

CITY OF YPSILANTI
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 28, 2017

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Hank Prebys Vice-Chair, 7:30 pm

Meeting Location: Spark East Building, 215 W Michigan, Ypsilanti, MI

Commissioners Present: Hank Prebys, Mike Davis, Jr., Jane Schmiedeke, Erika Lindsay, Alex Pettit

Commissioners Absent: Anne Stevenson, Ron Rupert

Staff Present: Cynthia Kochanek, Preservation Planner
Seth Torkelson-Regan, Commission Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Schmiedeke (second: Davis) moves to approve the agenda as amended to include audience participation regarding the property at 218 N. Adams.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

218 N Adams- Steve Pierce advised the commission on his plans for the property at 218 N Adams.

PUBLIC HEARING--none

OLD BUSINESS

205 N Hamilton

**Application was moved to the end of the meeting due to no applicant present.*

NEW BUSINESS

29-31 N Washington

**Application is for marquee work*

Applicant: Michael Forbes, Aver Sign Company

Discussion: Forbes: Recapped that the concern from the previous meeting was the type of bulb being used. [*Demonstrates the brightness of the bulb with a sample*]

Pettit: Stated that the temperature of the light appeared to be warmer than specified.

Davis: Asked Forbes how much brighter the proposed bulb is compared to the current bulb.

Forbes: Stated that the proposed light is dimmable. Added that the proposed sign will be significantly brighter than the current one because the current one has many bulbs that are currently not working.

Davis: Asked about the internal illumination of the sign.

Forbes: Responded that there are tubes in the sign now, with transformers as old as the building. [*Showed picture of the back of the marquee*] Added that replacements would give it a clean look.

Davis: Asked if it would be a light strip or single LED bulbs.

Forbes: Responded that it would be LEDs on a strip, with bulbs every six inches or so.

Davis: Stated concern with how the internal light strips will work. The first concern is that the brightness will increase by 1000%. The second concern is how the internal bulbs will be pointed--up, down, or outward.

Forbes: Responded that internals will light up the sign faces. Unlike with neon, there will be uniform, clean lighting. Added that the current owner thinks that due to the amount of lights out on the sign, it makes it look like the club is closed.

Davis: Asked if commission could discuss the tracks that hold the letters.

Forbes: [*Showed model of proposed tracks*]

Prebys: Asked commission if the black lines can be taken away without destroying the look of the sign.

Schmiedeke: Responded she does not think so.

Lindsay: Referenced the Michigan Theater sign in Ann Arbor because they have the original historic sign intact, and it appears similar to this one. Expressed concern about the color of the bulbs.

Forbes: Responded that the bulbs will show very white.

Lindsay: Asked which material is used for the current black track.

Forbes: Responded that it is a metal grid.

Lindsay: Expressed concern about the longevity of the new plastic tracks.

Davis: Asked Forbes if his company will be doing the lighting and the tracks.

Forbes: Affirms.

Davis: Asked if the track could be black instead of clear, and if the grid pattern could remain.

Forbes: Responded that on the polycarbonate sign faces, little strips of vinyl could be placed to mimic the current look of the grid, which the difference would not be noticed from fifty feet away.

Lindsay: Expressed concern about the immediate close up view of the sign with the proposed tracks. Stated she would not want to see a vinyl decal for the track.

Davis: Stated he does not have a problem with new lighting changes--the bulbs are sufficient. Stated he does not have a problem with LEDs on the inside. Expressed a dislike for change in sign lettering tracks. Thinks that the sign track should be fixed rather than replaced.

Lindsay: Asked if it is possible to install an exterior grid track.

Forbes: Responded that it is possible.

Pettit: Wondered if the grid can actually be fixed. Asked how the grid would be attached to the white part of the sign.

Forbes: Responded that it will be connected with opaque connectors every foot or so.

Prebys: Asked if the grid lines will be at equal spacing as the current grid.

Forbes: Responded that they will be equal.

Davis: Stated we should preserve this style of grid and not replace it with a different style. Echoed Commissioner Lindsay's idea of changing lighting and repairing the grid. Asked Forbes if this is a feasible solution.

