

MINUTES

**City of Ypsilanti
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting held in person, City Hall Council Chambers**

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023
7:00 P.M.**

ELECTION OF CHAIR

Motion: Byrge (seconded by McCready) moved to elect James Ratzlaff as chair for this meeting.

Voice Vote – Ayes: Commissioners Byrge, McCready, VanBolt, Ratzlaff.

Nays: None

Motion carried.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Ratzlaff Welcomed attendees.
Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

Commissioners Present: James Ratzlaff – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Delrhea Byrge – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Hannah McCready – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
John VanBolt – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Commissioners Absent: James Chesnut – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Alex Pettit – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Stefan Szumko – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Staff Present: Ellen Thackery, Preservation Planner

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: VanBolt moved (second: Byrge) moved to approve the agenda as proposed.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, McCready, VanBolt, Byrge

Nays: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

James Fink of 206 S Washington spoke in support of the fence at 130 N Huron. They have a low decorative fence at their house and they believe it has improved their quality of life and the appearance of their house.

PUBLIC HEARING—none

OLD BUSINESS

130 N Huron

**proposes a full-perimeter fence in black aluminum with pickets and fleur-de-lis encased in an aluminum frame so points are not exposed.*

Homeowner Douglas Winters, present. After last meeting, he made additional efforts with city planning staff to amend the application. He has submitted a rendering as requested. The property was once going to be an office so it has a parking lot. That parking lot is sometimes used by others for skateboarding without owner permission and there are other issues with the lot and people using it so homeowner wants to make it clear that it is private property. He wants it to look more residential and Holli (city planner) confirmed that the property is indeed zoned Historic Corridor, which allows for 10' rear fencing and 6' front-yard fencing, but he doesn't want that. Only seeking 4' front yard fencing and 6' rear and side yard fencing.

Staff report: Staff notes that this house is significant and contributes to both the local and National Register districts. Staff stated that this application is a re-review from a postponed application from August 22 and that at that meeting, the fence height had been a little unclear. Now proposed is a 6' fence for the sides and rear and a 4' for the front yard. Staff noted that staff misspoke last time about allowed fence heights; in most cases around the city, a 4' front yard fence is the maximum height for a residence. In this zoning area, however, a 10' rear fence and a 6' front fence would be allowed by zoning. The city planner has approved this zoning review application. In the packet, staff has also sought to answer other questions the commissioners had—there is a rendering, photos of the rear yard from the park, more details about the gates, and a mini windshield survey of front-yard fences. Staff believes that the proposed fence meets Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10 and recommends approval.

Discussion:

Commissioner stated that there are some metal fences around, similar to the proposed, and they fit a house like this one, and they remind that people live in these houses and that fact is good for the city. A commissioner clarified that the fleur-de-lis style in the packet was what the applicant proposes and that the gate height was very similar to the fence height but also added a little bit of height because of the arches on the gates. Commissioner thanks applicant and staff for the extra information provided since last meeting because it is helpful, especially the rendering. Another thanked applicant for their patience and diligence in providing additional information. Commissioner asked about how the box of mechanicals would be screened; applicant agreed he would screen, likely with landscaping. Gates will all open inward toward the house, not out toward sidewalk.

Motion: Van Bolt (second: Byrge) moved to approve application PHDC-23-0071 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 130 N Huron to include installation of black aluminum picket fencing without exposed points or spikes and two sets of matching gates in the following heights and locations (with locations as defined by the city's zoning ordinance): 4' fencing and 4' gates around the front yard, with manual, swing gates at the walk to the front door and remote-

controlled swing gates at the driveway, and with 6' matching fencing around the side and rear yards. The proposed fence and gate design, height, and materials meet the City's historic district design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10. Standard 9 states that related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property, and that new work will be differentiated and compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment. Standard 10 states that related new construction will be able to be removed in the future without negatively impacting the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, Byrge, McCreedy, VanBolt
Nays: None
Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

206 S Washington

**Remove two vinyl windows that had been installed in the house at some point and replace with two custom-built wood windows to match the historic.*

Applicant: homeowners James and Elizabeth Fink, present

Staff report: House is a key property and contributes to both the National Register and local historic districts. House is at corner of S Washington and Woodward and the application is for two vinyl windows on the Woodward side and at the rear of the house to be replaced with wood custom-built windows. Staff absolutely believes that the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and staff would have administratively approved but reviewed the list of administrative powers and did not quite feel that this application fit, so staff brought it to the commission. Staff recommends approval.

