

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 7, 2022

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: T. Emory, K. George, S. Radtke, J. Huss

MEMBERS ABSENT: D. Gregersen, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, D. Born

OTHERS PRESENT: K. Hallman, B. Franceschi, and S. Gerrard (296 W. Webster); T. Harrell and R. Chlopan (460 W. Clay); M. Faino, M. Acker, and Debbie (621 W. Western); E. Bollweg (407 W. Muskegon); D. Null and J. Greve (1275 Peck); M. Dickinson (475 W. Webster)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None. Minutes will be presented at a future meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Case 2022-02 – 296 W. Webster Ave. – Addition

Applicant: Muskegon Museum of Art - District: National Register/Downtown Structures - Current Function: Institutional

J. Pesch explained that this was a case originally reviewed at the January 12, 2022 HDC meeting – where it was granted conceptual approval by the board – and that the applicant was back to seek final approval for the project. He added that this meeting would serve as a review of the full project including the building addition and enabling work on the W. Webster Avenue side of the building.

The applicant was seeking approval to construct a new, two-story addition to the north of the Muskegon Museum of Art's existing building, install a new south entrance on W. Webster Avenue where a window currently exists, and create a landscaped plaza connecting the new addition's north entrance to W. Clay Avenue. The footprint of the new construction would span two current parcels (269 W. Webster and 315 W. Clay) as well as portion of the vacated alley in this block, space completely or partially located in two local historic districts. The building addition was proposed to contain new large and small galleries, event space, a roof terrace, the museum store, classroom and activity space, mechanical space/loading dock, support space, and collections management space.

S. Gerrard and B. Franceschi, architects, provided a project update, comparing renderings of the proposed addition to photos of existing conditions. S. Gerrard explained the configuration and purpose of the new W. Webster Avenue entrance proposed to take the place of an existing storefront window added in the 1980s as part of first building addition. S. Radke asked if any thought had been given to the potential negative issues with regards to skateboarders using the proposed seating wall on the new entrance. S. Gerrard noted that there were multiple methods, both pre- and post-construction, that can be used to combat or deter skateboarders, should issues come up.

S. Gerrard continued with a presentation of the building addition focusing on how the old and new buildings would connect and visually play off of one another. He emphasized that the building addition was designed so as

not to overwhelm the scale of the original building or first addition. The only places where the addition would be physically connected to the existing building would be near the loading dock and at the building's current rear entrance, with both points of connection having a fire-rated door, effectively separating the old and new spaces in the case of a fire.

B. Franceschi provided samples of an anodized aluminum panel with a brushed bronze finish and a manganese brick that were proposed as exterior materials for the building addition.

S. Radtke asked if there was any type of tinting planned for the glass on the addition and if the wall sign would be back-lit. S. Gerrard stated that the glass would be transparent with a low-E coating and no tint. He added that the sign's letters would likely be constructed of the same anodized aluminum but would be up-lit from lights at the base of the building with the possibility of changing colors.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a new, approximately 21,500 gross square foot, two-story addition to the north of the Muskegon Museum of Art's existing building, install a new south entrance on W. Webster Avenue where a window currently exists, and create a landscaped plaza connecting the new addition's north entrance to W. Clay Avenue as presented in the June 7, 2022 HDC staff report and supporting documents as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by T. Emory, supported by S. Radtke and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, K. George, and T. Emory voting aye.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2022-20 – 460 W. Clay Ave. – Rehabilitation

Applicant: Tim Harrell - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to install composite, horizontal lap siding with a 6" exposure, install composite trim retaining the existing trim profiles, install black fiberglass windows with the same openings and retaining the same dimensions, install black metal handrails on the front porch, and remove the chain-link fence in the front yard.

R. Chlopan clarified that the proposed siding exposure would be closer to 4.5" rather than 6" to more closely match that of the neighboring house. J. Pesch noted that the house has had replacement siding since at least the 1970s. K. George mentioned that this house and the neighboring house were mirror images of one another, so it was safe to assume that the original siding was similar to that of the neighboring house. T. Harrell explained that, in contrast to the neighboring house, the siding and windows had not been maintained well over the years, citing a patchwork of siding materials and windows that were falling apart as evidence. The board determined that because the siding was not original and that the proposed replacement siding would more closely resemble what had originally been used on the house, the proposed replacement siding was acceptable.

The board discussed the request to replace the existing trim with composite trim, retaining the existing trim profiles. S. Radtke noted that the HDC preferred that any replacement siding and trim be smooth rather than faux-wood textured. T. Harrell noted that the majority of the trim was currently aluminum-clad. J. Huss asked if the decorative gable end would be retained. T. Harrell said that their plan was to replace siding and trim below that area, but not to change the decorative gable end. S. Radtke asked if there were plans to address the front porch columns. T. Harrell stated that they would remain as-is. The board agreed that as long as the replacement trim retains the same dimensions and basic profiles, it could be approved.

