

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

April 22, 2021

Chairperson S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, Muskegon, Michigan; D. Gregersen, Muskegon, Michigan

MEMBERS ABSENT: T. Emory, Muskegon, Michigan; K. George, Muskegon, Michigan; A. Riegler, Muskegon, Michigan

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch; C. Cashin; L. Mikesell

OTHERS PRESENT: None

This meeting was a continuation of the April 6th meeting. There were a number of cases under Other Business on the April 6th meeting agenda which were not addressed due to time constraints.

OTHER BUSINESS

2021 HDC Goals – At a previous meeting, the HDC discussed goals for preservation in the City of Muskegon that could be carried out by this board. This meeting began the conversation of assigning tasks to different board members.

- 1) Mailings to property owners within the historic districts containing info on HDC procedures.

J. Pesch said that mailings will be mostly completed by staff, with help from others for creating the literature. Mailings could be sent to current occupants and property owners so both were made aware of the purpose of the historic districts and the role of the HDC. Staff will also update an informational brochure that can be handed out to interested parties that come into the Planning Department at City Hall. These mailings/brochures will include procedures as well as information on what it means to live in a historic district.

S. Radtke stated that he is willing to work with staff on editing or writing literature for the mailings and brochure.

- 2) Outreach to local realtors with literature highlighting benefits of properties in historic districts.

J. Pesch had previously shared some studies on the benefits tied to properties located in a historic district. The board had also mentioned several other benefits in the past that could be briefly summed up in a document that is mailed out to residents and realtors. There have been issues in the past with homes being sold in

the historic district were not presented as such, and new owners then end up surprised that they have to follow certain procedures.

D. Gregersen volunteered to gather contact names from real estate companies in the area. He also proposed including photos of a historic home that has been allowed to make any change they wanted, in turn destroying the architectural value of the home, alongside a photo of a home that had been respected (likely aided by HDC review) over the years.

S. Radtke asked how mailings would be funded and whether the HDC should start producing an annual or semi-annual newsletter that could be sent to the historic district properties and include HDC cases/updates and success stories. J. Pesch explained that the cost of the mailings would likely come out of the Planning Department's budget and that it would be possible to create an annual report for the historic districts. Discussion ensued about whether this newsletter should be mailed or emailed. S. Radtke, D. Gregersen and J. Pesch agreed that the newsletter should be mailed to attract attention. J. Pesch mentioned also reaching out to neighborhood associations or attending their meetings to give a presentation and/or answer questions from neighbors regarding the historic district and the HDC.

J. Pesch mentioned partnering with Lakeshore Museum Center's Heritage Museum to promote their Heritage Home plaques, as well as honoring certain home owners through the City Commission to commend them on the work that they have done on their house.

S. Radtke mentioned sending letters to realtors when properties in the historic district went up for sale, if possible. J. Pesch explained that the County handles transfer of ownership information and it may be difficult to obtain the information on homes for sale until after the sale takes place. S. Radtke proposed that HDC create a welcome packet to new property owners instead that could include a printed copy of the HDC's local standards and a thank you/informational letter. J. Pesch mentioned also creating a better online presence where property owners can review important information.

3) Identify resources with particular historic significance to the Muskegon community.

J. Pesch mentioned looking beyond the current historic district boundaries to identify other historic buildings and sites in the City. He mentioned creating a plan for including those buildings and sites in a historic district, or another means recognizing their importance and protecting them.

4) Evaluate other potential boundary updates/new historic districts adjacent to existing districts.

J. Pesch mentioned creating a survey of properties found by during goal #3 and starting the discussion of possibly adjusting the existing historic district boundaries.

S. Radtke said he could meet with J. Pesch to start assigning tasks to complete these goals. J. Pesch agreed to draft assignments for review at a future HDC meeting.

J. Pesch said the Planning Department is working on updating the City's Master Land Use Plan, which contains a chapter on historic districts. He planned to send out the current Master Plan for for HDC review and discussion for updating this section of the Plan.