Discussion: Chair notes that this application is unique in that people usually want to remove historic windows and this application is to put wood windows in. Homeowners state that they've hated the vinyl windows since they moved in—the windows don't match others, are cheaply made, don't function, have gotten mold, they're terrible windows.

Motion: Byrge moved (second: McCreedy) to approve application PHDC-23-0075 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 206 S Washington to include the replacement of two nonhistoric vinyl windows near the house's northwest corner with two custom-built wood double-hung windows in the original two-over-four configuration. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard 6. The new windows will match the old in design, color, texture, and materials and are substantiated by pictorial evidence.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, Byrge, McCreedy, VanBolt
Nays: None
Motion carried.

627 N River

**Amending existing application from repairing and limited replacement of siding to full replacement of siding, and also adding porch designs to the approved porch slabs.*

Applicant: Doug Geidner, homeowner, present. The house's siding is more deteriorated than expected. This house suffered from neglect for a long time. The proposal is to replace wood siding on front like for like with cedar and use fiber cement siding on the sides and rear that match the historic siding's exposure; exposure doesn't match now. Current siding on sides and rear is not historic. Also included here are the porch designs. The existing roofs/shelters over the stoops are falling off; were installed likely in the 1970s or 1980s and were not installed correctly; were not tied back to the house's structure.

Staff report: Work on this house has been ongoing; the commission has approved several applications in the last year or more. Recently approved work included the administrative approval to remove the asbestos siding that had been on top of the historic siding and to repair and selectively replace what was there as needed. Now that the asbestos siding is off, it is clear that the deterioration of the historic siding is more advanced than expected. So what is before you tonight is an amendment to an earlier application. You would be approving the full replacement of the siding instead of repair and limited replacement, and the porch design is before you as well. The house has an upright gabled part and a wing, and the wing is set back from the upright gabled portion. The 1927 Sanborn shows that the historic porch was not across the entire front of the house—it was only from the projection of the house down to the south end and then it wrapped slightly around that. Regarding the porch, the Standards and Guidelines are clear: if we have documentation and know what the porch looked like, it should be recreated. If we don't know what the details looked like, and in this case, we don't—we only know the footprint—you want to create a porch that is compatible but that doesn't create a false sense of history. The house is not listed in the National Register so the record we use to guide whether a building is contributing to the districts or not is silent on this house. Staff believes that because this house has undergone roof modifications, footprint modifications, it lost its porch, and now its windows will also be replaced, this house would not be considered contributing. In this particular case, because so much of the house has been modified and it is not contributing, staff believes that allowing smooth fibercement siding on the sides and rear would be allowed by the Standards and Guidelines. The Guidelines do allow for this. The Standards and Guidelines don't prefer a substitute—they prefer wood for wood—but they allow it in some cases. Staff thinks the reveal on the front of the house's siding looks smaller than 6-8", and staff's biggest concern with the proposal is preserving the Greek Revival character-defining trim in the upright/gable portion of the house and around its side where the frieze board is, and preserving the relationship between that trim and the new siding.

Discussion:

Applicant: Confirmed he will use cedar and do the trim as it is now on the upright portion of the house. On the north side of the house immediately east of the chimney, a window up in the frieze board had been exposed once the siding came off—it had been covered. He cannot keep that window because that is a bedroom and it takes away the ability to use it as a bedroom. That's probably why they covered it up before. The other window up in the frieze board immediately west of the chimney will be preserved. He will do the trim as close to the original as possible to its current state.

