

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
August 19, 2020 – Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm

Roll Call

Present: Interim Chair Rebecca Houze and Commissioners Jennifer Bridge, Sandra Carr, Monique Chase, Lou Garapolo, David Sokol, and Noel Weidner
Absent: None
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner
Attorney: Greg Smith, Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins

Agenda Approval

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Sokol.
Motion approved 7-0.*

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the minutes for July 15, 2020, with the edits mentioned.
Second by Commissioner Bridge. Motion approved 7-0.*

Regular Agenda

- A. HPC2020-25: 318 S Cuyler Ave (Dan and Joia Kopelow):** Certificate of Appropriateness to add one window on side elevation to match existing windows (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

The architect, Robert Shemiot, and the homeowners, Joia and Dan Kopelow, were present. Mr. Shemiot said they are trying to match the historic windows and provide more sunlight to make the space for livable.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Weidner.

Commissioner Garapolo said the application looks good. Chair Houze said the proposal is sensitive in the way that the new window matches the historic window and she doesn't have any problems with it.

Motion by Commissioner Bridge to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the window as proposed. Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 7-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: None

HPC2020-26: 841 N Kenilworth Ave (Lori Weiss and Brad Wainer): Certificate of Appropriateness for a screened porch addition on the side elevation (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said the Commission should discuss the two options provided for the new column, wood or stucco, and determine whether one is more appropriate based on the Guidelines.

Lori Weiss and Brad Wainer, the homeowners, were present. Ms. Weiss said they would prefer the stucco if possible but they haven't received the cost estimates yet.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Bridge.

Commissioner Garapolo said the drawings make the columns look predominant but they are not—the stucco columns fade into the building. He said he initially preferred the wood as it would be a differentiation from the historic house but he expressed concern about its appearance next to the stucco column. He said he would prefer the stucco. Commissioner Bridge said the issue with the stucco is that it wouldn't differentiate enough. Commissioner Weidner agreed and said differentiation is his preference. Commissioner Sokol said he can live with either but agreed the wood would better differentiate the new and old. Commissioner Carr said she likes both. She said a stucco column was approved last year but the project was different. She said she prefers the wood as it looks more like a porch, particularly with the lighter wood apron at the bottom. Commissioner Chase agreed that the wood is better.

Chair Houze said from a historic preservation perspective, wood would create the required differentiation. The wood can be done in a way that is appropriate. She asked if anyone had an issue with the roof. Commissioner Garapolo said it looks fine.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the porch addition as proposed, with the condition that Option B, with the wood column, be used. Second by Commissioner Bridge. Motion approved 6-1.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: Commissioner Garapolo

- B. HPC2020-27: 239 S Kenilworth Ave (Arvind Rajagopal):** Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the existing, deteriorated front porch with a porch of increased depth and turned balusters (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview and said the Commission should in particular discuss the railing options provided by the homeowner, turned or flat-sawn, and provide conditions as needed to ensure the porch details meet the Guidelines.

Arvind Rajagopal, the homeowner, was present. Mr. Rajagopal said everything but the post and dentils have been substituted and the footings were not done correctly so it is unstable. He said he wants to use wood but is proposing an increased depth to eight feet for usability. He said he is willing to take the Commission's feedback on the baluster type and spacing.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Weidner.

Commissioner Sokol asked Planner Trexler if the house was likely to have had any porch originally. Planner Trexler said there was a house in this location in 1895 with a porch that appears similar in size. The house was subsequently added onto and Queen Anne style elements were likely added at that time, which would be within the period of significance for the historic district. Chair Houze asked about the supplementary photos from the 1980s. Mr. Rajagopal said he could not see the photos well; Planner Trexler said those likely did not depict the historic balusters but in one case it looked like there was turned balusters. Chair Houze agreed they were hard to see.

Commissioner Weidner noted the change in size and asked about how this aligns with the neighboring houses. Mr. Rajagopal said he doesn't have the exact measurements but he doesn't think it will be any closer to the street than his neighbors'. Commissioner Weidner said he knows there is some question about the original appearance but the turned columns are appropriate.

Commissioner Garapolo said the extension towards the street is really more of a zoning issue. He said the turned balusters are more appropriate and should have a two-inch spacing. He said the dentils at the top of the roof should be replicated. Commissioner Sokol agreed and said the dentils are a unifying aspect. Commissioners Bridge and Carr agreed. Commissioner Carr said she does not have an issue with change in size and thinks the flat sawn baluster would be out of scale for this porch. She said keeping an eye on the neighbor's porch is helpful.

