

# MINUTES

City of Ypsilanti  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
Regular Meeting held in person, Freighthouse

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

## CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Pettit Welcomed attendees.  
Meeting called to order at 7:07pm

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  
Delrhea Byrge – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Ellen Thackery, Preservation Planner

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Szumko (second: Chesnut) moved to approve the agenda as proposed.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Szumko, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Byrge  
Nays: None  
Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS, other than their agenda item**—none

**PUBLIC HEARING**—none

**OLD BUSINESS**—none

## NEW BUSINESS

### 206 N River

*\*new garage entry door and siding*

Applicants Teri Piziali and Malcolm McDonald, present

*Staff report: This house contributes to the district and dates back to at least 1855. The garage was built about 1916 and is attached to the house at the rear. There is a separate detached garage as well. The proposed work is on the rear part of the house, not very visible from the sidewalk, especially from the south, and the affected areas are secondary elevations. The homeowners would like the fiber cement siding because their attached garage's wood siding has been very damaged by squirrels, and they plan to replace the steel person-entry door with another similar steel door. Staff believes the relevant questions for this application are, if the wood siding is beyond repair, must it be replaced with wood, and if wood is infeasible, is the proposed fiber cement siding an acceptable alternative to wood?*

Discussion:

Applicant: The condition of the siding is very bad and squirrels have been chewing in and have been relocated. The tarp shown in the picture in the packet covers the overhead garage door in the winter.

Commissioners: Discussed the construction in that part of the house, installation would have to be to manufacturer's specifications for the warranty so the installation might be challenging. Applicant discussed sistering new studs to old, and all discussed need for some kind of insulation and vapor barrier. Windows will need to be retrimmed.

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Chesnut) moved to approve Application PHDC-23-0050 for the proposed work at 206 N River for the: 1) replacement of a steel person-entry door with a like steel entry door on the garage/rear-most portion of the house, and 2) the removal of deteriorated wood siding on the garage/rear-most portion of the house and the installation in its place of white smooth HardiePlank Lap Siding, on the northern, eastern, and southern walls of the garage portion only. Because the wood siding was shown to be infeasible in this case, because the elevations affected are toward the rear and are secondary, and because the proposed replacement is compatible in this case, this proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 6 and 9 and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge  
Nays: None  
Motion carried.

## **627 N River**

*\*new front doors and wood windows with aluminum cladding*

Applicant: Douglas Geidner, present

*Staff report: House has experienced many alterations over the years—the roofline on the wing part of the house has likely been altered, the porch has been removed, and doors were added to the front likely where they were not historically. For all of these reasons, even with the wood siding now exposed and with the trim now visible, staff does not believe this house would be considered contributing to the district. Much work has been approved on this house, but one thing that was not approved at a commission meeting in April was the replacement of the windows. The commission requested that a window repair professional assess the conditions. Window repair professional James Turner has been to the house to assess the conditions and found that after so much deferred maintenance over so many years, and the extra trim added over the window frames without proper precautions, windows have rotted badly and need to be replaced. Also on this application are new front entry doors, and, on the rear of the house, new exterior basement stairs, walls flanking the stairs, drain, and door.*

Discussion:

Applicant: Applicant confirmed the windows will be full-frame replacements and the windows will be replaced to the rough openings because of the deterioration.

[Discussion about where the new drain at the base of the basement steps will discharge; house has an interior perimeter drain and new footer drains.]

Motion: Chesnut (second: Byrge) moved to approve application PHDC-23-0057 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 627 N River to include new front entry doors in either smooth paintable fiberglass or wood and without the ornamental details that link it to the Craftsman style (such as the dentil molding below the window); removal of current elements leading to rear exterior basement access (rubble walls, stairs, door); installation of new concrete pad, steps, walls on both sides of steps, new drain, new metal door, and new metal guardrail; and removal of existing one-over-one windows and replacement with proposed Andersen E-series one-over-one double-hung windows in wood with white aluminum cladding. The proposed work on the windows meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 6 because the house has been significantly altered, the windows currently in place are not original and are beyond repair, and the proposed windows match the existing in design and texture. The proposed work on the rear basement access and the two front doors meets Standard 9.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge  
Nays: None  
Motion carried.

