



MINUTES

City of Ypsilanti HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, November 10, 2020
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Pettit Video/telephone usage instructions given for potential attendees
Meeting called to order at 7:04pm

Commissioners Present: Alex Pettit, Erika Lindsay, Amy Swift, James Chesnut

Commissioners Absent: Anne Stevenson, Ron Rupert

Staff Present: Scott Slagor, Preservation Planner
Nancy Hare-Dickerson, Commission Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Lindsay (second: Chesnut) moved to approve the agenda as submitted.

Roll Call Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Lindsay, Swift, Chesnut
Nays: None
Absent: Commissioners Stevenson and Rupert
Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS—none

PUBLIC HEARING—none

OLD BUSINESS—none

NEW BUSINESS

101 S Washington

**New signs.*

Applicant: Duane Romanski, owner - present

Discussion: Pettit: Stated that the application is for sign work. Asked applicant to walk the Commission through what is being proposed.

Romanski: Stated that they recently purchased the building. Stated that applicant is looking

to switch the panel on the main sign at Ferris and Washington Street. Indicated that the plan is to change just the outside panel on the "Chapel Parking" sign in the parking lot. Stated that they would like to put their logo on the side of the building.

Pettit: Asked if there are anywhere in the photos where it identifies where the sign for the building would go.

Romanski: Stated that if you go to the one that says "Chapel Parking" *[reference photo materials]*, it would be just to the left of the portico there.

Pettit: Asked if it is correct that these are backlit signs.

Romanski: Confirmed.

Pettit: Asked if it is correct that applicant is proposing to change out the acrylic panel on those two signs *[reference photo materials]*.

Romanski: Confirmed.

Pettit: Asked if it is correct that the sign at the corner *[reference photo materials]* is a single direction sign, just the one facing the street.

Romanski: Confirmed.

Pettit: Asked if it is correct that the sign in the parking lot *[reference photo materials]* is a two-sided sign.

Romanski: Confirmed.

Pettit: *[Explained HDC general policy regarding new or modified backlit signs in the District]* Stated that the proposed drawings are black on white. Asked if applicant would be interested in entertaining the concept of reversing that – where it would be white on black.

Romanski: Stated that they did not want to change it all that much. Indicated that the current sign has been there for over forty years. Stated that they were looking to just switch the panel to make it look pretty much the way it does now, just with a different name on it. *[Further statements as to difficulties in making the sign different from what is proposed]*

Swift: Stated that the current signs are non-compliant but they are there and they have a history of being there. Acknowledged agreement with Commissioner Pettit's request for the color to be inverted. Indicated an opinion that, overall, because the panels are existing, it is not necessary to implement a bigger change than that.

Chesnut: Asked if it is correct that for the lit panels, it is almost like a one-to-one swap out; that what is being asked by applicant is that just the plastic panel gets swapped out and that what is really changing is the letters, the naming.

Romanski: Confirmed.

[Further discussion as to the proposed design/inversion considerations/lighting options]

Lindsay: Indicated that one thing for the Commission to consider is that it is a non-contributing property.

[Procedural discussion ensued]

Pettit: Asked if it is correct that the remaining sign, which is a new sign, is five-by-five-foot.

Romanski: Confirmed.

Pettit: Asked about the mounting method.

Romanski: Stated -- masonry screws.

[Further discussion as to mounting provisions]

Swift: Asked if there is lighting planned for this sign *[reference photo materials]*.

Romanski: Confirmed, no.

[Procedural discussion continued]

Motion: Swift (second: Chesnut) moved to approve and issue a Notice to Proceed for work at 101 S Washington as submitted in the application dated October 27, 2020, for the replacement of faces on two signs and the installation of an aluminum wall sign, as specified. Approval is conditioned that the aluminum wall sign be mounted to the mortar joints to the greatest extent possible.

Secretary of the Interior Standards:

#9 – Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original materials

#10 – New Work shall be removable

Roll Call Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Lindsay, Swift, Chesnut

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioners Stevenson and Rupert

Motion carried.

STUDY ITEMS—none

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

Motion: Lindsay (second: Swift) moved to approve the administrative approvals for:

1. 114 Woodward Roof

Roll Call Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Lindsay, Swift, Chesnut

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioners Stevenson and Rupert

Motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Discussion on 60-day approvals.

