staff Report: *Contributing Queen Anne house, proposal is for the rebuilding of a small rear deck. Deck is currently pressure-treated wood. Commission could either view this proposal as a like-for-like replacement, or commission may want to seek to bring the project more into alignment with the City's design guidelines and request vertical grain fir tongue-and-groove porch boards.*

Pettit: Clarified that the deck is uncovered; applicant confirmed.

[Like-for-like approach in this case seems reasonable. Not visible from right of way; confirmed. Commissioner noted that once the deck begins coming off, homeowner will want to be careful as demo proceeds to protect any flashing between the house and the deck. Will use metal mesh as rodent proofing. Has adjusted gutters to better drain water in area. Commissioner also suggested using tape to flash the tops of the deck joists to help them last longer.]

Motion: Szumko (second: Chesnut) moved to approve application PHDC 23-0022 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 312-314 W Cross Street for the repair and/or replacement of the existing back porch using pressure-treated lumber, painted to match the house's trim when dry, because the existing back porch is built of pressure-treated lumber and because it is a rear-facing, nonhistoric porch. The proposed work does not negatively impact the house's historic materials and can be removed without damaging historic materials or character, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and not destroy significant original material.

#10- New work will be removable.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

27 S Huron

**New EPDM roof, metal cap, flashing on decorative mansard roof, new slate shingles on decorative mansard roof*

Applicant: Craig Annas – present.

Discussion: *[Staff Review: This is a modern one-story building in the district that is not considered contributing. It has a decorative mansard roof around the top of the building. Proposed are a new like-for-like roof, new metal cap similar to the existing, flashing under the new tiles, and slate roof tiles in place of the cedar shakes on the mansard.]*

Property owner explained that the cedar does not dry out readily and so moss and spiders (and their webs) are an ongoing issue.

[Discussion about how some more recent buildings, like midcentury modern buildings, are starting to acquire significance, but commission does not consider these cedar shakes significant or character-defining, and building is not considered contributing.]

Motion: Ratzlaff moved (Chesnut seconded) to approve application PHDC 23-0023 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 27 S Huron Street for the replacement of the existing EPDM rubber roofing membrane with a like roof, proper flashing under the decorative mansard roof, installation of metal cap in dark bronze, and the replacement of the existing cedar shakes with slate roofing tiles, because the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and not destroy significant original material.

#10- New work shall be removable.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four

Nays: None

Motion carried.

221 S Washington

**New front porch/stoop*

Applicant: Josh and Lauren Budde, the owners - present

Discussion: *[Staff Review: Very intact Italianate. Uncovered front porch/stoop is not original and is cast concrete and is failing. Owners propose a new front porch (still uncovered) of reclaimed brick sidewalls and limestone porch cap and stair treads. Nonhistoric handrail is intended to be removed and would not be replaced unless required by building code.]*

[Commissioners and applicants discussed reclaimed brick; applicants are not sure what color bricks will be but will be matched as closely as possible; commissioners caution that the mason needs to select exterior grade bricks. Mason will know to do that. Handrail might be nice for aging in place; if handrail is necessary, black pipe rail might be something to consider. Consider building porch in a way that a handrail could be added later. A simple rail would be better than a highly decorative one by the Standards.]

Motion: Ratzlaff moved (Second: Szumko) to approve Application PHDC 23-0024 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work at 221 S Washington for the removal of the damaged, nonhistoric cast concrete steps and porch and the building of new steps and front porch with brick sidewalls and limestone treads and porch cap, and relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are Standards 9 and 10.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and not destroy significant original material.

#10- New work shall be removable.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four

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Nays: None
Motion carried.

311 E Forest

**Sliding doors to future deck.*

Applicant: Nikki Nabozny, applicant - present

Discussion: *[Staff Review: This house is in the district but is not considered contributing. Has been a study item in the past, and minutes from that discussion were included in the packet. All work is on the rear. Proposed is a sliding door in place of a vinyl window at the center of the rear façade.*

Applicant confirms that the sliding door is a wood door with a composite coating. Applicant is in the process of getting a quote for a new rear deck, likely a 16 x 12' deck, two steps down to the yard, likely will be floating, doesn't have a plan yet but will be getting building permits. Hope is that the door installation and deck will happen at once. Applicant will be applying for the deck soon.

Commissioner notices that the hose bib and laundry vent might be in the way of new door; applicant confirms that these will be moved toward the corner of the house staying toward the rear. Door trim will likely be like the windows are—site-bent aluminum on the aluminum siding.

