

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
January 14, 2010 Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Room 101 – 7:30 pm

ROLL CALL

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

MINUTES

Motion by Heitzman to approve the November 12, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Niermann. Motion approved 6-0.

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

None

REGULAR AGENDA

- A. **Historic Landmarks: Preliminary Determination of Eligibility** – Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for four Historic Landmark nominations.

Planner Kaarre introduced the Historic Landmark nominations for 639 Fair Oaks Avenue, 178 N. Euclid Avenue, 231 N. Euclid Avenue, and 647 Linden Avenue. 639 Fair Oaks (Charles Schwerin House) was constructed in 1908 and designed by architect E. E. Roberts. 178 N. Euclid (Russell Wallace House) was constructed in 1906 and designed by architect E. E. Roberts. 231 N. Euclid (Edward and Caroline McCready House) was constructed in 1907 and designed by architects Spencer and Powers. 647 Linden (Charles Castle House) was constructed in 1924 and designed by architect Frederick Schock.

Commissioner Heitzman noted that 639 Fair Oaks and 178 N. Euclid were built by the same contractor (William Pillinger). Both nominations should include the same information about Pillinger.

Motion by Heitzman to approve a Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for the Historic Landmark nomination for 639 Fair Oaks Avenue under four Criteria for Designation as outlined in the nomination. Second by Niermann. Motion approved 6-0.

Motion by Heitzman to approve a Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for the Historic Landmark nomination for 231 N. Euclid Avenue under three Criteria for Designation as outlined in the nomination. Second by Vitello. Motion approved 6-0.

Motion by Morris to approve a Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for the Historic Landmark nomination for 178 N. Euclid Avenue under three Criteria for Designation as outlined in the nomination. Second by Niermann. Motion approved 6-0.

It was noted that architect Frederick Schock was a non-conformist who had a boldness and sense of style. The “castle” design of the crenellated parapets was a play on the name of the owner – Charles Castle.

Sheila Mack, property owner of 647 Linden, stated that there is a huge vault in the basement original to the house. Mr. Castle was a banker.

Motion by Morris to approve a Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for the Historic Landmark nomination for 647 Linden Avenue under four Criteria for Designation as outlined in the nomination. Second by Diamond. Motion approved 6-0.

It was suggested that landmark nomination be made more widely available so the public can read the histories of the buildings. They should also be distributed to the Historical Society and Public Library and put on the Village web site. Riverside has an interactive map with Landmark summaries.

B. HPC 10-01: 332 Wisconsin Avenue (Mohanraj/Whyte) – Certificate of Appropriateness for rear, side and front additions (*Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District*): Forwarded from the Architectural Review Committee

Property owner Mary Anne Mohanraj and architect David Muriello were present.

Planner Kaarre introduced the application. The proposal is to construct a rear two-story addition, expansion of the attic upwards, a one-story conservatory addition on the south side elevation, and a new turret addition in the northwest corner of the roof of the front façade.

Ms. Mohanraj stated that they need 6 bedrooms, they have two kids and they both work at home. She is a novelist and he is a mathematician at UIC. The house has been empty for close to 3 years. There is water damage. They have repaired what they could. The original wood floors are under the existing floors. The front porch was added about 1911-13. The proposed turret will help make the angled room more usable. There is a very steep roof in the attic and they need more head room. The conservatory is not necessary but would be nice to have. The rear addition will expand the tiny kitchen into something more usable, with a master suite on the second floor. They plan to restore the original wood windows and storms. Pam Whitehead is their contractor. They are keeping the wood siding. She provided photos of other Queen Anne homes in Oak Park with front turrets.

Chair Bassett-Dilley reviewed the New Addition Policy in the Guidelines, which deals with compatibility and keeping with the style of the house. There is a dividing line of what’s permissible between aesthetically pleasing and historical. You don’t want to create a false sense of history.

Commissioner Diamond stated that the Guidelines allow new turrets if they are characteristic of the style. That is why they encouraged the owner to find other Oak Park examples.

Commissioner Morris noted that the historic character of the house is that its been added on to over time to make it usable. The additional go along with the spirit of the house.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that in most of the examples shown the turrets turn the corner at an angle or 45 degree angle. He understands that a square turret has more usable space; it's functioning as a dormer. The house across the street added a similar turret in 1996.

Commissioner Vitello stated that other turrets look like part of the house.

Commissioner Diamond stated that the turret helps to balance and hide the attic addition.

Chair Bassett-Dilley suggested bringing the scale of the turret down more. He can see that it meets the Guidelines. A turret is more fanciful, sculptural, etc. It should be more embellished based on the style.

Mr. Muriello stated that they would be happy to look at changes to its design.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that the other turret across the street is flush with the wall. This turret would look better flush with the side wall.

Commissioner Niermann stated that other turrets step out, not back. The shed roof is historic but not original.

Chair Bassett-Dilley noted that greenhouses are also permitted under #8 of the New Addition Policy. The conservatory will be somewhat visible and is characteristic of the style.

