

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
February 12, 2009 Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Room 101 – 7:30 pm

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Jeff Limberg, Bob Lempera, Tom Bassett-Dilley, Carmen Vitello, Kate Susmilch, Drew Niermann, Kristen Diamond, Kyle Hickman, Garret Eakin
ABSENT: Nick Kalogeresis, Frank Heitzman
STAFF: Doug Kaarre, Urban Planner

MINUTES

Motion by Susmilch to approve the January 8, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Diamond. Motion approved 9-0.

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

None

REGULAR AGENDA

- A. **HPC 09-01: 820 N. Grove Avenue (O'Shea/Sturtevant)** – Certificate of Appropriateness for side and rear additions and front porch stair restoration (*Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District*): **Forwarded from the Architectural Review Committee.**
Property owners Laura O'Shea and Bert Sturtevant; and architects Carol Barrett and Elizabeth Scrafano were present.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley introduced the application. The Architectural Review Committee met with the applicants to review the project. The Committee recommended looking at other potential roof shapes for the one-story addition and had some concerns on how the rear addition roof met the original.

Bert Sturtevant, property owner, stated that they have two small children and moved here from the city for the yard, schools, proximity to the city, public transit and historic character. It has a nice, large, attractive back yard. The look and feel reminded them of where they grew up. They are proposing additions and renovation which represents an investment in the house and Oak Park. Their goals are as follows:

- 1) Upgrade the infrastructure – plumbing, electric. They had an energy audit. The proposed design helps with the energy efficiency. They're proposing rain barrels and solar panels.
- 2) Create more interior space. They tried to minimize the size and scale of the additions. The side addition is one story. They are utilizing existing space as much as possible.
- 3) Create a connection to the back yard. They opened the back of the house to the yard – the existing spaces don't do this. It will also provide more light inside.

The existing house is 1,600 s.f. and they are adding 1,000 s.f. They really tried to limit the impact on the house and neighbors and create a nice connection to the back yard. They admire Frank Lloyd Wright and looked for inspiration in connecting the inside and outside.

Guidelines: They paid careful attention to the Guidelines and tried to be consistent.

- a) The scale of the additions is compatible and consistent with the scale of the house. The side addition is graduated and steps back.
- b) They are not removing any features from the front. They are removing one small window on the side. They are restoring the side walls on the front porch stairs based on a historic photo.
- c) The additions are on secondary and tertiary facades.
- d) They are consistent with the historic character; they are using stucco and wood, the wood banding follows the front porch lines, the roof gable follows the porch roof.
- e) They are distinguishing new from old by using modern window styles and a modern roof line. The wood siding is used in a more interpretive way. There is a 4-inch setback on the rear side.

The proposal allows them to accomplish their goals in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and consistent with the Guidelines.

Carol Barrett, Scrafano Architects, stated that the owner covered most of it. They provided a model of the house showing the additions and the neighboring houses. The side addition doesn't stand out too much. It blends in yet appears as an addition. They are matching the banding and fascia board of the porch. They followed the ARC's suggestions. There are minimal views down the side yards. They are keeping the same materials – stucco, wood, glass. There are Frank Lloyd Wright homes that are 100 years old that look more modern than this. They are trying to be green by using sunlight, cross-ventilation, overhangs, trellis and solar panels.

Elizabeth Scrafano, Scrafano Architects, stated that it is a “warm” modern addition with clean plaster and stained wood. It is modern in shape and floor plan but the materials are “warm.” There are more sustainable materials on the interior. The wood siding is only on the rear.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley asked if the solar panels are part of the current proposal.

Mr. Sturtevant stated that they are considering them but haven't made a final decision.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that based on the roof plan it seems that the solar panels would be visible from the street. The view should determine where they go.

Mr. Sturtevant stated that he's not sure they should include them due to the process.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that the Commission would need to discuss them, and any approvals today would be conditional on seeing them.

Ms. Scrafano stated that they are still researching the costs. There are some that go under the roofing materials.

Commissioner Eakin asked about the roofing materials.

Ms. Barrett stated that the existing house and side addition are asphalt shingles and the rear addition will be standing seam metal panels due to the angle.

Ms. Scrafano stated that there will be a solar membrane under the sheet metal, which is less maintenance. It sheds water and snow. They will match the color of the house roof.

Commissioner Eakin asked for clarification on the detail where the hip and shed roofs meet.

Ms. Barrett stated that they are removing the rear sun porch. The metal meets the asphalt with a valley under the shingles.

Ms. Scrafano stated that they are trying to match the fascias as closely as possible. Gutters will go down the side. The roofs will meet.

