

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 1, 2020

Vice Chairperson S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: T. Emory, Muskegon, Michigan; K. George, Muskegon, Michigan;
A. Riegler, Muskegon, Michigan; L. Wood, Muskegon, Michigan

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. Radtke, K. Panozzo

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, R. Cummins

OTHERS PRESENT: J. Heeren, 238 Houston Ave.; M. Belt, 238 Houston Ave.; A.
Weflen, 45 Iona Ave.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 6, 2020 with a correction to add that the minutes of the September 1, 2020 meeting were approved by the HDC, and the special meeting minutes of October 15, 2020 was made by K. George, supported by L. Wood and approved with T. Emory, A. Riegler, K. George and L. Wood voting aye.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2020-24 – 238 Houston Avenue (Rehabilitation). Applicant: Joe Heeren. District: Houston. Current Function: Vacant. J. Pesch presented the staff report. This property was damaged by a fire in August 2020. The applicant is seeking approval to 1) install a new, 30"x54" vinyl egress window on the south (front) elevation, 2) replace destroyed, 24"x54" wood windows on the second floor in the front of the building by relocating the building's existing wood windows of the same size and appearance, 3) replace missing/damaged 24"x54" wood windows on the east and west elevations with vinyl windows (with a faux-wood textured finish) of the same size and appearance, 4) uncover and replace the storefront windows on the first floor with windows of the same size and style (only if restoration of the existing storefront windows is not possible), 5) install a new metal roof (after repair of fire-damaged wood structure and rafters), 6) removal of the existing chimney and installation of a new vent if needed, 7) box in the eaves, and 8) install new wood siding over the existing siding.

A. Riegler asked if there was any history of the building that could be reviewed. J. Pesch stated that the building was constructed pre-1920, based on documentation available, and that not many changes had been made to the building based on photographs kept by the HDC. Photographs also showed that the building had historically contained a commercial storefront with a residence on the second story. A. Riegler asked if the plan was to maintain the mixed-use configuration. J. Heeren confirmed that the building would contain a storefront with a loft residence. A. Riegler asked if there were plans to have a bedroom in the attic based on the request to install an egress

window. J. Heeren confirmed that this was also part of the plan. A. Riegler stated that the building did not appear to be of any particular architectural style, and that it was a simple vernacular building.

K. George asked about the request to replace the remaining wood windows with vinyl windows and noted that the elevation drawings showed double-hung replacement windows that do not match the style of the existing wood windows. J. Heeren stated that he planned to use all the wood windows that survived the fire on the front elevation of the building as they will be most visible; any missing windows on the side elevations would be replaced with new vinyl, double-hung windows. K. George stated that the elevation drawing was not accurate. J. Pesch stated that the drawings were submitted before he was able to discuss the details of the project, which is why the drawings were inaccurate. A. Riegler asked if the egress window's lower sash would have to be 5.7 square feet in area. M. Belt, architect for the project, stated that the egress window's lower sash would have to meet code and that he had planned for that. A. Riegler stated that adding a new window to the attic would not be something that the HDC generally approves, but considering the folk, vernacular style of the building, she did not see an issue with permitting the window. K. George stated that the alternate to the plans presented would be razing the building.

A. Riegler asked if the windows near the rear of the building would be retained. J. Heeren confirmed that they would. There was some confusion as to which windows at the rear of the building were existing and which may be proposed, and M. Belt clarified that the request was to raise the height of the lower section of roof at the rear of the building, over the garage, to match the height and pitch of the main roof of the building. L. Wood stated that the higher roof would look better. K. George asked if the rear porch and garage were constructed later. M. Belt stated that he figures that the porch was once open, but was enclosed later; he noted that the kite-shaped detail on the gable end of the rear porch would be replicated on the building's front elevation. K. George stated that the rear porch was very visible from the surrounding streets and changing the height of the roof would change the appearance of the building significantly. M. Belt noted that the higher roof would permit the headroom clearance needed for a new staircase to access the loft area; he stated that they considered a spiral stair as a space-saver, but that it was not historically accurate nor was it as functional as a straight-run stair. K. George noted that the HDC did not review interior work. A. Riegler stated that the higher roof changes the proportions of the entire building and how it relates to the surrounding structures. M. Belt stated that he thought a switchback stair with a landing could be accommodated without changing the roofline. T. Emory asked if the enclosed rear porch would remain enclosed with new windows or be opened back up. M. Belt stated that windows that were not damaged would be retained. The board agreed that keeping the existing windows enclosing the rear porch in their current locations was preferred.

