



City of Ann Arbor

100 N. Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Meeting Minutes Historic District Commission

Thursday, February 10, 2011

7:00 PM

CTN , 2805 S. Industrial HWY, Suite 200, Ann Arbor

PLEASE NOTE NEW TEMPORARY LOCATION

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Ramsburgh.

ROLL CALL

Jill Thacher took the roll call.

Present: 7 - Kristina A. Glusac, Robert White, Ellen Ramsburgh, Patrick McCauley, Lesa Rozmarek, Thomas Stulberg, and Benjamin L. Bushkuhl

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was unanimously approved.

HEARINGS

11-0196

HDC10-007 - 721 West Washington Street - Install Metal Chimney - OWSHD

Jill Thacher gave the staff report.

BACKGROUND:

This one and a half story gable-fronter with a full width front porch first appears in Polk City Directories in 1921 as the home of James Poulos, a cook at Ann Arbor Restaurant (located at 215 S Main Street), and his wife Mary. Four other Pouloses are listed as boarders that year, and all have a connection to Ann Arbor Restaurant. The two story addition on the west side was constructed after 1931.

A staff approval was issued in June of 2007 to strip and reroof the house.

LOCATION:

The house is at the southeast corner of West Washington and Mulholland.

APPLICATION:

The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a stainless steel chimney for a woodstove on the roof, five feet in front of the existing brick chimney. The proposed chimney would be 8" in diameter and 4' in height.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:

From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

(2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

(9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings:

New Additions

Recommended: Constructing a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Locating the attached exterior addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building; and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Designing new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.

Placing new additions such as balconies and greenhouses on non-character-defining elevations and limiting and size and scale in relationship to the historic building.

Not Recommended: Attaching a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic building are obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Designing a new addition so that its size and scale in relation to the historic building are out of proportion, thus diminishing the historic character.

Duplicating the exact form, material, style, and detailing of the historic building in the new addition so that the new work appears to be part of the historic building.

Designing and constructing new additions that result in the diminution or loss of the historic character of the resource, including its design, materials, workmanship, location, or setting.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. *The house is simple, with clean lines and little applied ornamentation. The two story addition on the west side was added after 1931, and the two dormers were most likely later additions, though all could have been added during the period of significance for the district (which ends in 1941). There is a brick chimney near the intersection of the original house and addition.*

2. *The homeowner purchased a woodstove and hired the applicant to install it. The proposed chimney location is the most efficient, per the applicant, because it allows the most direct run from the woodstove through the attic and out of the house. Staff discussed several different ideas with the applicant, including using the existing chimney for the woodstove (which staff was told is not large enough to accommodate the stove plus the furnace and other vents already utilizing it); or locating the chimney*

elsewhere on the roof, which could cause building code issues and/or decrease the efficiency of the woodstove while increasing the cost of installation due to longer runs and bends in the venting pipe. Staff considered recommending that the new chimney be located close to the existing chimney in order to minimize its appearance, but feels that would detract from the existing brick chimney, which could be considered a character-defining feature of the house.

3. Staff recommends that the chimney be painted to match the color of the roof or a dark color in order to attract less attention than the stainless steel finish. Regarding height, the chimney should not be taller than the minimum height required by building code.

4. Staff feels that because of the simple design of the house and lack of character-defining features in the vicinity of the installation (with the exception of the brick chimney), the proposed chimney does not obscure, damage, or destroy historic features. The proposed location is not inconspicuous, but requiring the chimney to be finished in a dark color and limiting its height would help minimize its appearance.

REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT:

Commissioners Stulberg and Rozmarek visited the site as part of their review.

Rozmarek said she agreed with Thacher's report and noted that there are several similar rooftop stacks in the neighborhood so she didn't feel that it would be an anomaly.

Stulberg stated that he also agreed with the staff report and comments made regarding the proposed chimney. He expressed that it helps that the dormers break up the roofline making addition protrusions from the roof not as noticeable. He also noted that such a chimney was reversible which was an added benefit on historic structures.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Greg Ohl was present to answer the Commission's questions. He added that he had enquired about possible muted colors and his contractor had informed him that they could order it in darker colors painted with heat-resistant paint.

Glusac asked about the proposed location of the chimney stack on the outside and how that affected the interior routing.

Ohl said he wanted to put the stove in a central location in the house where he could get the most use of the heat produced. He mentioned that he had been informed that it wasn't advisable to have too many angles of the pipe because that would cause creosote build-up.

