

CITY OF MUSKEGON

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MEETING

April 7, 2026 @ 4:00 PM
MUSKEGON CITY HALL, ROOM 204
933 TERRACE STREET, MUSKEGON, MI 49440

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. Radtke, D. Gregersen, J. Huss, G. Borgman, C. Davis, K. Kochin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Melinn, 1011 2nd; A. Fairfield (Advanced Signs), 477 W. Western; J. Zappacosta (Hackley Public Library) and K. Nyht (Fishbeck), 315 W. Webster; P. Stone, 1752 Jefferson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of minutes of the March 3, 2026 regular meeting. Planning

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2026 regular meeting was made by G. Borgman, supported by J. Huss, and approved S. Radtke, C. Davis, K. Kochin, D. Gregersen, G. Borgman, and J. Huss voting aye.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Case 2026-04: 1011 2nd Planning

J. Pesch reminded the HDC that this case was tabled at the March 3rd meeting, but stated that more information was shared since then. The applicant was

seeking approval to relocate two existing, formerly roof-mounted air conditioning units (one from each side of the sanctuary) to the ground, install the necessary conduit within a copper drain pipe to match the existing copper downspouts, and conceal the new ground units in a stone wall-appearing wrap and a vegetative screen.

D. Melinn explained that the roof-mounted units were expensive to maintain as they had to be removed from the roof for servicing. S. Radtke noted that the relocation of the units seemed to be a necessary change, that the units would not be especially visible from the ground with the proposed screening, and that the plan to run the conduit through a copper drain pipe that resembled the building's downspouts would further hide their presence.

A motion to approve the request to relocate two existing, roof-mounted air conditioning units to the ground, install the necessary conduit within a copper drain pipe to match the existing copper downspouts, and conceal the units in a stone wall-appearing wrap and a vegetative screen as presented in the April 7, 2026 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 J. Huss, and approved with J. Huss, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, S. Radtke, K. Kochin, and C. Davis voting aye.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Case 2026-05: 315 W. Webster Planning

The applicant was seeking approval to construct a new one-story entry vestibule addition on the building's west (W. Webster Avenue) elevation, construct a new three-story stair tower vestibule addition on the north (side) and east (rear) elevations, infill one first-story window with cast stone block on the west elevation, install a new second-story window matching the existing windows in appearance, proportion, and detailing in the location of a former window on the west elevation, replace damaged stone window sills with cast stone replacement sills and replace missing stone units with new cast stone pieces on the west and north elevations where necessary, install a cast stone medallion on the building corner where the former building addition was attached, remove the non-original brick covering the existing stained-glass window on the north elevation, and install a decorative wall panel over the affected section of the north elevation where the former building was attached that incorporated architectural elements from the new entry and stair tower.

K. Nyht presented the project to the HDC, explaining that Fishbeck was working

with the Hackley Public Library to adapt the Torrent House for modern use while still being respectful of the building's existing fabric. The new one-story addition on the west elevation would move the front porch out about four feet and cover a new chair lift and entry vestibule; that entry would offer an alternative to the only existing accessible entrance on the rear of the building, which was an exterior elevator door exposed to the elements.

K. Nyht described the existing circulation which consisted of two stairways for part of the building, but only a single stairway from the third floor which was rather narrow and steep. The third floor contained the former ballroom, which was the largest space in the building; with only one means of access, the space was currently limited in its capacity and less useful to the programming the library hoped to provide. The three-story stair tower vestibule proposed at the rear of the building would both create a new stair to connect all floors as well as provide an indoor space from which one could access the elevator from ground level. This addition would be of a modest size due to the property line being so close to the existing building.

G. Borgman asked if there was a rendering depicting the two additions. K. Nyht stated that they were still in a very conceptual stage of the design – this information was being presented as a proof of concept – so no rendering was available, and that they were still open to discussion of the additions' appearance, materials, etc. The HDC reviewed the proposed drawings and existing condition photos that were included in the staff report.

S. Radtke asked about the choice to use cast stone rather than reusing stone salvaged from the existing building where demolition, new connections, doors, or windows, were planned. K. Nyht explained that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards called for differentiation between old and new materials unless sufficient documentation existed for reconstructing the historic parts of the building that were lost or damaged in the 1950s. The proposed use of cast stone came out of this approach as it was felt that it would blend well with the existing stone while not attempting to replicate it. S. Radtke asked what type of cast stone was being considered and K. Nyht stated that a rough-faced stone with a similar, but perhaps darker or lighter, tone. S. Radtke suggested using a smooth-face cast stone particularly on the new addition's columns, and that if enough of the original stone could be repurposed to clad the front addition at least below the watercourse, it would go a long way in blending the new with the old. G. Borgman asked if the library had any success in tracking down the original limestone quarry and J. Zappacosta stated that they had not, but even if they had, it would not match perfectly with the stone which is used on the building because it had not weathered in the same way. He added that sourcing the stone was also likely to be cost-prohibitive.

J. Huss asked if any of the provided drawings specified where cast stone was proposed to be installed and noted that the cast stone medallion and decorative wall panels mentioned were not actually shown; she stated that she would not be willing to approve them without seeing them. K. Nyht explained that the drawings were conceptual and further detail would be provided once they know they are heading in the right direction.

