

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 5, 2022

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, D. Gregersen, E. Trejo, J. Huss

MEMBERS ABSENT: T. Emory, excused; K. George

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Snyder and J. Sternberge (238 Houston), A. Straub (1164 Terrace), K. Cappellucci (97 Iona), E. Trejo (486 W. Clay, also noted above)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 1, 2022 was made by E. Trejo, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, E. Trejo, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

Case 2022-11 – 238 Houston Ave. – Siding, Trim, and Eaves

Applicant: Joseph Heeren - District: Houston - Current Function: Vacant

This was a continuation of the discussion from the March 1, 2022 HDC meeting where this was accepted as a walk-on case. The applicant is seeking approval to install composite siding on the north elevation and vinyl siding on the east, west, and south elevations with a 4” reveal, install 6”-wide composite trim/sills on all exterior doors and windows, and box in the eaves with aluminum soffit and fascia with false composite exposed rafters.

J. Pesch shared the approved motion from the March 2022 meeting to provide context for the board members that had not been present at that meeting. He explained that, at the March meeting, the board did not vote on the portions of the request that involved the siding, window and door trim, and the plan for the eaves and rafters. D. Snyder explained that they had since updated their application materials to reflect the changes that had been discussed at the previous meeting. He noted that the building was planned to be used as a small gallery and event space. J. Pesch shared the changes to the request since the March meeting.

In order to provide appropriate ventilation in the attic, J. Sternberge explained that they were requesting French style eaves which would match the angle of the roof, rather than the previously presented style, that had a soffit parallel with the ground. False composite exposed rafters would then be connected to the existing rafters to give the appearance of open eaves.

D. Gregersen asked about the roof overhang on the rear elevation of the building, noting that the same overhang did not exist on the front elevation. He explained that it was likely that there was once a similar overhang on the front elevation. S. Radtke noted that, from a maintenance standpoint, it may be a good idea to add a roof overhang on the front elevation. Due to the lack of historic documentation, the board agreed that such a change would be made as a recommendation, but not as a requirement.

The width of the proposed new siding had been increased from a 3” reveal to 4”. The composite siding proposed for the front elevation was deemed acceptable by the board, but additional discussion regarding the vinyl siding

proposed for the sides and rear of the building followed. The west elevation was cited as a location where composite siding would be required due to the building's high-visibility from 3rd Street. The board determined that the siding would not be necessary for the full length of that elevation, but only to the point where rear addition began. J. Pesch clarified that vinyl siding was being considered by the HDC in this case because there was already replacement siding on the building and the remaining, original siding beneath it was in poor condition – both were also damaged by the fire.

The board discussed the front elevation's transom windows. D. Snyder explained that there was no plan to restore them at this time, but he would consider it, as it could benefit the gallery space. S. Radtke asked if the small awning on the west elevation would be restored as part of the project, noting that it was likely a later addition. D. Snyder stated that it would be. D. Gregersen said that it would be beyond the control of the HDC to require that the awning be removed, but the board did note that they would be in favor of the wings on each side of the door being removed to restore what was once likely a wrap-around transom window. S. Radtke also mentioned that its restoration could incorporate the sunburst design featured on the gable end of the building's rear elevation.

The board stated that they would be in favor of the proposed 6"-wide composite trim and sills if they were to match the original elevation drawings reviewed at the December 1, 2020 HDC meeting.

The motion from the March 1st meeting was reviewed as follows:

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a new egress window on the south elevation, replace missing/damaged 24"x54" wood windows on the east, west, and south elevations with vinyl windows of the same size and appearance with applied mullions installed on both the inside and outside of the glass for the three second-story windows on the south elevation, uncover and replace the storefront windows on the first floor with windows of the same size and appearance, and extend the height of the chimney using reclaimed brick from the building to meet code for venting as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained.

The additional items discussed at this meeting resulted in the following addition to the above motion:

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install composite siding on the on the south and west elevation and vinyl siding on the east and north elevations as well as the west elevation of the rear addition with a 4" reveal, install 6"-wide composite trim/sills on all exterior doors and windows to match the elevation drawings provided at the December 1, 2020 HDC meeting, and install aluminum soffit and fascia with false composite exposed rafters on the eaves as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by E. Trejo and approved with S. Radtke, E. Trejo, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

The board also made a series of recommendations including adding a roof overhang on the front gable end similar to the original condition of the rear gable end, installing a transom window in place of the existing sign band above the storefront, and removing the existing side wings on the small roof on the west elevation.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2022-12 – 1164 Terrace St. – Fence

Applicant: Straub Investment Properties LLC - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential/Vacant

J. Pesch presented the staff report. The applicant was seeking approval to construct a six-foot-tall wood privacy fence surrounding the side and rear yard and proposed parking area. Because the HDC local standards limited privacy fences to no more than four-feet in height beyond the midway point of the front and rear of the house, this request could not be approved by Staff as it did not conform with the local standards at the proposed height.

S. Radtke asked about the proposed material of the fence. A. Straub explained that he was planning on using a white vinyl fence with heavy landscaping planted in front of the fence to lessen its presence when viewed from Terrace Street. He added that the fence would provide security and privacy for future tenants.

The board and applicant discussed a discrepancy in the drawing and photos included in the staff report as to the proposed location of the fence. It was determined that the fence would end just behind the decorative window on the northwest corner of the house, rather than in line with the front wall of the house. D. Gregersen said that the location of the fence closer to the street than permitted by the HDC's local standards was logical since running the fence midway between the front and rear of the house would mean that the fence would meet the house in the center of a bay window. The fence would also run along the east property line instead of in the location shown in the site plan.

