

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
September 10, 2009 Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers – 7:30 pm**

ROLL CALL

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

Chair Bassett-Dilley introduced new commissioner Joerg Albrecht. Joerg is an architectural historian from Germany and he is looking forward to hearing from a European perspective.

MINUTES

Motion by Morris to approve the August 13, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Diamond. Motion approved 7-0.

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

None

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Public Hearing for Historic Landmark Designation: 175-181 Linden Avenue/643-645 Ontario Street

Chair Bassett-Dilley opened the public hearing and provided an overview of the process. He read into the record two letters received from the public:

- 1) A petition signed by nine of the condo owners located within the property under consideration for landmark designation indicating their support for the nomination.
- 2) A letter from Karen Doty, 174 N. Euclid, indicating support for the nomination.

Brian DeVinck, 181 Linden Avenue #2, stated that he is the president of the condominium association and submitted the nomination on their behalf. This is the only Prairie style apartment building and is an important work by architect John Van Bergen. The residents appreciate the building and the Prairie style design extends to the interior as well. The condo rules state that the owners should provide their best efforts to maintain and restore the building to what has been lost. They feel that the Landmark rules are no more restrictive. The building was converted to condominiums in 1977.

Chair Bassett-Dilley asked if there are other Prairie style apartment buildings.

Mr. DeVinck stated that William Drummond designed a few, but they are Prairie on the exterior only. There is another Prairie style apartment building on Scoville also designed by Van Bergen, but that was reconfigured from a Victorian house.

There was no public testimony in opposition to the nomination.

Commissioner Lempera asked about the window replacement program.

Planner Kaarre explained that the original casement windows were replaced with sliding windows in the 1977 conversion. The Commission approved a replacement program a year ago for casement windows. Several owners have completed the replacement.

Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that the nomination outlines this. It will happen over time.

Commissioner Eakin stated that he had the opportunity to visit the building and meet with the owners. This building was born of the place where we reside and is a Prairie School building. Van Bergen buildings are very livable and high quality. This is a very nice piece of architecture with a very enthusiastic group of owners. The designation is perfect.

Motion by Albrecht to accept the landmark nomination report for 175-181 Linden Avenue/643-645 Ontario Street as the findings of fact. Second by Eakin. Motion approved 7-0.

Motion by Vitello to forward the findings of fact and resolution to the Village Board of Trustees recommending approval of 175-181 Linden Avenue/643-645 Ontario Street as a Historic Landmark. Second by Albrecht. Motion approved 7-0.

Planner Kaarre outlined the proposed dates the Village Board will review the application.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that it was a great application with a lot of background on Van Bergen.

Commissioner Vitello noted that there is book by Martin Hackl that has an inventory of all Van Bergen's properties.

Motion by Eakin to close the public hearing. Second by Lempera. Motion approved 7-0.

B. **Architectural Review Guidelines** – Discussion of Potential Updates Continued from the August 13, 2009 meeting.

Paint Policy

Commissioner Lempera noted that the Commission does not currently review paint colors. The Guidelines only recommend on how to remove paint. He looked at other towns when preparing the revisions. He noted that some consultants do color schemes.

Commissioner Morris noted that the content of the revised policy is wonderful. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) also consults on color schemes.

Chair Bassett-Dilley suggested referencing color consultants. They should also mention doing original color analysis. He referred to the ticket booth at 313 Forest.

Commissioner Morris stated that they should encourage color analysis, though it may be cost prohibitive for most people.

Commissioner Lempera mentioned that sometimes you can find a piece with original colors that has been covered.

Commissioner Vitello noted that Evergreen Studios in Oak Park does color analysis.

Commissioner Morris noted that many paint companies have historic color lines for different periods like Victorian, Colonial, etc. Some have free software you can download and do your own color schemes. She will get a source from IHPA.

Commissioner Eakin stated that earlier color palettes are often more limited. Later color palettes can also be historic.

Chair Bassett-Dilley noted a good source is “A Century of Color,” by Roger Moss.

Planner Kaarre noted that there are several good articles from the Old House Journal that he shares with people when they ask about color schemes.

Commissioner Morris noted that Unity Temple is currently doing an interior color analysis. She asked if they should add a separate section about stucco.

There was discussion about stucco deterioration and removal for the restoration of wood siding underneath, as well as various patterns, mixes and stains. It was felt that a section on stucco would be appropriate.

