

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 14, 2023

S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Huss, T. Emory, K. George, G. Borgman, S. Radtke

MEMBERS ABSENT: D. Gregersen, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, W. Webster, S. Kiaunis

OTHERS PRESENT: W. Walker and B. Housh (69 Irwin); D. Fowler, R. Jackson, and W. Barnhard
(621 W. Western)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 3, 2023 and the special meeting minutes of October 25, 2023 was made by G. Borgman, supported by T. Emory and approved with J. Huss, T. Emory and K. George, G. Borgman, and S. Radtke voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

Because there was no representative present for Case 2023-23 under New Business, the board chose to first discuss any Old Business.

Case 2023-22 – 69 Irwin Ave. – Siding

Applicant: William Walker - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential

W. Walker and B. Housh attended the meeting to present alternative siding materials they had found after running into difficulties with available materials specified in the HDC's approval motion. The following work had been approved at the October 25, 2023 special meeting:

“Install composite siding with a smooth finish and a four-inch reveal on the front porch, the north (front) elevation of the house, and the front two-thirds of the east elevation of the house; install vinyl siding with a smooth finish and a four-inch reveal on the south (rear) elevation, the west elevation, and the back one-third of the east elevation of the house; retain the wood trim boards where they currently exist and install composite or wood replacement trim with a smooth finish for the corner boards and composite replacement trim with a faux wood grain finish for the watercourse matching the dimensions of the previously-existing trim; retain the decorative crown molding above the windows where it currently exists and replicate it where damaged or rotted; and remove the small, unoriginal bathroom window on the west elevation of the house as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained.”

B. Housh explained that production of composite siding with a smooth finish had stopped and the product was unavailable and J. Pesch confirmed that one of the major manufacturers no longer listed the product on their website. B. Housh further explained that the siding was only available with a four-and-one-half inch reveal, not the four-inch reveal that was specified at the previous meeting. S. Radtke asked what the reveal of the original siding had been. B. Housh stated that it was three inches. J. Pesch noted that the board had approved a four-inch reveal because the change would be relatively indistinguishable in terms of the architectural character of the house.

B. Housh added that all replacement composite trim would have a faux wood grain finish due to material availability. G. Borgman acknowledged that there were not many other options other than going from supplier to supplier and buying up the remaining stock. B. Housh noted that

A motion that the HDC modify its approved motion from Case 2023-22 to approve the request to install composite siding with a smooth or faux wood grain finish and a four-and-one-half-inch reveal on the front porch, the north (front) elevation of the house, and the front two-thirds of the east elevation of the house; install vinyl siding with a smooth finish and a four-and-one-half-inch reveal on the south (rear) elevation, the west elevation, and the back one-third of the east elevation of the house; retain the wood trim boards where they currently exist and install composite or wood replacement trim with a smooth or faux wood grain finish for the corner boards and composite replacement trim with a faux wood grain finish for the watercourse matching the dimensions of the previously-existing trim; retain the decorative crown molding above the windows where it currently exists and replicate it where damaged or rotted; and remove the small, unoriginal bathroom window on the west elevation of the house as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by K. George, and approved with K. George, J. Huss, G. Borgman, S. Radtke, and T. Emory voting aye.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2023-23 – 74 Delaware Ave. – Porch

Applicant: Tony and Amy Mueller - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to remove the damaged front porch and rebuild it. J. Pesch explained that he had only briefly spoken with the applicant, that the application had been received after the deadline, and that there was no additional information provided with the application. S. Kiaunis, Dangerous Buildings Inspector for the City, explained that, in October, the City's Housing Board of Appeals (HBA) determined the house a Dangerous Building due to the damaged front porch. The damage was reported as being the result of animals digging beneath the porch.

K. George stated that there were no footings under the damaged porch column and that the roof would need to be supported at that corner, and the base of the column would need to be hand-dug out to add a footing beneath it. J. Huss stated that it would be very expensive to remove the porch and rebuild it in a way that resembles what was existing. The board members discussed the generally stable appearance of the porch despite the failing column, and S. Kiaunis speculated that the interior of the brick column could contain a support structure.

