

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 7, 2023

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: K. George

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch

OTHERS PRESENT: B. Grimm (585 W. Clay); D. Bruce and E. Walker (1268 Ransom); K. Gress; L. Huettner; J. Locke

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of February 7, 2023 was made by G. Borgman, supported by J. Huss and approved with S. Radtke, T. Emory, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2023-04 – 1334 Peck St. – Windows and Garage Demolition

Applicant: City of Muskegon CNS - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

The applicant was seeking approval to demolish the existing, detached garage and to remove and replace 18 wood windows with replacement wood windows matching the size, design, proportions, profile, and materials of the existing windows. J. Pesch noted that the request was to replace 19 windows, not 18 windows as originally specified. The work was proposed as part of a lead abatement project through the City of Muskegon Community and Neighborhood Services Department (CNS).

S. Radtke asked that the board begin with comments on the windows. J. Pesch noted that the project specifications incorrectly called for three lites on upper sashes, but the existing windows had five lites in the upper sashes; the new windows would replicate the existing, five lite design. G. Borgman asked if there were any decorative windows aside from the one on the south elevation and J. Pesch confirmed that this was correct and that the decorative window would be retained, adding that the remaining first floor windows were double hung windows.

The board moved on to discuss the proposed demolition of the detached garage. J. Pesch explained that approximately 20 years prior, the HDC denied a request to demolish the detached garage, and since then, the doors into the garage were boarded over and had become inoperable. G. Borgman asked if the structure was solid. J. Pesch stated that it was not known, as the lead program was not assessing the situation from a structural standpoint, only from the perspective of effective lead abatement. S. Radtke said that the garage did not have any dominant architectural features and was likely built later than the house. D. Gregersen added that it was not being used and it made little sense to let it sit unused, deteriorate further, then return with the same request in a few years. J. Pesch added that, in their review of the project, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) noted that demolition of the garage would have no adverse effect on the property.

S. Radtke provided an overview of the HDC's general approach to garages and other accessory structures in the historic districts. G. Borgman noted that any new garage proposed to be constructed at this property would require HDC review and approval.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to demolish the existing, detached garage and to remove and replace 19 wood windows with replacement wood windows matching the size, design, proportions, profile, and materials of the existing windows including a grill pattern that matches the existing windows' grill patterns as closely as possible and with the condition that if true divided lite windows are not used, grills must be permanently affixed to both the interior and the exterior of the windows 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 S. Radtke, T. Emory, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

Case 2023-05 (Walk-on) – 585 W. Clay Ave. – Door

Applicant: Bill Grimm - District: Clay-Western - Current Function: Residential

The board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to replace the front door at 585 W. Clay with an ADA-compliant door that fit within the existing, rough opening.

J. Pesch explained that the building was in the process of being converted from a mixed-use building with a commercial storefront on the first floor to a fully residential building containing one dwelling unit on each floor. All of the work completed to date had been interior work that did not require HDC review, but the change to the doors was needed because it was the only non-compliant component of what was otherwise a fully ADA-accessible lower unit. The board reviewed photos of the existing double doors and drawings of the proposed replacement doors.

B. Grimm explained that the proposed new door was an eight-foot-tall door with a smooth finish with two equally tall sidelights; the door would swing out. The existing doors were taller than eight feet, but the manufacturer of the new door only produced an eight-foot-tall door with a transom window to fill the remainder of the opening without requiring any modifications to the door jamb. He added that the existing doors would be retained and could be re-installed in the future.

B. Grimm explained that the frame of the door and the door itself would be painted to match the color of the rest of the storefront. J. Pesch asked if the windows on the new door and sidelights would align with the glass of the existing storefront windows. B. Grimm stated that they would, and that the submitted drawings showed an incorrect design.

J. Pesch explained that the door had to be ADA compliant, and the HDC's role was to ensure that the necessary changes were minimally visually intrusive. He added that, in conversation with the applicant, another approach was considered in which the existing, secondary door is used for an accessible entry, but the interior space into which one would enter was too small to meet accessibility requirements; expansion of the interior space to meet the needed dimensions required building a wall in the middle of the storefront window. D. Gregersen asked if a new interior wall in that space could be extended to a point that did not interfere with the storefront window. B. Grimm stated that such an approach would cause issues with access to each unit. Creating access to both units from the same door would necessitate adding a door at the top of the stairs to separate the upper and lower units, which in turn would trigger additional code compliance issues for the upper unit that was already finished.

S. Radtke stated that without the ability to use the existing doors, the HDC would need to decide on how to balance the functionality of the new doors with their appearance. D. Gregersen stated that what was proposed would likely be as good an option as was available under the circumstances.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace the original front doors with an ADA-compliant entrance composed of a single, eight-foot-tall central door with two sidelights and a transom light with the conditions that the glass in the new door and sidelights match the height of the existing doors and storefront glass and that the original doors retained for reinstallation in the future as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by T. Emory, supported by D. Gregersen and approved with S. Radtke, T. Emory, J. Huss, G. Borgman, and D. Gregersen voting aye.

S. Radtke mentioned that all glass in the new door and sidelights should be clear, and J. Pesch confirmed that this was a requirement of the zoning ordinance.

Case 2023-06 (Walk-on) – 1268 Ransom St. – Siding and Windows

Applicant: Elva Walker - District: McLaughlin - Current Function: Residential

The board agreed to review a walk-on case regarding a request to install new windows to replace existing, damaged and deteriorating windows which were beyond repair, and to install new siding and trim. G. Borgman mentioned that it appeared a few of the windows had already been replaced and D. Bruce confirmed that they had, but by a previous owner. D. Bruce shared current photos showing the existing condition of the windows and trim, adding that many of the new windows in the house had been installed on the front elevation of the house. J. Pesch provided photos of the house from August 2020 for the board to review.