Staff: The original Greek Revival house would have had both the upright portion and the wing portion; the original wing portion would not have been as high roofed as this wing portion is now, and it wouldn't have been as long to the south. Staff believes the wing portion was enlarged both

vertically and in the footprint. The original house would have ended sooner and the gable on the wing portion is likely not original and that small window there is likely not original as ventilation to the attic. It was likely added when the wing portion of the house was expanded and the gable added interest and also allowed the small window for attic ventilation.

Chair: Having a hard time visualizing what the final product will look like when complete and what the materials on the porch are. It should be clear that the porch is not original to the house. Applicant described that if when they are done rebuilding the foundation, if code will allow him not to put a guardrail on the porch, he would prefer to do that and leave it clean and open. Whether he can leave it unguarded will depend on how high the foundation ends up and how high the porch will be above grade. Commissioner agrees that she needs to understand the materials on the porch better as well. Applicant describes cement porch, beams wrapped in cedar, asphalt roof like on the main part of the house. Everything will be wood. Beams will be square and will have simple trim around the top and bottom of the posts. Applicant prefers Option B1 in the packet because the house will shed water better with that design and because if you step up onto the porch, you will not be directly in front of one of the front doors. Applicant would prefer to extend the porch and porch roofline to the south so that most of the wing portion of the house has a porch; he'll plan to do that. Commissioner asked for clarification about material on the gable on the new porch—will that be covered in cedar lap siding as well? Applicant confirmed that it would. Chair requested clarification on railing—applicant would prefer not to have a railing but will put one on if necessary. Staff mentioned that historic railings would have been lower than modern railings and that if a railing ends up needing to be required, might need to consider a booster railing over a lower-than-36" railing. If the applicant likes a railing and if the porch is lower than 30" above grade, you could build a lower railing than the usually required 36" because it would be decorative at that point and not required by code and it is in the historic district. Chair clarified that the new porch would not be tied into the house's foundation—it will be free floating and then they will pour a new cement cap. (The house had cement stoops before.) Options are A, B, B1, and C. Commissioner seeks clarification on way forward—if applicant prefers an option, it seems that the way forward is that that option is the one proposed and commission votes as to whether that option meets the Standards or Guidelines or not. General agreement that that is the procedure. For the record, the applicant's proposed porch in this application is design B from the packet, but the applicant proposed extending the porch further southward, more like the B1 design.

Motion: Byrge (second: Van Bolt) moved to approve amendments to Application PHDC-23-0029 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 627 N River to include: removing siding, installing a vapor barrier, installing cedar lap siding on the front (east) in exposure closest to the historic wood siding on the front, and installing smooth fibercement lap siding in the same historic exposure on the sides and rear (north, south, and west), with the conditions that the fiber cement siding has a smooth finish, and that all historic trim will be preserved or replicated as necessary, and that the historic trim and the new siding will fit together and appear as it did historically. Also approved is proposed porch option B with the conditions that the porch will extend past all of the windows in the front and that all of the components of the porch will be painted wood. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 6 and 9.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, Byrge, McCreedy, VanBolt
Nays: None

109 Maple

**Build a new front porch.*

Applicant: Matthew Peters, present

Staff report: 109 Maple is listed as a contributing house in the National Register nomination so it is considered contributing to the district. The house has come to the commission before for work recently. The house has lost its porch along the way and the applicant seeks to build a new porch. The Standards in such a case call for the work to be differentiated but compatible. The applicant brought the proposed porch to the commission as a study item at the August 22 meeting. The application before the commission tonight is mostly as that study item was. Staff stated that not all dimensions are here as they will be for the building permits, but recapped the components of the porch and the materials to be used—any visible parts of the porch will be wrapped in wood that could take stain or paint, the heavy structural elements of the porch like the header and the four vertical posts would be painted white, and the railing as proposed would be natural with a clear protective coat but staff notes that the local historic district fact sheets require wood above ground to be painted or stained opaquely. Applicant clarified that the porch ceiling boards would be natural in color and two inches thick, six inches wide and in varying lengths. Porch floor is as the guidelines lay out, with the 1x4" fir tongue-and-groove decking, and the proposed lattice skirting meets the local design guidelines (fact sheets) as well. There will be at least one handrail, but there might not be two. We have found no historic photos of the porch. Staff believes that the proposed concept meets the Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation. The porch is not introducing conjectural features or giving a false sense of history. Staff's only concerns were the porch dimensions and proportionality, and that our design guidelines require that anything above ground is painted or stained with an opaque stain. Staff sought clarification on the height of the porch from grade, the height of the porch guardrail and its relationship with the window behind it, and staff reiterated that the porch guidelines also state that for guardrails, balusters are to be enclosed within top and bottom rails and not attached to the exterior of the rails. Staff drafted two potential motions for your consideration.

