



MINUTES

**City of Ypsilanti
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting held in person at Ypsilanti Senior Center**

**Tuesday, April 12, 2022
6:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Meeting Called to Order 6:12 pm

Chair Alex Pettit welcomed everyone, told public when they would have an opportunity to address commission

Commissioners Present:

James Ratzlaff – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Stefan Szumko - Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Jeff Muir – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti
Alex Pettit – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Commissioners Absent: James Chesnut – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Commissioners recently resigned: Amy Swift – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

Staff Present: Ellen Thackery, Preservation Planner

AMENDMENT TO AGENDA

Chair added one item to New Business and called it "Discuss Commission Meeting Schedule."

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Szumko (second: Ratzlaff) moved to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval: Roll call vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS—none

PUBLIC HEARING—none

OLD BUSINESS

216 N Grove

**Window Replacement*

Staff Report: Staff indicated that this agenda item had been heard at the last meeting and postponed for lack of information. House contributes to the National Register and local historic districts, front window has two parts—both fixed sashes—and is currently vinyl. Last month, proposal was to install one picture window in the window opening and remove the separation between the two fixed sashes. Revised proposal is to keep the current window configuration and install two fixed sashes separated, as it is now, in the black Fibrex material.

Applicant: Nothing really to add, brought a sample of product, proportion of window rails/stiles to glass will be unchanged from current.

Discussion: Vinyl is currently in place and that is not a desirable product, and this is a composite material that includes some wood sawdust. There is some hesitation about new materials, but the composite windows might be more in line with the Standards and can perhaps allow them in place of the vinyl to see how they perform and look. Confirmed that the glass will be the same size as it is now.

Motion: Szumko moved (seconded by Muir) to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the replacement of the front window at 216 N Grove as proposed with two Anderson Fibrex windows in black because, as the applicant provided more information, a sample, a drawing of how the proposed windows will look, and because the original window configuration is now maintained (with one smaller upper sash above one larger square lower sash and with both sashes fixed in place), the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 2, 5, and 9. It is understood that the Commission will continue to consider this material on a case-by-case basis, and what is compatible here may not be compatible in a different circumstance or property.

Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#2, #5, #9

Approval: Roll call, unanimous. Motion carried.

208 N Hamilton

**Window Replacement (retroactive)*

Commissioner Muir recused himself from this discussion and vote.

Staff Report: Staff indicated that it was understood that Commissioner Muir would have to recuse himself and so staff spoke to Mr. Beal, the applicant, and he has given staff permission to re-submit this application as it stands for the meeting 4/26. In the meantime, staff will send a procedural denial because this application will reach its 60-day deadline for automatic approval 4/24.

NEW BUSINESS

333 Oak

**Shed and Greenhouse*

Staff Report:

Applicant: Judy Lucchetti, homeowner – present. Clarified that she has submitted a revised site plan/sketch to show that the shed placement has changed more to the center of the yard instead of along the very rear.

Discussion: Clarified that the siding is wood on the shed. Commissioner asked how the greenhouse would be anchored to the ground. Applicant explained that she is still researching that but that the shed was her higher priority.

Motion: Szumko (second: Ratzlaff) moved to approve and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the erection of a shed and a greenhouse at 333 Oak as proposed in the application received March 4, 2022. Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards include Standards 9—Contemporary designs shall be compatible and shall not destroy significant original material—and 10—New work shall be removable.

Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#9, #10

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous. Motion carried.

615 N Prospect

**Porch Rebuild*

Staff Report: This house is a wood frame house just inside the district. The lower portion of the porch is being proposed to be removed and rebuilt as shown in the application. Roof will remain, but there will be new porch columns, floor, skirting, handrail, and maybe steps. The house does not have significant character-defining features on the front facade that we are protecting.

Applicant: Mike Condon of Ypsilanti Restoration didn't have anything more to add, and is happy to answer questions.