T. Harrell stated that he would like to get rid of the exterior stair on the east elevation of the house, but that he was not sure if today's code requirements would allow for an alternative means of egress. J. Pesch directed him to speak with the building inspections department regarding the relevant code requirements. The board briefly discussed potential alternatives to the exterior staircase, noting that their recommendation would be to remove the stairs if the building code would allow for it.

The board moved on to discuss the replacement windows, breaking up the discussion to address the windows with colored glass separately. S. Radtke noted that as long as the windows on the sides and back of the house retained the same size and appearance, and fit within the original openings, the board tended to be more willing to approve replacement. T. Harrell said that they were planning to do exactly that with black fiberglass windows.

J. Pesch noted that the colored glass was used exclusively on the south (front) elevation, with one additional window on the east elevation with divided lights but without colored glass, that a previous owner had attempted to repair. The board identified the colored glass windows to be an architecturally defining feature of the house. T. Harrell asked if there had been any situations in the historic districts where replacement of unique windows was permitted by the HDC, as he was proposing to replace them with standard, double-hung windows to fit within the original openings, maintaining the upper and lower window splits. The board could not recall a case where replacement of decorative, colored glass windows were allowed to be removed. R. Chlopan stated that the windows were beyond reasonable repair, which is why replacement was being proposed. K. George understood their concern, stating that the preferred solution would be reconstruction of the windows, and providing a brief history of the significance of the two mirrored houses. J. Huss asked Staff if there were resources available for the applicant directing them to contractors with experience in window repair. J. Pesch stated that there were a number of sources for information on repairing wood windows, and that he would share a few resources that he had also shared with other property owners in the historic districts. T. Harrell asked if the board could approve a recreation of the original windows using colored film applied to a modern window to resemble the original pattern.

S. Radtke reiterated that the board had never allowed for replacement of such an architecturally defining feature, and noted that the local standards specifically referenced not removing or altering decorative windows. K. George proposed that the HDC make a decision on the remainder of the request, but table the decision on the windows with colored glass to allow time for the applicant to research window restoration and alternative solutions.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install composite, horizontal lap siding with a 4.5" exposure, install composite trim retaining the existing trim profiles and decorative gable end, install black fiberglass windows with the same openings and retaining the same dimensions on the side and rear elevations, install black metal handrails on the front porch, and remove the chain-link fence in the front yard as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by K. George, supported by J. Huss and approved with T. Emory, K. George, J. Huss, and S. Radtke voting aye.

Case 2022-21 – 621 W. Western Ave. – Window

Applicant: FOE Eagles 668 - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Commercial/Institutional

The applicant was seeking approval to install a new 9' x 9', four pane window with reflective glass in an original opening on the north (W. Western Avenue) elevation due to water damage found with the former window. The work was completed without building permits or HDC review, and the reflective glass in violation of zoning regulations.

J. Pesch explained that the building was built in the 1800s, but the entire front facade along W. Western Avenue was heavily remodeled in 1949 and that was likely when the glass block windows were installed. He stated that because the appearance of the building following the 1949 remodel was more than 50 years old, it could be deemed historic in its own right, and that the original appearance of the front elevation likely should not play into the HDC's review of this work.

M. Faino explained that the reflective finish could not be removed from the glass, and that he originally planned to install tinted windows that were not reflective. J. Pesch reviewed the zoning ordinance's requirements for clear glass storefronts in this part of the city. M. Faino mentioned that the windows were selected to match the doors that had been replaced a few years ago which the HDC had approved. J. Pesch added that those doors did not

contain mirrored glass. M. Faino said that they also planned to change the other glass block windows to match this window when funding became available.

S. Radtke explained that the HDC does not typically approve reflective glass unless it has historic precedent at a specific property, and that if it was approved, the work would still need to go before the Planning Commission to receive a departure from the zoning ordinance. J. Pesch said that he would have to look into whether the HDC's or the Planning Commission's decision would take precedent, but that ideally, the two boards would agree on an outcome. He added that the zoning ordinance specifically called out properties listed in the state or national register of historic places, or located within a local historic district as ones where the Secretary of the Interior's Standards would supersede the zoning ordinance.

M. Faino proposed adding a tint to glass to cut down on the reflectivity. J. Pesch noted that whether the window was glass block or reflective and/or tinted glass, the window had never been transparent, but that the change in material and appearance of the window would void its grandfathered status. The HDC discussed the possibility of adding an applied tint to the exterior of the windows to diminish the reflectivity of the glass noting that such a product would have to be able to hold up to exterior conditions as applying it to the inside of the glass would be ineffective. J. Pesch stated that the HDC should review the work as it would any other case, and that the need for Planning Commission review regarding the glass transparency could be determined once the HDC had made their decision.

