

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
January 10, 2019 - Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers, 7:30 pm

Roll Call

Present: Chair Christopher Payne, Jennifer Bridge, Darrick Gurski, Rebecca Houze, Laura Jordahl, David Sokol, Aleksandra Tadic, and Noel Weidner
Absent: Tom Abrahamson and Sandra Carr
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner
Attorney: Gregory Smith, Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins

Agenda Approval

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the agenda as amended; Second by Commissioner Bridge; Motion approved 8-0.

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Houze to approve draft minutes for December 13, 2018; Second by Commissioner Tadic; Motion approved 8-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. HPC 2019-1: 150 N Taylor Ave (Kazimir and Megan Boyle):** Conversion of attached garage into living space, including the demolition of the garage door and portion of wall to be replaced by a row of windows (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Payne introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview of the project.

Christopher Bremer, the architect for the project, was in attendance but expressed that he did not have additional information to provide.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to open the discussion; Second by Commissioner Tadic

Commissioner Gurski asked if there were alternate plans suggested, and if any alternative roof options were proposed. Planner Trexler said that this is the only plan that was submitted.

Commissioner Weidner recommended that changes should be reversible and that using an different siding in the place of the garage door could work.

Commissioner Sokol asked why this project was not reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee. Planner Trexler explained that the December ARC meeting was canceled and the architect was invited to the Commission meeting but is prepared to return the following month if the plans need to be changed.

Commissioner Tadic said the Architectural Review Guidelines state that original openings shouldn't be removed. She expressed an interest in keeping the door in some way.

Commissioner Sokol said he would like to hear more from the architects on the Commission and recommended sending the project to the Architectural Review Committee. Commissioner Weidner agreed.

Chair Payne said that reversibility can be easily accomplished in several ways. He noted that the current door, itself, is probably not the original door and there is no evidence that it looks like the original door. It is more important that the design retain the look of an opening. Chair Payne recommended that the Commission take no action and that the project be reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee. The architect was informed that they can bring a new proposal for the Architectural Review Committee meeting if they desire.

The Commission took no action.

B. HPC 2019-2: 1014 and 1018 Pleasant St (Al Rossell): Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish two buildings (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Payne introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview of the project and noted that the applicant previously submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish these two buildings at the June 9, 2016 Historic Preservation Commission meeting and the Commission took no action at that time. The applicant had no immediate plans for the properties so did not request a hearing. A letter from the State Historic Preservation Office in 2016 verified that the buildings are considered contributing to the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District.

Al Rossell, the property owner, explained his history with the buildings and his plans. He said he has entered into a contract to sell the property to a developer provided the buildings are first demolished. Rossell said that he purchased the buildings before the creation of the historic district and asked what makes them contributing. He talked to the building owners next door and they support the demolition. He also noted that the new construction would be subject to Historic Preservation Commission review. He also noted that the properties are located on the edge of the district.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to open the discussion; Second by Commissioner Houze

Commissioner Houze said that an important part of the district is its diversity in architecture. Commissioner Bridge responded that the mixture of building types on this block of Pleasant St is an important feature in the district. Chair Payne explained that while the National Register nomination notes some specific details that are common, it is the variety of architecture within a timeframe that makes the district unique. He also noted that the two buildings in question are across the street from an Oak Park landmark (Pleasant Home) and are both in good shape and occupied. Rossell agreed that the buildings are in good shape but asked why the district paints such a broad stroke. Chair Payne responded that there are plenty of buildings in the district that are non-contributing.

Rossell said that he would like to go straight to Economic Hardship and skip the hearing for the Certificate of Appropriateness. Attorney Smith said that a step cannot be skipped in the process. Chair Payne noted that the hearing is important because it gives adjacent property owners an opportunity to have a say. Planner Trexler said that the Ordinance states that a Certificate of Appropriateness must be denied through the hearing process before an applicant can pursue Economic Hardship. Village staff will follow-up with Rossell and the Commission with the next steps as detailed in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Commission took no action on the Certificate of Appropriateness.

C. Historic Landmark Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for 640-44 Madison St (Essex Foley Family LLLP): Preliminary determination of eligibility for the Hill Motor Sales Company (1924/1927) in response to landmark nomination submitted December 28, 2018 by Frank Lipo and Frank Heitzman.

Chair Payne introduced the application and Planner Trexler gave an overview of the project since the last Historic Preservation Commission meeting. Attorney Smith gave additional background.

Oak Park citizens and landmark nomination preparers Frank Lipo and Frank Heitzman gave a presentation on 640-44 Madison St. Lipo noted that this nomination has been ten years in the making and various planning processes including reuse have been previously suggested. The building was one of three buildings identified by the Madison St Corridor Study as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A lot of defining architectural details remain, including interior elements that would be attractive with the right reuse project. The architects, E.E. Roberts and Elmer C. Roberts are notable architects in Oak Park and the terra cotta ornamentation found at 640-44 Madison St is characteristic of their designs. Heitzman noted the structural bow string truss roof, a unique and innovative feature. Lipo detailed the landmark criteria from the Ordinance and how this building meets those criteria.

Stephen Kelley, whose students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago previously prepared a Historic Structures Report on the building, gave a presentation to the Commission explaining why the building should be landmarked and subsequently preserved. Kelley argued for sustainability and noted that if the developer is given proper guidance, the building could be reused.

Chris Donovan, citizen of Oak Park, gave a presentation to the Commission arguing against giving the building landmark status. Donovan said that Oak Park already has many examples of E.E. Roberts' architecture. This building has been vacant for years, which is resulting in a loss of taxes. Reuse would cause drastic financial hardship. The Ordinance denies rights by not allowing objection of the property owner.

Motion by Commissioner Houze to open the discussion; Second by Commissioner Bridge

Commissioner Tadic thanked the nominators for their time. Commissioner House noted that although Oak Park does have other E.E. Roberts buildings, this is the only auto dealership.

Commissioner Gurski thanked the nominators for their presentation and Commissioner Sokol agreed that the presentation was helpful. Commissioner Sokol noted that this item has been deferred for many years. Commissioner Sokol said he supports moving forward with the landmark process. Commissioners Weidner and Bridge also stated their appreciation for the applicants' efforts. Commissioner Weidner said that the building is unique and well-crafted.

Chair Payne said that a letter was received from Landmarks Illinois supporting preservation of the building. The letter was read to the Commission. Chair Payne then commended the proposal and presentation, saying that it was a compelling argument. The building is a significant example of heritage in Oak Park. Chair Payne noted several of the landmark criteria that the building meets and said that he supports a preliminary determination of eligibility.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to approve the preliminary determination of eligibility for the historic landmark nomination of 640-44 Madison St. Second by Commissioner Tadic. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Chair Christopher Payne, Jennifer Bridge, Darrick Gurski, Rebecca Houze, Laura Jordahl, David Sokol, Aleksandra Tadic, and Noel Weidner

NAY: None

CONSENT AGENDA - None

OTHER BUSINESS

Several Oak Park citizens were in attendance to respond to the Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of 1014 and 1018 Pleasant St. Chair Payne explained the process and told them that they are welcome to attend the potential hearing in February.

Chair Payne recommended that demolition permits not be considered by the Village until after the landmark process is completed. Chair Payne also urged that reuse options be considered. Planner Trexler will communicate these opinions to the Village.

Commissioner House asked if demolition permits were automatically delayed by the landmark process in the Ordinance. Attorney Smith said this will be reviewed.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Tadic

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:00PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Urban Planner Historic Preservation.