

Historic District Commission
Minutes Of March 3, 2021
Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, March 3, 2021. Chair John Henke called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Chair John Henke; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht; Keith Deyer, Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Patricia Lang (arrived 7:05 p.m.), Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Members Steven Lemberg, Cassandra McCarthy (arrived 7:08 p.m.); Student Representatives Charles Cusimano, Elizabeth Wiegand (all located in Birmingham, MI except Dustin Kolo, who was in Gaylord, MI.)

Absent: None.

Administration: Nicholas Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist
Leslie Pielack, Museum Director

03-022-21

2) Approval Of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Willoughby
Seconded by Mr. Kolo to approve the HDC Minutes of February 3, 2021 as submitted.

Motion carried, 5-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Willoughby, Dukas, Henke, Kolo, Deyer

Nays: None

Abstain: Lemberg, Debbrecht

03-023-21

3) Courtesy Review

A. 556 W. Maple - Birmingham Museum

Museum Director Pielack was present on behalf of the item.

A number of HDC members commended Museum Director Pielack on the quality of her report. There were also comments that the report should be made more widely available by the Community Development Department so that residents could reference it in their own historic preservation projects.

The report was unanimously endorsed by the HDC.

03-024-21

4) Historic Design Review

A. 743 W. Frank – King-Argus House

CP Dupuis reviewed the item.

Kabir Mendiratta, applicant, and John Simlik, builder, were present on behalf of the application.

It was noted that the storm door would be removed. The beveled glass on either side of the front door would be replaced with non-beveled glass since there was no other beveled glass on the home.

Mr. Deyer noted that the heights of the glass on either side of the front door in the drawings were slightly mismatched.

Mr. Simlik said that was an error in the drawing. He said the right side represented the accurate height and that the left side would be brought up to match the right side.

Motion by Ms. Dukas

Seconded by Mr. Deyer to approve the Historic Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 743 W. Frank – King-Argus House. The work as proposed meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation standard numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 9.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Dukas, Deyer, Willoughby, Henke, Kolo, Lang, Debbrecht

Nays: None

B. 361 E. Maple – Hawthorne Building

CP Dupuis summarized the item.

Faiz Simon, owner, and Chris Longe, architect, were present on behalf of the project. Mr. Longe reviewed the plans.

Chair Henke noted that the HDC is not charged with endorsing historic preservation projects that only maintain the facades of buildings. He also noted that the appropriate massing of a historic building is considered in terms of the amount of old structure preserved and new structure added. He noted that because of this it is not relevant to compare the massing of a development that encompasses a historic building to the massing of entirely non-historic buildings on the same street.

Mr. Willoughby recommended Mr. Longe review the plans for the glass canopy that is at the top of the historic opening a bit further, and that he consider making the columns more subtle. He suggested putting the columns behind glass was one option.

Ms. Lang said she liked the idea of putting the columns behind glass.

After HDC discussion, there was some consensus that the project should relocate the egress stairway in the front facade and redesign the area; step back the glass a bit more from the second floor up and clarify the drawings to make the stepback more clear; and, remove the upper peak that was designed to cover the rooftop mechanicals.

Mr. Willoughby said he was not as concerned about the proposed massing, since he said it fit with the historic building and that permitting development on historic buildings in the City actually allows for historic aspects to be promoted and maintained. He said if maintaining the rear facade were important there might be a way to do that in the plans, and that while the front facade is not the only historic aspect of a building, it is one of the most important to preserve.

Mr. Kolo and Ms. Lang agreed with Mr. Willoughby that the proposed design preserved the historic aspects of the building to an acceptable extent, and that the standards for developing historic buildings should be applied with a modicum of flexibility.

When asked by Mr. Deyer, Mr. Longe indicated that the project would prefer a postponement of the discussion over a denial of the application. Mr. Longe stated he could have the updated plans ready in time for the March 17, 2021 HDC meeting.

Motion by Mr. Deyer

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to postpone consideration of the Historic Design Review application for 361 E. Maple -- The Hawthorne Building to the regular HDC meeting of March 17, 2021.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Debbrecht, Dukas, Willoughby, Henke, Kolo, Lang

Nays: None

03-025-21

5) Sign Review

None.

03-026-21

6) Study Session

A. Promoting Historic Preservation – Outline

CP Dupuis asked if the HDC had any additional ideas for the item.

Mr. Deyer recommended plans be made to promote historic education, including publicizing historic building events in the local press.

Ms. Debbrecht reiterated that the work being done on the Allen House should be further publicized.

Mr. Kolo recommended that the consequences of not attending to historic preservation be publicized.

Ms. Lang and Mr. Kolo recommended that when owners seek demolition permits for houses older than either 50 or 100 years the project should be required to come before a City board for review.

Chair Henke noted that would require an ordinance change.

CP Dupuis concurred with Chair Henke. He noted that such an ordinance change might gain support among residents since many have expressed concern about the rate of teardowns in the City.

03-027-21

7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication

A. Pre-Application Discussions

1. 141 W. Maple – Fields Building

Prior to the meeting the applicant requested the pre-application discussion be pulled with the possibility of returning at a future meeting.

B. Draft Agenda: March 17, 2021

C. Staff Reports

1. Administrative Sign Approvals

2. Administrative Approvals

3. Demolitions

4. Action List - 2021

The HDC provided brief feedback regarding the proposed action list.

03-028-21

Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to adjourn the HDC meeting of March 3, 2021 at 9:00 p.m.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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Yeas: Debbrecht, Dukas, Lang, Henke, Kolo, Deyer, Willoughby
Nays: None

Nicholas Dupuis
City Planner

APPROVED