### **31 N Washington**

*\*new brick facing on columns and in alcove below marquee to cover brick damage from the aggregate panels that had been installed and from the past removal of poster display cases that had been inset into the brick.*

*Staff report: The commission has seen this building several times now—it is the Martha Washington Theater and it contributes to both the National Register and local historic districts. A lot of work has been approved on this building as well, but one thing that was not approved at a May commission meeting was the covering of the columns and alcove under the marquee with a fiber cement product. The commission had required that those columns remain visible as columns from the parapet to the sidewalk because they are character-defining features of the building. This revised proposal to cover damaged and missing bricks with thin face bricks that match as closely as possible to the historic, staff believes, meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.*

Discussion:

Applicant: Joel Stoin representing DeJa Vu and MIC Limited, present. Summarized that Next Level Custom Brick will match cement at the bottom across the front and into the alcove up to the doors and then install thin face bricks covering the damage on the columns and throughout the alcove under the marquee. The bricks will match as closely as possible in color and will be wirecut but won't be iron-spotted. Can't get bricks that are both wirecut and iron-spotted. Because of the marquee, these bricks won't be directly adjacent to the historic bricks, so close match should be close enough. The entry doors in the alcove will get new trim and will have clear glass in them.

Commissioners: Agreed that this is what they discussed and that this proposal will be good for the building and will make the marquee really stand out.

Motion: Byrge (second: Chesnut) moved to approve Application PHDC 23-0056 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work proposed at 31 N Washington to repair and replace damaged bricks below the marquee (including the column faces and the entire alcove to and around the doors) with bricks laid in a running bond pattern, with the conditions that the bricks used will match the existing as closely as possible and are exterior bricks, the mortar composition will match the historic mortar composition, the masonry joints will match the historic masonry joints on the building, and the appropriate building department permit is obtained. This proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation #6.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge  
Nays: None  
Motion carried.

## **212 S Huron**

*\*metal flat roofs at top of house replaced with EPDM; slate for slate repairs and replacements with attic stock and salvaged slate on the main body of the roof; porch roofs and bay window roof (currently flat metal on most but deteriorating slate on the front porch roof) all replaced with standing seam metal roof; carriage house flat roof replaced with an EPDM roof; two chimneys repointed and one chimney rebuilt*

*Staff report: The proposed work is for 212 S Huron, a very significant house in the district. It is described in the National Register nomination by name—that is very unusual for our historic documentation. Further, the carriage house is also specifically mentioned in our National Register nomination, which is quite unusual for an outbuilding in our documentation. The house is significant without question. The house's flat metal roof deterioration at the top of the house is serious and homeowner could coat or replace with EPDM—applicant's architect suggests EPDM for longevity. The slate for slate work meets Standard 6. Staff believes that the standing seam metal porches for the existing metal porches also likely meets Standard 6. (Existing porch roofs are flat and these would have standing seams, but all are metal.) Staff mentions that the low-pitched roof on the front porch has been hard on the slate and that neither contractor consulted suggested putting slate back on that roof because of the low pitch. In this application, a metal standing seam roof is proposed on the front porch. Staff described that the owner had received an estimate for roof work from Detroit Cornice and Slate as well if commissioners want to see it projected on the screen for comparison (it proposed copper instead of standing seam metal, but that work is not being proposed here so staff did not include that estimate in the package. [No commissioners asked to see it.] Staff also clarified that the commissioners see two estimates in the packet—one from June 9 and one from later in June. The first quote proposes a rust inhibitor on the flat metal roofs, but the architect requested a second quote replacing those roofs instead. Both of these are in the packet. Staff stated that if homeowners opt to cover the existing flat metal roofs with a protective coating instead of replacing as proposed here, they can do that with staff approval instead of full commission approval. Chimneys are also proposed to be repointed or rebuilt.*

Applicant: Brad and Esther Jentzen, planning to buy the house from the estate, present. Their architect Brenda Rigdon also present.

