



City of Ann Arbor

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

Thursday, January 13, 2011

7:00 PM CTN Studios, 2805 S. Industrial HWY, Suite 200, Ann Arbor

PLEASE NOTE NEW TEMPORARY LOCATION

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM at the CTN Studios, 2805 S. Industrial Hwy, Ste 200, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

ROLL CALL

On a roll call, the record reflected the following members present.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Item B; HDC09-062 - 537 Detroit Street was removed from the agenda.

On a voice vote the Agenda was Approved as amended.

HEARINGS

11-0002

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

BACKGROUND:

A two-story Greek revival house built on this site c.1835 was the home of Edward Mundy, an Ann Arbor merchant who became Michigan's Lt. Governor under Stevens T. Mason in 1835 and was later a state Supreme Court Justice. The house was condemned and razed in 1975. (See attached survey sheet.) A commercial auto repair shop that had been constructed behind the house in the 1950s remained, and in 1980 a single-story office addition was attached to the front of the garage. The building most recently housed the Bessenberg Bindery.

LOCATION:

The site is located on the west side of North Fifth Avenue, north of East Ann and south of Catherine Street.

APPLICATION:

The applicant seeks HDC approval to demolish the existing structure and construct a new 2 ½ story single-family residence in its place.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

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

(1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

(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.

(10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):

District/Neighborhood

Not Recommended: Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.

Setting

Recommended: Retaining the historic relationship between buildings and landscape features of the setting. For example, preserving the relationship between a town common and its adjacent historic houses, municipal buildings, historic roads, and landscape features.

STAFF FINDINGS

1. The 1982 Old Fourth Ward survey designated the building as "contemporary", which would today be called a non-contributing structure. Since the structure does not contribute to the Historic District, its removal may be appropriate
2. The existing building covers around 70% of the lot, and the former garage portion is the full width of the lot. The proposed single-family residence is approximately the same length as the existing building, but covers about 55% of the lot, and the massing is broken up into three distinct sections separated by courtyards. The street-facing section presents a two-story gable front that is proportioned to fall between the buildings on either side (the east wall of the larger Armory condominiums on the south, and a smaller 2 ½ story gable-front house to the north). The center section features a cross-gable, and the rear section has a gable facing the alley and a two-car garage at grade. The front setback aligns with that of the armory to the south, and the middle of the front porch to the north.
3. The building is compatible in scale and massing to the adjacent properties. Though the proposed building is taller than the existing, it is appropriate for the district and not dissimilar from the two-story house that originally stood on the site. The modern materials proposed (brick veneer, a steel or asphalt roof, and metal and concrete fencing) are complementary to the historic materials used on the adjacent armory and other neighborhood buildings.
4. It is staff's opinion that the removal of the existing building and proposed house are generally compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and meet The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, particularly numbers 1, 9 and 10.

REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT:

McCauley had concerns about the heavy looking bunker-like fence. Ramsburgh agreed with McCauley's remarks and expressed her concerns about the casement windows.

DISCUSSION BY THE COMMISSION:

Applicant Dick Mitchell from Mitchell and Mouat Architects was present to respond to the Commissioners' questions about the proposed project. He explained that the context is unique in that the Old Fourth Ward Historic District is residential with commercial businesses mixed in so he had tried to pick up on both the residential as well as the commercial design, including the window design. He explained the proposed windows are steel windows and not clad and they propose using black or dark bronze and the fence would match the windows.

He explained that the site drops from front to rear and the fence hits midpoint of the windows throughout.

Commissioner Glusac asked how the proposed concrete material in the front of the property came about.

Mitchell responded that in their research they hadn't found other properties in the OFW with similar concrete base fences.

Glusac asked what the spacing was on the proposed fence.

Mitchell described the fence noting that the spacing would be 4".

Commissioner Stulberg asked about the chimney placement.

Mitchell responded that the livingroom was the best location and gave a nice focal point from the front of the building.

Commissioner Bushkuhl asked if the proposed construction would interfere with the existing tree on N. Fifth Ave.

Mitchell answered no.

Glusac inquired about the proposed setback and lot size as well as the possibility of the house being used as a 2-family residential house.

Mitchell responded that the floor layout wasn't intended for 2-family and he explained the floorplan to the Commission.

Public Hearing Closed at 7:30 PM.

Moved by Commissioner Ramsburgh, Seconded by Commissioner 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 standards 1, 9 and 10, and the Guidelines for Setting and District/Neighborhood.

DISCUSSION BY THE COMMISSION:

McCauley had concerns about the height and materials of the fence, especially the solid wall parts, noting that he thought it would make it stand out too much in the neighborhood. He stated that he didn't have issues with the building design itself.

Stulberg agreed with McCauley expressing that the wall was too heavy and large for a residential property and felt it wasn't in keeping with the character of other structures in residential neighborhoods. He said he would be in favor of a lighter fence.

Glusac had concerns about the pedestrian experience with a concrete wall and felt that the overall massing of the house was too much. She had concerns with the design. She stated that the design elements didn't address the project being in a historic district.

Commissioner Rozmarek agreed with several of the same concerns that other Commissioners had expressed. She stated that she felt the front door to the house should face the street. She stated that she felt the neighborhood was a front porch neighborhood and the front porch was missing on this proposal. She said she did appreciate modern design but this design wasn't appropriate for this neighborhood. She expressed that the facade faces the residential street and needs to play into neighborhood.