Motion made by Commissioner Rozmarek, seconded by Commission White that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 721 West Washington Street, a contributing property in the Old West Side Historic District, to install an 8" diameter capped stainless steel chimney on the condition that the chimney be no higher than the minimum required by the building code and that it be painted or pre-finished to match the roof or a similar dark color. As conditioned, the proposed work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding resources and meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, in particular standards 2 and 9, and the Guidelines for New Additions. On a roll call vote,

the Chair declared the Motion carried.

Yeas: 7 - Glusac, White, Chair Ramsburgh, Vice Chair McCauley, Rozmarek, Stulberg, and Bushkuhl

Nays: 0

11-0197

Old West Side Re-Survey

There being no one present for comment, the Chair declared the hearing closed.

Jill Thacher gave the staff report.

MEMO PRESENTED TO THE COMMISSION BY JILL THACHER:

A public hearing for the Old West Side Historic District Reconnaissance-Level Survey is scheduled for the February 10, 2011 HDC meeting. Included in your packet is a copy of the survey report, and the survey cards for the 958 properties within the district are available online at www.a2gov.org/hdc (see the left sidebar for a link to OWS Survey). The executive summary of the report is below. See the report for more information on the survey methodology, history of the district, and a list of non-contributing properties.

Executive Summary

When the City of Ann Arbor designated the Old West Side Historic District in 1978, survey and designation techniques were not as developed as they are today. Therefore, a list of contributing and non-contributing properties in the district was never developed. The purpose of this reconnaissance-level survey is solely to determine which resources contribute to the character of the historic district.

The entire survey area is within a larger district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Old West Side Historic District. The nomination was completed and the district listed in 1972, with a revision prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office in 1991. The period of significance in the revised nomination is 1840-1941. Contributing and non-contributing properties were not identified by address in the revised nomination. Because the history of the district is well documented both in the national register nomination and in the original study committee report, no further historic research was conducted for this survey. Each property was photographed, and a list of potentially non-contributing properties was developed from the field work. These properties were researched to verify the date of construction and the history where necessary. Properties constructed after 1941 or that have lost their architectural integrity have been determined as non-contributing.

Unanimously Postponed for future action from the Historic District Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

11-0002

HDC10-164 - 215 North Fifth Ave - Demo Non-contributing Structure; Construct New House - OFWHD

Jill Thacher gave the staff report.

This application was postponed at the January 13 HDC Meeting to allow the applicant to consider concerns expressed by the Commission. Those concerns included (but are not limited to):

1. *The appropriateness of the proposed casement windows. The verticality of the windows was described as visually jarring.*
2. *The height and materials of the fence, especially the solid wall portion in close proximity to the street and sidewalk and its effect on the pedestrian experience. A lower fence was suggested, as was the use of brick or concrete in piers between metal fence sections instead of on the fence itself.*
3. *The lack of a street-facing front door, which is prevalent in the neighborhood.*
4. *Related to #3, the blankness of the street-facing elevation. Articulating (popping out) the chimney was suggested to give the eye something to look at.*

Revised drawings have been submitted by the architect and are attached along with last month's staff report. Changes include the following:

A1.0 Revised site plan showing fence and walkway material revisions.

A1.1 A floorplan for the ground floor has been provided.

A 2.0-5.0 Horizontal muntins have been added to the steel casement windows. The muntins are noted on the plan as optional: if the Commission is in favor of the muntins, staff suggests including them in a motion as a condition of approval.

A2.0-5.0 The fence design has been changed. Along Fifth Avenue, the fence has been lowered to 36" in height on the southeast corner. As the fence runs north, architectural concrete is used to build up the base to keep the fence level. At the northeast corner, the 36" metal fence sits on approximately 5" to 7" of concrete. Along the north property line, the fence is predominantly 36" metal on architectural concrete, with two 16' sections of 5' high concrete fence opposite the two doors. On the south side, from the street wall of the house back to the rear module of the house, the fence is 5' concrete on a zero to 3' concrete base. Along the rear module, the fence reverts to 36" metal on 3' to 4' concrete base. Facing the alley, two metal gates would be installed on either side of the garage, and the architectural concrete from the fence base would carry over onto the foundation of the west elevation. Staff will show comparison drawings (original and revised) at the meeting.

A2.0-4.0 Twin chimney pots have been added on top of the chimney.