Commissioners: The slate repair and replacement on the main body of the roof meets the Standards. Coating or replacing the flat roofs meet the Standards. The metal roof for the metal roof on the porches and bay window also seems to commission to meet the Standards, since the standing seam is low and the ridges are residentially scaled at 12" apart. Commission understood that

slate is not a good material for a low pitch, and looked at pictures of other metal roofs on stone houses with slate roofs (and exposed rafter tails) to see how compatible the proposal seems. Commission doesn't think the front porch roof is highly visible and that the proposal seems compatible with the historic materials and character of the house. Homeowners and architect are still considering colors for the metal roofing—that detail will need to be ironed out a little later.

Motion: Szumko (second: Byrge) moved to approve Application PHDC-23-0060 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work proposed at 212 S Huron to include: replacing the damaged slate on the house's main roof with slate available on site; removing steel roofing from the house's three flat roof sections and replacing it with an EPDM membrane system in black or a lighter color to be determined, and repairing structural framing and sheathing if necessary; replacing the carriage house's roof membrane with a new EPDM membrane system in the appropriate color; removing steel roofs from northwest porch and bay window and replacing them with a new metal roof in slate, red, gray, or brownish (earth tones); reconstructing one chimney from salvaged materials on site with the condition that the mortar used will match the historic in mortar color, composition, and joint size; repointing two other chimneys, with the condition that mortar used will match the historic in mortar color, composition, and joint size; and removing deteriorated slate from the front porch, including the gable roof over the front door, and replacing with a metal roof in colors as previously mentioned, with the condition that if applicant wants to apply for the State Historic Tax Credits and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requires a change to the plan or materials to reserve the tax credit, staff will work with owner and SHPO to amend the application and approve it administratively. If required changes are substantial, staff can elect to bring the amended application back to the commission for review. Building permits are necessary for this work.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge  
Nays: None  
Motion carried.

## **STUDY ITEMS**—none

## **ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**—

### Approvals that should have been reported at May 23 meeting:

216 S Huron, asphalt roof to asphalt roof  
12 W MI Ave, paint previously painted surfaces  
315 N Grove, repaint wood siding  
29 E Cross, repaint storefront and fire escape

### Approvals for this meeting:

36 N Washington, awnings recovered  
216 N Grove, repaint previously painted surfaces  
120 E Cross, new like-for-like roof  
121 N Washington, mural  
516 N River, detached deck  
311 Washtenaw, re-side nonhistoric addition  
222 N River, air conditioning  
57 E Forest, like-for-like roof  
406 Maple, painting siding only

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### Property Monitoring:

Staff encouraged commissioners to use See Click Fix (<https://cityofypsilanti.com/506/Report-an-Issue>) to send staff property concerns. If it's indicated that the issue is in the "Historic District," it will come right to staff.

Commissioners mentioned a couple items for staff to follow up on.

### Updates from Staff:

The Virtual Summer Short Course from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions will be offered August 23 and 24 and the Department has some training funds available. Please let staff know if you would like to attend.

Staff also wanted to offer a reminder that as commissioners discuss an application and concerns or thoughts, best practice would be always to refer to a Standard before beginning a discussion point so that we are couching all of our discussion in the Standards. That practice will get us to our most defensible decisions.

### Commissioner Comments:

Stefan Szumko is leading a history walk around Cross Street and EMU July 23.

## **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS—none**

## **HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS**

### **1. Proposed amendment to the minutes of May 23, 2023**

Staff requested placing brackets around the second sentence of the discussion of the last agenda item.

The sentence reads, "The Standards require that exterior alterations will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion, and massing to protect this property and its environment." Staff suggests instead: "[Staff note: The Standards require that exterior alterations will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion, and massing to protect this property and its environment.]"

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Szumko) moved to accept this amendment to the minutes of May 23, 2023.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

### **2. Approval of the minutes of May 23, 2023**

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Szumko) moved to approve the minutes of May 23, 2023, as amended.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Chesnut, Ratzlaff, Szumko, Byrge

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 9:25 p.m.**

Full Minutes Prepared By: Ellen Thackery