Ms. Barrett stated that it will still look like two roofs.

Commissioner Susmilch asked for clarification on how the gutters and water removal system will work.

Ms. Barrett stated that there will be a downspout where the roofs meet. A gutterbox will handle the additional runoff.

Commissioner Lempera stated that the Guidelines call for additions to be compatible with the character of the building to which its attached.

Ms. Barrett stated that they are different yet compatible. They are using the same materials – not steel and glass. The only real difference is the roof line and windows.

Ms. Scrafano stated that there are similar roof lines in the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District. They are trying to take advantage of as much light and space in the rear as they can.

Mr. Sturtevant stated that they are using the same materials. The floor-ceiling windows wrap around the back. They are using overhanging eaves. They are updating the design but its based on the original design.

Commissioner Lempera asked if they looked at other window/roof configurations on the one-story side addition.

Ms. Barrett stated that they did. They are not opposed to matching the window more with the front. They also looked at a hip roof. She showed how it would look on the model.

Ms. Scrafano stated that it works, but they like the shed roof better.

Ms. Barrett stated that the shed roof is simpler and works better with the trellis.

Commissioner Eakin asked if the trellis was covered with plastic.

Ms. Barrett stated that it is possible. It could be fabric or other materials. Moving the windows didn't work too well for the interior layout.

Ms. Scrafano stated that the corner window takes advantage of the view. They can change it from a casement to a double-hung if necessary.

Laura O'Shea, property owner, stated that all the rear windows are casements.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that the ARC had similar questions and comments – the roof shapes and windows. They have addressed the trim alignment.

Commissioner Lempera complimented them on the front porch wall restoration. He is bothered by the corner windows on the side addition. A foursquare will sometimes have centered or corner windows, but the side addition should follow what's on the house. He is okay with using casements. He has trouble with the shed roof – it is too simple a design. Using a shed makes four different roofs on the house. He likes the hip roof.

Commissioner Eakin complimented them on a nice scheme and careful plan which integrates the project up and down, the scale of the kitchen addition and the extension of the dining room in back. The two-story addition is worked out carefully. The master suite works well. He looked hard at the site. He is okay with the one-story addition corner windows and trim/banding. The rear elevation is terrific. The scheme falters where the roofs meet. They are a different thickness. It needs some offset or reveal. It's a dangerous detail for snow. He's not sure how they would work. He is pro-architecture. This is a plain, but great house. He needs to be convinced that is the perfect detail for the roofs.

Commissioner Diamond stated that she is pleased to see the changes that have been made. She loves the design, it's fresh and modern yet "warm" and complimentary. She has a concern about the roof detail as well. She is okay with the kitchen addition – it is set back far enough. She is okay with the corner window. They have good materials usage.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that she is inclined to agree with Commissioners Diamond and Eakin. The side addition works well. She loves the rear addition and how it works with the site and house. The roof doesn't work for her. It seems too out of place, but is close. Some tweaking would make it integrate better. It's a great interpretation of what's there. She prefers the hip roof on the side addition. There are multiple roof shapes. This eases the transition.

Commissioner Niermann stated that the space is great and the additions are good. The roof detail is tough and doesn't quite work.

Commissioner Hickman stated that he agrees with Commissioners Susmilch and Lempera. The corner window doesn't seem to match with the front of the house. The hip roof works better on the side addition.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley noted there seem to be consistent comments from the Commission with the roof detail, but seem split on the side addition roof. He agrees with Commissioner Lempera on the side addition; a hip roof makes more sense. The rear addition takes off as its own thing. It's not tied to the side addition, which is more tied to the house. He inquired if they looked at less of an overhang on the rear addition.

Ms. Barrett stated that they looked at pulling the roof in or lifting it up above. That resulted in too much height on the interior. The existing soffit is flat. They could work on pulling it in.

Ms. Scrafano stated that they could pull the roof up with the wall.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he is not in favor of bumping up the roof.

Commissioner Eakin stated that if the roof were cut in and not flush it would work but the gutters will create a problem.

Ms. Scrafano stated that some Oak Park homes have a shed side wing with a gabled house.

Commissioner Eakin stated that they could go with a hip but he likes the corner windows.

Commissioner Diamond stated that working as a whole the corner windows are fine.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that there is an argument for the shed/corner window in the Guidelines.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that her concern with the roof is enough that she is not comfortable with even a contingent approval today. It's so close to being fantastic. It needs another review.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that it depends on the scope of issues – shape/mass or detail.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that you can't separate the two – they affect each other.

Commissioner Lempera suggested a straw poll on the different elements.

