



MINUTES

City of Ypsilanti
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
Ypsilanti City Hall – 1 S Huron Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Monday, August 26, 2019
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of Chairperson Davis and Vice Chairperson Pettit, Commissioner Prebys called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

Motion: Schmiedeke (second: Stevenson) moved to nominate Hank Prebys as Acting Chairperson.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carried.

ROLL CALL

Hank Prebys Acting Chair 7:03 PM

Commissioners Present: Anne Stevenson, Hank Prebys, Jane Schmiedeke, Ron Rupert

Commissioners Absent: Mike Davis, Jr., Alex Pettit, Erika Lindsay

Staff Present: Joe Meyers, Economic Development Director
Christopher Jacobs, Community Development Manager
Scott Slagor, Preservation Planner
Nancy Hare-Dickerson, Commission Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Schmiedeke (second: Rupert) moved to approve the agenda as submitted.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Slagor: Read comments emailed to staff from Larry Yapp, owner of 32-42 N Huron.

Motion: Stevenson (second: Schmiedeke) moved to approve the agenda as submitted with the emailed comments from the property owner of 32-42 N Huron (attached).

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Planning discussion on historic districts in Ypsilanti

**Staff led a discussion on historic preservation in Ypsilanti based on Sec. 54-32 of the Historical Preservation Ordinance, Purpose and Intent.*

[Discussion clarifying the Certified Local Government (CLG) program/State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requirements - Local perspective/National Register perspective]

[Discussion re: multiple resources in the City worthy of designation locally or in the National Register of Historic Places; such as Peninsular Park, the Tucker house, and the College Heights and Normal Park neighborhood]

[Discussion re: looking back at what is already listed and determining if there are other areas of significance that should be considered within the current designated districts, such as significant individuals, World War II-era history, and how the district has changed]

[Discussion re: additional means of promoting the economic benefits of preservation that are currently underutilized, such as conducting a property value study]

[Discussion re: the topic of maintaining properties - what is working well with the current work permit application system and measures that can be taken to increase compliance. Discussed placards to show Certificate of Appropriateness, increasing awareness that a property is in the district, and the City's efforts to increase compliance across areas.]

[Discussion re: the topic of providing citizen information for the appropriate preservation of resources - additional educational opportunities the HDC could utilize; such as trainings, conducting a survey of Ypsilanti residents for what trainings/lectures they would like; the use of social media, and additional Fact Sheets]

[Discussion re: additional or better ways the City/HDC could promote preservation/heritage tourism through partner organizations; such as the Historic Preservation Program with Eastern Michigan University]

[Discussion re: whether the current Design Criteria is sufficient for evaluating new construction in the Historic District. In general the Commission found the standards appropriate, however they considered revising or eliminating Standard #8. Staff agreed to provide the HDC with example of good infill construction in other cities.]

[Discussion re: areas/items used in the HDC decision-making process; i.e., staff reviews, fact sheets, trainings. Online trainings were favorably received.]

[Discussion re: tools, resources or process changes that would help the HDC make decisions. Discussed utilizing the TV screens in the Council Chamber room more.]

Discussion on Administrative Approvals

**Staff presented a report on proposed changes to permitted administrative approvals.*

Slagor: After first explaining the administrative approvals currently allowed by the HDC, staff stated that he prepared the report for the HDC to discuss and consider possible options for additional administrative approvals in an effort to promote increased efficiency of the process.

Proposed additional administrative approvals include:

- Asphalt shingle roofs, regardless of color.
- Rear fencing applications.
- Installation of barrier-free ramps.
- Minor amendments to previously approved work.
- Extensions of approved work.
- Minor landscape features.
- In-kind replacements, particularly for non-historic features.
- Paint color review.

Discussion ensued as to the following proposed administrative approvals:

Roofing and Gutters

"Staff recommends expanding reroofing admin approvals to include all asphalt shingle or in-kind roof replacements, regardless of color. Historically, wood shingle and metal roofs varied in color as they could be painted, stained, or natural. Staff can ensure that drip edges will match the trim of the house. In-kind replacement of slate or tile roofs may be approved by staff as well. The HDC would continue to review applications for new roof materials, such as synthetic slate or faux clay tile; roof applications concerning decorative features; and roof applications with new ventilation. In-kind gutter replacements may also be approved administratively; however, a change in gutter type would go before the Commission".

