



City of Plymouth Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 5, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.
Plymouth City Hall Commission Chambers

City of Plymouth
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Plymouth, Michigan 48170

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Polin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Linda Filipczak, Jeremy Borys, Joshua Mrozowski, John Townsend, Stan Cole, Colleen Polin

ABESENT: Linda May

Also present was Community Development Director, John Buzuvis and City Commission Liaison, Suzi Deal.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Comm. Townsend and seconded by Comm. Filipczak to approve the meeting minutes from January 9, 2020, as amended or administratively clarified.

MOTION APPROVED 6-0

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion was made by Comm. Cole and seconded by Comm. Borys to approve the agenda as presented.

MOTION APPROVED 6-0

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Comm. Cole nominated Comm. Polin to be Chairman for the 2020 calendar year. There were no other nominations.

MOTION APPROVED 6-0

Comm. Townsend nominated Comm. Cole to be Vice-Chairman for the 2020 calendar year. There were no other nominations.

MOTION APPROVED 6-0

6. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

7. OLD BUSINESS

a) H19-10: Rear Porch at 260 S. Union

Joe Phillips, applicant, presented his case. He explained the renovations that were completed to upgrade the building in 1994, which included new windows and openings, new siding, handicapped ramp, and reconstruction of the rear porch. He explained that all four side of the building were altered drastically. He explained the only elements of the rear porch that are wood are the balusters, rails, and newel posts. Mr. Phillips explained the original rear porch and wood columns were removed in 1994 and the porch was constructed with a brick façade on block on a concrete foundation with a concrete slab. He explained that the building foundation is sculptured block. He explained the other synthetic materials that currently exist on the

building: fascias and returns are pre-finished, aluminum clad wood, the porch soffits are vinyl with pre-finished aluminum trim, the siding and trim are vinyl, the windows are all vinyl, and the rear door is fiberglass clad, pre-finished metal. He explained that while the rear porch was likely original, the materials were not. He referenced specific sections of the Secretary of Interior Standards on pages 74, 156, 158, and 232.

Citizen Comments

None.

Board Discussion

Comm. Borys asked why composite material was proposed instead of wood.

Mr. Phillips explained that composite is easier to maintain than wood, long term.

Comm. Townsend asked if 20 years was an appropriate amount of time to expect a wooden porch to last.

Mr. Phillips explained that for an exterior, commercial structure like this he would expect it to last longer than 20 years.

Comm. Cole explained that they are being asked to interpret the rehabilitation standards. He explained that he reached out to the State Historic Preservation Office for clarity on this project. He explained the Board will have to discuss if it was feasible to use wood again. He explained that based on the 1994 picture the porch appears to be original. He would classify the work completed on the porch at that time as reconstruction. He explained there were a few different approaches the Board could take: like for like replacement (require wood), allow composite (which may further dilute the historic character of the house), or ideally, require the porch to be rebuilt the back to its original state. He asked the Board to discuss if approving composite materials instead of wood would further dilute the historic character since the other exterior materials are not historic. He further explained that likely when the use of the building changed, the railing would have been required rather than keeping it an open porch like the photo shows. He felt that because the railing was a safety feature it was acceptable for it to be of composite material.

Chair Polin asked for clarification on what exactly was being replaced and the project's scope.

Mr. Phillips clarified that rails and spindles would be replaced, as written in the application.

Comm. Townsend agreed with Chair Polin's assessment that there was some conflicting information related to what would be replaced within the application.

Comm. Mrozowski read a portion of Preservation Brief 45 related to preserving historic wood porches, stating "greater emphasis is placed on material authenticity and material integrity when maintaining and repairing individually significant historic properties".

Chair Polin stated modern materials cannot be pieced in with historic materials.

Mr. Phillips clarified that the repair would be of the railing system holistically, not individually.

Comm. Townsend wanted more specific information to be presented to them.

Comm. Filipczak agreed and wanted details so they didn't have to assume what would and wouldn't be replaced.

Comm. Mrozowski asked what would qualify as integrating composite materials with wood materials.

Comm. Cole stated that if top and bottom rail were wood and the rail between was composite – that would qualify as an integration of materials. He further clarified that the entire system must be compatible, but it does not have to be compatible with the material it butts up to (i.e. decking or siding).

Comm. Borys believed the whole system should be replaced with composite materials: handrails, balusters, and the newel post.

Comm. Cole agreed but did not believe the column needed to be made of composite material. He wanted to see more specific dimensions on the parts of the handrail system to ensure it would look identical.

Comm. Townsend asked if it was a like for like replacement related to the size of the railing system.

Comm. Cole asked if the Board would accept composite.

The Board agreed.

Chair Polin asked for dimensions to be provided.

Mr. Phillips asked for the Board to approve the allowance of the columns, newel posts, and rails to be composite. He explained he needed to verify if they are or are not planned to be composite and the specific details.

A motion was made by Comm. Borys, supported by Comm. Townsend, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for H19-10, 260 S. Union, to replace the rear porch railing system. The finding of facts is that the project meets Secretary of the Interior Standards numbers 6 and 9 that the new feature will match the old in design, color, and texture. Additional finding of facts is that the porch is not original, the porch is not on the front of the building, and there are other composite materials on the façade of the building. The approval has the following conditions: composite materials may be used for the handrails, balusters, and newel posts; the wood columns may not be replaced with composite materials; photographic evidence must be provided to show what currently exists; and final drawings shall be provided of the porch system to be installed.

MOTION APPROVED 6-0

8. NEW BUSINESS

a) City Strategic Plan Presentation by City Commission Liaison Deal

City Comm. Deal presented the Strategic Plan that was adopted by the City Commission on January 20, 2020. She asked the Board to consider some goals they could accomplish in the 2020 calendar year. She suggested goals like reviewing the ordinance and asking questions, developing a process for administrative review, and selecting an approved palette of paint colors.

Comm. Cole suggested design standards and having some approvals allowed by having guidelines set. He also suggested updating the 1994 Historic District Study.

City Comm. Deal suggested settling on three goals. She also suggested an informal training to discuss standards, to make strong motions, and to practice scenario-based reviews.

Comm Borys suggested reviewing a five-year history of the Board's approvals and denials.

Comm. Filipczak asked how applications are determined to be complete. She asked what the Board's expectations were regarding details required.

City Comm. Deal suggested reviewing the application for what should and should not be included in an applicant's submission.

Comm. Filipczak suggested reviewing other communities' applications for what they require for a complete submission.

Comm. Mrozowski explained that completeness of application is different from clarity in the application.

Comm. Filipczak agreed and stated the Board should not have to make assumptions.

City Comm. Deal asked the Board to consider some potential goals for next month's meeting.

Comm. Cole wanted a goal to be how to handle violations that occur within the district.

Comm. Townsend clarified that an appropriate follow-up process needs to be established.

Dave Rucinski, 1392 Maple, asked how about design guidelines and how a complete application is ensured when an applicant is out of state.

9. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

a) Sharing lessons learned memo

The Board did not discuss this agenda item.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Comm. Townsend, supported by Comm. Filipczak, to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 PM.