Motion: Szumko moved (second: Chesnut) to approve Application PHDC 23-0025 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 311 E Forest Ave to include the removal of a rear vinyl window and the installation of a white sliding patio door as proposed in its place. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation #9.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original material.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four
Nays: None
Motion carried.

STUDY ITEMS

309 S Washington

**New siding*

Applicant: Emmanuel Aubrey, one of the owners - present

Discussion:

Applicant described that after many years of neglect, they purchased this house and siding is very deteriorated. Bats lived under siding (those were removed by a wildlife company) and water was coming in.

Chair stated that, as applicant and staff have discussed, federal and local guidelines place emphasis on preserving historic material and spot-replacing deteriorated boards and replacing in kind, wood for wood. Before there is any talk of replacement, repair and spot replacement is the prescribed approach. Chair sees that in this packet, there are pictures that show very deteriorated siding. Why does applicant seek to replace so much material? Applicant explained that when he spoke with restoration contractors, they explained that these boards would completely fall apart without intensive repairs. The contractors stated that they would use an infrared paint stripper and a compound that would require several applications to preserve the boards and the process would have cost about as much as the house. Chair wonders if that level of intervention would be required—instead, new wood boards could be pieced in as necessary. Applicant explains that many boards (probably more than 30%) are ready to fall apart, and contractor explained that in many cases, boards that look fine from the paintable surface are broken from the underside. Contractors have found many cases of hodgepodge repairs, where things were covered up or corrected in a very piecemeal fashion without addressing underlying issues. (Rotted trim would just be installed on top of old rotted trim but moisture issue was not addressed, for example.)

Commissioner asked if insulation was being considered. Applicant said he would like to insulate and was considering blown-in cellulose. The house's construction makes insulating a challenge because there's sheathing in some places but not in others and no vapor barrier at all anywhere. Commissioners discussed that an energy audit or images from a thermal camera would help homeowners see where they are losing the most heat and then seeing if insulation is reaching /settling into the intended areas.

Homeowner stated that some of the studs are charred from a past fire. Commissioners stated that you could sister some wood to the damaged studs if you have siding and sheathing off.

Commissioner said that the lack of vapor barrier is likely contributing to the wear and tear on the siding because of the moisture passing through the wall. A complete tear-off to get a solid vapor barrier would not be out of the question in this commissioner's mind. In this scenario, there would be a large-scale removal of historic material, but for the long-term preservation of the structure, it could be worth it, especially considering the condition of the material on the house. Another commissioner also notes that much of this material may not actually be historic.

The scalloped siding above is a character-defining feature and it would be ideal if that scalloped siding could be salvaged.

Window trim would likely need to come off to add a vapor barrier; homeowner states that much of that trim is soft to the touch. Commissioner notes that trim is difficult because the window sills, for example, probably go all the way though the wall. When the window frame was installed, it was all a unit and the sill is integrated and goes all the way through the wall. May be that rot can be cut off the sill and then a replacement is pieced in.

Confusing that there is sheathing in some places but not others and so changing that detail will have a knock-on effect on the siding, trim, and materials that will lay on top of the sheathing. Will be difficult to keep all of the work on a single plane if it doesn't start out uniform/consistent.

And, how you standardize the inconsistencies will affect how recessed the window trim appears. The window trim seems to appear almost flush with the siding in some places.

Homeowner describes that the house has experienced some structural issues—people have cut through beams they should not have so these structural issues need to be addressed. One commissioner notes that fiber cement siding is heavy—this could add some strain on the house if the structural issues are not corrected. The current siding is likely absorbing a lot of water which will make the existing siding quite heavy also.

