

CITY OF MUSKEGON  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
MINUTES

**September 10, 2024**

J. Huss called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. and roll was taken.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: K. Kochin, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, W. Webster, K. Spittler (Building Inspections), J. Schrier (City of Muskegon legal counsel), R. Kleyn (CNS)

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Snyder (238 Houston); T. Bernhardt and V. Bernhardt (280 W. Muskegon); B. Mahaffey (1135 5<sup>th</sup>); E. Kuyt (407 W. Muskegon); J. Luce (1326 4<sup>th</sup>)

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

J. Pesch stated that the minutes from the previous two meetings were still being drafted. A motion to table approval of the regular meeting minutes of July 2, 2024 and August 13, 2024 was made by D. Gregersen, supported by G. Borgman and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, J. Huss, and C. Davis voting aye.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Case 2024-06 – 238 Houston Ave. – Demolition**

**Applicant: City of Muskegon - District: Houston - Current Function: Vacant**

Demolition of the structure was approved by the Historic District Commission at the July 2, 2024 HDC meeting (Case 2024-06). At the direction of the City Manager and the City’s legal counsel, this request was returned to the HDC following additional noticing of the property owner.

The applicant was seeking approval to demolish the structure. J. Pesch explained that the Housing Board of Appeals (HBA) had declared the building as unsafe, substandard, dangerous, a public nuisance, and had recommended demolition. A fire occurred at the property in May 2020 and two subsequent cases were reviewed by the HDC in December 2020 and April 2022 in relation to the building’s rehabilitation.

G. Borgman asked why this case was returning to the HDC and J. Schrier explained that the property was not noticed of the meeting back when it was reviewed by the HDC in July. D. Snyder asked about the process for HDC review. J. Pesch explained that the building was declared a dangerous building by the HBA and that the City Inspection Department’s request for demolition – a change to the exterior of the building – required HDC review and approval before work commenced. D. Snyder provided an overview of some of the work that had been completed at the property and explained that they had difficulties in the permitting process. J. Snyder and K. Spittler described the condition of the building’s interior, and K. Spittler explained that the owner had not followed the correct process in attempting to obtain permits for the work.

J. Huss stated that the HDC's role in this situation was to either approve or deny the City's request to demolish the building based on the historic significance of the building and its current condition. She added that the decision to demolish the building is on the City and the current lawsuit. J. Pesch confirmed that the HDC reviewed these requests from a historic preservation lens, and while they do not want to see buildings torn down in the historic districts, the circumstances at this particular property require that they are faced with such a decision.

J. Huss reiterated that the dangerous building declaration was not the decision of the HDC, they were reviewing the request from the perspective of historic integrity – how much of the original building remains intact (i.e. original siding, original windows, etc.). J. Pesch noted that there had been past HDC approvals for rehabilitation of the building most notably following the fire, and that some of that work had been completed in compliance with the HDC's rulings while some had not. The HDC was aware of what work had been completed at the building.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to demolish the structure as long as the necessary permits are obtained was made by D. Gregersen, supported by G. Borgman and approved with J. Huss, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and C. Davis voting aye.

**Case 2024-09 – 280 W. Muskegon Ave. – Ramp and Patios**

*Applicant: Mike Bernhardt - District: National Register - Current Function: Institutional*

At the August 13, 2024 meeting, the HDC tabled its decision on the proposed patios at the front of the building. J. Pesch explained that the staff report contained the original request in its entirety, but only the front patios required discussion. T. Bernhardt provided additional historic photos of the building and explained the in-depth research they had been doing on the building's history.

T. Bernhardt shared renderings of the proposed layout of the front patios and an idea of their preferred plantings along with various photos of design precedents and specific products to be used for planter boxes, pots, etc. She explained the issues with the current landscaping at the building, and that they planned for low shrubs, box hedges, and potted trees to define the patio space and provide some separation from the street.

