

**BIRMINGHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF APRIL 4, 2018**

Municipal Building Commission Room  
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan

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Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission (“HDC”) held Wednesday, January 17, 2018. Chairman John Henke called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Present:** Chairman John Henke; Board Members Doug Burley (left at 7:55 p.m.), Vice-Chairman Keith Deyer, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Member Kevin Filthaut

**Absent:** Board Members Adam Charles, Natalia Dukas, Thomas Trapnell; Alternate Board Member Dulce Fuller

**Administration:** Matthew Baka, Sr. Planner  
Leslie Pielack, Museum Director  
Carole Salutes, Recording Secretary

**04-06-18**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
HDC Minutes of January 17, 2018**

**Motion by Mr. Willoughby**

**Seconded by Mr. Burley to approve the HDC Minutes of January 17, 2018 as presented.**

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Willoughby, Burley, Deyer, Filthaut, Henke

Nays: None

Absent: Charles, Dukas, Trapnell

**04-07-18**

**HISTORIC REVIEW  
607 Bates  
Major Jones House  
Bates St. Historic District**

Mr. Bill Finnicum, Finnicum Brownlee Architects, asked if they could proceed tonight only with items on the non-historic portion of the house and not having to do with replacing original materials on the historic portion.

Zoning: R-3 Single-Family Residential

History: The Historic Major Jones House is located on the north half of a large lot at 607 S. Bates. The south half of the lot is vacant. The Historic Major Jones House was constructed in 1865 and is believed to be one of the oldest homes in the Bates St. Historic District. The house was designated historic in 1978 and the Bates St. Historic District designation came into effect in January of 1998.

The house served as a two-unit rental property for several years, and it has been vacant for many years. In 2003, the owner was cited for maintenance violations, and in 2006, after making several requests to demolish the property, the owner was cited for Demolition – by - Neglect (DXN). The owner was required to make several repairs to upgrade the condition of the house. The house has been sold several times and reviewed by the HDC for potential renovations. However, none of those approved plans were executed, and the current owner was approved to renovate the property with a new proposal.

Approval History: On June 21, 2017, the applicant appeared before the Historic District Commission seeking approval of an addition to the Major Jones House. The application was approved with the exception of the front porch. The Commission requested that the applicant consider altering the design in a way that accentuates the original portion of the home and its detail features.

Accordingly, the applicant submitted revised plans in August of 2017. The applicant was approved on August 16, 2017 to expose the window and restore the decorative wood details shown in the historic photos available for the house.

In addition, the applicant was granted the required variances at the July 11, 2017 Board of Zoning Appeals meeting to construct the copula and the gabled ends that were previously identified as dormers.

Proposal: The applicant is now returning to the commission to request additional modifications to the approved plan. The following changes are proposed:

- Change of window color;
- Change of roofing color;
- Add glass block windows;
- Replace masonry apron on porch with lattice for ventilation;
- Combine two kitchen windows into one;
- Replace stone wall with wood fence and 10 ft. arborvitae;
- Replace original windows;
- Replace original wood siding.

Mr. Finnicum indicated the following:

- The window color will remain the same; only the source will change.
- The black roof will turn to a warm black because of reflection from the sky.
- The block windows on the new basement will not be visible from the street.
- The lattice on the porch will be painted the same medium grey color as the foundation.
- The kitchen window will be over the sink.
- The reason for replacing the stone wall with a wood fence and mature shrubbery is to block out the view of the neighbor's garage and to filter out sounds from the neighbor's swimming pool.

These are all of the changes to the addition.

**Motion by Mr. Deyer**

**Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to approve the items that were highlighted tonight.**

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Willoughby, Burley, Filthaut, Henke

Nays: None

Absent: Charles, Dukas, Trapnell

**Motion by Mr. Deyer**

**Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to postpone the two remaining items.**

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Willoughby, Burley, Filthaut, Henke

Nays: None

Absent: Charles, Dukas, Trapnell

Chairman Henke went on the record to say that he does not believe, knowing the history of this house, that tearing all the siding off the historic portion and replacing it meets The Secretary of Interior Standards #9. The house is not that bad on the exterior, and there is a company in Ann Arbor that can basically take an old wood window and rebuild it to make it look brand new. For those reasons, he will not recommend those two requests.