Chair Houze agreed about the depth of the porch and recommended keeping in mind the rhythm of the street and the location of the neighbors' porches.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the porch replacement with the following conditions: turned balusters, two-inch baluster spacing, and replicated dentil detailing. Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 7-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: None

- C. HPC2020-28: Scoville Building (151 N Oak Park Ave) (Scoville Square Associations L.P.):** Certificate of Appropriateness to alter the east and south elevations as part of a larger interior renovation (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Douglas Gilbert, the architect, as well as John Reagan and Dennis Jones of Wintrust, were present. Mr. Jones provided a background of Wintrust and their plan to move to Oak Park. Mr. Gilbert gave an overview of the proposed changes at the east entry and for the north windows. He said the windows on the north will continue the rhythm on the street and they are proposing a community display at the end window as this cannot be a true window due to safety concerns. Mr. Jones said the windows will provide more light to the interior. He explained that removing the inset entry will provide two or three additional work spaces on the interior.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Weidner.

Commissioner Sokol said this building has gone through a lot of iterations and when it was restored they did not go back to all of the original materials but used fiberglass in some places. He said the Commission should discuss what is historically important and how they can make a usable space while retaining the most honest sense of the historic building possible.

Commissioner Garapolo said the north elevation is appropriate. He said he likes that the decorative trim will be restored but his problem is in eliminating the inset doors on the east. He said his recommendation would be to keep the doors and inset. Commissioner Weidner agreed and said he understands commercial spaces need to be flexible and things need to change but the inset appears to be historic. He said he likes the idea of bringing the windows down on the north and noted that this would be reversible.

Commissioner Bridge said she has to abstain from the discussion and vote.

Commissioner Carr agreed with Commissioners Garapolo and Weidner. She said getting rid of the inset makes it less flexible for future tenants. Mr. Jones asked if they can have the inset without the doors. Commissioner Weidner said this would be acceptable. Commissioner Garapolo agreed that the inset is important but could be infilled with a matching glass storefront. Commissioner Carr agreed the important part is the inset. Chair Houze asked Planner Trexler whether the doors are historic. Planner Trexler said the cast iron panels and columns are specifically mentioned as being historic but the doors are not. Mr. Gilbert said everything he's seen indicates that the cast iron piers are the only historic portion.

Commission Sokol said the design of the inset is important, not what's there. Commissioner Chase agreed that keeping the rhythm of the inset is important and they could either leave the doors or put in windows. Chair Houze agreed. She said she approved of the awnings and the restoration of cast iron elements.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for front elevation renovation with the condition that the inset on the east elevation and cast-iron elements be preserved. Second by Commissioner Weidner. Motion approved 6-1-0.

AYE: Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

Abstained: Commissioner Bridge

NAY: None

D. HPC2020-29:1118 Wenonah Ave (Floyd Mohler): Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish garage and build a new garage (Gunderson Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Floyd Mohler, the homeowner, was present. Mr. Mohler said the garage is in poor condition. At the north corner, there is 2 or 3 inches of sag, possibly due to a lack of gutters. On the north side there is air underneath the foundation and the foundation is folding. The decking on the roof and the wood paneled ceiling are sagging. In order to repair, they would have to lift the building and replace the foundation underneath but he does not think this is technically feasible. He said that not much of the garage is visible.

Motion by Commissioner Carr to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Garapolo.

Commissioner Garapolo said he agrees with the staff recommendation to use a 3" profile for the siding rather than 4". He said the window type should also be compatible with the house. Mr.

Mohler said he noticed several other garages in his neighborhood, including his neighbor's, which have 4" vinyl siding. He said the window will not be visible from the street.

Commissioner Weidner said the garage does not look like it needs to be torn down. Chair Houze agreed. She asked if the Commission would like to see more evidence. Commissioner Garapolo said the project should go to the Architectural Review Committee (ARC). Commissioner Sokol agreed. Mr. Mohler said he submitted additional photos and invited members of the Commission to visit his garage. He detailed some of the issues with the garage. Commissioner Garapolo said they understand but they need more information in the application.

Chair Houze said the Commission is bound by the Guidelines, which require repair unless it is too deteriorated to be repaired. She recommended that additional photos of deteriorated portions be provided and the contractor who has looked at it write a letter to this effect. She recommended bringing these items to the ARC. The Commission discussed the approval options.

Commissioner Sokol asked if the ARC can visit the building as part of their meeting. Attorney Smith said a public meeting cannot occur on private property. However, the members can go individually and bring that knowledge back to a properly noticed meeting.

Commissioner Carr discussed some of the photos and deterioration and noted that the garage is minimally visible.

Chair Houze asked what would happen if it doesn't pass. Planner Trexler said they would have to come back to the HPC with an altered application to meet the Guidelines. She recommended that the HPC let the applicant know specifically what should be provided, such as a letter from a structural engineer. Commissioner Carr said cost estimates of repair vs. replacement have been accepted in the past as well. Chair Houze said she doesn't want to set a precedent of making it easier to demolish historic garages and clear evidence of deterioration is needed. The Commission discussed taking no action and having ARC members visit the garage. Commissioner Bridge recommended a structural engineer or providing costs of repair vs. replace. Commissioner Houze said either of these would be helpful.

Following discussion, Chair Houze recommended a motion delegating approval authority to the ARC.

Motion by Commissioner Carr delegating Certificate of Appropriateness approval authority to the Architectural Review Committee. Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 7-0.