S. Radtke arrived at 4:26 p.m.

D. Gregersen stated that the hedges and other plants would counter any new pavement that was added where there was currently grass. G. Borgman agreed that the greenery would be more visible than the pavement would be when viewing the property from the street. S. Radtke said that the proposed plan was more structured and maintained the formality of the front facade, which had been one of his concerns in previous discussions. T. Bernhardt added that umbrellas to shade the area would be less permanent and only used for events.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct patios in the front lawn on Muskegon Avenue to reflect the drawings presented at the September 10, 2024 HDC meeting as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by G. Borgman and approved with J. Huss, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

**Case 2024-10 – 1135 5<sup>th</sup> St. – Windows**

Applicant: Clement Coulombe (Owner); Brett Mahaffey (Contractor) - District: Houston - Current Function: Residential

This case was tabled at the August 13, 2024 meeting. The applicant was seeking approval to replace three wooden double-hung windows on the second story of the south (side) elevation, one wooden double-hung window on the second story of the west (rear) elevation, and one wooden double-hung window on the second story of the north (side) elevation with double-hung wood composite windows of the same size and appearance. J. Pesch shared photos of the window on the north elevation from viewed from W. Webster Avenue noting that it was largely obscured by vegetation.

S. Radtke explained that the HDC typically recommends repair of windows where possible, but has made exceptions for windows on secondary elevations. J. Huss asked if all exterior trim would be retained and B. Mahaffey confirmed that it would. J. Huss requested that this be included in the final motion.

B. Mahaffey summarized the HDC's questions that J. Pesch had relayed to him from the August meeting; he explained that a document included with the application incorrectly called for a loss of 1.5" of glass area on all sides of each replacement window and noted an incorrect trim color. He stated that while the reduction in glass area could be an issue with some houses, he did not think it would be in this case, and he intended to get the maximum size of glass for these windows though there could still be some loss in glass area. B. Mahaffey also noted that the trim color would not be white, it would be terratone to match the color of the window frame.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace three wooden double-hung windows on the second story of the south (side) elevation, one wooden double-hung window on the second story of the west (rear) elevation, and one wooden double-hung window on the second story of the north (side) elevation with double-hung wood composite windows of the same size and appearance as long as all exterior trim is maintained and the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by J. Huss and approved with J. Huss, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

As no applicant was present for Case 2024-14 under Old Business, the HDC moved on to discuss the items under New Business and agreed to return to this case later in the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

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

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

The applicant was seeking approval to replace the siding with a double 4 vinyl siding. J. Pesch explained that he did not receive much additional information other than the fact that the proposed vinyl siding would have a four-inch reveal. Photos of the house from 1972 and 1984 were shared, the former showing the original wood siding.

The HDC noted that there was a small section of the original siding still exposed above the front door, and estimated the dimension of the reveal to be three inches, but J. Pesch noted that the reveal dimension was not confirmed by the applicant. G. Borgman asked if vinyl would be acceptable if the reveal matched that of the original wood siding.

S. Radtke stated that, as this was a rather large house and was originally somewhat architecturally distinguished, the HDC was not predisposed to allow vinyl siding and that their local standards called for restoration of the original siding, if possible. He added that new wood or composite siding could also be considered if the original wood siding was not salvageable – both were preferable to vinyl siding. J. Pesch stated that it was not known whether the original wood siding was still present underneath the aluminum siding, and if so, its condition was also unknown.

The HDC determined that if vinyl siding was preferred by the applicant, they would need to provide additional details regarding what is existing under the aluminum siding. Though it had been allowed in the past on rare occasions, and sometimes only on the back and sides of the house, they noted that vinyl generally was not permitted on more prominent elevations. J. Pesch asked if the HDC would consider allowing vinyl siding on the house's less prominent elevations. The HDC requested that staff contact the applicant to gather answers to the questions that had been discussed.

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

**Case 2024-16 – 407 W. Muskegon Ave. – Side Porch Stairs**

*Applicant: Elizabeth Kuyt - District: Houston - Current Function: Residential*

The applicant was seeking approval to remove and replace the existing porch and stairs on the east (5<sup>th</sup> Street) side of the house with a code compliant, more historically appropriate stair.