Discussion:

Applicant: Applicant confirmed that the porch measures 26.7" above grade, so technically he wouldn't need a porch railing but he is leaning toward having one anyway. He had been planning on a 36-inch guardrail, but in light of staff's concerns about the proportion of the rail to the front window, he is now looking at a 30-inch guardrail. (A 36-inch guardrail would be 9" about the front window's sill.) Staff explained that our guidelines do allow for a booster rail, so if code will require a 36-inch guardrail, a booster might be considered. It should be that since a porch guardrail would not be **required** at this height, a 30-inch guardrail would be allowable. That allowance will be up to the building official. Staff noticed that the proposed center post would be obstructing the front window a little. Some discussion of whether the design could be adapted to allow for that middle post to be shifted slightly so the window would not be blocked. Ultimately, that design element—the center post-- is the homeowner's. Clarified that the homeowner would like to have some elements of the porch be unstained and unpainted and instead have a clear coat on them. Staff stated that she thought this guideline exists because historically porches were painted to protect them and that it's a more modern treatment to leave them clearcoated for outside use.

[Discussion about when urethanes became widely available, porch ceilings could be clearcoated perhaps, guidelines, and when composites might be acceptable, Standards allow some more flexibility on the rear, like a rear porch.]

Motion: McCready (second: Byrge) moved to approve Application PHDC-23-0084 and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed porch work at 109 Maple to include: building a hipped-roof structure that spans the full width of the front of the house whose main horizontal support beam will be painted to match house trim; wood tongue-and-groove ceiling boards; 4 6"x6" posts painted to match house trim; all-wood porch guardrails with flat balusters and simplified Craftsman-style caps on the posts with balusters encased in the top and bottom rails; graspable handrail(s) to match the guardrails; 1"x4" tongue-and-groove fir porch decking; and lattice porch skirting. All parts of the porch that are above ground shall be painted or stained an opaque stain. Proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard 9.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, Byrge, McCready, VanBolt
Nays: None
Motion carried.

STUDY ITEMS

306 N River

Propertyowner Eric Mullins, present. Thinking about a pergola. Would be freestanding, not attached to the building or foundation. Would need to be painted or stained opaque—owner said he'd have it painted or stained the green that is already on the building. He might also look into solar panels on top as well, but that would be later. Joists of the pergola would span from the door to the east, and from gravel to the utility meters. When this project gets submitted, it would be helpful to show a sketch or rendering showing where the pergola will be on the site. If there will be lighting on the pergola, please include those details on the proposal as well when submitted. Eric asked about the alleyway/drive behind Hyperion and Co-op—if dumpster needs to be moved and shared and go back there, how could he figure out whether that alley is public and also how could he control traffic flow better back there as needed with the dumpster? Staff will follow up with him after talking with city planner.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS—none

OTHER BUSINESS—none

Property Monitoring
Updates from Staff
Commissioner Comments

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS—none

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

1. Approval of the minutes for August 22, 2023

Discussion: Commissioner Ratzlaff noted that he was absent but his name is listed as voting to approve the agenda early in the meeting. Staff will correct.

Motion: Byrge (second: VanBolt) moved to approve the minutes of August 22, 2023 as amended.

