

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

August 13, 2024

J. Huss called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, K. Kochin

MEMBERS ABSENT: J. Huss, excused; K. George

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, W. Webster

OTHERS PRESENT: B. Hernandez (600 W. Clay); J. Gress and K. Gress (458 W. Webster); M. Bernhardt and T. Bernhardt (280 W. Muskegon)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to table approval of the regular meeting minutes of July 2, 2024 was made by D. Gregersen, supported by K. Kochin and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and K. Kochin voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

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

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

The applicant was seeking approval to construct an accessible ramp and required railing in the front lawn on Muskegon Avenue and construct patios at the front and rear of the building. J. Pesch noted that the existing concrete patios at the front of the building would be repaired and expanded to provide a full-width plaza. At the rear of the building, the existing asphalt parking area would be removed and a full width, concrete pedestrian plaza would be put in its place. All patio areas would have landscaping and traffic barrier planters.

J. Pesch noted that the applicant had since changed their approach to the project and was no longer requesting approval for the ramp and railing in the front lawn on Muskegon Avenue. He added that a section of the building code allowed the project to forgo the modern code requirement for a ramp if the HDC denied the request. S. Radtke stated that this was similar to situations in which modern building code requirements could be overruled by an HDC decision enabling construction of a railing at a shorter, but historically appropriate height. He added that he was already leaning toward denial of the request due to the symmetry found in the design of the building's front elevation.

After a brief discussion on accessibility requirements, K. Kochin noted that the HDC would have to base their decision on the proposed ramp's impact on the historic look and integrity of the building. J. Pesch confirmed that this was correct. S. Radtke noted that while it was hidden by vegetation, the

entablature at the base of the building matched that which is found on the sides of the building; he had concerns with the ramp further obscuring this detail. D. Gregersen added that if the main auditorium space inside the building was on the first floor rather than the second floor, he would be more inclined to approve the ramp. The HDC discussed the connection between the entrance at the rear of the building and that at the front of the building.

S. Radtke stated that he was concerned with the request to remove the greenspace at the front of the building due to the large amount of pavement present in the surrounding properties, but that he was more comfortable with the proposed patio at the rear of the building. D. Gregersen asked if the HDC should be reviewing the patios and J. Pesch explained that the HDC's staff approval policy only allowed for staff approval of paved areas with a traditional layout. As there had not historically been patios in front or behind the building, this was brought before the HDC for formal review.

The board agreed to separate the request into three separate motions, but without the applicant present, the HDC agreed to revisit the request at the end of the meeting (for the purposes of these minutes, all subsequent discussion from later in the meeting is summarized in this case). The HDC decided to vote on two of the three motions due to time constraints and the possible loss of a quorum if delayed further.

A motion to deny the request to construct an accessible ramp and required railing in the front lawn on Muskegon Avenue was made by G. Borgman, supported by K. Kochin, and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and K. Kochin voting aye.

M. Bernhardt and T. Bernhardt, owners of the building, arrived.

A motion to approve the request to construct the patio at the rear of the building as presented in the August 13, 2024 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by K. Kochin, supported by G. Borgman, and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and K. Kochin voting aye.

S. Radtke provided an overview of the conversation and motions that had taken place during the meeting. M. Bernhardt explained that the front patio would provide gathering space for programmed activities at the building – these would take place as often as possible, not just on Sunday as they had previously – as well as activate the exterior of the building. He added that seating, umbrellas, and large planters with a lot of greenery would be added to help define the outdoor space and provide a soft buffer from surrounding properties. It was intended to be more like a garden than a paved area. T. Barnhardt stated that they had issues with people sleeping behind the current landscaping and that the proposed greenery would concentrate the current grass areas into a more refined design with some verticality.

G. Borgman left at 5:35 p.m.

T. Barnhardt explained that they had been researching the building's history and had found some of the original architectural drawings and a number of historic photographs; there was a different style of landscaping for the original design that showed a planter box around the perimeter of the front lawn. She added that there had originally been taller cedars and potentially some cherry trees that were replaced with low-growing evergreen shrubs. Their goal with the proposed landscaping and plazas was to return to something more in line with the building's original design intent. D. Gregersen asked if there were drawings or product photos other than the provided plan drawing to help illustrate some of the landscaping that had been described, and T. Bernhardt said they could provide those. As

there was no longer a voting quorum, the HDC decided to review the request to construct the patio at the front of the building at the September meeting.

As some applicants were not in attendance, the cases were heard out of order.

Case 2024-11 – 600 W. Clay Ave. – Shed

Applicant: Artworks of Muskegon - District: Boilerworks - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to place an 8' by 8' storage shed on the property in the location depicted in the site plan included in the staff report. J. Pesch shared a photo of the proposed style of shed and explained the proposed location of the shed on the property.

B. Hernandez from Artworks Apartments mentioned that zoning regulations limited the possible locations for the shed. J. Pesch agreed that the building's location in the center of the block made this the least conspicuous shed location and the location that best met the local standards guidelines for newly constructed sheds.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to place an 8' by 8' storage shed on the property in the location depicted in the August 13, 2024 HDC staff report and in the style depicted in the application's supporting documents 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 S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and K. Kochin voting aye.

Case 2024-12 – 458 W. Webster Ave. – Garage

Applicant: Jon and Katie Gress - District: National Register - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to remove and rebuild the southwest, southeast, and northeast walls of the garage at the rear of the property with new windows of a similar size, configuration, and mullion design and with some changes to window locations. J. Pesch reviewed the existing and proposed elevation drawings, noting the changes to window locations. He noted that a similar project was completed for the northwest (rear) wall of the garage in 2019, and the remaining three walls were not visible from the street and minimally visible from the alley.