S. Radtke stated that he and J. Pesch had discussed this case prior to the meeting and he felt that the work could be approved by staff. J. Pesch explained that this was a fairly simple stair, with little, if any, historic significance and the proposed design for the replacement stair directly referenced the HDC local standards' Porch and Deck Standards and Guidelines' Decking, Sample Ballustrade Construction, and Railing Detail drawings. He explained that it appeared to meet all the criteria the HDC would request, but he was not able to staff approve such work.

The HDC briefly discussed the possibility of updating the HDC Staff Approval Form to allow for cases such as this to be approved by staff. S. Radtke proposed that this topic be added to a future meeting agenda.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to the request to remove and replace the existing porch and stairs on the east (5<sup>th</sup> Street) side of the house with a code compliant stair as depicted in the September 10, 2024 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, C. Davis, S. Radtke, and J. Huss voting aye.

**Case 2024-17 – 416 W. Webster Ave. – Shutters**

*Applicant: Robert Lusby - District: National Register - Current Function: Residential*

The applicant was seeking approval to install pine shutters on the front elevation of the house. J. Pesch noted that the work had already been completed and added that in further conversations with the property owner, he was provided with precedent photos that depicted other Italianate houses that had shutters and shared those with the HDC.

The HDC noted that the shutters shown in the precedent photos were either louvered or paneled shutters which differed from the farmhouse-style shutters than had been installed on this house. Attention was also called to the fact that shutters traditionally were mounted on hinges installed over the window trim on either side of the window rather than to the outside of the trim, and that it was not typical for shutters to be tall enough to cover the trim above the window sash, as the second-floor ones had (though the first-floor shutters were the appropriate height).

J. Pesch explained that this was one of the houses moved from the Hackley Hospital site in 1994 and the first owner at its current location proposed a renovation that brought the house closer to an Italianate style, though that was not necessarily the style the house had always been. He shared a historic photo from October 1946 which showed the house following a remodel that removed its original front porch and replaced it with brick steps and a stoop leading to the front door. The current front porch and porch roof had been added following the move to its current location.

S. Radtke stated that the width of the shutters was relatively correct, noting that those on the wider window on the first floor would have been stored folded in half. While the board agreed that shutters were common on Italianate style houses, the style and placement of the shutters was the main issue. D. Gregersen proposed that the HDC could approve a louvered or paneled shutter design that is mounted in the appropriate location of a height that, if functioning, would only cover only the window sash. J. Pesch suggested that a motion to deny the existing shutters be made along with a separate approval motion specifying an appropriate option for shutters on the house.

J. Huss left at 5:00 p.m.

A motion that the HDC deny the request to install pine shutters on the front elevation of the house due to the inappropriate size, placement, and style of the shutters was made by D. Gregersen, supported by G. Borgman and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

A motion that the HDC approve installation of paneled or louvered shutters of an appropriate, historically referenced size and mounting; the existing shutters can be modified by being cut down, reversed, and mounted inside the casing as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by C. Davis and approved with D. Gregersen, C. Davis, S. Radtke, and G. Borgman voting aye.

## OTHER BUSINESS

**Clarification on Case 2024-08 at 1326 4<sup>th</sup> Street** – J. Pesch reminded the HDC that this work was reviewed as a walk-on case at the July 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting and explained that the applicant was seeking clarification on the HDC’s approved motion, which read as follows:

“Remove the rotting soffit and fascia and replace the soffit with aluminum vented soffits that match the existing direction of the soffit boards, and retain the original fascia molding or, where rotted, replace with a similar profile wood molding across the front and sides of the house and using a flat fascia on the rear elevation, if needed.”

R. Kleyn explained that she did not realize that the HDC’s approval motion did not allow the fascia boards to be wrapped with aluminum, which was their original plan to address the issues at this house.

Once it became clear that doing so would include angling aluminum to cover the existing molding, R. Kleyn was concerned that it would violate the scope of work that the HDC had approved. There was concern that reinstalling a similar wood molding over the fascia board, would prevent the fascia board from being wrapped in aluminum as the nails from the molding would breach the aluminum wrap, causing leaks. S. Radtke and D. Gregersen stated that the original motion only allowed for aluminum soffit; if allowed, they did not think there would be too many issues with nailing into aluminum-wrapped fascia boards assuming everything was properly sealed and painted.