Schmiedeke/Stevenson/Prebys: Indicated agreement.

Rupert: Stated – except for white roofs.

[Further discussion re: reasons for past restrictions on roof color]

Prebys/Schmiedeke: Indicated agreement.

Rupert: Asked about metal roofs.

Slagor: Stated that the only time that staff would suggest administrative approval is if there is an existing metal roof on the building. Stated that there is a lot to consider with a metal roof.

Rear Fencing Applications

"Currently, all fencing applications go to the HDC for review. Staff recommends allowing approval of rear fence enclosures when the fence complies with the guidelines in the HDC Fence Fact Sheet as well as the City's Zoning Code. Fencing at the front of properties would still go before the Commission".

Prebys: Asked if that would also mean that if it were a wooden fence, it would be painted or stained.

Slagor: Stated that that is a requirement, so it would be in there.

Stevenson/Prebys: Indicated agreement.

Rupert: Asked -- if they have a fence that was going to go on the rear and then also on the sides, that would not be administratively approved.

Slagor: Stated that if it was a backyard fence, you may be able to see some of the front. But if it came all the way up to the front yard, then, no, that would not be administratively approved.

Meyers: Stated – basically, enclosing a back yard.

Slagor: Stated – yes, back yard enclosures essentially.

Rupert: Indicated agreement.

Schmiedeke/Stevenson: Indicated agreement.

Meyers: Indicated that the administrative approval changes can always be revisited if it turns out not to be a good idea.

Installation of Barrier-Free Ramps on Residential Buildings

“Typically, ramps on residential buildings are requested because the resident requires one to access their home. Time is critical with these approvals as often a resident cannot go for a prolonged period without access to their building. The State Historic Preservation Office typically approves ramp applications on the basis that they are removable features that allow residents to remain in their homes.

Accommodating accessibility issues is one way the HDC can promote the City’s vision of building a diverse community. Staff will approve ramps if they are easily removed and not damaging to the historic fabric of the building. Commercial properties that are altering their egress will still be reviewed by the HDC”.

Schmiedeke/Prebys/Rupert: Indicated agreement.

Stevenson: Stated that in talking about temporary ramps and removeable features, that they oftentimes become permanent features.

[Continued discussion re: temporary becoming permanent; re: metal/wood ramps – more discussion may be needed]

Slagor: Asked -- so maybe approval of the prefabricated metal ramps but permanent wood structures that are part of the porch, if they do not fit with our Porch guidelines, bring it to the HDC.

Prebys/Rupert: Indicated agreement.

Stevenson: Sometimes they may start with a metal ramp and then realize that it will be a longstanding feature and will want to build a wooden structure. That point may be the time to bring it to the HDC.

Minor Amendments to Previously Approved Work

“Staff recommends admin approvals of minor revisions to approved work that meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. Such admin approvals may include: a change in product brand, paint color, choosing to repair rather than replace historic fabric, or minor changes to landscape features”.

Prebys: Stated that it seems like a useful thing.

[Discussion re: examples of possible types of minor amendments]

[Discussion re: administrative approvals being made only by professional staff]

Storm Windows and Doors

"Storm windows and doors are typically installed to protect the historic fenestration of the building. Staff recommends admin approval of storm units if they are an appropriate material; such as wood, aluminum, or fiberglass; and do not obscure distinctive historic features, such as the window glazing pattern".

Schmiedeke: Stated – and so the doors are not decorative in their right; as simple as possible.

Slagor: Acknowledged. Clarified that these are just storm windows and doors, not the actual original sash.

Prebys/Schmiedeke/Stevenson/Rupert: Indicated agreement.