The board moved on to discuss the proposed metal roof. The board reviewed the local standards for roofing. J. Heeren stated that the metal roof was not a make-or-break feature of the project and that he would be willing to use architectural shingles. A. Riegler stated that, given the building's location in a residential area, a standing seam metal roof would not be appropriate, but shingles would be.

K. George asked if the applicant was requesting to eliminate the chimney and replace it with a vent. J. Heeren explained that the chimney was no longer functional. K. George asked if the vent

could be run through the existing chimney. M. Belt explained that the height of the chimney would need to be raised three to four feet to accommodate the height of the vent. A. Riegler advised that the chimney be left at its current height and that the vent extend beyond that to its code-required height; K. George agreed. J. Heeren stated that the chimney was in good condition, but served no current purpose. The board preferred to see the chimney retained as an architectural feature of the building. M. Belt proposed to enclose the vent with a decorative cladding material to match the rest of the building rather than to leave exposed vent. M. Heeren stated that he had some original brick from the building that he could reuse to clad the length of vent that would be exposed. A. Riegler stated that as long as the matched the brick used on the existing chimney, that would be permissible. J. Heeren noted that there was once a second chimney, but that it had been gone for some time and only the rear chimney remained.

K. George asked the board for their thoughts on the request to box in the eaves. A. Riegler stated that she would not recommend boxing in the eaves as they were a notable architectural feature on the relatively simple building. M. Belt explained that ventilation would be greatly improved if the eaves were boxed in and soffit vents were added.

The board discussed the proposed siding. M. Belt stated that cement board siding was planned. K. George asked what profile was planned for the siding and that a profile narrower than six inches would be preferred, possibly four inches. J. Pesch pointed out that some of the original siding was visible on the east elevation toward the rear of the structure. A. Riegler requested that whoever made the motion should note that the new siding should match the profile of the existing siding, which appeared to be four inches. K. George noted that board and batten siding was proposed for the gable end of the roof on the front elevation.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a new egress window on the south elevation using an existing wood window, replace destroyed, 24"x54" wood windows on the second floor in the front of the building by relocating the building's existing wood windows of the same size and appearance, replace missing/damaged 24"x54" wood windows on the east and west elevations with vinyl windows (with a faux-wood textured finish) of the same size and appearance, uncover and replace the storefront windows on the first floor with windows of the same size and appearance, extend the height of the chimney using reclaimed brick from the building to meet code for venting, and install new engineered wood siding over the existing siding with a profile that matches the existing 4" profile as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained, was made by K. George, supported by T. Emory and unanimously approved, with L. Wood, T. Emory, A. Riegler, and K. George voting aye.

A motion that the HDC deny the request to install a metal roof, to box in the eaves, and to extend the height of the roof above the existing porch at the rear of the building (as shown in the east elevation drawing dated 11/09/2020) was made by K. George, supported by T. Emory and unanimously approved, with L. Wood, T. Emory, A. Riegler, and K. George voting aye.

Case 2020-25 – 45 Iona Avenue (Windows and Siding). Applicant: Amy Weflen. District: McLaughlin. Current Function: Residential. J. Pesch noted that the meeting agenda listed the incorrect address for Case 2020-25, and should instead be at 45 Iona Avenue.

J. Pesch presented the staff report. The applicant is seeking approval to 1) replace all existing wood windows with vinyl replacement windows including some modifications to window sizes, 2) install molding and/or flat panel, shaker-style shutters, 3) to replace the existing siding with vinyl siding and a shaker accent near the peak of the roof on the front façade, and 4) replace the front door with a new six-lite, two-panel wood or fiberglass door. The work has been partially completed.