Planner Kaarre outlined the options – a) vote as submitted, b) vote with contingency on certain changes, c) send back to ARC with suggestions for changes.

Commissioner Eakin made a motion to accept the design with certain conditions. There was no second.

Straw Poll – Each Commissioner was asked if they preferred a hip roof, shed roof or either one on the one-story side addition:

Hip Roof – Lempera, Limberg, Susmilch, Vitello

Shed Roof – None

Either Roof – Bassett-Dilley, Diamond, Eakin, Hickman, Niermann

Straw Poll – Each Commissioner was asked if they prefer the windows on the one-story side addition to remain at the corner, be moved off the corner an unspecified distance, or either option:

Remain on Corner– Diamond, Eakin

Move Off Corner – Hickman, Lempera, Limberg, Niermann, Vitello

Either Option – Bassett-Dilley, Susmilch

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that the applicants gave a great presentation. The Commission has provided direction and the application will be forwarded to the February 25 ARC meeting.

Ms. Scrafano confirmed that they are looking at no corner window, a hip roof on the side addition and set the rear addition roof in.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated yes, that is the direction.

Ms. Scrafano stated that they can solve those issues.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley recommended looking at the solar panel issue to determine if it will be included or not.

Commissioner Eakin stated that he is not in favor of a metal roof. It should be shingles to match the house.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he doesn't agree. It's not shiny.

Ms. Scrafano stated that she can bring samples of the metal panels. They blend well together with the asphalt shingles.

Mr. Sturtevant noted that there are two corner windows on the side addition – facing front and south. He asked if they could remove the one on the front.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that the second floor windows on the house are off the corners – both addition windows should be off the corners. A blank wall facing the street would not work.

Commissioner Lempera stated that they could eliminate the south corner window.

The application was returned to the Architectural Review Committee with recommendations for changes and additional information.

B. Architectural Review Guidelines – Discussion of Potential Updates

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley introduced the discussion. The Commission went through the preservation ordinance over the last several years to discuss potential changes. He wanted

to start the discussion of potential changes to the Architectural Review Guidelines. He reviewed comments made by Commissioners Doty, Freerksen and Lipo at the October 23, 2007 meeting when the ordinance was discussed. Chair Gilbert had asked everyone to mention one thing in the ordinance that bothered them. His suggestion for tonight is to come back with ideas for important changes to the Guidelines at the next meeting. Think about things that don't work or confuse applicants. There are several previous Commissioners here tonight that he would like to hear from.

He reviewed comments made from previous meetings. When projects need rethinking vs. tweaking it is hard to get a good project out of a bad application.

- There was consensus that COA's should be mandatory for all reviews.
- They want to work on streamlining the review process and clarify what is mandatory.
- Provide written requirements for submittal of documents to applicants.
- Siding changes are an issue.
- Provide clearer provisions for assessing fines.
- Clarify the definition of demolition.
- Provide better education to the Board of Trustees on preservation issues.
- Coordinate better with zoning in regards to scale.
- The Guidelines are too lenient with bungalow additions.
- Investigate a demolition delay ordinance.

Frank Lipo, 535 N. Ridgeland, stated that he always struggled with standard no. 9 about differentiating additions yet making them compatible. He also pointed out that roof shapes and slopes are to be considered under massing when determining historic character. He offered to come up with project examples that did or didn't work and review how the Guidelines applied to each project. It might be useful during review. He also suggested having other former commissioners review drafts in the future.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that there is a question of having strong guidelines gently enforced or looser guidelines.

Mr. Lipo stated that guidelines are inherently flexible. They talk about all sides of issues (i.e., different yet compatible). Many people automatically think their additions should match the original. That is why you have 11 commissioners for interpretation. It would help to explain why the Guidelines say certain things. Tighten up the document with language, examples, photos and other visuals.

Karen Doty, 174 N. Euclid, stated that its hard making decisions when you're still learning. You can cite the Guidelines but also other relevant sources; she often did that. Everything needs to be legally defensible. She hears comments that the Commission changes when the people change and are too loosey-goosey. The Commission is constrained by the Guidelines and all decisions must meet them. Not everyone understands that. The Guidelines should be more of a constructive tool for the lay person. They should explain better so applicants can understand the process and how things are interpreted. Include visuals in the document. Make the document more user-friendly and expand the definitions like a textbook. It should address garages. There were changes to the policy from the Board towards accessory structures which seemed appropriate. They should look at them a bit

differently than houses. The Guidelines should be more specific at times and address various thought processes. Be clear and legally defensible. Outline the three ways to look at additions.