Mr. Deyer observed when he watched the BZA hearing regarding the copula there was no discussion of whether it is appropriate to the house. So it is clear to him if this commission refers something to the BZA again they need to be clear about what we like and what we don't like so the BZA doesn't take a narrow view.

Mr. Willoughby thought it is nice that they don't get out of their box because they really are not qualified to weigh in on aesthetic issues.

**04-08-18**

## **HISTORIC DESIGNATION REVIEW**

**556 W. Maple Rd.**

**Allen House**

**Birmingham Historic Museum**

**Mill Pond Historic District**

Zoning: PP Public Property

Proposal: Mr. Baka offered background. The 1928 Allen House and surrounding grounds at the Birmingham Museum have a unique history that dates from the 1818 pioneer period, when Elijah Willits first came to what is now Birmingham and bought 160 acres that include the site. Although it is part of the city's Mill Pond Historic District, the Allen House has numerous historic features and associations that make it eligible for individual listing as a historic site with the honorary National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places provides formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state. Pursuing formal listing for the Allen House has a number of distinct advantages:

- Helps to meet goals of the city's Certified Local Government ("CLG") program through the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") to work toward local historic preservation and to identify potential properties for listing in the National Register;
- Makes the Allen House eligible for CLG grant funding for preservation and rehabilitation projects for the house and grounds;
- National Register designation can help with other historic preservation-related grants and funding partnerships for the site;
- Acknowledgement and promotion of the historic importance of the house and grounds at the national and state level and heritage tourism.

The nomination process involves a detailed application with documentary evidence that meets established eligibility criteria. The materials are formally reviewed by SHPO and, if deemed eligible, forwarded to the National Park Service for listing. The Allen House would be listed in a national database as meeting the historic and preservation standards of the applicable criteria.

When Community Development Block Grant funds were used in 2010 for barrier-free access projects for the Allen House, the SHPO was required to review the house's historic status as part of the federal funding requirements. At that time,

the SHPO determined that the Allen House would be eligible for future individual listing on the National Register. This previous review and familiarity of the SHPO with the Allen House and its history may help facilitate the application process.

On February 1, 2018, the Museum Board voted unanimously to support the pursuit of the nomination process to list the Allen House and grounds on the National Register of Historic Places through application with the State Historic Preservation Office.

Ms. Pielack emphasized that the advantage for them is if they are able to be listed on the National Register for the Allen House it would include the grounds, which are historic. Therefore they would potentially have access to some grant funds that they wouldn't have currently. The folks at SHPO are familiar with the Allen House and two different members have said that, provided the application is complete they didn't see any problems. They said to make sure in the application to clarify the history of the Hunter House as well, because it is now on the site. What they will be doing is assessing in its current situation whether the Allen House and grounds meets their test for historic integrity.

**Motion by Mr. Deyer**

**Seconded by Mr. Burley to recommend approval to the City Commission of the request to apply for nomination of the Allen House and grounds to the National Register of Historic Places through application with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office.**

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

**VOICE VOTE**

Yeas: Deyer, Burley, Filthaut, Henke, Willoughby

Nays: None

Absent: Charles, Dukas, Trapnell

**04-09-18**

**STUDY SESSION**

**Overlay Signage Standards**

Mr. Baka recalled that over the past several meetings the HDC and DRB members have had informal discussions regarding the differences between the Overlay Signage Standards and the Standard Sign Ordinance. These discussions have been initiated by a number of sign reviews and variance applications that have come to the boards for review as part of their attempts to be allowed signage in line with the Standard Sign Ordinance rather than the Overlay Sign Standards.

After he reviewed the standards for the Briggs, Greenleaf Trust and now the Balmoral Bldg., he came to the realization that over the years the Overlay Signage Standards had not been strictly applied on them. There is a rule, specific to the Overlay District that businesses above the first floor are not allowed any signage. This has become a problem because there are a lot of businesses on second floors that desire signage.

One big thing is that within the Standard Sign Ordinance the amount of sq. ft. of signage allowed is determined by the width of the storefront. The Overlay Ordinance has no specific limit to the amount of area. The signage is just limited by the number of entrances a business has to the building. One sign is allowed at every entrance.

