

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
July 13, 2023 – Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm

Roll Call

Present: Acting Chair Andrew Elders and Commissioners Asha Andriana, David Bates, Monique Chase, Sarah Doherty, Scot Mazur, Amy Peterson, and Mark Weiner
Absent: Commissioner Nicole Napper and Chair Lou Garapolo
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner

Agenda Approval

Motion by Commissioner Mazur to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Weiner. Motion approved 8-0.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Chase to approve the minutes for June 8, 2023. Second by Commissioner Bates. Motion approved 8-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. Advisory Review: 328 N Cuyler Ave (Damon Wardlow):** Advisory Review of proposed new coach house (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. Planner Trexler read written comments from Chair Garapolo, who was absent from the meeting. Chair Garapolo wrote that the details of the garage should match the house and the siding should be a wood type material. He wrote the “metal grille” aesthetic is not compatible.

Present on behalf of the project were Damon Wardlow, the homeowner, and Thomas Donalek, the architect. Mr. Donalek said they developed the design to be sympathetic to the house and within budget constraints. He said they will develop framing for a property balcony and the Juliette balconies will be temporary. Window sizes are constrained by budget.

Acting Chair Elders asked about the roof pitch in comparison with the house. Mr. Donalek said it will be 45%, which is close. They’re working within zoning constraints. Acting Chair Elders said the Juliette balcony doesn’t bother him, especially since it’s facing the backyard. Commissioner Peterson asked for more information about the future balcony and Mr. Donalek explained.

Commissioner Chase asked about the divided windows. Mr. Wardlow said this is not what is on the house and he can take the grilles off. Commissioner Doherty recommended matching the windows in the attic and using 3 lights divided vertically.

The Commission discussed the window locations and the architect explained concerns about safety. The Commission provided siding recommendations, advising wood or a wood product without a stamped wood grain.

B. HPC2023-29: 609 S Elmwood Ave (Andrew France): Certificate of Appropriateness to replace concrete and brick stair with composite stairs and a wood railing (Gunderson Historic District).

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview, including that it is unlikely that the brick is original but no date has been ascertained. She said Chair Garapolo wrote that he agrees with staff comments.

Andrew and Anne France, the homeowners, along with Paz Lopez, the contractor, were present. Mr. France declined to address the HPC.

Motion by Commissioner Doherty to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Chase.

Acting Chair Elders said the more solid knee walls are appropriate. They don't have to be brick. The most appropriate replacement would be stucco. Railings markedly alter the character of the entrance.

Commissioner Doherty said these entries are unique. There are only five houses like this and only two that don't have a roof covering. She agreed with Acting Chair Elders that a solid knee wall would be most appropriate, whether stucco or wood. These houses tie the stairs directly into the house rather than being a separate porch.

Commissioner Andriana agreed with Acting Chair Elders and Commissioner Doherty. She said stucco is the most appropriate.

Acting Chair Elders asked about the brick and Mr. France provided a sample. Acting Chair Elders said it's a thin brick. He asked what is in the core of the knee wall and Ms. France said it's white and crumbling, it is not brick.

Commissioner Peterson said she agrees it should be stucco, it should match the rest of the house. Railings were discussed; Commissioner Doherty recommended a rail could be added. Mr. France asked if there are funds from the HPC and Acting Chair Elders said there is a financial hardship process. Planner Trexler explained. She asked the Commission about a wood-clad knee wall as an option that could be less expensive. The Commission agreed it would be more appropriate than a railing.

The Commission discussed the height of the knee wall and options, including stepping it down if the homeowner prefers. Commissioner Peterson said 810 Gunderson is an example of a stepped knee wall.

Acting Chair Elders summarized the Commission's recommendation that it's probably the original configuration and was rebuilt with brick. There's no historic precedent for a balustrade. He asked if the homeowners have objections if they make the knee wall a condition of approval. Mr. and Ms. France said they do not.

Commissioner Chase made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed with the condition that the stairs have a stucco or wood-clad knee wall. Second by Commissioner Mazur. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Bates, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Mazur, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Weiner, and Acting Chair Elders

NAY: None

- C. HPC2023-30: 739 N Marion St (Steve Citko):** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish historic garage (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments, which included a recommendation that a third-party report be provided.