2021 Staff Approval Update – J. Pesch shared a list of projects that staff had approved since the start of the year:

- 72 E. Grand – Re-roof with like materials
- 421 W. Webster – Replacement of two second-story wood windows on rear of house with aluminum-clad wood windows fitting the same opening and with the same vertical mullions.
- 600 W. Clay – Reroof flat roof, removal of active growing tree and replacement with like brick and mortar in a 6'-wide by 8'-tall area on the building's east corner.
- 563 W. Western – Replacement of four wood double-hung windows with vinyl-wrapped wood double hung windows of the same size and appearance. Repair and replace spalling face brick and tuck point.
- 263 W. Muskegon – Replacement of rear door and repairs to wood steps on the back of house
- 1668 Jefferson – Construction of 78' of 6'-tall wood privacy fence.
- 1752 Jefferson – Replacement of damaged wood siding with like materials retaining all exterior trim where possible.

S. Radtke asked that staff inform homeowners that modern mortar now contains Portland Cement which is harder and can cause bricks to break over time; prior to the 1920s the mortar's base was made of lime.

S. Radtke mentioned that, as the chairperson of the HDC, staff will occasionally reach out to him to ask for advice on whether or not the case should go before the HDC; if anyone had an issue with the cases mentioned above not going before the HDC could let him and staff know so that they can collect feedback on this process.

Nelson House – Staff has been working with a group to save the historic Nelson House located at 1292 Jefferson (the former rectory for St. Jean's Church). The current proposal involves moving the house from its present location to a vacant lot owned by the City of Muskegon at 382 W. Muskegon Avenue. Under this plan, the house would be moving from outside a historic district into the Houston Historic District. No formal review or approval of the proposed project was handled at the meeting.

The board members shared their opinions about the beauty of the home and agreed that the home should be saved and/or moved. J. Pesch shared the history of the home and stated that he was looking for historic photos of the home, especially ones that may exist from when the home was moved from its original location at the northwest corner of 3rd Street and W. Webster Avenue to its current location in 1891.

L. Mikesell explained that the City was seeking to partner with the Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association (NNIA) to fund the process of moving the house through a loan from their endowment fund and that a meeting was planned for the following week to discuss the project. The project would happen in stages with the first involving only the house move and construction of a new foundation. Depending on whether or not the house had a potential buyer, phase two could simply allow for the sale of the house to a private owner as-is, or could include an additional loan to the City for rehabilitating the home before selling it. Any loan would be repaid when the house sells or over a three-year period.

S. Radtke asked what would happen with the other two structures on the property. J. Pesch said there are no current plans for those structures with both being owned by the Muskegon Public School District. L. Mikesell noted that there was a vacant lot on Sanford Street where staff had been looking into moving the red brick structure from its current location.

HDC Staff Approval of Sheds – Staff is considering updating the HDC Staff Approval Form to include accessory structures such as sheds. Requests for sheds are fairly common, and are approved through the Planning Department via issuance of a Development Permit. While the HDC typically references the Local Design Guidelines for New Construction when reviewing proposed sheds, more specific guidelines could be adopted and used as a baseline for potential projects in the future.

J. Pesch said that board currently takes quite some time reviewing these typically less-significant accessory structures and feels that the HDC could develop more specific guidelines that would allow staff to approve new sheds in historic districts.

S. Radtke would like requirements with fewer restrictions because, as temporary structures, sheds do not affect the historic timeline of the house, plus it would allow residents to spend less money on building the structure; these structures should be as neutral as possible and not a focal point.

HDC Regular Meeting Date Change – Due to recurring time constraints with virtual meetings hosted on the same Zoom account, Staff is considering changing the dates for regular meetings.

J. Pesch suggested that the board move the meeting to a different date and/or time, to avoid interfering with a meeting that is hosted, using the same City of Muskegon Zoom account, on the same date as the current HDC meetings at 5:30p.m. Moving the meeting, even if temporarily, would allow for HDC meetings not to get cut short. J. Pesch planned to return to this topic at the next meeting when more members were in attendance.

Public Comment Period – Time was allotted for public comment with contact information provided. No comments were received.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

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