A. Straub asked about the possibility of replacing the fence with a gate where the driveway would cross the proposed fence line. He noted that the fence, as drawn on the south property line along Delaware Avenue, was incorrect, as he did not intend to have it placed adjacent to the sidewalk. Instead, the fence would be located north, to a point just south of the proposed condensing units. The board acknowledged that that segment of fence would meet the local standards if it were to be constructed in the new location.

Board members reviewed the front setback of the neighboring house on Terrace Street in relation to the location of the proposed new fence and determined that it would not negatively impact the view of the neighboring property.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to construct a six-foot-tall vinyl privacy fence surrounding the side and rear yard and proposed parking area as depicted in the site plan included in the April 5, 2022 HDC staff report, shifting the location of the fence along Delaware Avenue north to a point just south of the proposed condensing units and running the fence along the east property line as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by E. Trejo, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, E. Trejo, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

Case 2022-13 – 97 Iona Ave. – Siding

Applicant: Kathleen Cappellucci - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

J. Pesch presented the staff report. The applicant was seeking approval to install vinyl siding over the existing wood siding on the house. K. Cappellucci shared photos of the condition of the house from when she had bought it and noted that painting the house had been very difficult and a constant task. She explained that she was planning to sell the house to the tenants, but that they required that the house be resided before completing the sale. A photo depicting the proposed style and color of siding was presented. K. Cappellucci stated that she was also unaware that the house was located in a historic district and noted several concerns about the conditions of neighboring properties. J. Pesch stated that he would direct these concerns to the appropriate City staff.

E. Trejo noted that the house was located mid-block, was surrounded by trees and some neighboring houses had vinyl siding. D. Gregersen stated that the issue was whether to allow vinyl siding or require wood siding. K. Cappellucci stated that she had previously obtained a quote for wood siding, but that it was expensive and that many contractors refused to do work in the neighborhood. D. Gregersen asked if a quote had been obtained for a composite siding material. K. Cappellucci stated that she had not, and had issues with getting contractors that were willing to do the work.

K. Cappellucci said the plan was to side over the existing siding instead of removing it. S. Radtke explained that the HDC generally did not approve siding over existing siding because it would change the profiles of the trim and moldings, and went on to note that the board has approved composite siding to replace wood siding with a few instances where vinyl siding was approved.

S. Radtke said that he would prefer to see a quote for composite siding. K. Cappellucci stated that she would have difficulty getting a contractor to complete the work. J. Pesch brought up another case that had been reviewed by the board where the property owner had been facing a similar issue; he offered to put them in contact with K. Cappellucci to discuss their experience and provide any advice they had. The board explained the details of composite siding and the details of what was deemed acceptable by the HDC.

The board discussed whether they should deny the request with a recommendation that a quote be obtained for composite siding, or table the request until a quote is obtained. J. Pesch added that the HDC could approve the request with the condition that composite siding replace the existing wood siding so as to not require the applicant to return if a favorable quote was received.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove the existing wood siding on the house and to install replacement siding of a composite material with the same reveal as the original siding, maintaining all moldings and profiles as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by E. Trejo, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, E. Trejo, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

The board briefly discussed the appearance of houses in the historic districts that had previously been approved for vinyl siding and the difficulties faced in the review of such cases. The board was also concerned with the issues voiced regarding the difficulties with securing a contractor to complete work in the historic districts that would meet the HDC's standards.

Case 2022-14 (Walk-on) – 486 W. Clay Ave. – Porch

Applicant: Emilio Trejo - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Residential

The board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to relocate the stairs leading to the front porch from the side of the porch to the front of the porch, along W. Clay Avenue, and to reduce the width of the stairs leading to the side (5th Street) porch to 42". E. Trejo added that the pavement leading from the W. Clay sidewalk to the current, front porch stairs would be removed, and that the relocated stairs would be centered on the front door.

The board reviewed historic photos of the house and discussed the differences in the appearance of the porch, which had been fully reconstructed in the 1990s. Previous approvals permitting changes to the side porch were reviewed, and E. Trejo explained that the stairs were about 64" wide. The board agreed that aligning the left side of the stairs with the wall would be preferable to centering a narrower stair on the existing porch door.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to relocate the front (south) porch stairs from the east side of the porch to the front, centered on the front door, and to reduce the width of the stairs on the side (east) porch from 64" to 42", aligning the stairs with the left side of the side porch as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye, and E. Trejo abstaining.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

J. Pesch noted that S. Radtke was the current Chairperson and former board member A. Riegler was previously the Vice Chairperson; T. Emory had since been running meetings in the event of S. Radtke's absence. J. Huss made a motion to retain S. Radtke as Chairperson supported by E. Trejo; S. Radtke accepted the nomination. S. Radtke nominated E. Trejo as Vice Chairperson supported by J. Huss; E. Trejo accepted the nomination. A vote was taken and unanimously approved, with S. Radtke, E. Trejo, J. Huss, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

Historic Districts Mailing – The board reviewed the draft letter to property owners within the historic districts and made comments. The possibility of a future workshop was discussed, and it was ultimately decided that a newsletter, perhaps via email, could be created and shared annually. Possible next steps discussed involved working with local realtors to improve awareness of the historic districts and bringing attention to the historic district status of properties when listed for sale. J. Huss recommended that the board work with the Chamber of Commerce to set up an informal, informational event.

Public Art in Historic Districts – The City had received a request from someone that had purchased a sculpture temporarily located on W. Western Avenue and wished to donate it for installation in a new location. One location being considered was on the southwest corner of Clay and 4th, near Hackley Park. The HDC generally supported the proposed location for the sculpture, and J. Pesch stated that he would share this information with staff also associated with the project.

2022 Staff Approval Update #1 – J. Pesch provided an overview of staff approved work in the historic districts since the last update in January. Six projects had been approved.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

JP