

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 12, 2022

J. Huss called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and roll was taken.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: K. George

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, L. Mikesell

OTHERS PRESENT: S. Gibbons and I. M. Vidal-Gibbons (523 W. Clay); L. Mikesell (1188 4th, also noted above); S. Olsen (313 W. Webster); D. Rodas (1586 Peck)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 12, 2022 and June 7, 2022 with the addition of missing names of attendees was made by T. Emory, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with T. Emory, J. Huss, D. Gregersen, and G. Borgman voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2022-25 – 523 W. Clay Ave. – Fence

Applicant: Steven Gibbons and Idalmis M Vidal-Gibbons - **District:** National Register - **Current Function:** Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to construct a six-foot-tall vinyl privacy fence in the side and rear yard of the property.

The applicants explained the reasons they were proposing a vinyl fence and added that there would be landscaping in front of the fence to lessen its presence, regardless of the material of the fence. The board agreed with the applicants' reasoning that a vinyl fence would remain in good condition for a longer time than a wood fence.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a six-foot-tall vinyl privacy fence in the side and rear yard of the property as proposed in the July 12, 2022 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by G. Borgman, supported by T. Emory and approved with G. Borgman, J. Huss, T. Emory, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

Case 2022-26 – 1188 4th St. – Fence

Applicant: LeighAnn Mikesell - **District:** Houston - **Current Function:** Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to construct a six-foot-tall cedar or vinyl privacy fence with the option of lattice panels in the side yard of the property along Monroe Avenue. Because HDC local standards limit privacy fences to no more than four-feet in height in the corner side yard, the fencing proposed could not be approved by Staff as it did not conform with the local standards at the proposed height.

L. Mikesell stated that the proposed fence would offer privacy for a new patio constructed in the side yard. D. Gregersen asked about the possible use of lattice panels in the fence. L. Mikesell stated that 4'-wide lattice panels would potentially be mixed in with the solid panels for improved airflow on the patio. She added that cedar was the preferred fencing material, but vinyl would be considered if cedar was not available.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a six-foot-tall cedar or vinyl privacy fence with or without the optional lattice panels in the side yard of the property in the location proposed in the July 12, 2022 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by T. Emory, supported by G. Borgman and approved with D. Gregersen, G. Borgman, T. Emory, and J. Huss voting aye.

Because there was no applicant present for Case 2022-27, the cases were heard out of order.

Case 2022-28 – 313 W. Webster Ave. – Demolition

Applicant: Downtown Muskegon Development Corporation (DMDC) - District: National Register - Current Function: Commercial/Vacant

The applicant was seeking approval to demolish the building addition and carriage house on the property, converting the land to greenspace when demolition is complete. J. Pesch provided a brief history of the Torrent House at 315 W. Webster Avenue and the building addition at 313 W. Webster Avenue – most recently known as the Community Services Building – sharing historic photos of the properties to explain the changes that had occurred to the buildings over time. Current photos were also shared to describe the way in which the two buildings were physically connected. He noted that the building addition was constructed in the mid-1950s, then significantly remodeled in the 1980s, and was not considered a contributing resource to Muskegon's National Register Historic District as the period of significance did not align with that of the rest of the district and the addition compromised the historic integrity of the Torrent House.

S. Radtke arrived at 4:29 p.m.

S. Olsen stated that the demolition contractor that had reviewed the project seemed pleased with the way that the construction of the building addition minimized the damage done to the Torrent House. J. Pesch noted that the main connection between the two buildings appeared to be in the location of a former chimney, so the point where the two buildings met was no longer affecting an original part of the house.

The board discussed the proposed demolition of the carriage house on the property. J. Pesch noted that the original drawings for the house did not include the carriage house, but that it did appear in a photograph captured between 1929 and 1942; the stone used on the carriage house in that photo appeared to differ in tone from that used on the house. He said he was unable to find any further evidence that the structure was built at a different time than the house.

The board reviewed current and past photos of the carriage house and discussed the original roof, which had since been removed and replaced with a flat roof. J. Pesch noted that all the stone facade on the carriage house appeared to still be in original condition with only wood details missing near the building's cornice. The board discussed the poor condition of the brick on the rear elevations of the carriage house. J. Pesch stated that a historic fire insurance map noted that those walls were constructed of a different material, which led him to believe they once were wrapped with exterior siding; it was possible that the brick used was an interior brick that did not hold up well to the elements after the original siding was no longer in place.

S. Olsen added that there were large boilers in the structure that would require demolition of walls to remove. He said that, while it would be more expensive to save the carriage house, if it were approved for demolition, they would still salvage the decorative stone for use on the site. After it was vacated by the Red Cross, the DMDC

purchased the building in order to keep it from being sold to a private buyer that might not act in the best interest of the community. The goal was to determine the best use of the land following demolition, and to rehabilitate the Torrent House as close to its original condition as possible. J. Pesch stated that the original architectural drawings were found and that they contained a considerable amount of detail, including dimensions, that would help in the work that would be needed on the exposed side of the Torrent House.

J. Pesch explained that the Hackley Public Library had long-term plans to use the Torrent House as an annex to the original library located across the street at 316 W. Webster Avenue. The Library was interested in making the other floors of the Torrent House more accessible for public use as the original library building was essentially locked into its current footprint and could not be further expanded.

S. Radtke proposed that the HDC review the demolition of the building addition and the demolition of the carriage house separately. The board had no further comments on the proposal to demolish the building addition.