Board members discussed the proposed replacement windows and J. Gress confirmed that they would be the same style as those used on the wall that was rebuilt previously. S. Radtke mentioned that the changes to the window locations were minimally visible from outside the property, so he had no issues with the proposed work.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove and rebuild the southwest, southeast, and northeast walls of the garage at the rear of the property with new windows of a similar size, configuration, and mullion design and with window locations that match the elevation drawings included in the August 13, 2024 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by K. Kochin, supported by G. Borgman and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, K. Kochin, and S. Radtke voting aye.

Case 2024-13 – 1633 Clinton St. – Porch

Applicant: Trinity Health - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to reconstruct the concrete front porch to appear similar to the current porch including replacement of the wooden columns with matching replacement columns.

J. Pesch noted the deterioration visible on the porch base and columns, adding that there were no changes proposed for the porch roof. S. Radtke pointed out the entasis present on the existing columns and said that any replacement column should match that profile. He added that the existing columns did not have a base, and that replacements should match that style. D. Gregersen said that he thought new columns of the same style were available. J. Pesch stated that the contractor for the project was considering fiberglass columns instead of wood. The HDC did not have an issue with the material of the replacement columns as long as they matched the appearance of the existing columns.

G. Borgman asked if the existing handrails were going to be retained and J. Pesch responded that while the railings did look somewhat deteriorated, the contractor had not specified whether they would be retained, removed, or replaced. The HDC discussed which style of handrail would be preferable, if required by code, and settled on a single, center-running handrail of a simple design.

The HDC moved on to discuss the base of the porch. S. Radtke noted that the porch had been painted, but that it appeared that its construction matched the foundation of the house with a brick watercourse and stucco. J. Pesch added that the contractor had mentioned that the base had seen significant deterioration over time; it was patched many times using concrete, so very little of the original stucco was still intact. D. Gregersen stated that the material of the rebuilt porch was not too relevant, seeing as it would likely be painted to match the rest of the house's foundation. K. Kochin noted that the body of the house was stucco, and that a concrete base for the porch would blend in with that. S. Radtke proposed that the HDC require that the overhang of the cement capping currently on the porch be retained.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to reconstruct the concrete front porch to appear similar to the current porch including mimicking the cement capping overhang and thickness, replacement of the wooden columns with matching replacement columns, and, if a handrail is needed, a single center-running handrail so as not to appear as a feature of the front porch and house as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by K. Kochin and approved with G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, K. Kochin, and S. Radtke voting aye.

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

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

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.

S. Radtke noted that the architectural style of the proposed house did not relate to the houses in the surrounding Clinton-Peck Historic District. G. Borgman noted that the house featured its garage and the houses in the surrounding historic district did not feature their garages. D. Gregersen agreed that no other house on the street had a garage on the front of it and added that the house's design contained a number of conflicting architectural styles. The board discussed alternatives for the location of the garage noting that many houses in the historic districts had detached garages and that there appeared to be space for such at this property.

The board expressed concerns with the fenestration (the house only contained ten windows in seemingly random locations), and S. Radtke noted that the scale of the house was off when compared to the surrounding houses. The HDC decided that they were not comfortable making a ruling without a representative for the case present.

A motion that the HDC table the request was made by D. Gregersen, supported by K. Kochin and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and K. Kochin voting aye.

Case 2024-10 – 1135 5th St. – Windows

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

The applicant was seeking approval to replace three wooden double-hung windows on the second story of the south (side) elevation and two wooden double-hung windows on the second story of the west (rear) elevation with double-hung wood composite replacement windows of the same size and appearance. J. Pesch clarified that there was only one window proposed to be replaced on the rear elevation as the second one was actually on the north (side) elevation, above the back deck, facing W. Webster Avenue – he shared photos of this window.

D. Gregersen mentioned that it was difficult to tell the difference between the type of windows that were proposed and the existing wood windows and that they took paint very well. S. Radtke said that he had some concerns with window inserts typically making the window smaller due to a new frame being added inside the existing window frame; D. Gregersen responded that he had seen some inserts that were better designed and that was not an issue, though he could not definitively say that was the case with the proposed windows. J. Pesch pointed out that a document submitted with their application for the work called for a loss of 1.5” of glass area on all sides of each replacement window. The HDC was concerned with this and preferred to receive further clarification from the applicant on this point. J. Pesch said that both the contractor and property owner were unable to attend this meeting.

S. Radtke asked about the white exterior aluminum wrap noted in the window specifications. D. Gregersen stated that he believed the aluminum wrap would be installed on the trim, and S. Radtke thought that this could be the 1.5” space surrounding the glass. The HDC discussed whether this 1.5” strip could be painted, but acknowledged that it was not called for in the application. K. Kochin recommended that the motion specify that the white exterior aluminum wrap must be painted to match the existing trim color unless the rest of the windows were to be replaced in the future. Again, the HDC sought clarification from the applicant.

S. Radtke asked if the applicant provided a reason for proposing to replace these windows and J. Pesch stated that their application referenced energy efficiency. The HDC acknowledged that the windows proposed to be replaced were simple in their design and located on less prominent elevations, but still felt that further discussion was needed to avoid potential mismatched windows.

A motion to table the request was made by G. Borgman, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen and K. Kochin voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

Public Art Project – Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed.

VI. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m.