

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 5, 2023

Chairperson S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, J. Huss, T. Emory, D. Gregersen

MEMBERS ABSENT: K. George; G. Borgman

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, W. Webster

OTHERS PRESENT: H. Sherman (1347 Peck); J. Piggee (164 Catherine)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of July 11, 2023 and August 1, 2023 was made by T. Emory, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, T. Emory and D. Gregersen voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2023-19 (Walk-on) – 1347 Peck St. – Porch Railing

Applicant: Helen Sherman - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

Because no other applicants were in attendance, the board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to install a new porch railing around the front and rear porches of the house as well as a second set of steps on the side of the front porch, between the back two columns.

H. Sherman explained that there was a handrail on the front steps that resembled the style of railing she was proposing on the two porches, adding that she was looking to install a railing that met modern building codes. Sharing historic photos of the house to verify this, she added that, historically, the house had other styles of porch railings in the past, but originally had no railings. She noted that the proposed railings would therefore not be historically accurate, but that the previous railings had not been either and that the proposed style was preferable.

S. Radtke asked how tall the proposed railings would be and H. Sherman stated that they would be up to the wider base of the porch columns. D. Gregersen asked what material the existing handrail was and whether the proposed railing would match. H. Sherman stated that the handrail was wood and that the new railings would also be wood, painted to match the existing handrail. S. Radtke asked if the proposed back railing would be lower than what was there currently, and H. Sherman stated that it would be about the same height. S. Radtke noted that the railings on the back porch were higher than the base of the columns, but that there was not a historical precedent to reference for the height of the proposed railings. J. Huss mentioned the possibility of building the railings' spindles to a height that aligns with the base section of the columns, then installing a separate handrail at the code-required height.

The board briefly discussed the request to install a second set of stairs on the side of the front porch and saw no issue with the request. J. Pesch noted that one of the historic photographs presented by H. Sherman showed a stair that once existed in the same location.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a railing on the front and back porch with spindles no taller than the base section of the columns and a handrail as a separate piece installed at the code-required height as well as the addition of steps into the side yard between the back two columns of the front porch as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by S. Radtke and approved with J. Huss, S. Radtke, D. Gregersen, and T. Emory voting aye.

Case 2023-17 – 164 Catherine Ave. – Chimney

Applicant: Joyce Piggee - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to remove the chimney on the west side of the house. J. Pesch noted that the chimney was hardly visible from the street, thus resulting in limited photos in the staff report. He added that the applicant had been considering options for repair or removal of the chimney. J. Piggee explained that two contractors she had spoken with advised full removal of the chimney due to issues with the chimney pulling away from the house after foundation repairs were completed on the other side of the house. She added that she would like to keep the chimney, but the contractors stated that it could not be moved back into its original position as it had started pulling away from the house as it was already unstable.

T. Emory asked if the chimney was for a fireplace. J. Piggee stated that it was, but it had not been used since she lived in the house. The board discussed whether a new vent would need to be installed if the chimney was removed, and how visible that might be from the street.

S. Radtke noted that the chimney was generally utilitarian and not an architectural feature of the house as some chimneys were. D. Gregersen added that he would question the merit in repairing the chimney if the foundation was having issues supporting it. J. Piggee stated that the foundation issues had been repaired, but that she was still worried about the chimney.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove the chimney on the west side of the house with the roof a siding being repaired to match the existing materials on the house 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 J. Huss, S. Radtke, D. Gregersen, and T. Emory voting aye.

J. Piggee asked the board if she could retrofit the existing chimney with an aluminum exhaust pipe. J. Huss advised that the contractors hired to remove the chimney evaluate what was currently being vented through the chimney, and to be sure that new ventilation either through the roof or the side of the house be installed to ensure that any utilities remain properly ventilated. S. Radtke explained that if a new exterior vent pipe was needed, the HDC would also need to review that work.

Case 2023-18 – 316 W. Webster Ave. – Freestanding Awning

Applicant: Hackley Public Library - District: National Register - Current Function: Institutional

The applicant was seeking approval to install a 9'x5'x6', freestanding awning with a steel frame above a basement window well in the courtyard space to prevent future water damage. J. Pesch noted that he expected a representative from Hackley Public Library but no one was present, so he would attempt to answer the board's questions.

J. Pesch explained that the proposed freestanding awning was intended to divert rainwater from basement window wells where water had gotten into the building during recent heavy rainfall. He noted that it would be installed in the courtyard area between the library and the art museum, though he was not sure exactly where. The board speculated on potential locations for the awning, as well as other means of addressing the water infiltration issue, but decided that more information was needed to review the proposed work. The board considered tabling the case to a future meeting. J. Pesch stated that he would reach out to the applicant for additional information, and asked if the board would be comfortable with him approving the work as staff should the work be relatively minor

and the awning not be visible from the street. The board agreed to this assuming the HDC Chairperson also approve of the work once more information was provided.

OTHER BUSINESS

2023 HDC Staff Approval Update – Since the last update in May 2023, Staff had approved 13 projects, those bolded were discussed with the HDC chairperson prior to approval:

- 484 and 472 W. Webster – Reroof houses
- 125 Delaware – Reroof house
- 1319 Peck – Reroof garage
- 1508 Clinton – Install ground AC unit (potentially not complete)
- 1061 2nd – Reroof house
- 25 Merrill – Repair fire damaged wall, two windows, siding, and roofing on rear of house
- 1715 Peck – Reroof house
- 1576 Peck – Reroof house (low-slope roof only)
- 469 W. Webster – Install ground AC unit
- 228 Houston – Reroof garage
- **1204 8th – Paved, at-grade patio and black aluminum 4.5'-tall fence**
- 1497 Peck – Reroof house
- 228 Houston – Rebuild front porch steps

J. Pesch provided additional information on the project that he had discussed with S. Radtke prior to staff approval. S. Radtke reminded the board members that if they took issue with any of noted work being approved by staff, such work could be brought before the HDC in future cases.

S. Radtke proposed a one-time approval from the HDC to finalize all staff approved work. J. Pesch added that while this had not been done previously for staff approved projects, it was similar to the final approval granted by the HDC for all work approved at virtual meetings held during the pandemic.

A motion that the HDC approve the staff approved work as presented was made by T. Emory, supported by J. Huss and approved with J. Huss, T. Emory, D. Gregersen, and S. Radtke voting aye.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.