AYE: Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: None

- E. 7 Van Buren St (Oak Park Residence Corporation):** Review of proposed new building within 250 feet of two Oak Park Landmarks (the Poley Building at 408-410 S Austin Blvd and the Dorothy Manor Apartments at 424-426 S Austin Blvd).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said the applicant attended the ARC meeting on February 26, 2020.

The following people were present on behalf the applicant: David Pope, Owner, Oak Park Residence Corporation; Peter Bissen, Architect, Kahler Slater; Dan Causier, Designer, Kahler Slater; Tom

Bassett-Dilley, Certified Passive House Consultant, Tom Bassett-Dilley Architects; and Rick Ehlert, Construction Manager, Synergy Construction Group.

Mr. Pope gave an overview of the project. He discussed the proposed building's characteristics and described their intent, such as the colonnade on the north elevation designed to link the neighborhood with Austin and the park across the street. He said they attended the ARC meeting with two options and proceeded with the second design, which the ARC preferred. In response to the ARC comments, they considered glass at the mechanical room but did not think it would be appropriate. He said they have pulled the lobby to Austin Blvd, as discussed. The design with the glazing percentages and verticality reflects the historic buildings. They have also provided more realistic renderings, as requested.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Weidner.

Planner Trexler confirmed for Chair Houze that HPC's comments will also be provided to the Plan Commission as well as the applicant.

The Commission and Mr. Pope discussed the colonnade and connection to Austin. Mr. Causier noted there is a precedent for large overhangs of this type in Oak Park.

Chair Houze asked the Commissioners to address the scale and the overall massing and materials proposed. Commissioner Garapolo reiterated his comment from the ARC meeting, noting that the solid wall at the mechanical room is not a good relationship with the corner of the historic building, which features glass windows. He recommended moving the mechanical room or creating glass panels to mimic the lightness seen at the other end of the front façade. Mr. Pope said the discussed this and enumerated some of the issues they found. He said energy efficiency is affected by the building envelope and amount of glazing, but they can review whether alterations can be made at this corner. Commissioner Garapolo recommended opaque glass and said he would like the base at that corner to be lighter. Mr. Causier said they took cues from the building there currently, which does have a solid base at this corner, but they can look into this. Commissioner Garapolo said the other side of the building is very light and he would like to see this replicated near the historic building. Mr. Pope said they will consider this.

Commissioner Garapolo said his other concern at the ARC was the height, or bulk, of the building. He said it is nicely designed but he is struggling to relate the building to the historic buildings. Mr. Pope stepping the building back was discussed but it affects their goal of it being a net-zero building as well as also their intent to have affordable housing. Mr. Pope said they explored stepping the building back but the solar array would still need to be the same size. Commissioner Garapolo suggested removing the east half of the upper floors and said that it could be taller in the back.

Commissioner Weidner said he likes the direction the design is going, particularly the colonnade, the reference to the Midcentury building, and the lightwell adjacent to the landmark. He said he thinks the design and density should prevail and livening up this part of the village will go a long way towards promoting the preservation of the historic buildings on Austin. Commissioner Carr said she is excited something new will be built on Austin and she would be more concerned about the scale if it was south of the historic building; where currently located, most of the shade will fall on the parking lot. She said the design is well-proportioned and has horizontal lines and warmth reminiscent of the Prairie style and appropriate to Oak Park. Commissioners Bridge and Chase agreed. Chair Houze said they are apartments, so they are preserving the historic use of the block, and it is a nice addition to Oak Park's long history of progressive architecture. She said in terms of the aesthetics, she is concern that the landmarks will be diminished in size, but she appreciates

elements brought in to lighten the façade and play on some of the delicate decorative details found on the older buildings.

Commissioner Sokol agreed with Commissioner Garapolo's comment that, to whatever extent possible, the southeast corner be softened, possibly with a portion of opaque glass, to be more sympathetic to the lighter quality of the landmark. Mr. Pope reiterated that they will take a look at this.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Upcoming hearing:** Commissioner Garapolo asked what the topic of the hearing will be. Planner Trexler said the topic will be the 203 S Marion application heard by the HPC in June.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Chair Houze said several commissioners raised questions about diversifying the commission. She met with Clerk Scaman, Deputy Clerk Christina Waters, and Rebecca Andree, who serves on the Citizen Involvement Commission, to discuss what the commission can do. They recommended working with other commissions, such as the Community Relations Commission. Chair Houze asked the Commission to not just consider ways to diversify the commission, itself, but also exploring historic preservation's importance for community diversity, health, and sustainability. She said she spoke with Commissioner Chase, who attended the Dismantle Preservation virtual conference. Commissioner Chase gave a short explanation of the conference, explaining some of the ideas brought up in the portion titled Identifying and Tackling Implicit Bias in Preservation. Chair Houze recommended collaborating with other commissions and possibly having a speaker. She said she thinks this fits well into the work plan as community outreach and public education.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Garapolo.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Weidner, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: None

Commissioner Sokol not in attendance for vote to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.