

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

August 1, 2023

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: D. Gregersen, excused; T. Emory, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, W. Webster

OTHERS PRESENT: F. Peterson and J. Salowitz (349 W. Webster); C. Nass (609 W. Western)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

J. Pesch explained that the minutes from the previous meeting were not yet complete. A motion to table the approval of the regular meeting minutes of July 11, 2023 was made by G. Borgman, supported by T. Emory and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, K. George and G. Borgman voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2023-15 – 609 W. Western Ave. – Windows

Applicant: Michael Kordecki - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Commercial

The applicant was seeking approval to replace the existing, storefront windows and doors with new windows and doors. J. Pesch noted that the work had already been started and provided photos of the building before and after the work was started as well as a photo of the building prior to its 2000s conversion to a restaurant.

C. Nass specified that the work was not finished and that they still planned to replace rotted wood members and the doors. He stated that the main difference with the appearance of the doors would be a change from two transom windows to a single transom window. S. Radtke asked if a building permit had been issued for the work and J. Pesch said that a permit had not been issued but the project was receiving funding assistance through a City of Muskegon facade improvement program. A building permit application was submitted back in February, but the HDC staff liaison was not notified. C. Nass added that one of the storefront windows was broken and was a safety issue in light of popular downtown summer events coming up.

J. Pesch explained that the appearance of the storefront differed greatly from the original appearance of the building. J. Huss pointed out that, historically, there were not transoms above the building's storefront windows. S. Radtke stated that the new windows were sliding windows and asked if the local standards allowed for such windows in this historic district. J. Pesch explained that there were no specific local standards for commercial storefronts versus residential houses, but that local standards for commercial storefronts may be something that the board should consider despite there being very few commercial buildings in the historic districts.

C. Nass stated that, much like other downtown restaurants, they were hoping to use operational windows rather than non-operational windows and added that they would be painted gray to blend with the rest of the storefront. G. Borgman asked if the applicant would be open to other options. S. Radtke said that his preference would be for fixed storefront glass, but acknowledged that the prior storefront design was not historical, the building did

not have much historical or architectural significance, and the building had already been heavily modified from its original appearance. J. Pesch reiterated that the most the HDC would have to rely on in terms of local standards was largely focused on residential windows and that repair of existing windows or replacement with matching windows was the preferred route.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace the existing storefront windows and doors with new windows and doors that fit the existing openings and a single transom window above the doors as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by K. George and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, J. Huss, and K. George voting aye.

Case 2023-16 – 349 W. Webster Ave. – Roof and Wall

Applicant: 349 W. Webster LLC - District: National Register - Current Function: Institutional (vacant)

The applicant was seeking approval to remove and repair a significant portion of the main roof and third-story stonework along the south elevation of the building, reconstructing the facade with the same stone and windows in the same configuration. If deteriorated stonework required replacement, it was proposed that stone on the non-functioning chimneys be used. The work would facilitate interior repair of failing trusses that would involve straightening, raising to the original elevation, and adding structural supports. J. Pesch added that while this work was not proposed to change the exterior appearance of the building in any noticeable way, it was a massive project that he felt warranted formal review and approval from the HDC rather than staff approval.

F. Peterson noted that the roof trusses appeared to be wedging themselves in a space and pushing the outside wall out on the building's south elevation. J. Salowitz added that this had been the condition for the last 100 years, but more recently there had been a number of failures – issues arising from large chunks of failing plaster on the interior – that were resulting in damage to the roof trusses. J. Salowitz explained which section of the wall would be disassembled, categorized, and ultimately reassembled in the same configuration once the structure of the building was addressed; the restoration consultant secured for the project would have access to replacement stone, if needed, from a quarry in Minnesota. While the quarry was not the one that provided the original stone for the building (that quarry was in Holland and had since been redeveloped into a subdivision), it would negate the need to utilize stone from the chimneys for the reconstruction.

G. Borgman asked when the roof, south wall, and structural work would begin. J. Salowitz stated that he had letters of intent from contractors for fall of 2023, and if not then, spring 2024. J. Salowitz briefly discussed potential future plans for the chimneys and future plans for addressing the rest of the building's facades. F. Peterson and J. Salowitz further explained the changes to the interior that were planned with the work, calling attention to the need for new structural columns to support the roof. While the columns would be located as unobtrusively as possible, they would have to run through the middle of the auditorium space on the top floor.

S. Radtke stated that he had concerns with applying a sealant to the exterior stone since it was acknowledged that some of the deterioration of the stone may be the result of moisture on the inside face rather than the outside face of the stone. He was worried that a sealant could trap that moisture. F. Peterson explained that each stone would be evaluated individually and that the consultant had a process to avoid potential further water damage to the stone.

J. Salowitz stated that the reconstruction plan was to reuse the existing windows which had likely been installed in the 1990s, and if any of the windows were damaged during the work they would be temporarily boarded up and dealt with in a future phase of work. While the original request called for potentially using stone from the chimneys, that would no longer be necessary, but the board discussed the architectural significance of the chimneys and if they were to be removed in the future.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove and repair a significant portion of the main roof and third-story stonework along the south elevation of the building, reconstructing the facade with the same stone and windows in the same configuration, using matching stone from a quarry in Minnesota if deteriorated stonework

requires replacement, and allowing identical replacement windows, if needed, 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 K. George, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and S. Radtke voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.