Mechanical Units Policy

Commissioner Lempera stated that he tried to put all items that extend from a building in one category, including mechanical/electrical boxes, antennas, energy retrofitting.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he was planning to do a separate section for energy retrofitting. Houses were historically massed and fenestrated for energy comfort utilizing the site and shade trees. How do they deal with solar and wind power, etc. They are an extension of exterior mechanical equipment and could fall under this category. They should encourage these on garages or where they are not visible. What should they do if someone is trying to do zero energy or if its visible. Maybe they should consider allowing it if it can meet a demonstrable level since its reversible. That seems to be the only acceptable reason to him.

Commissioner Lempera noted that there is a “green block” on the 300 block of S. Humphrey. They should follow-up on what they did there.

Commissioner Albrecht stated that electricity price is important. It's harder to function completely off the grid – too cool in summer, not warm enough in winter.

Commissioner Morris suggested contact the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) to see if they are tracking commissions dealing with sustainability. The National Park Service is looking at greening the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Chair Bassett-Dilley discussed energy auditors. There are two in Oak Park as well as the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

Commissioner Lempera discussed the painting of roof vents to match the roof and which section it should be in.

OTHER BUSINESS

Architectural Review Committee: Report on August 26, 2009 meeting. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 23. Chair Bassett-Dilley provided an overview of the projects discussed.

Open Space Preservation: Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that they can't protect significant open spaces from subdivision and new construction, which is only Advisory review. He discussed the yard space between 313 and 333 Forest Avenue which has the potential for a new house between Wright's Hills-DeCaro and Moore houses. He did a quick survey and found 12 properties where this might occur. They should encourage Landmark designation of these properties, as well as conservation easements and send letters suggesting this.

Commissioner Morris noted that Landmark review would be better than changing the zoning. Easements may be problematic to use right now.

Commissioner Albrecht suggesting adding an Open Space Preservation section in the Guidelines.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that they need more than Guidelines. In some cases they need to prevent the subdivision of the property. He's concerned about what will happen when development pressures increase. People from the city want new houses in Oak Park.

Commissioner Morris stated that they could be more aggressive than sending letters. Invite them to coffee, educate them on the issues.

Commissioner Albrecht stated that the Commission could write Landmark nominations.

Commissioner Morris suggested enlisting the help of the Wright Preservation Trust or the National Trust to encourage Landmark designation. They should back up with statistics and examples.

Chair Bassett-Dilley agreed that they should have a general policy with a specific inventory.

Commissioner Morris advocated for the preservation of Ranch houses as well. They shouldn't encourage their demolition.

2010 Commission Work Plan: Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the proposed work plan.

Chair Bassett-Dilley recommended revising the ordinance/guidelines priority and postponing the Chicago Avenue architectural survey.

Planner Kaarre discussed the issue of creating a new Stone Sidewalk committee. This will be further discussed at the November 12 meeting.

Commissioner Morris noted that advocacy groups can help ensure compliance with the Programmatic Agreement on preserving stone sidewalks. She provided an overview of the Preservation Awards event proposal and Day In Our Village plans which were discussed at the Education Committee. The awards event will help grow interest for the program and help build up advocacy lists. Unity Temple has agreed to host the first year. The DIOV event will include more activities, better displays and hands-on demonstrations.

Planner Kaarre inquired on whether the Commission wished to pursue expansion of the local boundaries of the FLW-PSA Historic District in 2010 or focus on the NHL district.

Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that the sooner the local boundaries are expanded the better for those neighborhoods. There is development pressure and have been several teardowns in these areas, including the 400 block of N. Maple.

Commissioner Morris noted concern that people would think National Register designation automatically leads to local designation. They downplay the regulatory side yet the HPC wants to have more say in what happens. It's hard to make that appealing. They should first do outreach and find supporters.

Planner Kaarre noted that there are five distinct expansion areas around the district and they could be handled separately.

Commissioner Albrecht asked about property values in the historic districts.

Commissioner Morris noted that its not really an issue in Oak Park as there is not enough differentiation in neighborhoods. The argument here is protecting character and values, not increasing them.

Planner Kaarre noted that they should investigate permit waivers for Landmarks.

Commissioner Eakin noted that Glencoe expedites permits for restoration.

The Commission approved the 2010 Work Plan as revised by a vote of 7-0.

ADJOURN

Motion by Morris to adjourn. Second by Diamond. Motion approved: 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm. Minutes prepared by Doug Kaarre, Urban Planner.

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