Doug Freerksen, 418 N. Harvey, thanked the Commission for inviting previous commissioners. The items Tom mentioned earlier are good items to start with. They should educate the Board. They could use real information on what the HPC does and why. The current Guidelines are good; they give you what you need. In most cases you can find written reasons for reaction. They need tweaking to be consistently, legally defensible. The earlier project is a great example that missed the mark on several levels. The Commission looked at some of the finer details. Don't pussy-foot around; you're not helping the applicants with that. Fenestration, massing and roof lines are important. Save details for the end of the discussion.

Mr. Lipo stated that he is proud to have been part of the Commission. Only a small percentage of problem projects get most of the publicity. It is a good fight worth fighting. 90 percent of the projects go well. Don't throw out good things for a small percentage of people at either end.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he is hearing that the Guidelines are the crux of what they do. They should work for the Commission and homeowners. They should be enforced. Different opinions are respectfully heard. There is always some gray area and interpretation. There are big ordinance issues such as COA vs. Advisory review, windows and vinyl siding. Should vinyl be allowed at all?

Commissioner Eakin stated that vinyl siding is inappropriate to the entire community. Vinyl and aluminum siding should be banned.

Mr. Freerksen stated that Mike Jackson recently did a cost study of wood siding vs. hardboard.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that Commissioner Heitzman forwarded a window study as well. Solar panels will come up. The Guidelines don't want to see them from the street. He is concerned about avoiding environmental issues.

Planner Kaarre stated that they should research sustainable approaches and products.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that historic preservation is always sustainable. It is hard to keep up with new approaches.

Commissioner Eakin stated that they will see a lot more sustainable issues. There is a smart house at the Museum of Science and Industry. Lake Forest, IL and Whitefish, WI have nice illustrated guidelines.

Ms. Doty stated that preservation and sustainability topics are offered at many conferences.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they should outline how historic preservation is not just about old buildings – values, design, compatibility, scale, massing. He likes Frank's idea about looking at projects.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that it would be helpful to see completed projects.

Mr. Freerksen suggested looking at the Blondeel House on N. Elmwood.

Commissioner Eakin stated that the Commission has quality debates as projects are discussed in an open forum with a nice mix of lay people and professionals. The value of interpretation is important. They need good compatible projects. He would like to see more modern architecture.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they need consistency in defense of the Guidelines, but there is interpretation. They will start the discussion at the next meeting. They could start at the beginning and work their way through.

Commissioner Susmilch suggested setting targets for each meeting for focus. Coordinate projects recommended by Frank for each section.

Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they will start with definitions at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Architectural Review Committee: Report on January 8, 2009 meeting. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission.

217 S. Euclid Avenue: Planner Kaarre provided an update. Following the Commission's request for review by the Village Attorney, Staff met to update him on the project. He determined that the violation was mainly procedural in nature and suggested a fine of \$500 to the contractor. He also suggested including in the letter a notice that the contractor's license will be revoked for a year for a third violation. Commissioner Susmilch stated that in addition they should clarify who is responsible and make sure the owner and contractor are both on the notice. Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he is disappointed in that legal opinion. Commissioner Niermann suggested they have the owner and/or contractor sign a notice that they acknowledge they are working in a historic district. Commissioner Lempera stated that the owner should ultimately be responsible. Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that more should have been done with this. Commissioner Lempera suggested talking to Trustee Johnson regarding the decision. Commissioner Susmilch stated that it wouldn't hurt to touch base with Trustee Johnson about the issues. They are very upset with the Village Attorney's decision. It's a slap in the face to the Commission. They are not enforcing the ordinance. Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he will talk with Trustee Johnson.

213-215 Harrison Street: Acting Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that there was recently an article in the paper that said the Village might enforce repair or demolition of this building. There are storefront issues. He discussed this with Ray Johnson. It's a beautiful building. He asked if the Commission should comment on it.

There was consensus among the Commission that it would be in the best interest of the street to repair and reuse the building rather than demolish it. The building has good

features. They should avoid creating a hole in the street wall. Their main concern is the street façade. They asked Staff to write a letter to the Building Department on their behalf.

Commission Chair Position: Planner Kaarre updated the Commission that Chair Nick Kalogeresis has officially left the Commission. His second term expires in February. He was originally planning to stay on until the March 2009 meeting, but his work schedule will prevent this. Commissioner Tom Bassett-Dilley has been asked to take the Chair position. He will be Acting Chair until officially appointed by the Village President and Board of Trustees.

ADJOURN

Motion by Susmilch to adjourn. Second by Niermann. Motion approved: 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm. Minutes prepared by Doug Kaarre, Urban Planner.

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