The board reviewed the design of the window, without considering the issue of the reflective glass. J. Huss stated that she would have liked to have seen more light division on the upper panes of glass in an attempt to mimic the windows used on the second floor of the building. J. Pesch shared renovation plans for the building that had been presented to the HDC in the past, but were never implemented; he noted that the drawings provided at that time may offer some possible mullion configurations to guide the current design or redesign of the window. The board and applicant reviewed the drawings. The board mentioned that the current window could have false mullions applied to the exterior that would further divide the existing four panes of glass, discussed the preferred design, and settled on an additional vertical mullion applied through the center of each of the four squares.

J. Pesch noted that if the HDC's decision did not align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, their motion would no longer overrule a decision made by the Planning Commission.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a new 9'x9', four pane window in the existing opening on the north (W. Western Avenue) elevation with reflective glass with the condition that the glass be covered with a tint to diminish the reflectivity, and that a vertical mullion be added in each of the four existing window sections as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by K. George and approved with K. George, T. Emory, J. Huss, and S. Radtke voting aye.

The board decided not to approve replacement of the second storefront window on the front elevation because that work was unlikely to happen within the one-year timeframe that the approval would be valid, though they did prefer that the two windows ultimately match one another.

Case 2022-22 – 407 W. Muskegon Ave. – Windows

Applicant: Elizabeth and Daniel Bollweg - District: Houston - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to replace nine existing or missing basement windows with glass block windows of the same size. J. Pesch explained that the HDC granted approval for replacement of all other windows at this property in November 2021 except for the basement windows. Three of the basement windows were still in place along 5th Street, but all the others appeared to have removed or were in serious disrepair and boarded-up.

S. Radtke noted that the basement windows were secondary windows but were on a primary elevation and suggested that the board review the work in two parts: the boarded-up or missing windows, and the windows that

were still in place. The board voiced concern over the appearance of glass block windows, especially if they were proposed to have vents. E. Bollweg stated that vents were not being proposed and that she also did not like the appearance of vents. The board discussed the various options for replacement windows and combinations of glass block windows and replacement windows that more closely resembled the three existing windows along 5th Street. E. Bollweg stated that part of the reason they were requesting glass block windows was because they would be built flush with the window opening, allowing for the removal of the rotted wood window trim.

The board considered a number of alternatives and discussed the expected final appearance of the glass block windows. S. Radtke proposed that the glass block be set back to match the reveal of the original windows instead of being flush with the outer wall of the house. E. Bollweg noted that landscaping around the foundation of the house was also planned at some point.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace nine existing or missing basement windows with glass block windows of the same size and recessed to match the reveal of the original basement windows 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 K. George, T. Emory, J. Huss, and S. Radtke voting aye.

Case 2022-23 – 1275 Peck St. – Sign

Applicant: Muskegon Pregnancy Services - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Commercial

The applicant was seeking approval to install a new, 2'-10" x 12'-0" wall sign on the east (Peck Street) elevation of the building. J. Pesch added that the proposed sign would be an internally lit sign cabinet, which was the same style of sign as the one that had previously existed in this location.

D. Null mentioned that the existing sign cabinet on the south elevation of the building would also have a new face installed with their business logo. J. Pesch explained that at the meeting where the previous sign at this address was reviewed and approved, the HDC determined that the building was built in the 1970s and was a non-contributing structure to the McLaughlin Historic District, which lead to more leniency with the design of that sign. S. Radtke noted that the HDC's local standards specified that the sign cabinet could not be more than 8"-deep and that, if approved, the final motion should include that as a condition of approval. J. Pesch added that the HDC often specifies that the sign be affixed to the mortar rather than the brick to avoid damaging the brick.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a new 2'-10"x12'-0" internally-lit wall sign on the east (Peck Street) elevation of the building with the design presented in the June 7, 2022 HDC staff report, with the condition that the sign does not protrude from the wall more than 8" and that the sign is fastened to the wall with lag bolts through mortar joints as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by K. George, supported by T. Emory and approved with J. Huss, K. George, T. Emory, and S. Radtke and voting aye.

Case 2022-24 (Walk-on) – 475 W. Webster Ave. – Shed

Applicant: Matt Dickinson - District: Houston - Current Function: Residential

The board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to install an 8'x10' wood shed with painted composite panels on an existing paved driveway off of the rear alley.

The board reviewed the site plan and photo of proposed shed provided by the applicant. M. Dickinson noted that there were evergreen plantings and a fence in front of the proposed location of the shed, screening the view of it from the street.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install an 8'x10' wood shed with painted composite panels on the paved driveway off of the rear alley, shielded from view from the street 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, T. Emory, K. George, and S. Radtke and voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

JP