A. Riegler asked which part of the work had been completed. A. Weflen stated that the windows had been removed and replaced, and that they were not informed that the property was located in a historic district when the house was purchased; they were told a permit would not be needed for the windows. A. Riegler noted that the second-floor windows on the front of the house appeared to be about four to six inches shorter. A. Weflen confirmed that the windows were about four inches shorter.

A. Riegler noted that this house was also of a similar folk, vernacular to the last case and asked if windows other than the four in the front of the house had been replaced. A. Weflen stated that 19 windows were replaced. A. Riegler noted that because the work had already been completed, there was not much the HDC could do with regard to that part of the request.

The board discussed the shutters and noted that each shutter should be half the width of the window it was meant to cover and that, as shown, the shutter design should not be approved. A. Riegler noted that even if the shutters were appropriately sized, they may not be right for this house considering the size of the windows on the house. A. Riegler asked if the size of the transom window above the front porch had been changed. A. Weflen said that it may be less than one inch smaller on each side, if anything.

K. George asked what type of siding was currently on the house. A. Weflen stated that it is believed to be a fiber cement siding, with other siding visible underneath it in some places. A. Riegler asked if they would be willing to retain the existing siding and paint it. K. George stated that the siding appeared to have a 7" profile and was very wide. A. Weflen noted that they hoped to replace the existing siding due to its condition. The board and applicant discussed the siding materials used on neighboring houses. A. Riegler recommended using an engineered wood siding product instead of vinyl siding if the original wood siding beneath the existing fiber cement siding could not be salvaged; the original siding profile would preserve the proportions of the house and the relationship of the wall to the roof and to the porch. L. Wood asked if the existing siding was peeling. A. Weflen noted that there were a number of areas where the siding was missing or damaged. T. Emory said that the siding appeared to be the same as what was installed on her house which was a very difficult material to work with, but that the old 3" profile clapboards were still installed beneath it on her house; she noted that there may be some asbestos in the current siding material that would have to be handled appropriately.

K. George asked how the reduced sizes of window openings would be handled in terms of finish materials. A. Weflen stated that the intention was to cover it with the new siding which would abut the bottom of the new window. A. Riegler noted that there appeared to be exterior trim that would have to be removed in order to install new siding. A. Weflen explained that what may appear to be trim was actually just dark-brown painted plywood in most places. K. George advised against

butting up any potential new siding to the bottom of the altered windows as a small window sill detail still existed on some windows that should be preserved where possible.

The board discussed the proposed replacement of the front door. The existing front door was not original and had a small 6"x6" window at the top. A. Riegler noted that the proposed replacement door was of the craftsman style which did not match the simple folk-Victorian style of the house; she noted that a more appropriate configuration would be a half-lite door, but that a solid door may help with security while keeping with the style of architecture.

J. Pesch stated that the meeting had to end at 5:30pm in order to accommodate another scheduled City meeting at that time.

A. Weflen stated that there was no remaining wood siding under the existing siding that could be salvaged. The board and applicant discussed options for replacement siding, or repair and painting of existing siding. A. Weflen stated that they would likely paint the existing siding.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace all existing wood windows with vinyl replacement windows including the modifications to window sizes with the requirement that the sills and trim be reinstalled where it has been removed, to replace the existing siding with wood composite siding, and to replace the front door with a new half-lite or solid wood door as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained., was made by K. George, supported by T. Emory and unanimously approved, with L. Wood, T. Emory, A. Riegler, and K. George voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Work Completed Without HDC Approval – J. Pesch stated that this item would need to be moved to the next meeting agenda due to time constraints. J. Pesch noted that he was tracking changes to resources in the historic districts that were not properly approved in order to keep a record of the work.

Public Comment Period – Time was allotted for public comment with contact information provided. There were no comments from the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

JP