A1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 5.0 The steel canopy structure over each of the two doors has been replaced by a steel trellis.

A7.0 A new context drawing showing elevations of buildings on the entire block has been provided.

Staff's opinion is that the window muntins modestly improve the overall design by softening some of the verticality of the casement windows. The fence height and materials along Fifth Avenue is now consistent with the fence next door at the Armory. Commissioner concerns about the blankness of the street-facing elevation (with the exception of the window muntins) and side entrance have not been addressed by these revisions.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Dick Mitchell, from Mitchell and Mouat Architects was present and spoke on behalf of the applicant. He expressed that they had taken stock in the neighborhood details and reviewed the proposed project.

Glusac asked the Applicant if the property is currently going through rezoning.

Mitchell responded, No.

Rozmarek enquired if Mitchell had brought the brick sample with him and if the proposed color was cream.

Mitchell said that he hadn't brought the brick sample and that they were now looking for a darker toned brick, which would be warmer in color, closer to that of the Armory.

Glusac asked what the thought process was behind the proposed roofing material.

Mitchell said it was the financial aspect.

Chris Crockett, 506 E Kingsley, spoke as the representative of the Old Fourth Ward District and said she was in favor of having a single family home at the proposed location.

Ray Detter, representing the Downtown Citizens Advisory Council spoke in support of the proposed project. He said their Council had met and discussed the proposed project and said they were thrilled to see this unique and diverse project come about.

DISCUSSION BY COMMISSION:

Commissioner Rozmarek stated that the single-family does not meet the D 2 density and therefore the issue becomes moot. She expressed that the scale, per diagram A1.0. is oversized and of the massing of a commercial building, which is too large for the neighborhood. She also pointed out that there are no fences on a single family house in this area. She said that the existing houses are forward facing with front doors. She felt that it wouldn't be a good neighbor to have a side entry.

Rozmarek said that the brick that was presented at last month's meeting was not appropriate in color or style since it was too simple and not compatible for a single family house.

Commissioner McCauley disagreed with Rozmarek, and stated that he feels the context elevation helps and that the proposed building works well with the overall massing and is not overly large compared to the house next door. He said that the proposed fence looks like a residential fence, and felt that there was no reason not to have a fence on this or other houses.

McCauley expressed concern with the cream colored brick and felt that a darker brick would be better. He said it was difficult to draw the line between too old and too modern looking. He said he feels the proposed project splits the difference, noting that it mimics the newer commercial building with gable end chimneys at Fourth and Catherine and he was in favor of the project.

Commissioner Glusac stated that she still had concerns regarding the pedestrian experience on Fifth Ave, noting that the 'transition zone' from the street to the door is interesting, but she felt no one is going to experience it except the residents. She also felt that the blank facade is still problematic and that the muntins and fence didn't help her see the house in a different light. She said while she supports residential in this location she doesn't feel that the proposed design is right for this location. She also commented that her understanding was that the brick color wasn't under the HDC's pervue and therefore they shouldn't base their final decision on any proposed brick color.

Glusac said in looking at the design she didn't see a single family residence, rather a two family residence with two courtyards and reiterated that she didn't feel the design was appropriate.

Thacher commented that exterior masonry would be under the HDC's purview and they should include that in their over-all review.

Commissioner Bushkuhl stated that he felt the revisions to the project since their last meeting, were responsive and addressed the Commission's concerns. He felt that the Standards and Guidelines were being met and the applicant wasn't attempting to mimic historic standards, and also not attempting to draw attention away from historic standards. Bushkuhl expressed that he felt the proposed project was appropriate.

Commissioner Stulberg thanked Architect Mitchell for the revisions made to the proposed plan. He also thanked the public for their participation and feedback on the project. He stated that he is happy that the proposed project is residential but felt that there needed to be discussion on how the project fits into the character of the block and district. He felt that the front facade stands out strikingly, but with the Armory roof sloping away, he felt that the house is all up front. Stulberg stated that the front of the building doesn't look like a house or a commercial building. He felt that the proposed building detracts from the character of the rest of the block. He expressed that the fence was significantly improved on and was appropriate.

Commissioner White stated that he was in support of the project. He thanked the public for their input. He expressed that if the brick color would be closer to what was on the Armory it would be more compatible. He said that he likes the design and how it fits into the neighborhood.

