

CITY OF PONTIAC, MI

HISTORIC COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 –

6:00 P.M.

City of Pontiac City Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER: (6:05pm)

II. ATTENDANCE

Present: Chair Rick David, Ken Burch, Regina Campbell, Fernando Bales, Jen Burk, Jim Allen, Rachael Clark
(Quorum Reached)

Staff Members: Mark Yandrick, Planning Manager

III. OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Planning Manager Yandrick welcomed the new members to the board and thanked Kathy Henke and Linda Porter for their service on the board.

IV. AMENDMENTS TO & APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager requested the commission add the selection of the Vice Chair under new business. Commissioner Burch made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Burk.

V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Commissioner Burch and seconded by Commissioner Burk to adopt the minutes from August 16, 2023. Motion passed 6-0.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

The commission discussed the appropriateness of electing a vice-chair at this meeting. Planning Manager explained the duty of the vice-chair is to perform the duties of the chair in his or her absence and to assist the chair in running the meeting by performing tasks such as timing public comments. The commission decided not to elect a vice-chair at this meeting so as to give the new commissioners time to adjust to the role of being on a historic commission. The commission determined that a vice chair should be elected at the October meeting.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Application #: HDC 23-026
Applicant: Kyle Westburg, West Construction Services
Request: Repairs and Improvements

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Address: 79 Oliver St.

Planning Manager Mark Yandrick gave a presentation on the applicant's request. The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the renovation of 79 Oliver St. The applicant is proposing a new roof, new windows, a replacement front door and a new front porch. City records indicate the HDC denied a request to demolish the structure on July 24, 2013. Staff's presentation went over the details of the proposed work and compared it to the Secretary of the Interior's standards of approval. Staff made a recommendation to approve the repairs and exterior alterations for 79 Oliver St. without conditions.

Kyle Westburg, owner of West Construction, spoke in regards to the application. The applicant gave an overview of the history of his company. His company did the historic renovation of the Sears building at 154 Lafayette Street. His company renovated the Strand Theatre in 2016. The applicant expanded on the poor condition of the home and the need to repair and renovate as much of the structure as possible. The proposed shingles are architectural shingles. The front porch was enclosed at some point in the 1950s and 1960s. The dormer extends over the porch, there is actual floor space above the porch. The decking is new within the last 40 or 50 years. The applicant is proposing a new porch that is consistent with the design of porches elsewhere on Oliver St. The front windows will be wood clad. The applicant is proposing 4 by 4 posts for the front porch.

Commissioner Allen asked if the windows are six over one. The applicant replied that that is what was there historically. Commissioner Allen stated that six over one are common in this area. The applicant replied they can consider this. Commissioner Allen noted that the proposed door is good.

Commissioner Bales asked if an additional beam is needed above the porch to hold the roof. The applicant replied that it is possible but such a beam would be hidden.

Commissioner David asked the applicant to elaborate on the Land Bank's role. The applicant replied that the property is owned by the Oakland County Land Bank. The Land Bank received a grant from the state that will be funding this and other projects. Commissioner David asked what the applicant's schedule is. The applicant replied that the dollars must be spent by the end of the year. His intention is to have the project done in November or December. The applicant hopes the home will be owner occupied once complete.

Commissioner Allen stated that this project will be the poster child for the neighborhood and therefore the standards that are set for this house will impact the rest of the neighborhood. The applicant agreed and stated he hopes to do a quality and historically sensitive renovation for that very reason.

Commissioner Burch explained that affordability has always been an issue in historic districts. The commission seeks to strike a balance between historic accuracy and providing affordable options for applicants. The goal of this is to entice property owners to get their proper approvals. If the process is too expensive or cumbersome it is more likely that property owners will ignore the process or avoid getting proper permits.

Commissioner Allen complimented the applicant and stated the project is stellar. Commissioner Allen asked about the cedar shake on the dormers. The applicant will be removing the aluminum from the

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dormer and revealing the cedar shake underneath.

Planning Manager Yandrick explained the process for making a motion and the applicant's process for getting a building permit.

Commissioner Bales asked if the proposed front steps would be open faced as is existing or if it will be closed. The applicant stated he is unsure; they have not made that decision yet. Commissioner Bales expressed his desire to see risers added.

Commissioner Clark expressed concern that requiring the applicant to install six over one windows might be financially prohibitive for the project and as a result she would like to allow the applicant to choose for himself whether to use six over six or six over one. Commissioner Allen replied that the cost difference between the two designs should be negligible and for that reason it would make sense for the commission to require six over one. The applicant stated he wants to go with six over one anyway. Commissioner Burch stated his desire to leave the option open to the applicant so as not to set a precedent that is difficult for other property owners to meet.

Commissioner Burch made a motion and Commissioner Burk seconded to approve case HDC 23-026 to repair and alter the exterior of 79 Oliver with one condition:

- 1. The front porch stairs shall have risers.**

Yes: 7

No: 0

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Application #: HDC 23-035
 Applicant: Walter Thomason
 Request: Replacement Windows and Front Door
 Address 359 W. Iroquois Rd.