Looking at siding—homeowner has looked at cedar, pine, paulownia, and at varying grades of each. Some of the wood looked quite bad to him and he wants a material that is economical but high quality and that will last and look good for the long term. Staff mentioned that there is a state income tax credit available for up to 25% of the costs of the project paid to the homeowner in the form of a state income tax credit. The credit can be used against their state income tax liability, and can be carried forward 10 years. Staff also mentioned that the Standards call for repair when possible and then replace in kind, and the Guidelines associated with the Standards recommend wood for wood, but they also show that another recommended approach could be using wood siding on the most public face of the building and using a material like fiber cement siding on secondary elevations. Homeowner wants the long-term more economical choice—it is both economical and the long-term less maintenance and is fireproof and you can purchase it primed and painted and the paint comes with a 15-year warranty, just more investment into our home. Should help us incur less costs over the short, medium, and long term. Commissioner states that we are tasked with preserving historic materials, and we take that charge seriously and we have to weigh some competing priorities. Homeowner feels like because of all of the many years of deferred maintenance and the materials' current condition, the economic equation is off-kilter. Would probably not see a need for such a drastic step if there had not been many years of neglect. Commissioner stated that the promise of the improvement of the structure for its long-term preservation (vapor barrier, watertightness) could tip the scales for him toward being amenable to a substitute material that looked very like the original in this case, especially if materials like the scalloped siding can be preserved. One commissioner stated that the long-term benefits of the vapor barrier and insulation for the structure outweigh the need for the strict materials compatibility that we normally look for. Commissioner stated that the baseline is that all of the siding will need to be removed for the vapor barrier and insulation; the idea of going with wood on the primary elevation is a thought, but in this case, likely none of the siding could be salvaged so the piecing-in that the Standards and Guidelines call for would not be being done.

Homeowner spoke about the base of the columns on his portico. The bases are deteriorated. Commissioner stated that those bases can be repaired or replaced. Homeowner asked about short decorative rails between the columns and the house. If they are not historic, a homeowner would not be required to keep them, but because they are outside work, an application to the HDC is necessary with some pictures. Staff explained that if they are not historic, staff could approve their removal administratively.

Commissioner cautioned that when it comes to vapor barriers, the homeowner and contractor will want to work with the siding manufacturer about what approach is best and what will not void the product's warranty. Commissioner cautions that the house has had a simple system for so long, and adding a vapor barrier and insulation introduces complexity. Where the house has

some plank sheathing installed, homeowner might want to consider leaving those in place. If you will remove them, maybe don't remove them all from one side of the house at once because they help stabilize the structure against racking (like in strong winds when the house might sway and the structural members get forced out of plumb).

Staff summary: For the minutes, what staff is hearing is that commission is supportive of the idea of all of the siding being removed to add insulation and a vapor barrier for the longevity of the structure. It sounds like the homeowners plan to remove and add these elements one elevation at a time. Once the vapor barrier, insulation, and maybe sheathing has been added, the commission would need to see the replacements in the same profile and texture as the historic material that was removed, and if the scalloped siding can be salvaged, that would be ideal. The commission would want to see the trim boards fitting with the siding the same way they are now—if the cornice board between the upper and lower siding is currently recessed under a set of boards, the commission would want to see the trim and siding components interacting the same way they do now. Commission understands that the trim will become more consistent in its relationship to the siding across all faces as the surfaces become more consistent.

The siding reveal varies on the house. There is a later addition and so that is different from the historic original house's siding reveal. The commission suggested that a historic elevation (like the front) could serve as the guide or model for the reveals all the way around the house.

411 N Adams

**Painting and potential new garage*

Applicants: left the meeting toward the end of the study item above, so commission did not discuss this item.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

Application PHDC 23-0022 approved for painting at 411 N Huron

OTHER BUSINESS

- 1. Property Monitoring**—staff is working the enforcement list, is working on it along with the enforcement audit, and building department and the planning department have discussed having monthly meetings together to provide that regular communication and checkin. Staff is making enforcement more of a focus, along with checking that work is getting completed once it's approved.

- 2. Updates from Staff**

Re: Michigan Historic Preservation Network – Upcoming training and conference opportunities, May 11-13 on Mackinac Island at Mission Point.

NAPC HDC training available virtually, offered 4/13 and 4/20, evening, different content each night, registration information available. Staff is attending and will share out materials I receive.

Upcoming NTHP webinar about planning, preservation, and change and there is a part 1 and part 2.

NAPC will offer a virtual summer short course in August.

Residential state income tax credit is still available for homeowner-occupied properties—get up to 25% of your costs returned to you in the form of a state income tax credit you can carry forward up to 10 years.

May Old House Expo was moved from May to November 5, a Sunday afternoon in the Freighthouse

3. Commissioner Comments

Upcoming History Walk, Normal Park, April 23, 2023, 10 am

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS—none

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

Approval of the minutes of March 14, 2023

Motion: Chesnut (second: Szumko) moved to approve the minutes of March 14, 2023, as submitted.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Four
Nays: None
Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Pettit adjourned the meeting, citing the end of the agenda with no further items to discuss.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:45 p.m.

Full Minutes Prepared By: Ellen Thackery