K. Nyht described the challenge of keeping the building's historic, residential feeling while still meeting commercial building codes with the additions. The additions, as proposed, would use a lot of glass so as to keep the original building visible rather than block it. The HDC discussed the proposed muntin patterns on the new additions and S. Radtke stated that he could see simply using a single pane of glass as an option that would reference the Victorian era's use of large panes of glass as opposed to the proposed prairie-style muntin patterns which were commonly associated with the arts and crafts style. J. Pesch asked if the original building's differing floor heights were the reason each of the windows on the three-story addition was shorter than the one below it and K. Nyht stated that it was.

J. Pesch asked whether there had been any consideration for building the front addition out to the edge of the building to where the historic porch once extended. K. Nyht stated that doing so could help mask some of the damage from the former addition. D. Gregersen asked if the existing front porch would be moved out and K. Nyht confirmed that it would be moved out about four feet closer to the front property line. D. Gregersen asked whether the roof of the proposed front porch would align with where the roof of the original front porch connected to the house just below the second-story windowsills. K. Nyht stated that they thought this was the same connection point but did not have great documentation of how this once appeared. J. Pesch and J. Zappacosta stated that there were better photographs than what had been made available to Fishbeck to date, and offered to share them.

J. Pesch noted that the possibility of reviewing this project in multiple phases was an approach the HDC had utilized in the past, including a few, recent, nearby projects. J. Zappacosta and the HDC members discussed the process of final review and approval of the project and agreed that, at this meeting, approving the project in concept would provide a foothold that both guaranteed the HDC a more detailed review at a future meeting and also offered the library assurance that the project was on the right track and could continue to move forward from the HDC's conceptual approval.

J. Pesch asked the board if there were any "must haves" that they would like to see the next time this project was reviewed. J. Huss noted that more detail on what the cast stone and medallions would look like along with the proposed

decorative wall panel. S. Radtke asked to see more detail on the proposed final appearance of the two additions based on the discussion at the meeting; if the footprint of that addition was extended to match that of the historic porch, he suggested changing a pair of columns on the front addition near the steps to a single column. G. Borgman requested renderings that showed the front addition, but noted that renderings of both additions would be helpful.

A motion that the HDC approve the request, in concept, to construct a new one-story entry vestibule addition on the west (W. Webster Avenue) elevation and a new three-story stair tower vestibule addition on the north (side) and east (rear) elevations was made by J. Huss, supported by K. Kochin, and approved with K. Kochin, C. Davis, G. Borgman, D. Gregersen, J. Huss, and S. Radtke voting aye.

B. Case 2026-06: 477 W. Western Planning

The applicant was seeking approval to install a 49 square foot internally-lit wall sign on the south elevation of the building. J. Pesch noted that the 49 square foot measurement was determined by drawing a rectangle around the full extent of the sign, but the sign itself was composed of standalone letters and a logo with no background.

S. Radtke asked if the connection points into the building could be limited to the mortar joints rather than the face of the bricks and A. Fairfield stated that they could limit them to the mortar. J. Pesch reviewed the wall sign requirements of the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that the size of the sign would fall within the size limitations. S. Radtke asked if the area of the sign face was calculated by drawing a rectangle around the sign or by measuring the area of each individual letter, as he had heard of both methods used in different municipalities. J. Pesch said the area of each letter or logo was measured, though the information provided in this application calculated the area by using a rectangle containing the sign's content, so in reality, it was smaller than 49 square feet.

J. Pesch also reviewed the HDC's Local Standards' Sign Policy which noted that illuminated signs should be externally illuminated; he noted that the HDC could approve signs that did not comply with their Local Standards as the HDC had previously approved a projecting sign for this same property that did not comply with the Sign Policy. J. Huss stated that the internally-lit sign would be less obtrusive than one with separate, external light fixtures.

A motion to approve the request to install a 49 square foot internally-lit wall sign on the south elevation of the building with attachment points in the mortar as depicted in the April 7, 2026 HDC staff report as long as the work meets all

zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by J. Huss, supported by C. Davis, and approved with S. Radtke, J. Huss, D. Gregersen, G. Borgman, C. Davis, and K. Kochin voting aye.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A. Historic Resource Survey Work Planning

The HDC discussed completing a historic resource survey for a few existing historic districts and adjacent areas. J. Pesch summarized his recent meeting with staff from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to review the HDC's options for carrying out such work. A Certified Local Government (CLG) grant was deemed to be the HDC's best option for hiring a historic preservation consultant to complete survey work. J. Pesch noted that the possibility of having HDC members and City staff handle much of the on-the-ground survey work had been tried in other communities, but according to the SHPO, was not typically a helpful approach; each consultant tends to have their own process, and that can be complicated with too many people involved in a project. J. Pesch noted that this did not eliminate the potential for HDC members and staff to participate in the survey work, as SHPO staff noted that such involvement/training was common, as long as it was planned for in advance and specified in the contract for the work.

The HDC asked staff to provide a summary of the locations that had been considered for survey based on their discussions that had taken place to date. Such a list would help to narrow the scope of the work included in a future grant application.

PUBLIC COMMENT

P. Stone from the Jefferson Historic District attended the meeting to keep up-to-date on things that were happening in the community. She asked about the CLG grant program, and J. Pesch offered a summary of the City's certification and what types of projects were eligible for grant funds.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:22pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Pesch, Planner