Forbes: Stated he thinks the grid can come off and be put back on after repairs, but he is not sure. Stated that he thinks the business would be willing to go forward with the proposed plan (to maintain the current grid pattern) if this is what is asked by the HDC.

Schmiedeke: Asked if the interior of the sign could be accessed for repair without removing the white panel.

Forbes: Responded no. The front face has to come off.

Schmiedeke: Stated it appears to her that the white portion of the sign is intact. Asked why the white portion needs to be replaced.

Forbes: Responded that the white portion is yellowed and weathered.

Kochanek: Stated that a piece of the white portion of the sign appears cracked.

Davis: Summarized Commissioner Schmiedeke's point that the sign should be touched as little as possible.

Prebys: Added that on the other hand, they need to get to the inside of the sign to do the repairs.

Davis: Stated that these materials probably weren't built to last this long. Stated he thinks it is safer to replace the whole white face, but not the whole grid.

Prebys: Summarized that the commission thinks the proposed light bulbs are fine, but that the issue is with the polycarbonate background and the grid.

Davis: Asked if the small box sign on top of the marquee is lit.

Forbes: Responded that it can be lit, and new LEDs will go behind it as well.

Davis: Asked if the commission could do an amended application before making a motion.

Kochanek: Affirmed.

Forbes: Stated he could amend the application to the HDC's suggestions.

Kochanek: Suggested having staff process an admin approval for the application once corrected.

Pettit: Suggested that the admin approval could include certain criteria that would address the amendments the commission is asking the applicant to make to the application.

Kochanek: [*To Forbes*] Stated that he should revise the application and include that the metal track should remain--no zip track piece. Additionally, there should still be the cleaning and painting of the marquee and the adding of the LED bulbs included.

Prebys: Added that when talking about LED bulbs, Forbes should specify about the 2 watt LED bulbs.

Motion: Davis (second: Lindsay) moved to table the work at 29-31 Washington pending an amended application.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

Motion: Davis (second: Schmiedeke) moved to authorize staff to make an administrative approval of the work at 29-31 N Washington to include the cleaning and painting of the marquee sign, the painting is to match; the replacement of interior lights with LED lighting strips and exterior lights with nostalgic S14 bulbs, as stated in the cut sheet from the application dated November 14, 2017; the replacement of the

polycarbonate background of the sign; and the maintenance of the existing aluminum/metal grid pattern and three dimensional lettering.

Secretary of the Interior Standards:

#6- Repair, don't replace. Replacements shall match original.

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original material.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

418 Maple

**Application is for window installation.*

Applicant: Christina Sears-Etter

Discussion: Sears-Etter: Stated the basement windows are in poor condition. Wants to replace seven windows total including adding two new egress windows with wells that won't change the visual look from the outside. Five other windows have various issues, including broken hardware, thus causing a safety risk--anyone could lay down and push themselves into the house.

Davis: Asked if windows will be vinyl.

Sears-Etter: Responded no vinyl. Added that a contractor friend of hers will be helping her. The egress would be either entirely wood or aluminum clad wood. She prefers a metal well, below ground level.

Prebys: Asked if the foundation would have to be cut into in order to make space for the egress window.

Sears-Etter: Responded that two of the wells would have to be lowered, but not widened. Added that there are no terrible foundation issues. There were water issues before she purchased the home.

Davis: Asked how the two egress windows will open--push out or push up.

Sears-Etter: Responded that different options are being considered. Asked HDC for suggestions. Her friend suggested a JELD-WEN casement window, primarily for safety. These would be on the northwest corner and on the back of the property.

Prebys: Stated that HDC rarely approves glass block. Asked commissioners if they felt glass block would be inappropriate for the house.

Schmiedeke: Responded it is appropriate due to the age of the property.

Prebys: Asked the commission about how they feel about the casement windows.

Lindsay: Stated that she approves of things that are like-for-like. Wondered why there is a need for two egress windows, instead of one, because of the changes to the foundation of the home.

