

**Historic District Commission
Minutes Of April 6, 2022**

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

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held Wednesday, April 6, 2022. Chair John 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; Student Representatives Meghan Murray, Charlie Vercellone

Absent: Board Members Keith Deyer, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Members Steven Lemberg, Cassandra McCarthy

Administration: Nicholas Dupuis, Planning Director
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

04-22-22

2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of March 16, 2022

PD Dupuis stated that Mr. Deyer had sent in a few minor grammatical corrections to the minutes. PD Dupuis asked if the HDC would accept those corrections.

The HDC agreed to do so.

**Motion by Ms. Dukas
Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the HDC Minutes of March 16, 2022 as amended.**

Motion carried, 5-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Lang, Kolo, Dukas

Nays: None

3) Courtesy Review

None.

04-23-22

4) Historic Design Review

A. 160 W. Maple – Dick O’ Dows – Request for Wall Art Installation

PD Dupuis summarized the item.

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the Wall Art application for 160 W. Maple – Dick O’ Dows. The subject site is located within the Central Business Historic District, but is not a designated historic resource and the proposed mural installation does not adversely affect the district or any adjacent or nearby resources.

Motion carried, 5-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Lang, Kolo, Dukas

Nays: None

04-24-22

B. 148 Pierce – Telephone Exchange Building – Request for Wall Art Installation

PD Dupuis summarized the item.

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to postpone the Wall Art application for 148 Pierce – Telephone Exchange Building – to April 20, 2022 in order to offer the applicant time to consider other applications that will not jeopardize historic materials on the building.

Motion carried, 4-1.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Lang, Kolo

Nays: Dukas

5) Sign Review

None.

6) Study Session

A. CLG Grant – Historic Design Guidelines – RFP Responses

PD Dupuis asked each HDC member to fill out four of the scorecards he provided, one for each respondee, by the next HDC meeting on April 20, 2022. In regards to funding, he said he would prefer to try and find funding for all aspects of the project before discussing whether some aspects might need to be amended.

Ms. Debbrecht noted the focus would be on creating guidelines for current and future or prospective owners of historic homes.

Chair Henke said an emphasis on education would be particularly important. He said it would be helpful both to promote historic designation and to discourage the frequent selling of older homes for demolitions and rebuilds.

Ms. Lang said plans for widely publicizing the value of historic homes, and modes of preservation, would be particularly important.

Chair Henke recommended that the interviews with the selected respondees be virtual. He said one question for the interview should be 'How do you best convey both the preservation focus and the CLG focus?'

In reply to PD Dupuis, both Chair Henke and Ms. Lang agreed that a graphically-oriented set of guidelines would likely be more helpful than a very text-heavy one.

It was noted that it would also be important to provide homeowners with a resource list of people who can perform appropriate repairs on older and historic homes.

Chair Henke recommended that the HDC members browse each resposdee's website.

PD Dupuis said he would email out the scorecard, which could be filled out for each applicant either on paper or virtually, and the RFP for the HDC's reference.

B. Bates St. Historic District Signage (Update)

Reserved for future discussion.

7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication

Ms. Lang raised the issue of demolitions. She asked what the HDC could do to slow demolitions in order to preserve historic resources, and she asked how her fellow Committee members felt about the prospect of attempting to do so.

In reply to Ms. Lang, Mr. Kolo concurred that it is difficult to see the City's historic housing stock decline. He noted that the HDC could possibly make recommendations to the Commission on policy changes, and that those would have to be reviewed by the Commission and the public.

PD Dupuis said the HDC could possibly request that their purview be expanded to include reviews of proposed demolitions of historic, but non-designated, homes.

Chair Henke said that achieving an ordinance change on this topic would require a Commission, Planning Board, and public that understands the importance of historic preservation. He described the review process that would need to occur in order to implement an ordinance change, and noted it would not be an immediate remedy to Ms. Lang's concern.

Ms. Lang acknowledged Chair Henke's statements, and said she still believed the topic to be worth pursuing.

Chair Henke concurred with Ms. Lang. He said it would be essential to have a joint meeting with the Commission if this matter is to go further.

Ms. Lang emphatically agreed that a joint meeting with the Commission is necessary.

Chair Henke said it is an urgent issue, that it is worth raising with the Commission, and that it is worth advocating for increased historic preservation as vehemently as possible. He cautioned his fellow HDC members to also be aware that this topic may not get an airing with the Commission before the 2040 Plan is adopted.

Chair Henke said one of the most persuasive approaches to discussing the topic would be noting that, as PD Dupuis pointed out, there are 3,000 homes turning 100 years old by 2030. Chair Henke noted the HDC must explain why that housing stock should be preserved. He said it would be important to clarify that preservation of well-constructed homes is not more costly than demolitions and rebuilds.

In reply to Mr. Kolo, Chair Henke said a goal of the review process would be to encourage homeowners considering demolition to consider other possibilities.

PD Dupuis noted that benefits of historic preservation of homes overlap favorably with the City's growing emphasis on sustainability. He noted that the environmental impact of preservation is generally better than a demolition and rebuild.

Chair Henke agreed that the alignment of historic preservation and sustainability is an important point to emphasize.

Ms. Dukas concurred with her colleagues' comments about the importance of historic preservation. She suggested that individual members of the HDC reach out to individual Commission members to build awareness around the issue. She also stated that HDC members need to continue publicizing the issue.

Mr. Kolo said he believes a Michigan State Historic Preservation Office document on the topic states that a diverse housing stock increases property values. He said that would be an important point to raise as well.

Mr. Kolo said there might also be a way to incentivize historic preservation through tax credits.

The HDC directed PD Dupuis to continue work on this topic, and to return the topic to the HDC for further action.

PD Dupuis acknowledged the direction, and said he would add the topic to the HDC's action list likely under the historic preservation master plan.

- A. Pre-Application Discussions**
- B. Draft Agenda**
- C. Staff Reports**
 - 1. Administrative Sign Approvals**
 - 2. Administrative Approvals**

PD Dupuis asked for permission to administratively approve a change to the plans for the ATM part of the storefront of 100 N. Old Woodward.

There was no objection to PD Dupuis' request.

3. Demolitions
4. Action List 2022

04-25-22

8) Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Debbrecht

Seconded by Ms. Lang to adjourn the HDC meeting of April 6, 2022 at 8:07 p.m.

Motion carried, 5-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Lang, Kolo, Dukas

Nays: None



Nicholas Dupuis
Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn
City Transcriptionist