Minor Landscape Features

"The Historical Preservation ordinance allows for the HDC to regulate landscape features; however, the Design Criteria for landscaping is vague. Additionally, the National Register and local district nominations do not specify which aspects of landscape and setting are historically significant to the district. This makes it difficult to determine when landscaping requires an application. Staff recommends administratively approving minor removable landscape features such as lampposts, flag poles, rear patios/decks, driveways, and new garden beds. Large landscape projects that accompany a site plan would be approved by the HDC".

Prebys/Schmiedeke: Indicated agreement.

Stevenson: Stated a concern about lampposts because they are sometimes part of the overall design of the lighting of the house. *[Discussion as to examples]*.

Slagor: Stated that that can be stricken. Stated that he will remove the word "lampposts".

Rupert: Indicated agreement.

In-Kind Replacements of Rear and Non-Historic Features

"Staff recommends allowing admin approval for repair and/or replacement of in-kind non-historic features, such as detached HVAC units, rear egress stairs, non-historic gutters and other in-kind items".

Slagor: Stated that he has been using his discretion with this the most – things that are not critical to the integrity of the building and are not especially visible. *[Discussion as to examples]*.

Stevenson: Asked if an application is needed for a repair that is an in-kind replacement.

Slagor: Confirmed that an application is not needed for an in-kind replacement repair. Stated that sometimes there is a full rebuild of stairs, for example.

Stevenson: Indicated agreement. Stated – like HVAC units, especially if they are in the same locations.

[Rupert initiated discussion re: a past application for stairs brought in for approval, as an example]

Rupert/Prebys/Schmiedeke: Indicated agreement.

Paint Color

"Staff recommends reconsidering the level of review given to paint color for multiple reasons:

1. The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office discourages regulating color unless there is a historically documented color palette, such as the Indian Village Historic District in Detroit. See enclosed email from Amy Arnold, Preservation Planner for the State of Michigan.

2. The City does not have well documented sources that detail the historic colors of buildings in Ypsilanti historic districts.
3. Determining historical color palettes can be difficult. There are some historical paint analysis studies and written historical descriptions of building colors. For instance, Greek Revivals were generally white or ivory with green or dark trim, Italianates favored earth tones, and Queen Anne's utilized a variety of bold colors. However, color vibrancy can fade on old buildings and the published historical color palette books are subject to discoloration as well.
4. The Ypsilanti Historic District period of significance (based on the National Register listing) is 1830-1932. With a 102-year time frame, nearly any historical color scheme is feasible, which make deciphering an appropriate palette difficult and less defensible.
5. Paint schemes change over time as exterior color is a removable feature that reflects the personal taste of the property owner.
6. Appropriate paint color can be subjective as color is experienced differently by each person.
7. Ultimately, paint is one of the ways a property owner can easily maintain their building to protect the historic siding. Some residents are intimidated by the HDC and have expressed reluctance to make changes that would require attending a meeting. Additionally, flexibility with paint schemes allows the owner discretion to "update" or personalize their buildings, and encourages regular maintenance.
8. Paint color regulation is one of the least popular aspects of any historic district. For the Historic District to continue to have popular support and eventually expand to other parts of the city, the HDC should be flexible on such aspects of buildings that are not critical to their historic integrity.
9. It is the professional opinion of staff that there is no scenario where an HDC decision on paint color would successfully stand to an appeal for the reasons stated above. The HDC should avoid making decisions that can be appealed easily, so as not to weaken the district.

The ultimate goal of a painting permit should be to ensure that the resource is being appropriately prepared, i.e. no pressure washing. Staff recommends allowing exterior painting to be approved administratively. This would streamline the process so property owners do not have to wait an extended period before beginning their projects. Staff would recommend the applicant choose colors that highlight distinctive features and to have multiple colors on a resource; i.e. a base, trim, and sash; however, it would ultimately be the decision of the applicant. Painting of previously unpainted surfaces, such as brick, stone or natural wood shingles, would be discouraged. Proposals to paint unpainted surfaces would go before the HDC as an action item. The HDC may continue to regulate color in appropriate areas, such as requiring new fenestration or trim pieces to match the existing colors of the building, thereby ensuring the changes are compatible under standards #6 and #9".