Discussion: What color will the new work be painted? Likely white, but possibly brown—hasn't confirmed that detail yet, but the rest of the front of the house is white. All construction will be painted wood except for the tongue-and-groove flooring, which will be dark hickory Azek. If the stairs will be done, they will be done using the 5.5" Azek on the treads and 3.5"-wide tongue-and-groove Azek boards on the porch floor.

Motion: Ratzlaff (seconded by Szumko) moved to approve the application received March 7, 2022 as submitted and issue a certificate of appropriateness for porch rebuilding work at 615 N Prospect to install new wood-wrapped porch posts, new porch floor, new skirting, and a new handrail, and wood must be opaquely painted. The relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards include #3 and #9.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous. Motion carried.

316 N Grove

**Roof modification to help with drainage*

Staff: House contributes to both the local and National Register Districts, proposed work to amend the house's roof is the same work the commission saw last month as a study item.

Applicant: Need to manage water better, move the water. Has been working with a contractor and he does know now that they can build what he had been proposing. The measured drawings came back within two to three inches of what he planned.

Discussion: One commissioner mentioned that he does think this proposed work will be a significant change to the historic house, but that it is a good change because it will help preserve the historic house for the long term.

Motion: Szumko moved (Muir seconded) to approve the application and issue a certificate of appropriateness for work described in the application received March 10, 2022 for a new modified gable roof installed just south of the historic tower as at 316 N Grove. Relevant Standards include Standards #2, #5, and #9.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous. Motion carried.

211 N Washington

**Roof and gutter work*

Commissioner Muir recused himself from this discussion and vote.

Staff Report: Staff indicated that it was understood that Commissioner Muir would have to recuse himself and so staff spoke to Ms. Kennedy, the applicant, and she understands that this application will be heard at the next historic district commission meeting 4/26. This application will not reach its 60-day deadline for action until June 10, 2022.

301 S Huron

**Change in materials to previously approved application*

Staff Report: This is an amended application from last summer. Commission approved the application in July 2021, and the homeowner would like to make two amendments to what was approved. She would like to make the handrails on the steps aluminum like the guardrail around the porch, and she'd like to use stone steps instead of metal grate.

Applicant: Not present.

Discussion: Commissioners agree that there isn't much of a difference between what was proposed originally and this proposal, but one commissioner did note one difference: the weight of the two

products. Stone will be much heavier than the metal grate stairs that had been proposed and will require concrete footing below the frost line. The metal grate steps would readily shed water, whereas the stone steps will retain water.

Motion: Ratzlaff (seconded by Szumko) moved to approve and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work at 301 S Huron as submitted in the revised description of proposed work received March 28, 2022, for installation of an aluminum guardrail and handrail and stone porch steps, with proper footing on north steps, as specified. Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards include Standards 3, 9, and 10.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#3- Do not imitate earlier styles.

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

#10- New work shall be removable.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous.
Motion carried.

411 N Huron

**Tear off existing roof. Replace with new standing seam metal roof.*

Staff Report: 411 N Huron contributes to the National Register and local historic districts and the proposed work was introduced last month to the commission as a study item. This proposal is for the standing seam metal roof, but the gutters are not before the commission right now.

Applicant: Clarified that the reasons the gutters are not being ordered yet are because of both cost and supply chain issues, and also explained that the gutter brackets will be installed directly into the roof decking to protect the ornate cornices.

Discussion: Commissioners urged homeowners to get the gutters as soon as possible because they protect the house and its foundation.

Motion: Szumko (seconded by Ratzlaff) moved to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work at 411 N Huron proposed April 4, 2022 for the removal of all current roofing material and the installation of a new mesh air layer, a fully adhered ice and water shield, new ventilation vents, flashings and drip edge as described in application, a new McElroy Metals Maxima Standing Seam Metal Roof in Dark Bronze, and new gutter brackets installed into the roof decking.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#2- Do not destroy original character. Do not remove or alter historic material or features.

#5- Preserve distinctive features.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous.
Motion carried.