Steve Citko, the homeowner and structural engineer, was present. He described the state of the garage and the efforts he has made to repair it. He said lifting it is dangerous and not feasible. The owner who built the garage was a carpenter; he probably got the wood from tearing down outhouses and chicken coops.

Motion by Commissioner Doherty to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Weiner.

Commissioner Weiner asked about the project timing and Mr. Citko said they would move forward right away. Commissioner Chase asked if he has records of talking to people about lifting the garage and Mr. Citko said these were all phone conversations. Commissioner Chase said she has no issue with this report. Commissioner Doherty said she's ok with it as well, since he's not financially benefitting. Mr. Citko said ethically and professionally, he wouldn't have said a word differently. Commissioner Doherty said this is more detailed than any other report they've had.

Acting Chair Elders agreed and said the sinking corner is concerning. In response to Chair Garapolo's written comment, he said it was financial interest. There's nothing really questionable about this. There's nothing new a different structural engineer would provide. Commissioner Chase said most of the third-party requests were architects.

Mr. Citko said William Schafer was a carpenter, he built this one and two across the street, this was his house. He did a good job on the house, but the sleeping porch and garage were not the same quality.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Mazur. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Bates, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Mazur, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Weiner, and Acting Chair Elders

NAY: None

- D. 719 N Marion St (Johnny Strauss), Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District:**
- a. **HPC2023-31:** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish historic garage.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments that he agreed with the submittal information.

Kim Smith, an architect but not associated with the new construction, was present. Also present was Johnny Strauss, the homeowner. Ms. Smith explained the issues with the current garage. Mr. Strauss said they need a new garage that will fit their cars and serve as storage. He said when they purchased the house, they couldn't get home insurance because of the state of the garage. They managed to convince the carrier, but the garage has been a concern since day one. The wall is pulling away from the framing.

Motion by Commissioner Doherty to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Weiner.

Commissioner Chase said she agrees with the request. The Commission confirmed Ms. Smith is not the architect of the new garage.

Commissioner Weiner said he will recuse himself as this was his architect.

Commissioner Doherty made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Mazur. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Bates, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Mazur, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Weiner, and Acting Chair Elders

NAY: None

b. **Advisory Review:** Proposed new garage.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments, which agreed with staff comments and said the rear elevation should not be a blank wall.

Mr. Strauss said there's probably two feet between the garage and the garage on the lot behind. They could put a window on the rear, but they'd be looking at a wall. It wouldn't be visible. Acting Chair Elders asked about the new location of the garage and Mr. Strauss said they couldn't find a better location for the size of garage they want.

Commissioner Doherty said what is presented is much better than the existing garage. Mr. Strauss said they've been through this process before. Commissioner Elders suggested permeable pavers or two ribbons of concrete with grass down the middle. Mr. Strauss said they may have to do that as they are close on lot coverage.

The Commission discussed the glass pattern on the windows. Mr. Strauss said many of the windows are not historic, but they have some Prairie style casements and a historic double-hung sash window with no grid. Commissioner Elders recommended going without a grid and matching the house as closely as possible. He said the design looks nice.

E. **327 S East Ave (MaryLou & Mark Tawney), Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District:**

a. **HPC2023-26:** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish historic coach house.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She said the applicant previously attended the June meeting and the HPC requested an updated structural engineer's letter, which has been supplied. She read Chair Garapolo's written comment that the modified letter is acceptable.

Tom Bassett-Dilley, the architect, was present. He said the only difference is that they've supplied the structural engineer's letter. He said there was concern about whether the building would be able to be maintained if shored, and whether it would be safe for workers.

Motion by Commissioner Doherty to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Weiner.

Commissioner Andriana said she agrees with Chair Garapolo's comments, what is in the packet suffices. Acting Chair said he agrees too. It's a compelling case, it's a shame.

Commissioner Andriana made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Chase. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Bates, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Mazur, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Weiner, and Acting Chair Elders

NAY: None

b. **Advisory Review:** Proposed new coach house.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments. Chair Garapolo wrote that the siding should be a wood product and the windows should match the house.