Sears-Etter: Stated she wants to improve the property value and usability of the home. Stated she would feel more secure if there was an exit in this space. Expressed a willingness to install one instead of two egress windows. Added that the idea was to get daylight and airflow in the basement to prevent mold and mildew.

Schmiedeke: Asked if the foundation is concrete block and unpainted.

Sears-Etter: Responded it is concrete block, and it is painted red, white, and blue.

Schmiedeke: Asked which color she proposes for the casement windows.

Sears-Etter: Suggested brown would look best.

Prebys: Asked Sears Etter to repeat the type of egress windows she wants to use and materials of the same.

Sears-Etter: Responded that it would be a JELD-WEN window, with a ladder out of the well. Stated it could be all wood or aluminum clad wood.

Lindsay: Suggested aluminum clad because wood would be affected by moisture in the well. Asked how deep the well of the window would be.

Sears-Etter: [*After calculating*] Responded about roughly 27". The well would have to be built in. Currently on the west side the space where the well will go is now about a foot wide garden bed. On the rear side, there is a patio she wants to preserve, but she will move part of it for the window well.

Davis: Asked what would be done to the two egress windows if casement windows and wells are not appropriate--as is, glass block, or a third option.

Sears-Etter: Responded she would do glass block, but this would not be preferred because the space wouldn't be suitable for someone to sleep down there because there is no way for someone to escape.

Lindsay: Asked if applicant has considered addressing the issue of airflow with the other windows.

Sears-Etter: Responded the top priorities are security and efficiency, which is why the glass block is preferred. Vented glass blocks would be fine too. Stated egress windows would be important for the security of her family. The second priority is energy efficiency. Cosmetic issues are less important.

Prebys: Stated that egress windows could be security issues, too, because they can be entrance windows.

Sears-Etter: Responded that egress windows lock and would not be facing the street.

Prebys: Responded that egress windows can break and the fact that they wouldn't face the street is worse because no one would be able to see them.

Pettit: Asked the commission if the egress windows are a concern for the house.

Prebys: Responded to Pettit that it is changing the aspect of the house.

Pettit: Responded that if the changes are happening below the grade, that this wouldn't affect the look of the house from the street.

Lindsay: Stated her concern about the structural security of the foundation when it is cut into in order to put in the windows. Stated that the commission needs to see evidence of foundational security. Added that it is difficult for the commission to approve something without a cut sheet with more details.

Sears-Etter: Responded that she does have blueprints and that she has no worries about the structural soundness of the house.

Lindsay: Responded that the commission, then, needs to see that on paper.

Davis: Summarized that the commission is looking for more details for how the windows and wells will look.

Lindsay: Added to Commissioner Davis' summary that the commission is looking for exactly how far into the foundation these egress windows will go compared to what is there now.

Sears-Etter: Stated that the project will be very standard, and as the homeowner she would not approve any changes to the home that would compromise the structural safety of the home.

Lindsay: Responded that the standard for the HDC is that they receive a cut sheet with details of the work before they approve work to be done.

Davis: Asked if the applicant could return in two weeks with a printout of the exact casement windows wanted from JELD-WEN, and a drawing or blueprint for the window well. The contractor is welcome to come, too.

Sears-Etter: Expressed concern about the ground freezing before receiving approval.

Pettit: Confirmed that the commission needs the specifics; it cannot approve generalities. Added that it sounds like the project could work.

Motion: Davis (second: Pettit) moved to table the work at 418 Maple for more information regarding window choice and construction plans.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion Carries.

16 N Washington

** Application is for roof, brick & window sill work, door & gutter replacement*

Applicant: Not present

Discussion: Kochanek: Advised that the applicant would not be able to make it to the meeting tonight.

Motion: Lindsay (second: Davis) moved to table the application for 16 N Washington for more information and the fact that the applicant was not present.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion Carries.