The board discussed assistance that may be available to the property owner through the City's Community and Neighborhood Services Department (CNS). K. George noted that projects funded by CNS often required approval from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) which could complicate things, but that SHPO would likely not have an issue with the work if it did not change the appearance of the house.

A motion that the HDC table the request until more information was provided by the applicant was made by J. Huss, supported by K. George, and approved with S. Radtke, K. George, G. Borgman, and T. Emory voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

621 W. Western – D. Fowler, R. Jackson, and W. Barnhard were present to discuss exterior work that was coming due on the Muskegon Eagles building. J. Pesch explained that D. Fowler had met with him a few weeks prior and he encouraged them to attend an upcoming HDC meeting to discuss their options when it came to addressing longstanding issues on the exterior of their building.

D. Fowler explained that the outside of the building was brick and had been painted multiple times and needed to be repainted every four to five years, but they were looking for more permanent options to address this issue. J. Pesch explained that the sides and rear of the building appeared to be painted brick, but the front elevation was

not painted. He added that the front elevation was reconstructed in 1949, but the building itself dated back into the late 1800s. Based on historic photos of the building, it appeared as though some of the window sizes and locations may have changed, but the brick on the sides of the building was likely to be original.

R. Jackson noted that the north side of the building had been recently treated with a bonding agent then sealed with a thin-set mortar or stucco material, but was still having issues with water penetration since parts of the wall were not treated with the bonding agent.

K. George asked what options they had considered for addressing the water and moisture issues. R. Jackson said that they looked into putting treated 2x4s on the outside of the building and attaching metal pole barn siding, vinyl siding, or cement siding to those. This was proposed to wrap all sides of the building, but the most urgent issues were on the south side of the building along 7th Street. The board was not in favor of this approach and K. George explained that they were very unlikely to approve such work and further explained how it may exacerbate the noted moisture issues with the brick. S. Radtke stated that the board tended to be more lenient with the side and rear elevations of structures, but that for the sake of the building's longevity, siding the building would still not be favored. G. Borgman noted that painting brick typically caused spalling, and W. Barnhard noted that that was an issue already. K. George stated that it may be best to remove the existing paint from the brick using and then to tuck point the wall. S. Radtke stated that the brick appeared to be exterior-grade brick, and he recommended that the owner look into having the brick media-blasted – not sand-blasted because that would cause further damage – to take the paint off and lessen the need for ongoing maintenance. K. George added that if the brick was poorly tuck pointed moisture issues would persist, regardless of the type of brick. S. Radtke added that the side elevations, due to their age, likely used lime mortar which was also more vulnerable to water. K. George agreed and noted that addressing these issues would not be cheap, but doing so would limit the need for frequent maintenance in the long run.

G. Borgman asked if there were any programs that the building owner could look to for assistance with funding the needed repairs to the building. J. Pesch noted that the City of Muskegon had a facade improvement program and share contact information for the City staff that oversaw the program. He also noted that the building may be eligible for State Historic Preservation Tax Credits for which he could share information, but that those credits were in very high demand and had likely already been used up for the current year.

W. Barnhard explained that the entire building needed to be tuck pointed. D. Fowler and the board members discussed the difficulty of finding masonry contractors. S. Radtke encouraged D. Fowler to look into some of the options discussed and return to a future HDC meeting once they had a better idea of the direction they would like to go.

Update on Dangerous Buildings in the Historic Districts – S. Kiaunis from the Building Inspections Department attended to review the status of properties currently listed by that department as Dangerous Buildings and to discuss the Housing Board of Appeals' process for reviewing Dangerous Buildings as it pertained to the responsibilities of the HDC.

The board chose to table the other items under new business until a future meeting since J. Pesch had to leave to attend another meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.