

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission**  
**July 9, 2009 Meeting Minutes**  
**Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers – 7:30 pm**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**MINUTES**

*Motion by Susmilch to approve the June 11, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Diamond. Motion approved 6-0.*

**NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gary Barnes, Oak Park resident, stated that he has attended many other commissions and the public is not engaged very much. He is the only one doing preservation any more. The Village doesn't work for residents who don't have money – only those who can afford to hire people. He discussed climate change. People who did their own restoration work used to be nurtured by the Village. The need commissions to start encouraging people to work with their hands.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

None

**REGULAR AGENDA**

- A. **Architectural Review Guidelines** – Discussion of Potential Updates Continued from the June 11, 2009 meeting.

Commissioner Eakin stated that the draft New Building Policy he prepared is a combination of other communities plus some new information he wrote. The introduction is to set the tone – the community is a grid, transit-oriented with a wealth of great buildings. The policy should address the history and context. He read from the second paragraph:

*“The policy does not prescribe specific architectural styles or images, nor does it encourage direct imitations of the past or radical departures from the existing design context. There are many appropriate design responses to a given situation. Architecture is an expression of its time responding to the moment. The policy is concerned with whether the design respects the project’s context and consciously responds to patterns and rhythms of the streetscape with a design that is compatible and that will contribute to the quality of the neighborhood.”*

The rest of the policy is broken down into pieces. He reviewed two photographs showing urban context and scale.

Commissioner Susmilch recommended including both good and bad examples in the Guidelines. One good example of context is on the 300 block of S. Oak Park Avenue – a row of two-flats with a four-story building in the middle.

Commissioner Diamond also suggested the 800 block of Columbian.

Commissioner Eakin stated that he envisioned using good and bad examples. He reviewed five additional photographs showing inappropriate bulk, garage doors facing the street, permastone cladding on a brick cottage, replacement windows, steel awning, ramp garages down a half level from the street which destroys the street rhythm, an appropriate garage located behind the house at the end of the driveway, and new construction that ignores the context – iron fence and large solar panels. This section could be illustrated very well.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that the siding issue deals with integrity, aesthetics and appearance.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that there are issues with solar panels. The Guidelines don't allow for them if they are visible from the street.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they need to re-think some of these issues. There are many different types of solar panels now.

Commissioner Diamond stated that they could also review them on a case by case basis.

Chair Bassett-Dilley encouraged them to start with garages.

Commissioner Heitzman suggested they find good examples of new construction to show.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he has done five new houses in Oak Park, two with Drew – the 800 block of Belleforte and Clinton and Adams.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that there is a difference between additions and new construction, though there are similarities. Maybe they should combine the chapters together. There is a book by Tyler that outlines three approaches to additions or new construction: 1) match a particular style, 2) compatible but different, and 3) contrasting. Good architecture could have a nice design in all three categories.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that it is often a question of scale. With an addition the focus is on the historic building; with a new building the focus is on the street context.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that floor additions are also an issue.

Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that there are some organizational questions in the document. Some parts might be better located in the Guidelines preamble. We shouldn't single out Frank Lloyd Wright too much. Use compatible vs. contextual.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that context is when buildings are comfortable in their settings.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that they should keep it in this section. It helps to learn about context.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that garage fronts and “pop-tops” don’t work in Oak Park. Some call them “starter castles.” There is a book by Sarah Suzanka called “The Not So Big House” which is an excellent reference. Garage location is an issue. They should use familiar and cultural terms – building types, garage location.

Chair Bassett-Dilley proposed adding a section about siting – the main building and accessory buildings.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that front porches and the garage on the alley are typical in Oak Park.

Commissioner Eakin stated that the Gold Coast in Chicago became so popular that everything was torn down to make way for more people. There is only a small portion left.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that she’s not a big fan of developments that use alleys as streets. They aren’t pedestrian friendly.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they do provide more density, such as Transit Oriented Development (TODs).

Commissioner Heitzman stated that the Village created design guidelines for new construction which is still on the shelf. They were okay but formulaic. He likes the idea of showing both good and bad examples in the guidelines.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that there are a number of points to review. They should tread cautiously using illustrations of local builders; however they do need examples. They should avoid making it personal.

Chair Bassett-Dilley suggested removing the third paragraph about architects.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that people may skip to one section and miss the introduction/preamble.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he liked the mention of zoning. They should add width to the text.

Commissioner Susmilch suggested adding lot coverage as well. They can edit the text down for captions under photographs.

Planner Kaarre recommended focusing on content at this time. When all the different sections of the Guidelines have been revised, they can discuss the format then.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they shouldn't refer to uses in the height section. The massing section is great.

Commissioner Eakin stated that he got that from "Getting Your House Right."

Commissioner Susmilch stated that they should refer to other sections, like Siding and Roofs. Evoke historic style vs. replicate; contemporary vs. historic styles.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they can't regulate style.

Planner Kaarre suggested having separate Guidelines for the Gunderson Historic District because it is such a uniform environment.

Commissioner Susmilch stated that an alternative could be to refer to uniform streetscapes in these Guidelines. They need some specifics to lead in certain directions in some cases. She suggested moving the style and compatibility sections.

The Commission discussed attached garages that weren't visible from the street. One example is on Cuyler at Ontario or Erie.

Next month they will review the Accessibility section and other short sections as determined by Staff at a later date.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Architectural Review Committee:** Report on June 24, 2009 meeting. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, July 22.

**Education Committee:** Report on June 25, 2009 meeting. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission. The next meeting will be on Thursday, July 23.

**HPC Educational Workshops:** The next workshop will be held on Tuesday, July 14 at Pleasant Home. The speaker will be Vince Michael discussing Architectural Styles.

**217 S. Euclid Avenue:** Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that there is no update yet on the proposed fines for violating the Certificate of Appropriateness.

#### **ADJOURN**

*Motion by Susmilch to adjourn. Second by Niermann. Motion approved: 6-0.*

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

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