210 N Washington

** Application is for siding replacement*

Applicant: Greg Davel

Discussion: Davel: Summarized the problems with the building before and after the fire. Stated that now is the time to replace the siding on the south-facing wall. Proposed getting Hardie siding, which is waterproof, and getting different colors. Proposed removing all existing fake brick, and also replacing the roof later on. Stated that if he replaces the south side, he should also replace this same fake brick siding on the east side with the same material. Proposed a reddish color to match brick on the building. He is open to other color suggestions.

Motion: Davis (second: Lindsay) moved to approve work at 210 N Washington to include the replacement of asphalt shingles/fake brick siding on south and east facing walls with a water barrier and Hardieplank lap siding, in a smooth lap, in a reddish color to be as harmonious as possible with the existing brick.

Secretary standards:

#7- Clean building gently--no sandblasting

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original material.

Approval: Unanimous.

[Discussion continued]

Davel: Stated that he will return in two weeks with a proposal for window replacement on the parts of building currently being worked on. Asked for suggestions for what he should consider.

Davis: Responded that two things that are often discussed are color and the amount of glass.

Davel: Stated that he would also like to replace ground level windows with glass block windows to increase security.

Prebys: Responded that glass block windows are generally not approved by the commission for this style of building.

Pettit: Raised the possibility of adding a glass block behind the current window to preserve the historical integrity of the window and provide security.

Davel: Respond that the problem is that people may still kick in the outer window because they don't realize the glass block is there.

Pettit: Added that this may not happen if the outer window is transparent and someone can see the glass block behind it.

Lindsay: Suggested Davel bring a cut sheet for each of his ideas.

46 E Cross

**Application is for Façade repair/replacement*

Applicant: Greg Davel

Davel: Stated that the work is done, but the concern is with the safety issues. Stated the mason expressed that the wood beam across all three of the buildings was rotting, and suggested removing all three pieces of wood across all of 46 E Cross. Showed that the building next door looks similar, thus suggesting that they had a similar issue and took a similar action in replacing the wood with brick. The brick will be painted to match the rest of the building. The mason also used wire mesh and nails to anchor the bricks, so they will never fall out.

Motion: Davis (second: Schmiedeke) moved to approve work at 46 E Cross to include the repair and replacement of brick and mortar of the facade of 46 E Cross. The repair will include the painting to match the color scheme of each facade. The repair will include the removal of the wood cornice piece and that will not be replaced.

Secretary of the Interior Standards:

#5- Preserve distinctive features

#7- Clean building gently--no sandblasting

#10- New work shall be removable

Approval: Unanimous. Motion Carries.

OLD BUSINESS

205 N Hamilton

**Application is for porch work*

Applicant: Not present. Represented by staff.

Kochanek: Stated that she looked at the porch. Stated that the porch looks exactly the same except the painting scheme. Now there is grey on the treads and white on the risers. Other than that, the work is essentially a repair.

Prebys: Asked what staff suggests.

Kochanek: Suggested approving it with the color differences.

Motion: Davis (second: Pettit) moved to approve the work done at 205 N Hamilton to include the repair of the porch with like materials, and stair replacement to include additional stringers. An attached handrail is also to be repaired to match the existing conditions, though it does not meet the current HDC porch and handrail fact sheet requirements. All materials are to be painted, with the risers white and the treads gray.

Secretary of the Interior Standards:

#9- Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original material

#10- New work shall be removable

Approval: Unanimous. Motion Carries.

STUDY ITEMS—none

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

118-120 Maple-*reroofing*

9 S Adams-*Exhaust vent installation*

Motion: Davis (second: Schmiedeke) moved for approval of both administrative approvals for 406 Oak for door replacement and 9 S Adams for new roofing.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

OTHER BUSINESS

Property Monitoring

32 E Cross Kochanek: Stated that work was underway at the building that Maiz is taking over. They were doing masonry work. Advised that a letter was sent to the owners regarding the proper mortar mix.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS--none

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

Approval of the minutes of November 14, 2017

Motion: Davis (second: Pettit) moves to approve minutes with the amendment of one spelling change.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Davis (second: Pettit) moves to adjourn meeting.

Approval: Unanimous. Motion carries.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:00 p.m.