Voice Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Ratzlaff, Byrge, McCready, VanBolt

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

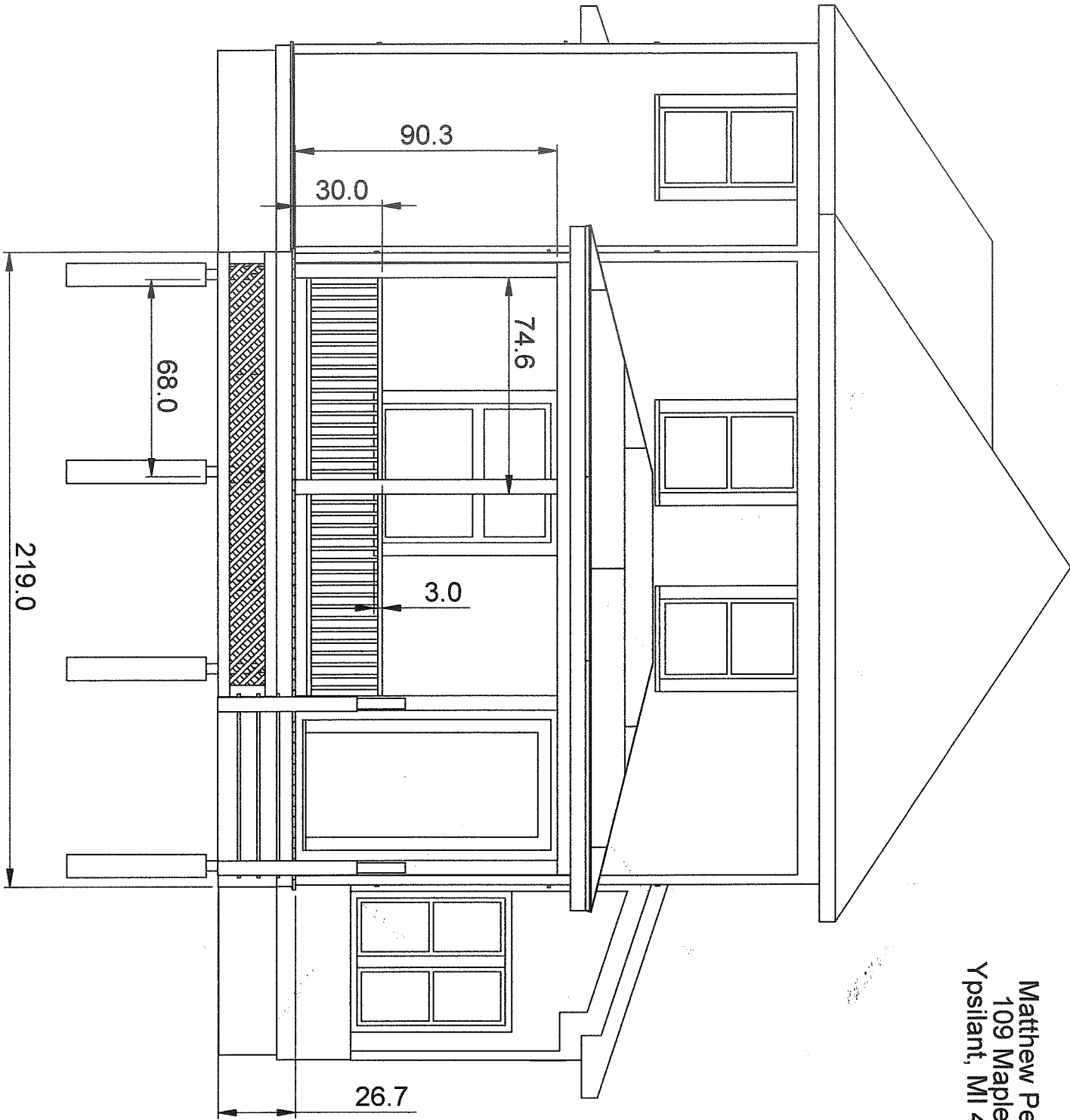
ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Ratzlaff requested a motion to adjourn the meeting, citing the end of the agenda with no further items to discuss. Van Bolt moved to adjourn, Byrge seconded, motion carried unanimously at 9:15 pm

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:15 p.m.

Full Minutes Prepared By: Ellen Thackery

DRAFT



HDC Front Porch Proposal

Matthew Peters
109 Maple St
Ypsilant, MI 48198

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