[Discussion re: staff recommendation and staff research on appropriateness of approving paint colors in historic districts]

Stevenson: Stated that the HDC is to uphold the Standards for Rehabilitation. Stated that there are a couple of Standards that can be pointed to to say that a particular feature or finish is not something that a particular building would ever have; therefore, is inappropriate for that building. Stated that there should be at least possibly a limitations/restrictions list *[Discussed examples]*. Stated that we do know that there are certain palettes that are acceptable and some that really are not, for reasons such as they may be more modern materials or paint colors that were never used historically. Stated that it is the Historic District as a resource, not just the individual resource.

[Further discussion continued reference SHPO policy, City attorney opinion, guidelines in other Michigan communities]

[Discussion re: idea of possibly a suggested paint list/appropriate paint palette for the time period and style made available for consideration]

Slagor: Stated that part of staff's recommendation is that we should still look at color so that replacements match originals and are compatible.

Schmiedeke: Indicated agreement of not prohibiting color choice. Stated that there should still be a way to deal with the occasional outrageous color choice *[Discussed examples]*.

Rupert: Stated that that is the reason he would like to review it beforehand.

[Further discussion continued]

Slagor: Stated that staff's suggestion was that for simple jobs where people are repainting already painted surfaces, that those could be administratively approved. Stated that if something is being painted that was not painted historically, like brick or stonework, that that would be discouraged but brought before the HDC. Stated that staff could also work with encouraging applicants to choose appropriate colors and having a different color for the base and the trim.

Prebys/Schmiedeke: Indicated agreement.

Rupert: Asked how that determination would be made.

Slagor: Stated that, traditionally, we have said that if you are repainting with the existing colors, then it is ordinary maintenance. Stated that what staff has been saying is that if you have a new color, then that requires a permit.

Meyers: Stated that the permits are not going to go away. Stated that when there is painting, we want to make sure it is prepped properly.

Rupert: Asked if chips would be seen first.

Slagor: Stated yes, because that is something they include in their application.

Stevenson: Indicated agreement to staff discretion for administrative approval. Stated that it would not hurt to pull together a palette of recommendations of colors that would be approvable and appropriate. Stated that it could become a fact sheet that staff could give to property owners.

Rupert: Indicated agreement with a fact sheet and color palette of recommendations.

[Discussion continued as to possible fact sheet language]

Additional Discussion

Schmiedeke: Asked if the fact sheet for porch decking requires tongue and groove.

Slagor: Confirmed.

Schmiedeke: Stated that tongue and groove should be removed because composite materials are being allowed. Also stated that the HDC requires fences to be painted or stained if they are visible from the street. Stated that there needs to be a way to deal with those who do not comply.

[Discussion re: possible ways to monitor compliance; discussion re: reviewing the fence painting requirement]

Prebys: Suggested possibly continuing the fact sheet discussion at a future meeting.
[Commission consensus]

Motion: Stevenson (second: Rupert) moved to adopt the proposed administrative approvals for staff as presented in the HDC Staff Proposal Report on August 26, 2019.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Comments- none

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS—none

ADJOURNMENT

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

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:52 p.m.

Full Minutes Prepared By: Nancy Hare-Dickerson

Scott Slagor

From: 3242nhuron@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 7:35 PM
To: Scott Slagor
Cc: Beth Bashert
Subject: HDC Special meeting

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Scott - Greetings.

I own the building know as 32 – 42 North Huron.

I am reading through the agenda of the August 26 special meeting. The proposed changes make sense but the Agenda omits what I consider a critical topic.

To accomplish the HDC goal “to stabilize and improve property values, ..., and to develop the Ypsilanti Historic District as a vital living area the existing’, the existing ordinances need to be followed by property owners.

I & my tenants are confronted daily by the adverse impact of those that flaunt the existing HDC ordinances. My property’s visual appeal and value have been adversely impacted by City’s failure to enforce existing HDC requirements.

My comment for the meeting is, I would like to see more consistent enforcement of the existing HDC requirements.

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