

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 6, 2022

T. Emory called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: K. George, J. Huss, D. Gregersen, T. Emory, G. Borgman

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Radtke (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch

OTHERS PRESENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 1, 2022 was made by K. George, supported by T. Emory and approved with T. Emory, K. George, D. Gregersen, J. Huss, and G. Borgman voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2022-34 – 464 W. Clay Ave. – Storm Windows

Applicant: Kimi George - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Commercial

The applicant was seeking approval to install seven wood storm windows on the front elevation of the house and metal storm windows on the remaining windows. K. George specified which seven windows were proposed to have wood storm windows, and that the aluminum storm windows proposed for the remaining windows were selected as a cost savings measure. D. Gregersen added that the aluminum storm windows may be less visually intrusive than wood storms. K. George stated that the original storm windows for the house were narrow and matched the split of the upper and lower sashes of the house's windows, and that the windows on the sides and rear of the house were split evenly and would not require custom storm windows. G. Borgman noted that the HDC local standards allowed for aluminum storm windows if they were painted and not left with a bare metal finish.

K. George explained that the plan was also to weatherize around the windows with the goal of preserving the original, but non-operational, stained-glass windows. The stained-glass windows were too fragile to repair, but the remaining windows on the house could be repaired or replaced, if damaged. G. Borgman asked if the storm windows would be vented and K. George replied that the plan was to seal the sides and top, and vent them at the bottom.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install seven wood storm windows on the front elevation of the house and metal storm windows on the remaining windows as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by T. Emory and approved with T. Emory, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and D. Gregersen voting aye. K. George abstained from voting due to being the applicant.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion of HDC Goals – This topic was a continuation of the discussion of the board’s activities from the past year, and planning efforts to continue to work toward achieving these goals. Focus areas in 2022 included:

- **Local Realtor Outreach** – Staff had contacted 17 local realtors with information regarding HDC procedures that can be shared with potential buyers. Some of those realtors noted the location of houses in historic district in future listings and more potential buyers were contacting staff with questions prior to purchasing a property, so these efforts seemed to be worthwhile. The board discussed creating and sharing literature highlighting benefits of properties in historic districts, and staff referenced such a study carried out for the City of Holland. Staff added that, of the analysis he was able to complete so far, he found that very few property demolitions had occurred in the historic districts when compared to surrounding areas. The board also discussed potentially hosting an informal, informational event to educate realtors and the public on the historic districts and HDC.
- **Updating/Expanding Muskegon Homeowners’ and Citizens’ Guide for Historic Preservation** – This item was last discussed at the February and March meetings, but no action had been taken. The document was created in 2003 with the purpose of assisting homeowners, builders, and citizens interested in acquiring an historic resource for rehabilitation or construction within the historic districts. It was outdated or incorrect in a number of areas, and could be expanded in others. Staff has suggested adding details such as appropriate door designs to the architectural styles section of the document as well as other common topics. The board agreed to review the document in sections at future meetings.
- **Historic Districts Mailing** – A draft letter to be mailed to property owners within the historic districts containing information on the historic districts and HDC procedures was reviewed at the April meeting, but Staff had not had the time to complete the mailing. J. Pesch noted that he had planned for this to be complete mid-way through 2023 and that the mailings would not go out all at once, but rather in different segments so that he would have time to answer any responses received from residents of the historic districts.
- **Historic Districts Chapter of the Master Land Use Plan** – HDC review of the Historic Districts chapter from the 1997 City of Muskegon Master Land Use Plan was needed in coordination with the Planning Department’s ongoing update of the full Plan. Staff provided a brief overview of the current chapter, noting that it made outdated references to old review standards, and that the needed updates may be worth using the City’s CLG status to seek assistance from a consultant. The board agreed to review the Historic Districts chapter in-depth at a meeting in early 2023.

CLG FY23 Grant Application Letter of Support – City Staff were working to complete a grant application to assist in funding conservation work for the monuments in Hackley Park. The HDC supported this project as a grant priority at their May meeting. A draft letter was not prepared in time for the meeting, so the board agreed to move discussion of this topic to the January 2023 meeting. At that meeting, staff will request that the board formally acknowledge their support of the application via a letter of support.

J. Pesch explained that conservation work for two of the statues originally included in the grant application would need to be funded separately, as they were not eligible for CLG grant funds due to ownership or location issues. G. Borgman mentioned that the Heritage Village Committee had funds that they may be willing to contribute toward the conservation work.

1292 Jefferson – K. George asked about potential preservation grant funding opportunities for rehabilitation of the Nelson House at 1292 Jefferson Street which was owned by the Muskegon Public School District. As was mentioned at the November HDC meeting, there was interest from private buyers to rehabilitate the house, but the expenses associated with the project made it a difficult one to undertake.

Additionally, the school district had no plans to rehabilitate the house, and it was understood that their intention was to demolish it should the house not be moved from the site. Past efforts to move the house revealed that doing so would add significantly to the costs of the overall project.

J. Pesch explained the potential funding sources that he was aware of, and noted that some – such as the CLG grants – only funded projects addressing historic resources that were owned by a public body or non-profit entity. K. George suggested that a public body or non-profit entity handle moving the house, then list it for sale so that a private buyer could complete the rehabilitation work. If moved to qualifying areas in the city, any owner that wishes to take on the rehabilitation project could also benefit from tax incentives to lessen the financial burden of the project. J. Pesch stated that he would discuss this topic with the City staff that were involved with a previous effort to move this house.

The HDC voiced concern about the condition of the house and the urgency in arriving at a solution to save it from demolition. They discussed next steps and the potential role the HDC would play in the process, how to get the Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association (NNIA) involved with efforts to save the house, and when to discuss the topic with the Muskegon Public Schools Board of Education. It was decided that City staff would meet to discuss the topic, the HDC would write a letter to the NNIA and the school board to be added to one of that group's future meeting agendas potentially in partnership with the NNIA. The board agreed to designate K. George as HDC representative so that the board can be updated more frequently than once a month at each regular meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

JP