

CITY OF MUSKEGON  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
MINUTES

**November 12, 2024**

S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, J. Huss, G. Borgman, C. Davis, K. Kochin (late)

MEMBERS ABSENT: D. Gregersen, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch

OTHERS PRESENT: E. Garner and G. Garner (37 E. Grand and 1519 Clinton); H. Laranja (448 W. Muskegon); S. Mullins and K. Mullins (1502 Peck); J. Rottier (1450 Clinton); R. Swarts (1597 Peck)

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve of the regular meeting minutes of October 1, 2024 was made by G. Borgman, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and C. Davis voting aye.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Case 2024-15 – 1148 Terrace St. – Siding**

**Applicant: Steven Roberts - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential**

This case was tabled at the September and October meetings due to lack of information. The applicant was seeking approval to replace the siding with a double 4 vinyl siding. J. Pesch explained that he had not heard back from the applicant since the October meeting and had no new information to share with the HDC. Since the last meeting, the house had been listed for sale. The applicant was not in attendance. J. Pesch recommended that the HDC render a decision based on the information that was available to them, and revisit the case should the current or future applicant request such.

A motion that the HDC deny the request to replace the siding with a double 4 vinyl siding due to a lack of information was made by G. Borgman, supported by C. Davis and approved with G. Borgman, J. Huss, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Case 2024-20 – 37 E. Grand Ave. – Mini-Split HVAC Units**

**Applicant: Edward Garner - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential**

The applicant was seeking approval to install two wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the south (side) elevation of the carriage house building. J. Pesch added that it was anticipated that the units would be screened from the street by the proposed privacy fence at 1519 Clinton in Case 2024-21 and explained where the fence was planned to be installed.

E. Garner clarified that the main house on the corner lot fronted E. Grand Avenue, but the carriage house building was behind it and faced Clinton Street. He added that he was trying to make the

carriage house occupiable again, but the structure's current boiler was outdated and a number of contractors he hired were unable to repair it. The mini-split units would offer cooling (as opposed to only heating) as well as improved energy efficiency.

E. Garner explained the interior layout of the carriage house and how separate mini-splits were needed for the bedroom on each floor. He added that the mini-split could not be ground-mounted like a standard air conditioning unit, but it would not be permanently attached to the building and could be removed in the future. G. Garner, the contractor for the project, explained that the location of each mini-split unit could not be shifted to a different side of the building due to the longer distance that the mini-splits' conduit would need to travel and the inefficiencies associated with doing so.

S. Radtke asked whether the conduit would be configured to go around the flair on the beltline midway up the wall of the building or go through it. G. Garner stated that the plan was to go around the flair, not through it. G. Borgman asked how thick the conduit would be. E. Garner noted that the example image shown in the staff report contained more lines than were planned for the carriage house's units, and that it would be thinner as a result.

The location of the property line in relation to the carriage house and the fence proposed in the next case was discussed, and S. Radtke expressed concern that, should the neighboring 1519 Clinton ever have a different owner, the fence proposed to screen the mini-splits could be removed by the neighbor. The board agreed that a condition of approval should require vegetative screening to be installed should the fence ever be removed.

K. Kochin arrived at 4:27 p.m.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install two wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the south (side) elevation of the carriage house building as long as screening is in place and the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by C. Davis and approved with S. Radtke, C. Davis, J. Huss, and G. Borgman voting aye and K. Kochin abstaining.

**Case 2024-21 – 1519 Clinton St. – Fence**

**Applicant: Edward Garner - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential**

The applicant was seeking approval to construct a six-foot-tall wood privacy fence aligned with the front wall of the house and in the side yard of the property between the driveway and the neighboring carriage house building at 37 E. Grand Avenue. Because HDC local standards limited privacy fences to no more than four-feet in height in front of the front half of the building, the proposed fence could not be approved by staff as it would not conform with the local standards at the proposed height.

The board noted that the proposed location of the fence, while not meeting the local standards, would not obscure views of the house. E. Garner proposed a few fence styles that he was considering other than the wood privacy fence included in his application, and asked about the possibility of installing a vinyl fence. S. Radtke stated that wood was the HDC's preferred material, but that they could consider vinyl if that was requested. G. Borgman proposed approving two possible fence materials. The HDC and applicant briefly discussed possible fence styles.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a six-foot-tall wood or vinyl fence aligned with the front wall of the house and in the side yard of the property between the driveway and the

neighboring carriage house building at 37 E. Grand Avenue as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by K. Kochin and approved with K. Kochin, J. Huss, G. Borgman, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

**Case 2024-22 – 448 W. Muskegon Ave. – Chimney Removal**

**Applicant: Hugo Laranja - District: Houston - Current Function: Vacant**

The applicant was seeking approval to remove the chimney in the house and to repair the opening to match existing roofing materials. The chimney was no longer functional.

H. Laranja explained that the chimney was used for ventilation of a former furnace and was not connected to an interior fireplace; removing it would allow for greater flexibility in the interior layout of the house.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove the chimney in the house and repair the opening to match existing roofing materials as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by S. Radtke and approved with G. Borgman, C. Davis, S. Radtke, K. Kochin, and J. Huss voting aye.