Commissioner Ramsburgh stated that she felt that most of the Commission's initial concerns have been addressed, noting that the fence is improved and she felt that the scale is a step-down to smaller residential building to the north. Ramsburgh said that being on Fifth Avenue, which is a very car oriented block, she felt that a side entrance on this particular block was okay. She felt that there had been compromises made, like a bridge between contemporary and traditional with the muntins and that was a helpful bridge. She said that new projects should take cues from existing ones and would like to see a warmer brick color for the building. She noted that if the brick color is compatible with the Armory or neighboring houses or something in between, it wouldn't stand [jump] out, which is what she believed the applicant didn't want to happen. She stated that she was in support of the project this time, since the revisions have been made.

Commissioner Rozmarek stated that she felt the building will destroy the proportion of the neighborhood. She said that it steps up at the street, not down. She felt it was an optical illusion that had been created which will create an awkward distraction on the streetscape.

Commissioner McCauley stated that the Armory is almost 3 stories on the south end and the houses across the street are larger than the residential ones next door.

Rozmarek said that it feels like there is a giant wall sitting at the sidewalk and that the Commission needs to think about this visual effect.

Glusac pointed out the 'blank' wall of the proposed new building facing Fifth Avenue, noting that the Armory has horizontal banding which helps lower the building, while the proposed building has nothing to break up the front facade. She stated that they

shouldn't be designing the building for the car that speeds down Fifth Avenue, but rather as a residential home.

White commented that the proposed building is downtown, and not in a subdivision, and there is a different approach to the life downtown. He noted that there are trucks in the alley behind this proposed house, [which doesn't happen in his neighborhood,] because this downtown situation is different.

White said the public likes what has been presented and since they have spoken, he too agrees. He reiterated that he feels the proposed project meets the standards.

Bushkuhl stated that he visited the site yesterday. He said that the front fascade wall will be influenced by the existing street trees and will help the new building blend into the neighborhood.

Stulberg stated that he wasn't necessarily opposed to the proposed height of the building and that a side entry is appropriate in a downtown setting on a narrow lot. He said that a front porch helps buildings step up from the street and reduce massing. He noted that a Detroit Street application design that had come before the Commission a few months ago took the design of the neighboring houses into account, which he felt was not addressed in this case.

Ramsburgh asked about the square footage of the proposed project.

Thacher responded that it is 4,400 sq ft included the 600 sq ft garage.

Ramsburgh said the lot is very difficult and narrow, and in looking at the neighboring houses they seem a lot smaller than the average houses in the Old Fourth Ward.

Motion made by Rozmarek, Seconded by Glusac to deny the application request of HDC10-164; Demo Non-contributing Structure and construct New House in the OWSHD at 215 N. Fifth Avenue, because it is not compatible with size, scale, massing, materials of the neighborhood and district and does not meet the Secretary of the Interiors Standards # 1, # 9, and # 10.

On a voice vote the motion failed.

Yeas: 3 - Glusac, Rozmarek, and Stulberg

Nays: 4 - White, Chair Ramsburgh, Vice Chair McCauley, and Bushkuhl

A motion was made by Ramsburgh, seconded by White, that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application at 215 North Fifth Avenue, a contributing property in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District, to allow the demolition of the existing office/industrial building and the construction of a 2-1/2 story residence as detailed on the submitted drawings. The proposed work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding resources and meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, in particular standard 1, 9, and 10, and the Guidelines for Setting and District/Neighborhood. On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried.

Yeas: 4 - White, Chair Ramsburgh, Vice Chair McCauley, and Bushkuhl

Nays: 3 - Glusac, Rozmarek, and Stulberg

NEW BUSINESS

Historic Preservation Awards Committee Appointments

Motion made by White, Seconded by Stulberg, to appoint the new member to the Historic Preservation Awards Committee as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY - (3 Minutes per Speaker)

None

A APPROVAL OF MINUTES

11-0199 Historic District Commission Minutes of the December 9, 2010 Meeting

Approved by the Commission and forwarded to the City Council due back on 3/21/2011

D REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

February 11 Retreat Information

Chair Ramsburgh said the HDC Retreat would be held at the Hobbs and Black offices beginning at 9 AM.

E ASSIGNMENTS

Review Committee; Monday, March 7 at noon for the March 10, 2011 Regular Session

Commissioners Rozmarek and Stulberg volunteered for the March Review Committee.

F REPORTS FROM STAFF

11-0198 January 2011 Staff Activity Report

Received and Filed

CONCERNS OF COMMISSIONERS

G COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:54 PM.