Ms. Mohanraj stated that it's a different material and not a false sense of history. It will create a distinction. The frame will be mahogany with glass roof and walls.

Commissioner Morris thanked the owners for the care, thought and sensitivity put into this project. She is impressed with the research that has been done.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that the conservatory will be a great asset. Notations should be added to the drawings noting materials, that you're keeping the windows, etc.

Mr. Muriello stated that the new siding will match the existing exactly.

Commissioner Heitzman recommended replacing the shakes on the mansard with shingles.

Commissioner Vitello noted that the shadow of original siding may be underneath.

Motion by Heitzman to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for 332 Wisconsin Avenue based on plans by Muriello Architects dated and received January 7, 2010 with the following conditions: a) Notes should be added to the elevations showing existing and new materials; and b) Any revisions to the approved project shall be submitted for review prior to construction. Motion approved 6-0.

C. **Architectural Review Guidelines:** Discussion of New Addition Policy

Commissioner Heitzman reviewed his proposal. He utilized the National Park Service in the document and for definitions. The mention of color is for permanent changes, not paint color. He defines “character-defining features.”

The Commission discussed the idea of an addition being at least 1/3 back from the front façade. It makes it clear to the owners. They discussed the requirement that the roofs should match the house. Different roofs can be compatible. They need to define compatibility.

Chair Bassett-Dilley is concerned about being too specific in the Guidelines.

The Commission discussed the idea of a separate set of guidelines for the Gunderson Historic District since it is a homogenous group of buildings.

Chair Bassett-Dilley stated that he doesn’t want separate guidelines for separate districts. The guidelines should be clear enough without being too specific or too vague and cover all different types of buildings.

The Commission discussed the theory on limiting designs and the fact that this proposal would prevent modern additions. They discussed energy examples. There are different theories on appearance and changes to historic buildings – matching versus compatible.

Chair Bassett-Dilley referenced the guidelines from Brookline, MA. They have photos and are concise. When the guidelines do get specific, it’s a good place for illustrations or photos. Perhaps a graphic or flow chart showing the application and review process.

The Commission discussed the idea of not exceeding 75% versus setting an addition 1/3 back. They agreed to change the term “match” throughout the document. They will add features in each section on ways to achieve that policy using words or illustrations. Dormers should be compatible with the character of the house. They discussed new floor additions and raised roofs. They need to get photos of examples of both before and after for further discussion on whether to keep allowing them. They change the character of the house but can be compatible. Maybe they should take out and let the applicants make a case for them each time. They should cross reference with the porch section.

OTHER BUSINESS

Architectural Review Committee: Report on December 14, 2009 meeting. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission. Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the projects discussed, which included revisions to an approved COA at 522 N. Marion (Frank Lloyd Wright HD) for a rear addition which was approved; rear, side and front additions at 332 Wisconsin (Ridgeland HD) which was forwarded to the HPC; façade alterations at 619 Pleasant (Ridgeland HD) which was partially approved; and discussion of proposed façade alterations to the new townhomes under construction at 1001-13 South (250 feet from a Landmark).

Education Committee: Report on the December 3, 2009 and January 5, 2010 meetings. The meeting notes were provided to the Commission. Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the meetings. The Committee has been discussing changes to the Preservation Awards process and is proposing a new award event at Unity Temple in the Fall. They are discussing more activities for the Day In Our Village booth, in addition to teaming up with the Historical Society and the Unity Temple Restoration Foundation. They are also proposing a series of educational classes on historic preservation and sustainability through the Park District, hopefully in cooperating with the Environment and Energy Advisory Commission. They have also been working on the third installment of the new HPC Newsletter.

Commissioner Morris urged the Commission to take the Certified Local Government survey that was forwarded by email. It will assist IHPA in providing educational opportunities for CLGs and is being funded by the National Trust. She also encouraged attendance at the NAPC Forum in Grand Rapids, MI in July. This national conference of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is held every other year.

1100-06 Chicago Avenue (Petersen's). Planner Kaarre requested feedback from the Commission on the replacement storefronts recently installed. The work was done without a building permit and without Historic review. The rest of the terra cotta on the first floor was restored.

The Commission felt that the new storefront design was not compatible with the original storefront that was removed in terms of design and materials. There were changes in design, detail and proportion that negatively impact the historic character of the building. They discussed whether the COA process should be strictly enforced through public hearings. The majority of the commission felt that they would only be on the receiving end of bad publicity if they were to insist on the new storefronts being removed. They also did not feel they would have Board or public support. The Commission determined that they would not pursue punitive measures as they did not feel there would be support for taking out the new storefronts and replacing them with a more appropriate design. They were also concerned as the Guidelines do not specifically address storefronts. They suggested Staff send a letter outlining their concerns and encouraging the owner to redesign the storefronts more in keeping with the original design.

ADJOURN

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

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 p.m. Minutes prepared by Doug Kaarre, Urban Planner.

U:\CPD_Strategic\Planning\Historic Preservation\HPC Agendas and Minutes\2010\2010 Minutes\01-14-10 HPC Minutes.doc