**Case 2024-23 – 1502 Peck St. – Mini-Split HVAC Units**

**Applicant: Murphy Brown Properties, LLC (Steve Mullins) - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential**

The applicant was seeking approval to install four wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the south (side) elevation and four wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the north (side) elevation. The building is located on a corner lot with the north elevation facing E. Grand Avenue. The work was already completed without building permits.

S. Mullins and K. Mullins apologized to the HDC for completing the work prior to their review and explained that they were not informed during the sale process that the building was in a historic district.

S. Mullins explained some of the interior work that had been completed and why mini-splits were deemed the best option. K. Mullins added that the location of the mini-split units was selected to be less visible, and a shared driveway with the neighboring property to the south limited them from installing the units on the rear elevation. She also noted that a large amount of obsolete wiring had been removed from the exterior of the building to clean up its appearance. The HDC proposed vegetative screening for the mini-split units, and K. Mullins asked what the timeframe for doing so would be. J. Pesch noted that HDC approvals were typically good for one year from the date of issuance, so planting in the spring of 2025 would be an option.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install four wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the south (side) elevation and four wall-mounted mini-split HVAC units and accompanying conduit on the north (side) elevation as long as vegetative screening is in place and the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by C. Davis and approved with K. Kochin, J. Huss, C. Davis, S. Radtke, and G. Borgman voting aye.

**Case 2024-24 (Walk-on) – 1597 Peck St. – Siding, Window Trim, Soffit, and Fascia**

**Applicant: Robert Swarts - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential**

The HDC agreed to review a walk-on case. R. Swarts, contractor, was present to explain the proposed work. The applicant was seeking approval to install vinyl siding, and wrap the window casings, soffit, and fascia with aluminum. The work had already been started, but was stopped quickly after learning of the house's location in a historic district. J. Pesch shared a few recent photos of the property.

G. Borgman asked if the current siding contained asbestos. R. Swarts stated that he did not think that it dated from the timeframe when such product was used, but he did not intend to remove it either way. S. Radtke estimated that the siding was installed in the 1940s or 1950s – over the original wood siding – and likely contained asbestos; he was concerned that adding another layer of siding would bury the windows to a point where they would be behind the new siding. R. Swarts noted that they planned on furring out the windows with 3/4" trim applied on top of the existing trim and wrapped in aluminum as one piece. K. Kochin asked if the proposed vinyl siding would appear similar to the original wood siding visible in some places and R. Swarts stated that it would.

The HDC noted that there were few original features of the house remaining, and asked if the missing window hoods could be replicated. R. Swarts said this would be possible, but doing so would create an awkward design where the J-channel meets with the hoods where they extend beyond the width of the windows. He mentioned the possibility of the hoods not extending beyond the width of the window to clean up the design, and said that he would be willing to recreate the window hoods on the front elevation, facing the street.

G. Borgman noted that the soffit and fascia seemed relatively unaltered and asked about the effect of vinyl siding on the molding detail in this area. R. Swarts stated that he had planned to remove the molding between the siding and soffit because leaving it would require that it be left unfinished with aluminum wrapped soffit on one side and J-channel on the other; he added that the J-channel would be white to contrast with the siding and reference the former molding. The second piece of molding on the fascia board would be wrapped with an angled piece of aluminum. S. Radtke stated that, while not preferable, he felt this approach was acceptable considering the molding was relatively simple and the work could be undone by a future owner wishing to restore the home. He added that maintaining it was difficult to justify, considering very few of the house's original features remained.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to cover over the current siding with four-inch lap vinyl siding, bring aluminum-wrapped window casings out to protrude beyond the new siding, install aluminum window crowns on the east (front) elevation, and wrap the soffit and fascia with aluminum as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by C. Davis and approved with C. Davis, J. Huss, S. Radtke, G. Borgman, and K. Kochin voting aye.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Staff Approval Form Update** – Staff presented an updated HDC Staff Approval Form that would permit staff to approve the construction of sheds that meet the design requirements outlined in the Local Standards' Design Guidelines for New Construction as well as porches or decks that follow the Local Standards' Porch and Deck Standards and Guidelines' Decking, Sample Ballustrade Construction, and Railing Detail drawings.

The board decided to limit the proposed change to only address porches and decks on secondary elevations.

A motion that the HDC accept the changes to item 3 and the addition of item 14 to the staff approval policy as presented and amended at the November 12, 2024 HDC meeting was made by J. Huss, supported by K. Kochin and approved with C. Davis, K. Kochin, S. Radtke, J. Huss, and G. Borgman voting aye.

S. Radtke asked about the staff approval updates that occurred throughout the year and whether those would continue. J. Pesch stated that they would continue as they were required by the City Ordinance that established the historic districts and the Historic District Commission.

**Local Standards Update** – This item was tabled to a future meeting.

**1450 Clinton Window Repairs** – J. Rottier, owner of 1450 Clinton Street, attended the meeting to discuss proposed work to repair damaged windows with unique, curved glass at the house. The HDC informally reviewed the proposed work and offered an idea to replace the damaged curved glass panes with plexiglass panes of the same size and installed the same way that a new glass pane would be installed within the existing frames. It was noted that this had not yet been proposed to the Building Inspections Department as a possible fix. The HDC was willing to offer conceptual approval of the work, but would defer to the Building Inspections Department to determine whether this would meet the building code or if it would address the violation in question. J. Pesch stated that, if necessary, the applicant could return to the HDC with alternatives for formal review should this approach not be accepted by the Building Inspections Department.

## ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.