Discussion centered on a memo prepared by Scott Slagor regarding the circumstances that led to the automatic approval of the application at 527 N Huron, and suggested ways that the 60-day application time period could be extended so an automatic approval is less likely to occur in the future. Staff suggested that the Commission consider the following actions:

- Staff recommended development of a form letter that can serve as a template for future extensions, so one is ready in case this issue arises again.
- Staff asked the Commission to discuss how they would like such an agreement to be executed in the future:
 - Delegate extension powers to staff by resolution, or
 - Allow the chair to make agreements subject to the approval of the whole Commission
 - Consider whether such agreements should only be executed at regular or special meetings where a quorum of Commissioners are present.

Discussion: Pettit: *[Presented an overview of the memo]*.

Lindsay: Suggested considering another version of the suggestions presented, granting extension power to staff on a per instance basis since this situation may happen again given the situation on the Commission; whether it be a quorum issue or meeting issue because of COVID. Stated that option three was not the best because the Commission has a history of not being able to make quorum. Asked if staff could be granted extension power by an email vote. Stated concern for the position it may put staff. Stated that giving one person the extension power permanently may be problematic.

Slagor: Stated that decisions cannot be made via email because it violates the Open Meetings Act.

Pettit: Suggested taking the first two options and combining them, allowing staff to make an extension agreement subject to approval by the Commission at the next meeting.

Slagor: Confirmed that option would be feasible.

Pettit: *[Broad discussion on staff involvement with extensions, and legal HDC meetings]*

Pettit: Asked what the outcome of the discussion tonight should be.

Slagor: Offered to add discussion and resolution of staff approving extensions subject to HDC approval at the next meeting.

Pettit: Asked for commissioner input.

Swift: Asked for clarification about the process with tabling due to a lack of information. Asked why staff cannot automatically extend to the next meeting.

[Broad discussion on the process for extensions, tabling, and incomplete applications].

Swift: Asked if a blanket denial is feasible when the clock runs out.

Pettit: Clarified that the 60-day time frame is in the ordinance and cannot change unless ordinance changes.

[Discussion of why the 60-day time frame is in place, and how it is affected by the pandemic]

Chesnut: Asked to clarify the definition of complete application.

Slagor: Stated that applications are considered complete once they go in front of the Commission, filled out the form, attachments, and photos. Amy Arnold, Preservation Planner with the State Historic Preservation Office who reviews appeals, stated that the clock starts once the application is date stamped and approved by Staff.

Chesnut: Asked for clarification that it is not within the Commission's powers to define complete applications.

Slagor: Confirmed that it is the City who defines complete applications.

[Discussion of qualifications for complete applications and review]

Pettit: Stated that the Commission still needs a tool for these instances regardless of how complete the application is.

[Discussion of how large projects are approved in the 60-day time frame]

Lindsay: Asked to discuss if staff can approve an extension subject to approval by the commission.

[Discussion ensued]

Lindsay: Asked if they could allow staff to approve, deny, or extend.

Slagor: Stated that the Commission can delegate an official to approve minor classes of work, but not denial. Does not know of other Commissions that have staff outright deny applications, and it may not be a good power to give to one person.

[Discussion of Commission and staff actions on applications]

Pettit: Asked when it is appropriate to discuss an extension with the applicant.

Slagor: Stated that it is unclear in the ordinance and State Law but would interpret it as the last regularly scheduled meeting before the 60-days are up.

[Discussion on the amount of time it takes to execute a decision or extension]

Slagor: Suggested including bolded dates in the staff review to make the timeline clearer.

Chesnut: Suggested modifying the template to say date of initial application, and they can do the math.

[Discussion of staff reviews and the Commission's review of applications]

Pettit: Asked if staff would take points from the discussion and put together a resolution for next meeting.

Slagor: Confirmed.

2. Property Monitoring

Commissioners/Staff discussed property questions, concerns and issues currently being reviewed.

3. Updates from staff

Re: Historic District commissioner vacancy

Re: Upcoming Michigan Historic Preservation conference

Re: Water Street site development

4. Commissioner Comments

Commissioners, who wished, shared additional thoughts/comments.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS -none

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

Approval of the minutes of October 27, 2020

Motion: Swift (second: Chesnut) moved to approve the minutes of October 27, 2020, as submitted.

Roll Call Vote - Ayes: Commissioners Pettit, Lindsay, Swift, Chesnut

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioners Stevenson and Rupert

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Pettit adjourned the meeting, citing the end of the agenda with no further items to discuss.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:43 p.m.

Full Minutes Prepared By: Nancy Hare-Dickerson