

**Historic District Commission  
Minutes Of April 19, 2023**

151 Martin Street, City Commission Room 205, Birmingham, MI

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, April 19, 2023. Mr. Henke called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**1) Rollcall**

**Present:** Chair John Henke; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Patricia Lang, Michael Willoughby (left at 8:38 p.m.); Alternate Board Member Mary Jaye; Student Representative Ian Weinberg

**Absent:** Board Member Keith Deyer; Alternate Board Member Steven Lemberg

**Staff:** Planning Director Dupuis; City Transcriptionist Eichenhorn

**2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of March 15, 2023**

**04-12-23**

**Motion by Ms. Dukas**

**Seconded by Ms. Lang to approve the HDC Minutes of March 15, 2023 as submitted.**

**Motion carried, 7-0.**

VOICE VOTE

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

Nays: None

**3) Courtesy Review**

**4) Historic Design Review**

**A. 188 N. Old Woodward – Comerica Bank**

PD Dupuis presented the item.

Liz Christopher of CBRE and Jim Nocker, contractor, spoke on behalf of the item and answered informational questions from the HDC.

In reply to Ms. Dukas, Ms. Christopher said they would have to come up with a different plan if they did not receive a variance.

Mr. Kolo said he was supportive of the request. He said it was not his favorite material but saw no issue with it.

Ms. Lang said she was also supportive of the request. She noted that the given the discreet location of the replacement on the building and the fact that the approved materials could not easily be used for the repair contributed to her opinion.

Ms. Dukas said the changes to the building would be on the frontage to Hamilton Row, which is a prominent road.

Mr. Willoughby said it would be nice if changes were made to the adjoining building so that it looked more like a composition.

The Chair said the two adjoining buildings had always looked like two distinct structures and that this proposal maintained that appearance. He said he viewed the proposed changes as appropriate. He noted that historic homes are required to have distinctive additions that do not appear historic in nature and said this building seemed to have the same effect.

Ms. Debbrecht agreed that the two buildings should remain different in appearance because making the buildings look similar could be visually overwhelming.

### **04-13-23**

#### **Motion by Ms. Debbrecht**

**Seconded by Ms. Lang to approve the Revised Historic Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 188 N. Old Woodward – Comerica. The proposed addition meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation standard numbers 1-5, and 10. This approval by the Historic District Commission is subject to approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals.**

**Motion carried, 5-2.**

#### VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Lang, Jaye, Kolo

Nays: Dukas, Willoughby

#### **B. 163 W. Maple – Seven Daughters**

PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions from the HDC.

Robert Freund, owner of the building, was present on behalf of the request.

HDC comments were as follows:

- There was concern about the soffit being destroyed, and that doing so would prevent it from visually resembling either of the adjacent properties;
- The sign seemed aesthetically dated;
- The soffit should be maintained; and,
- Even though the building was not technically historic, the present aesthetic contributed to the aesthetics of the historic district.

Given the comments, the Chair invited a motion to postpone.

### **04-14-23**

**Motion by Ms. Dukas**

**Seconded by Ms. Lang to postpone the historic design review for 163 W. Maple to May 17, 2023.**

**Mr. Kolo noted that if the applicant wanted to add a sign, bringing the sign plans to the May 17, 2023 meeting would potentially save them time.**

**Motion carried, 7-0.**

VOICE VOTE

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

Nays: None

**C. 245 S. Eton – Birmingham Grand Trunk Western Railroad Depot**

PD Dupuis presented the item.

Mark Knauer, architect, and Wayne Schick, Senior VP at Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, spoke on behalf of the project and answered informational questions from the HDC.

In response to HDC discussion, the applicant team said:

- The awnings on the far north side of the building would be maintained and the awnings on the front facade of the building would be removed;
- They would replace the fire pit with the fireplace near the southwest portion of the building, and the fireplace could use the 1984-style brick;
- The fireplace would not block any of the windows;
- The hedges could be maintained at four feet;
- They would have the fireplace be gas-burning instead of wood-burning; and,
- They would update the rendering to reflect the lack of stars and lighting on the canopy.

PD Dupuis said he would review the lighting proposal administratively, and said if there were any concerns he would bring the lighting proposal to the HDC.

Additional HDC comments were as follows:

- The design might be more cohesive if the proposed lighting aligned with the 1920s character of the building; and,
- The sign on the top of the canopy could be maintained as long as it complies with the ordinance.

**04-15-23**

**Motion by Ms. Dukas**

**Seconded by Ms. Lang to approve the Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 245 S. Eton - Birmingham Grand Trunk Western Railroad Depot – with the conditions listed below. The proposed work will meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation numbers 1, 2, 5, 9, and 10 upon the conditions being met:**

- 1. The applicant must submit revised plans that remove all existing awnings on the main façade of the historical structure;**
- 2. The applicant must submit revised plans that relocate the fireplace to the south end of the historical building;**
- 3. The applicant must reduce the hedge plantings in front of the historical facade to four feet;**
- 4. The applicant must reduce the lighting on site and submit specification sheets for all newly proposed fixtures;**
- 5. The applicant must revise the canopy sign to adhere to the ordinance; and,**
- 6. The applicant must provide revised drawings to reflect the modifications.**

**Mr. Willoughby noted that the elevation labeled 'east' depicted the west elevation.**

**In reply to Mr. Knauer, the Chair said Mr. Knauer and Mr. Dupuis could discuss how a valance, crown, or other aspects of the canopy might determine the height of the signage on the canopy.**

**Motion carried, 7-0.**

VOICE VOTE

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

Nays: None

## **5) Sign Review**

### **6) Study Session**

#### **A. Historic Design Guidelines (Update)**

PD Dupuis stated the next deliverable would be available June 2023.

## **7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication**

Ms. Lang expressed her desire to see more historic preservation in the City. Ms. Jaye concurred.

The Chair said that publicizing the resources the State Historical Preservation Office offers was one way to increase community awareness of the benefits of historic preservation.

Ms. Debbrecht and the Chair noted that economic pressures made historic preservation more challenging for homeowners.

PD Dupuis said the HDC likely had some ability to do more historic preservation work. He added that historic designation was one of the HDC's more effective tools to promote historic preservation.

It was determined that there would be a study session on the topic after the Historic Design Guidelines are adopted.

In reply to Ms. Debbrecht, PD Dupuis said HDC members could encourage residents to designate their homes as long as the HDC member specifies that they are speaking in their personal capacity

and not on behalf of the HDC. He said that HDC members could also encourage residents to contact him to learn more about the historic designation process.

- A. Draft Agenda**
- B. Staff Reports**
  - 1. Administrative Sign Approvals**
  - 2. Administrative Approvals**
  - 3. Demolitions**
  - 4. Action List**

### **8) Adjournment**

No further business being evident, the HDC motioned to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.



Nick Dupuis, Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

APPROVED