Ground signs are not addressed in the Overlay Ordinance.

Projecting signs under the Standard Sign Ordinance are allowed to protrude 30 in. off the face of the building; whereas under the Overlay Ordinance they are allowed to be 1 1/2 ft. tall by 4 ft. wide. Both have to be 8 ft. above grade.

There is nothing the City can do about existing signage that was erroneously approved by the City. However, from this point forward, now that the problem has been identified, the Ordinance has to be enforced the way it is written.

The discussion turned to defining types of signs. Mr. Baka stated a name letter sign is composed of individually constructed and applied letters, numbers or characters. A wall sign is comprised of name letters mounted to a background. Wall signs are allowed to be taller than name letter signs.

Mr. Deyer said it seems to him that the Overlay Signage could just go away. This is an opportunity to adopt the Standard Sign Ordinance after making minor tweaks to it.

Mr. Baka said he never fully understood why in the Standard Sign Ordinance it says that no sign shall be erected at street intersections and no signs other than municipal traffic control signs shall be located in the triangle formed by the property lines paralleling the streets and extending for a distance of 25 ft. each way from the intersection of the right-of-way lines at the corner. With regard to municipal traffic control signs, those are never on private property. So that makes him question what they are talking about.

Further, at a corner going 25 ft. each way from the intersection of the right-of-way lines, and drawing a diagonal line across the private property, there are no signs allowed in that area. However, a building is permitted to be constructed there. Mr. Baka did not understand that point and it was agreed that it could be eliminated.

Mr. Baka thought that multiple tenant buildings would have to be mindful of doing a Master Sign Plan before putting up signs everywhere. Many businesses choose window signage. They are allowed 12 sq. ft. per frontage in the Standard Sign Ordinance. Window signs in the Overlay are only allowed to be 6 sq. ft.

Consensus was to clean up the language and the definitions in the Standard Sign Ordinance in order to make it simpler to understand.

It was discussed that sandwich boards are loved by businesses. They are mostly 2 ft. by 3 ft. It was considered that the businesses might be allowed either window signage or an A-Frame.

Board members thought that the thickness of transformers could now be reduced from 4 in. because of LED lighting.

Mr. Deyer summed up the discussion by saying the board would like to just eliminate what is in the Overlay Sign Ordinance and apply what is in the Standard Sign Ordinance so it is consistent across the City. They have found some areas in the Sign Ordinance that can be cleaned up in order to make it easier for people to understand.

Mr. Willoughby thought they could take a building and see how the Standard Sign Ordinance applies to it. Mr. Baka thought that giving the board the leeway to make judgment calls is very useful to avoid having applicants go to the BZA.

Mr. Baka indicated he will take up this issue with the DRB next because it will be good to have input from both boards. It will go to the Planning Board as well.

**04-10-18**

## **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### **A. Staff Reports**

-- Administrative Approvals

- 167 N. Old Woodward Ave., Grabba Green - Install one illuminated blade sign, one illuminated Grabbagreen food + juice letterset and one "open" window sign.
- 160 W. Maple Rd. - Awning for rear door, no signage.
- 141 W. Maple Rd., White Birch - Place signage on facade above front windows.

- 160 W. Maple Rd., Dick-O'Dows - Match paint approved for rear of building to front, BM2126-20
- 135 S. Old Woodward Ave, Verizon - Change existing color to Benjamin Moore 2124-10 (Wrought Iron) on the exterior.

-- Violation Notices (none)

-- Demolition Applications

- 534 W. Glenhurst
- 1212 Webster
- 415 Wellesley
- 885 Redding
- 2614 Yorkshire
- 2350 Yorkshire
- 1476 Humphrey
- 1279 Washington
- 426 Bird
- 1300 Washington
- 2225 Windemere
- 2413 Manchester
- 648 Dewey
- 1383 Cedar
- 1675 Banbury
- 298 S. Old Woodward
- 223 E. Hoover
- 1042 Smith
- 1515 Webster
- 1608 Washington
- 1264 Smith

## **B. Communications**

-- Commissioners' Comments (none)

**04-11-18**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

No further business being evident, the Chairman motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m.



Matthew Baka  
Sr. Planner