G. Borgman asked if there was a plan for the garage and D. Bruce said that they intended to keep it, improve any issues with the structure, and re-side it. He stated that minor repairs had been made to the siding over time, but many were patch jobs that they had hoped to replace with new siding. S. Radtke said that he did not have an issue with the work proposed for the garage as it was not architecturally significant. The board agreed that they would be willing to allow changes to the garage on an as-needed basis.

S. Radtke asked if there were photos of the windows on the side of the house. J. Pesch shared a 2017 photo of the side of the house and the board determined that the original windows all appeared to have a one-over-one configuration. S. Radtke asked about the material of the proposed replacement windows. D. Bruce stated that they were willing to consider whatever material the HDC preferred. S. Radtke explained that the HDC typically approved wood replacement windows, or in a few recent cases, fiberglass windows, but did not encourage vinyl replacement windows. The board agreed that, based on the photos, the windows appeared to warrant full replacement. D. Bruce said that if it was possible to repair the existing windows they would, but many were damaged beyond reasonable repair. S. Radtke added that because the windows were simple one-over-one windows, the board tended to be more open to replacement windows as replacements were easier to match.

G. Borgman asked about the sliding window on the south elevation, facing the driveway. D. Bruce explained that the slider window was a replacement window and noted which other existing windows were replacements; he clarified that the proposal was to replace all windows in the house, regardless of their age, so that they all matched. D. Gregersen noted that the replacement slider window did not match the height of the original window in that location. E. Walker explained that there was a sink and overhead cabinets behind that window, which would limit the height of its replacement. S. Radtke stated that because that window had already been replaced, and because it was located near the rear of the side elevation he was willing to allow it to be replaced with a narrower, double-hung window that was shorter than the others on that elevation. The board agreed that this would be acceptable.

S. Radtke asked whether they were considering installing windows in the boarded-up sunroom on the north side of the house and D. Bruce stated that it would remain boarded up. J. Pesch added that the sunroom had been boarded up for decades, based on historic photos of the house.

S. Radtke explained that the HDC's local standards called for wood or composite replacement siding and strongly discouraged vinyl siding. He noted that while the body of the house had trim boards at the corners, the porches did not have trim on the corners and the siding wrapped around them; he stated that he preferred to see at least the siding detail on the porch retained. The board determined that composite siding with a smooth finish and the same exposure on the body of the house would be more appropriate than vinyl siding.

The board noted that there was a column missing from the far north corner of the front porch, but it was eventually determined that the column was not original to the house, with photographs showing that it was added without HDC approval sometime between 2003 and 2016. The board decided that it would be acceptable to remove the non-original column.

D. Gregersen asked if the exposed rafter tails would be restored as they had been covered with a fascia board on the front porch. A photo of the house from 1984 showed that the rafter tails throughout the house had originally been exposed. S. Radtke noted that it would be appropriate to remove the fascia board that was installed around

the front porch to expose the rafter tails. The board also agreed that, where missing, the tongue-in-groove soffit boards and exposed rafter tails could be replaced with matching materials.

E. Walker mentioned that there had not been front doors on the house in the time that they owned it, but there were interior doors within the small vestibule on the front porch. G. Borgman asked if they intended to install replacement doors where they were missing. D. Bruce stated that they were, but did not know the style of door that was originally used on the porch. The interior doors within the vestibule were not original, so the board suggested a pair of new or reclaimed historic doors with three-quarter-length glass design. Staff and the board discussed sources for reclaimed materials and historic preservation contractors.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to remove and replace 36 existing windows with wood or fiberglass windows of the same size and appearance within the existing openings, replace the slider window on the first floor of the south elevation near the rear of the house with double hung or casement windows, remove and replace the existing wood siding with composite or wood siding with the same exposure and corner detailing with a smooth finish, replace existing trim with matching composite or wood trim, retain the main roof rafter tails and, if possible, remove the fascia board on the front porch roof to expose the rafter tails, replace two front doors with new or salvaged doors of a simple, three-quarter-length glass design, remove the column on the far left (north) corner of the front porch, and permit garage modifications to suit needs as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by D. Gregersen, supported by J. Huss and approved with D. Gregersen, G. Borgman, J. Huss, T. Emory, and S. Radtke voting aye.

OTHER BUSINESS

1292 Jefferson – J. Pesch shared that, at the upcoming, March 13th City Commission Worksession, City staff were to present a proposed project in which the City of Muskegon would move the Nelson House from its current location at 1292 Jefferson Street to the vacant lot at 382 W. Muskegon Avenue.

The presentation to the City Commission would include history of the house as well as the other houses that were moved into the same block in the past under the City's Historic Infill Policy. The plan was to list the house for sale in its new location in as-is condition, then the HDC would review all exterior changes proposed by a future owner. J. Pesch explained that City staff were working with potential partners and/or grant opportunities to aid in funding the house move.

J. Pesch encouraged board members to attend the Worksession to provide public comment in support of the project.

1043 Washington – J. Locke asked if the building at this location was the first hospital in the city of Muskegon. J. Pesch stated that it was his understanding that it was. A local researcher had written about the history of the building and J. Pesch stated that he would share the write-up, if given approval to do so. Board members discussed the current condition of the building and the fact that the City had recently deemed it a dangerous building.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

JP