

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MARCH 20, 2019
Municipal Building Commission Room
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, March 20, 2019. Chairman John Henke called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1) ROLLCALL

Present: Chairman John Henke, Vice-Chairman Keith Deyer, Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Patricia Lang; Student Representative Klea Ahmet

Absent: Board Members Doug Burley, Natalia Dukas, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Members Kevin Filthaut, Dulce Fuller

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Nicholas Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

Chairman Henke notified 277 Pierce that they would need four affirmative votes to be granted their extension request. Chairman Henke said that the applicant could choose to adjourn their review until the next meeting, or that they could move forward currently.

The applicant for 277 Pierce indicated they would prefer to keep their hearing for the present meeting.

03-12-19

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES
HDC Minutes of February 20, 2019

Ms. Debbrecht asked that the spelling of Sheila Bashiri's name be corrected.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Deyer
Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the HDC Minutes of February 20, 2019 as amended.

Motion carried, 4-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Debbrecht, Henke, Lang

Nays: None

03-13-19

3) 277 PIERCE - SITE PLAN EXTENSION

City Planner Dupuis reviewed the item.

Planning Director Ecker confirmed that the site's construction drawings are in for permits.

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the requested six month site plan extension for 277 Pierce.

Motion carried, 4-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Deyer, Henke

Nays: None

03-14-19

4) BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM HERITAGE LANDSCAPE ZONE MASTER PLAN

City Planner Dupuis reviewed the history of the item noting that the applicant is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness. The Board then welcomed Brian Devlin from Nagy Devlin Land Design.

Mr. Devlin presented the Heritage Landscape Zone Master Plan for the front of the Birmingham Museum. He explained:

- The Heritage Zone is comprised of the front yards of the Allen and Hunter Houses and the front of the plaza.
- Part of the intention for the Master Plan is to use many of the same species of plants that were originally planted in front of both homes. More compact and modern cultivars will be used for the updates in order to conserve space, but they will give a sense of what the landscaping had been like.
- Some of the Catalpa and Norway Maple trees currently in the Heritage Zone will be removed, to be replaced with three American Elms which are resistant to Dutch Elm Disease.
- The dumpster location will be screened. The arborvitaes planted there are not doing well, so the Plan proposes a wood trellis with English Ivy vines planted at the base instead.
- The plaza will stay the same. The Heritage Garden is in place. It has also been suggested that Nagy Devlin Land Design provide a list and a map of plants which were available at the time the homes were built. People in Birmingham would also be welcome to contribute plants they have been growing, and the mapping of the original plants would provide a guideline for where the citizen-contributed plants should go.
- In front of the Allen House, the Children's Garden remains. Gates have been installed at the openings so that when children are there they can be kept secure.
- A new sign is proposed in front of the central portion of the plaza. Concrete will be removed for the installation of the sign, with the goal of getting the sign as close to the road as possible while still far enough from the road to avoid splashes from cars, salt, and plowed snow.
- The sign will be wood posts with a 12 inch wood base and concrete footing raising it off the ground. It will 38 square feet total, and about ten feet in length, which is the length required to fit all the lettering and the logo on the sign. Two pieces of plywood wood will be sanded together. The back piece of plywood will

be a different color, and the lettering for the sign will be cut out from the front piece of plywood so that the letters are both colored and recessed. The logo on the sign will be a relief. There are groundlights planned for the sign as well.

City Planner Dupuis noted the sign will require the review and approval of the Design Review Board, so the final length of the sign will be discussed and determined at that time.

Ms. Lang asked for confirmation that the sign would be able to withstand weather.

Mr. Nagy confirmed the sign should last for a fair amount of time.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Deyer

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to recommend the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Birmingham Museum work as proposed meets Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation Numbers Six and Nine.

Motion carried, 4-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Debbrecht, Henke, Lang

Nays: None

03-16-19

5) MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Staff Reports

1. Administrative Approvals

2. Demolitions

3. Museum Director Pielack told Vice-Chairman Deyer that she digitized the Echo City material about a week ago and sent it to City Planner Dupuis for the Committee's perusal. Museum Director Pielack then provided the Committee with an update on the National Certification on the Allen House:

- The National Register Nomination for the Allen House has been submitted. It is in Lansing, and has yet to be reviewed. Post-review, Birmingham may receive a request from Lansing for revisions or additional materials.
- It is most likely the submittal will be considered during the September 2019 review, though there is a chance it could be reviewed in May 2019. Museum Director Pielack said she would let the Committee know for sure when the review will be moving forward.
- There was enough material to submit the Allen House under Criterion A, for its association with transportation and community planning in the greater context of what was happening along the Woodward corridor, the suburbanization of the Detroit area, and how Birmingham and Henry Allen in particular was responding to that; Criterion B, for the individual contributions of Henry Allen who guided Birmingham's change into a City, wrote the City Charter, helped keep the City sound during the Great Depression, and other significant roles; and Criterion C, for being a unique example of the work of noted Detroit architect Rupert W. Koch who designed several significant revivalist homes and works of architecture

- in the 1920s. Elements of the red schoolhouse which pre-existed the Allen House at the site were incorporated into the structure of the Allen House including the limestone threshold of the schoolhouse and the outline of the schoolhouse's windows, which were bricked-in but maintained.
- Museum Director Pielack noted that the historical preservation of the elements of the schoolhouse was an almost entirely unique decision in Southeast Michigan at the time. She has been unable to find another example of that kind of historic preservation from the region and that era.
 - In addition, the Allen House was actually built in 1926, not the 1928 date that has been indicated up until this point.
 - The outdoor swimming pool in the back of the Allen House is a very early example of its type. Museum Director Pielack has located photos of its construction which she would be happy to share with the Committee.

Chairman Henke said Cranbrook was creating reflecting ponds around the same time the Allen House swimming pool was constructed. He advised Museum Director Pielack that Mark Coir, a former member of the HDC, used to run the research portion of collections for Cranbrook and may be a helpful resource moving forward.

Museum Director Pielack thanked Chairman Henke for the recommendation and told the Committee that they would be welcome to participate as part of the public in the review hearing for the Allen House so she would be sure to communicate the date.

Ms. Debbrecht said that at some point in the near future she and Ms. Lang had some information to share on further publicizing the process of historic designations. She said that they had met with Jonathan Dewint from Harbor Springs, MI who shared some of the City's experiences with raising awareness about historic designations within the City.

City Planner Dupuis offered to compile the information more formally as well if Ms. Debbrecht emailed him her points. Ms. Debbrecht confirmed she would.

B. Communications (none)

03-17-18

ADJOURNMENT

No further business being evident, the board motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Nicholas Dupuis
City Planner