G. Borgman stated that demolition of the building addition but keeping the carriage house would leave an eyesore visible from the street. S. Radtke stated that he felt the carriage house was salvageable considering that the wood roof was the main piece that was missing, and that he did not expect the interior to be too elaborate. G. Borgman said that he had been inside the carriage house and that the interior was not in good condition – it was filled by the boilers and inundated with asbestos. S. Radtke said that the building would have to be remediated of asbestos before being torn down anyway. J. Pesch added that while he understood the concerns about visibility of the carriage house in its current condition, the exposed side of the Torrent House would also likely be unattractive following the potential demolition of the addition. D. Gregersen mentioned that, if there were limited resources for the project, it would make sense to concentrate them on repairing the house. S. Olsen said that the cost of retaining the carriage house would be prohibitive, and that continued repair and maintenance of the structure would also be of significant cost. S. Radtke noted that the HDC's decisions were not to consider the economic feasibility of proposed projects.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to demolish the building addition on the property taking care to protect the windows and architectural features on the Torrent House, converting the land to greenspace when demolition is complete 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 S. Radtke, D. Gregersen, J. Huss, T. Emory, G. Borgman, and voting aye.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to demolish the carriage house on the property, converting the land to greenspace when demolition is complete 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 D. Gregersen, G. Borgman, J. Huss, and T. Emory voting aye, and S. Radtke voting no.

T. Emory left at 5:15pm.

Case 2022-27 – 26 E. Isabella Ave. – Windows

Applicant: Ashley Bucy - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to replace all existing windows in the house with vinyl windows of the same size and appearance within the original openings excluding the leaded glass casement window, sidelight windows, and two dormer windows on the front (south) elevation, and replace an existing basement window with a larger egress window and window-well and side over one missing window on the rear (north) elevation.

G. Borgman asked how the HDC typically approached proposals for vinyl-clad windows and J. Pesch explained that the local standards called for repair of existing windows, but where repair was not feasible, replacement windows were to be of the same material as the original windows. S. Radtke added that the board had occasionally allowed for more leniency in replacement materials on the side and rear elevations of the house.

J. Pesch shared photos of the rear elevation of the house, explaining the applicant's requests. The board determined that it was unlikely that some of the windows on the rear elevation were original, as it appeared that the rear porch had once been open instead of enclosed and because that elevation was not very visible from surrounding streets.

The board discussed the classification of the leaded glass windows as casement windows, ultimately determining that they would simply refer to them as leaded glass windows. Additional discussion focused on the locations of unique windows on the house, with the board ultimately settling on a motion that would require retaining all leaded glass windows, sidelight windows, and two dormer windows.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace all existing windows in the house with vinyl windows of the same size and appearance within the original openings excluding all leaded glass windows, sidelight windows, and two dormer windows, replace an existing basement window with a larger egress window and window-well, and side over one missing window on the rear elevation with similar material 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 S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and J. Huss voting aye.

Case 2022-29 (Walk-on) – 1586 Peck St. – Windows, Siding, Trim Wrapping
Applicant: Danny Rodas - District: Clinton-Peck - Current Function: Residential

The board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to replace wood windows with vinyl windows, install new vinyl siding, new PVC trim and new aluminum soffit, and to wrap round porch columns in PVC to make them 10"x10" squares. J. Pesch explained that the work had already been partially completed without building permits nor HDC approval.

D. Rodas indicated which windows had already been replaced, explaining that he was not aware that the house was located in a historic district. J. Pesch shared photos of the house taken before and after the window replacement work had been completed. G. Borgman asked why the windows were replaced and D. Rodas said that most of them did not open, four of them had broken glass and were covered in plastic, and that he was not able to repair them.

The board noted that many of the new windows installed did not fit within the original window openings and that, combined with the false mullions in the replacement windows, they were not appropriate for the house. D. Rodas stated that he was proposing to replace other windows as well, but all of them had the false mullions and would not match the appearance of the original windows. He added that a previous owner had installed vinyl replacement windows on the second floor. J. Pesch stated that there was no record of that past work being approved by the HDC, but that the replacement windows that were installed on the second floor appeared to be more in line with what the HDC might approve.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace all windows with vinyl replacement windows matching the size, shape, and appearance of the original windows and with the condition that all leaded glass windows are retained as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by D. Gregersen, supported by G. Borgman and approved with S. Radtke, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, and J. Huss voting aye.

Citing a lack of information needed to review the work, the board tabled the request to install vinyl siding, replacement trim, and soffit wrapping to a future meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

New HDC Member – Commissioners welcomed their newest board member, Greg Borgman.

2022 Staff Approval Update #2 – Since the last update in April 2022, Staff had approved seven projects, those bolded were discussed with the HDC chairperson prior to approval:

- 1649 Peck – Replacement of existing fence with new fence of same design, materials, and appearance
- 1659 Peck – Reroof house and flat roof; install aluminum soffit in place of existing chicken wire soffit on portion of house not visible from surrounding public streets
- 105 Iona – Reroof house
- **401 W. Western – Removal of defunct chimney (on alley)**
- **241 W. Muskegon – Installation of storm windows on the first floor of the attached garage**
- **561 W. Western – Change color of museum window sign to white (green was approved at 6/7/22 HDC meeting)**
- 26 E. Isabella – Reroof house replacing OSB and exposed rafter tails, where damaged

August 2022 HDC Meeting Date – Staff and the board discussed alternate meeting dates in August but did not settle on a date. Staff promised to follow up with more information on any potential rescheduled meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

JP