Planning Manager Yandrick gave an overview of the applicant's request to replace their windows and the front door at 359 W. Iroquois. There are 15 windows in total in need of being replaced. One bedroom window that faces W. Iroquois Road is proposed to be expanded to allow for more light into the bedroom. Staff is recommending the applicant offer historic material for the windows facing the road. Planning Manager Yandrick clarified that the commission has the authority to issue a split approval with conditions. For example, the windows facing away from the road be approved will the windows facing the road be approved on condition they are composed of a historic material.

The applicant, Walter Thomason, spoke regarding his application. He stated he's lived in the house for 38 years. The applicant stated the house was built in 1931 and the windows have never been replaced. The windows are in poor condition and he needs to repair or replace them to stabilize and weatherize the structure. The existing windows are not energy efficient and the design requires the windows to open by pulling the pane down into the wall. Nine of the 16 windows proposed for replacement are on the second

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floor patio. The applicant clarified that the one window on the first floor that was replaced previously was replaced in 2017.

Commissioner Burch asked if any of the windows were storm windows. The applicant replied that there are some on the second floor.

Commissioner Allen explained that all the windows were most likely storm windows originally with many of the storm windows replaced in the 1960s or 1970s. Commissioner Allen asked if the porch on the second floor is enclosed. The applicant replied that it is a seasonal room. The room is heated. Commissioner Burk clarified that this room was historically used as a sleeping room and the windows were for circulation.

Commissioner Burch asked if the applicant has gotten prices for wood clad windows. The applicant replied that he's called around and is having difficulty finding someone who will do all wood windows.

Commissioner Burk expressed concern about pricing the applicant out of replacing his windows. She stated that there are 11 street facing windows that she's comfortable requiring to be wood but that the windows not facing the street may be a vinyl material designed to appear like wood.

The applicant explained there is a large screen across the back that covers five windows.

Commissioner Allen explained that contractors should know that vinyl windows are not appropriate in historic districts.

Commissioner Burk elaborated on her concern about the cost of requiring wood windows. She explained that there are wood wrapped windows that provide a wood look.

Commissioner David asked about the applicant's preferred timeline for getting the windows replaced. The applicant's microphone was not turned on and his response is inaudible.

The applicant explained that there is a side door going into the kitchen that has a security screen door.

Commissioner Campbell asked if the proposed motions are for the door and windows or if they are separate for the door and for the windows. Planning Manager Yandrick replied that it is up to the commission. They can approve the windows and table the windows or vice versa.

Commissioner Campbell asked if the applicant would like more time to find resources for more appropriate windows or if he would like a decision tonight. The applicant replied he would like to comply with whatever the rules are.

The applicant asked if the five windows on the porch facing to the rear of the property can be vinyl since they are not facing the street and then go with wood materials for the windows facing the streets.

Commissioner Bales asked where the standard that vinyl is inappropriate for historic districts has come from. He explained that vinyl has come a long way and can be done to appear historically accurate.

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Commissioner Bales concern is with the color of the windows and requests that what is installed to the rear of the property appear consistent with the windows facing the streets. He expressed that using vinyl on the rear of the property is fine in his opinion.

Commissioner Allen clarified that any portion of the exterior that is visible from the street is under the commission's jurisdiction. Staff clarified that everything on the exterior of the home is under the jurisdiction of the home.

Commissioner Burch made a motion and Commissioner Campbell seconded to approve the doors as presented and the windows that do not face the street as presented, while the windows facing the street must be wood with aluminum clad.

Commissioner Clark asked about the window in the bedroom proposed to be expanded. The applicant replied that it would be centered over the larger window on the first floor.

Commissioner Burk expanded on her earlier comments and explained that there are modern materials such as vinyl and hardie board that have advanced to the point where they can be designed to appear like wood, with the same texture and coloring, but are much cheaper and last much longer. She would like the commission to keep this in consideration moving forward.

Commissioner Bales asked if enlarging the window is part of the motion. Planning Manager explained that this is part of the application and so is covered by the motion. Commissioner Bales asked for the reason for expanding the window. The applicant replied that it is the bedroom window and he would like more light.

Commissioner Campbell wants to make sure the applicant is furnished with appropriate resources to help him find a contractor.

Commissioner Burk stated that wood windows are roughly double the cost of vinyl windows. Commissioner Campbell asked how many companies the applicant has called. The applicant replied that he tried three companies and ran into difficulties finding a company that would work in the Pontiac area.

The commission voted on the motion.

Yes: 7
No: 0

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

IX. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Planning Manager Yandrick told the commission that the meeting for October will be pushed back a week to allow for Planning Staff to attend a conference.

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Mr. Yandrick asked if the board was interested in pursuing further education.

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Clark made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Campbell seconded. Motion passed 7-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Corey Christensen, Senior Planner Community
Development Department