

## MEMORANDUM

To: Historic District Commissioners

From: Jill Thacher, City Planner/Historic Preservation Coordinator

Date: June 7, 2011

Re: June 9 HDC agenda item D-5 537 Detroit Street HDC11-075

On November 20, 2008, and June 11, 2009 the replacement of several non-original or deteriorated windows on this house was approved by the Historic District Commission (HDC), but two windows in good condition were denied a certificate of appropriateness for sash replacement. The two windows are on the upper floor of the east (front) elevation of this house. The owner appealed the decision to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Review Board. The Review Board upheld the Commission's determination as to the non-deteriorated condition of the windows, however the Review Board found evidence lacking as to the age and historic significance of the two windows in question. The Review Board ordered the Commission to determine whether the windows are original to the house or alternatively are historic-era or non-historic era replacements.

The Study Committee Report for the Old Fourth Ward Historic District identifies the period of historic significance for construction of structures as 1931 or before. Per the Report, no new buildings were built in this neighborhood between 1931 and 1940. The Study Committee Report notes that construction styles changed to more modern techniques after the war, therefore to be considered historically significant the windows must have been constructed prior to the end of World War II. As noted in the attached 2009 staff report, 537 Detroit St. was constructed between 1897 and 1899. Therefore, to be considered original to the house, the windows must have been constructed in 1899 or prior.

The Review Board has ordered the Commission to make only a determination of the age and significance of the windows. The order instructs the Commission to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for repair if the windows are found to be original or historically significant or, in the alternative, to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement if they are determined to be non-original and non-historically significant.

On April 22, Stephen Stier, a preservation consultant from East Lansing, Michigan visited the site with me, Commissioners Tom Stulberg and Lesa Rozmarek (acting as the Review Committee for this matter), and Assistant City Attorney Chris Frost. Mr. Stier, the Commissioners, and I inspected the windows, and Mr. Stier later provided a

report of his findings and several photographs that he took on the site visit. Mr. Stier concluded that the window sash were produced and placed in use in this house between 1900 and 1930.

Commissioner Lesa Rozmarek (no longer on the Commission) provided the following observations from the site visit:

I observed that the sashes exhibited pegs - a construction technique that is indicative of very old sash construction. The sashes are in very good condition, with the exception of the top sash slipping down, which can be resolved through restoration and rehabilitation of the window.

Based on my observations of the sash, I concur with Mr. Stier's report that the windows are pre-War construction. Because the windows were constructed before the end of World War 2 (and likely prior to 1930), they are within the period of historic significance of the district.

### **Possible Motion**

Based on Mr. Stier's report, and staff observations at the site, staff suggests the following motion for the Commission's consideration. Please note that this supports staff findings and is only a suggestion.

I move that, based on Mr. Stier's report and the observations of Commissioners and staff, the Commission determine that all the window sash installed in the two second story east (front) elevation windows on the house at 537 Detroit Street were produced and placed in use on the house between 1900 and 1930 and are therefore historically significant to the Old Fourth Ward; and that, in accordance with the order of the Review Board, the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for repair of these sash.