McCauley said he would be in favor of the project if it wasn't for the proposed concrete wall, since the height and massing is too much for the neighborhood.

Bushkuhl appreciated that the property will be reverted to residential use and he didn't think that the massing is a problem given the armory right next door. He mentioned that there are several types of fences in the area even if they weren't as massive as this proposed one.

Ramsburgh said she agreed with the other Commissioners' comments about the wall fence. She said that the applicant might feel a larger fence will give them more privacy on a busy street like North Fifth Ave, but she didn't feel that it was in keeping with the residential look and openness.

She stated that she found the vertical windows jarring and thinks if there were a front entrance it would help incorporate this building into the neighborhood. She expressed that she didn't have an issue with the massing and height of the proposed building given the Armory next door. She said she was glad to see the parcel revert to residential use again, and noted that the Historic District carries a great deal of weight in the D2 zoning district.

Commissioner White stated that given the location being close to City Hall, the Fire Dept, the museum and a parking lot across the street, a fence will give protection to the property and for children playing, but maybe the fence didn't have to be as tall as proposed.

Public Hearing opened again.

Dick Mitchell was asked to return to respond to comments of the Commission.

He stated that the wall came about since the barrier free ramp which is an entrance/exit to the armory actually touches the existing bindery building. He showed a picture of the ramp noting that its height goes up to approximately 7 feet with the handrailing 32 inches above that level with air conditioner condensing units under it. He expressed that the south side of the property is very difficult to work with given the

location and height of the existing ramp, and asked if changes were to be made that consideration would be given to the height of the ramp on the neighboring property.

He reviewed the picture of the north side pointing out that the neighbor on the north currently parks 8 cars in that parking lot area and thus the proposed screening had come about. He said they were very willing to work with the neighbors on the proposed wall/fence.

McCauley said that he would be satisfied with lowering the height of the fence in the front of the building and maybe changing the material to brick instead of concrete.

Commissioners suggested softening the fence/wall if they would propose an open fence the same height but with more wrought iron and less solid material using a column/pier structure instead of a wall structure.

Rosmarek asked if there was any possibility of articulating the chimney and making it stand out towards the street more.

Glusac stated that she wasn't in favor of the project as she didn't feel that the front of the building had the necessary character.

Stulberg said he agreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners and felt that the project needed to work with the neighborhood.

Public Hearing closed.

A motion was made by Chair Ramsburgh to withdraw her motion, seconded by White.

A motion was made by Chair Ramsburgh, seconded by White, that the Resolution/Public Hearing be Postponed to the Historic District Commission meeting on 2/10/2011. On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried.

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

Nays: 0

B OLD BUSINESS

10-1279 HDC09-062 - 537 Detroit Street - Window Assessment - OFWHD

Item was removed from agenda.

C NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC COMMENTARY - (3 Minutes per Speaker)

None

A APPROVAL OF MINUTES

11-0020 Historic District Commission Minutes of August 12, 2010

A motion was made by Chair Ramsburgh, seconded by White, that the Minutes be Approved by the Commission with changes and forwarded to the City Council and should be returned by 2/7/2011. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.

11-0021 Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2010

A motion was made by Chair Ramsburgh, seconded by White, that the Minutes be Approved by the Commission and forwarded to the City Council and should be returned by 2/7/2011. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.

11-0003 Historic District Commission (HDC) Special Meeting Minutes of November 30, 2010

A motion was made by Chair Ramsburgh, seconded by White, that the Minutes be Approved by the Commission and forwarded to the City Council and should be returned by 2/7/2011. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.

D REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS / COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS

Commissioner Rozmarek reported on an interview she gave with the Detroit Hour Magazine on the use of solar panels in Historic Districts. She thanked solar applicants for their work on educating the Commission on solar panels and sustainability.

Rozmarek also reported on attending a consumer electronics show in Las Vegas where she learned about the advantages of electronic controls of thermostats and other devices in the home that will help maximize energy uses.

The Commission discussed if solar panels qualify for Historic Preservation Credits.

Jill Thacher said there is much discussion on the topic and we are still waiting on a final decision on the matter.

Retreat Planning

The Commission set February 12, 2011 as a tentative date for the HDC Retreat. The Commission asked for suggestions of possible speakers and topics of interest.

E ASSIGNMENTS

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

Commissioners Rozmarek and Stulberg volunteered for the February 2011 Review Committee.

F REPORTS FROM STAFF

11-0001 December 2010 HDC Staff Activity Report

Received and Filed

Old West Side Survey Follow-up

G COMMUNICATIONS

Glusac said she had a concern regarding the length of the CVS project and noted that State Street had been closed causing much disruption to the neighboring businesses and traffic. She said she asks herself if the Commissions' decision to save the facade was worth the timing on the project. She felt that mobiliation would've been easier without the facade.

The Commission briefly discussed the topic and Chair Ramsburgh asked if the Commission would be interested in making the topic an issue at their retreat; looking at how the Commissions' decisions affect timing on projects like the CVS, Zingermans, 711 Catherine. She said it would be helpful to look back and assess how the Commissions' decisions played a part in the project timing

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:36 PM.