Tom Bassett-Dilley, the architect, explained some of the design decisions. He said all the trim profiles will match existing. The location will be moved slightly. On the house side, they ran a longer dormer for adequate light and vent, and to connect to the house. The owners were interested in incorporating solar, so the east-facing former was designed to accommodate that. The dormer window is near the floor to mimic the hay loft and will have tempered, maybe frosted glass.

Acting Chair Elders said he agrees double-hung sash windows would be more appropriate. Or they could mimic sash windows. Otherwise the proportions look great and it is very appropriate. The Commission discussed the dormer mimicking the historic hay loft. Commissioner Peterson said she thinks the window should not have a grid because the historic coach house doesn't. Mimicking the function is more important than mimicking the house. Commissioner Elders said they don't know what was there and a mock-door would be more appropriate. Commissioner Doherty said she likes that it just references the coach house, especially since it's in the alley. Commissioner Chase agreed. She said they see a lot of garages without windows on the first floor due to safety and she thinks it works in this case.

F. **304 N East Ave (Jeannie Affelder & Jeff Weissglass), Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District:**

a. **HPC2023-27:** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish historic garage.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She said the applicant previously attended the June meeting and the HPC requested a structural engineer's letter, which has been supplied. She read Chair Garapolo's written comment that he agrees with the submittal.

Tom Bassett-Dilley, the architect, was present. He said he has nothing to add.

Commissioner Peterson said they provided what was requested. Commissioner Doherty agreed.

Commissioner Andriana made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Peterson. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Bates, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Mazur, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Weiner, and Acting Chair Elders

NAY: None

b. **Advisory Review:** Proposed new garage.

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments. Chair Garapolo wrote that new siding should be compatible with the house and windows should be double-hung.

Tom Bassett-Dilley, the architect, was present. He said the house has a wider, vinyl siding. They are matching the historic garage siding exposure.

The Commission discussed the windows and Commissioner Doherty recommended salvaging the historic window. Mr. Bassett-Dilley said they plan to have a set of three windows facing the house, not just one as shown in the elevations. Acting Chair Elders approved and said he appreciates the five horizontal panels on the door. He said matching the historic garage siding is appropriate and he doesn't have any reservations about the proposed design. Mr. Bassett-Dilley said they like to salvage windows and they were able to do so for their project on Pleasant.

G. **Advisory Review: 259 Home Ave (Steadman):** Advisory Review of proposed new garage (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Acting Chair Elders introduced the item and Planner Trexler provided an overview. She read Chair Garapolo's written comments. Chair Garapolo wrote that he agrees with staff comments and the submittal overall.

Tom Bassett-Dilley, the architect, was present. He said they did an extensive renovation of the house, which was finished last year. They found a historic photo of an adjacent property. The homeowner will be doing projects in the upper floor of the garage, so there is a hoist to haul up wood working objects. The garage is connected to the house via a trellis.

Acting Chair Elders asked about the siding and Mr. Bassett-Dilley said LP is no longer offering a smooth product and the wood grain looks wrong. Acting Chair Elders said overall the design looks great. Commissioner Doherty asked about the visibility of the back of the garage. Mr. Bassett-Dilley

said it's two or three feet from the lot line. Acting Chair Elders asked about adding a window and Mr. Bassett-Dilley said Mills Park Tower is behind the garage and a stair goes up the back wall. Acting Chair Elders recommended considering something at the stairwell for passive light, even a small decorative window.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Commission asked staff about the potential to demolish Village Hall. Planner Trexler summarized what occurred at the Village Board meeting. Acting Chair Elders said they can volunteer to do a walk-through analysis, maybe they can formulate a document to address aesthetic concerns. He recommended the Commission follow the commentary and information so they can address it.

Acting Chair Elders said RuskinArc is going away at the end of the year. He said he consults it at least every week and it is interesting to be able to filter things by architect and by builder. It is an important tool. Planner Trexler said they plan to migrate the information to an in-house GIS page.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Doherty to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Andriana.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.