J. Luce, a roofing contractor representing the property, explained his concerns with constructing what the HDC had approved previously. He proposed wrapping the fascia boards with aluminum and installing a polystyrene molding using an adhesive to attach it to the aluminum fascia. The HDC was open to the idea of using polystyrene molding atop aluminum-wrapped fascia, but R. Kleyn stated that there could be a significant cost to replacing all wood molding on the house with polystyrene.

R. Kleyn mentioned that most of the damage had occurred on the back portion of the roof and the remainder of the fascia and molding was relatively intact. She proposed repairing and wrapping the dominant rear gable and the sides on the back section of the roof and reusing pieces of the molding to patch damaged portions on the house's remaining fascia on the front and side elevations.

S. Radtke proposed that the back section of roof on the side elevations could use polystyrene molding of a similar profile and capped at the ends where they meet the dominant gable on the rear elevation, and that the dominant gable on the rear elevation could have a flat fascia. This would also leave more wood molding to potentially salvage and use on the front and side elevations. The HDC agreed to amend the motion for case 2024-08 to reflect this proposal.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove the rotting soffit and fascia and replace the soffit with aluminum vented soffits that match the existing direction of the soffit boards, and retain the original fascia molding or, where rotted, replace with a similar profile wood molding across the front and sides of the house (reusing the salvaged pieces from the rear elevation) and using a flat fascia on the rear elevation, if needed, and approve removal of the fascia and crown molding on the back upper gable retaining it for patching the three front elevations, the two lower back and side fascias may be replaced with wood or composite fascia of a similar size and profile as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, C. Davis, and S. Radtke voting aye.

## OLD BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

### **Case 2024-14 – 1449 Clinton St. – New Construction**

*Applicant: Dalton Haight - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Vacant Lot*

This case was tabled at the August 13, 2024 meeting. The applicant was seeking approval to construct a new single-family house with an attached garage on the lot. The HDC reviewed the proposed elevation drawings, floor plans, and site plan at the August meeting and decided that they were not comfortable making a ruling without a representative for the case present. J. Pesch explained that he had reached out to the property owner a few times since the last meeting but had received no response.

The HDC summarized the points made during the discussion held at the August meeting, touching again on how the architectural style and scale of the proposed house did not relate to the houses in the surrounding historic district, the house's garage being featured in a way that was not found anywhere

else on the street despite there being space for a detached garage that would be more in line with the houses in the surrounding historic district.

A motion that the HDC deny the request to construct a new single-family house with an attached garage on the lot as depicted in the drawings included in the August 13, 2024 HDC staff report was made by G. Borgman, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and C. Davis voting aye.

#### OTHER BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

**2024 Staff Approval Update #2** – Since the last update in June 2024, staff had approved nine projects:

- 1562 Peck – Reroof house
- 1326 4<sup>th</sup> – Reroof house
- 280 W. Muskegon – Restore stained glass windows and install a storm window
- 280 W. Muskegon – Repairs to flat roof
- 1562 Peck – Reroof shed
- 1516 Clinton – Reroof house
- 1121 Peck – Restore porch (no change in appearance)
- 280 W. Muskegon – Tuck pointing, limestone repair, cleaning and sealing, and reinstalling original decorative lamp in front of the building
- 1148 Terrace – Reroof house

**New HDC Member** – It was announced that C. Davis had been appointed to the HDC.

**Shed at 1183 Terrace** – J. Pesch explained that he received an application for a new storage shed at this property after the application deadline for the September meeting. The shed was proposed to be placed at the back of the driveway at this property and it met the requirements outlined in the HDC’s local standards. The HDC agreed to allow staff to approve the shed as it was proposed, and S. Radtke asked if this type of work could be included on the HDC Staff Approval Form. J. Pesch said he would add an agenda item for further discussion at the October meeting.

#### ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.