417 Maple

**Uncover older steps, remove concrete paths, install pavers, new driveway, paint accents on the house black*

Staff Report: This house might be considered non-contributing at this time, only because staff thinks some of its character-defining features are concealed by the current siding. The original footprint of the historic house is clearly visible, and staff wonders if the small windows upstairs on the front of the house indicate old small friezeband windows from the Greek Revival style. The hunt for historic photos will continue. Proposed work includes keeping enclosed front porch but revealing the older steps that lead to that enclosed porch, installing painted white wood handrail to match other porch's existing handrail, painting wood porch decks black, painting window sashes, gutters, and visible foundation black, removing concrete paths at front and on southeast side and replacing those with pavers, installing a new paver path on house's west side, and installing a new concrete driveway accented with pavers.

Applicant: Have decided not to paint the masonry foundation.

Discussion: Commissioners encouraged concrete footers under steps and adding drainage under drive. Commissioners encouraged making sure that drainage is added and that concrete is leveled to help with drainage issues.

Motion: Ratzlaff moved to approve the application and issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work as proposed at 417 Maple on April 4, 2022 to remove the existing wood steps and stoop, restore and shore up the revealed older concrete steps, install a white-painted, wood handrail to match the other porch's handrail, properly prep with gentle sanding the two wood porch floorboards and paint them, paint the exterior window frames, and gutters, remove the concrete paths to front porch and on southeast side and replace them with pavers, install a new paver path, and remove the gravel driveway and replace it with a concrete drive bordered with pavers.

Further, Ratzlaff moved to deny the proposed foundation painting as proposed on April 4, 2022 because the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings does not recommend applying paint or other coatings to masonry that has been unpainted.

Both motions were seconded by seconded by Szumko.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

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

#10- New work shall be removable.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous.
Motion carried.

220 N Huron

**Replace existing steps and ADA-accessible ramp with new on non-historic addition.*

Staff Report: 220 N Huron is likely individually eligible for the National Register, and it contributes to both the National Register and local historic districts. The proposal is to remove the wood stairs and ramp that lead to a Historic District Commission

non-contributing addition and replace it with new concrete stairs and a concrete ramp. The proposed work does not impact the historic structure and is to the side and rear of the historic house.

Applicant: In January or so, we discussed poured concrete and there were no objections at that time. An ADA-compliant steel pipe handrail will be installed on both the stairs and ramp. Also, there is a tree right at the base of the ramp. The foundation of the ramp will cut into the root system, and the tree itself is not significant. It probably started growing when the last ramp was installed and likely was not planned/planted.

Discussion: Commissioners agree that the tree likely is not a historically significant feature on the landscape and was not in great condition in 2021, and that it can be removed as part of this work as necessary.

Motion: Szumko (seconded by Muir) moved to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work at 220 N Huron as proposed April 5, 2022 to remove the existing wood steps and wood ramp and install a new concrete ramp with black metal balusters, handrail, and an additional black metal pipe handrail. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10, because the work does not impact the historic structure, access is to a non-historic addition, the design is compatible but differentiated, and the work is reversible.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

#2- Do not destroy original character. Do not remove or alter historic material or features.

#3- Do not imitate earlier styles.

#5- Preserve distinctive features.

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

#10- New work shall be removable.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous.
Motion carried.

215 N Adams

**New concrete patio*

Staff Report: This property contributes to both the National Register district and the local historic district. It is a 1920s, two-story, side gable, brick English cottage.

At the December 14, 2021 meeting of the historic district commission, the applicants applied for replacement French doors to the patio/deck. The commission denied that application because the doors were vinyl clad.

Proposal is to remove existing wood, non-historic deck and replace it with a concrete patio.

Applicant: For the doors, we are looking for someone who can repair them.

Discussion: What are the standards the Commission applies here? Was poured concrete used historically? Poured concrete itself was in use in the early 1920s, but patios were not usually made of it. That doesn't mean, however, that you could never add it. That said, commissioners look at the

texture of the proposed patio to make sure it's not trying to look like something else. The applicant is thinking of adding a color to the concrete, and the commission doesn't worry so much about color but instead wants to try to be sure the concrete doesn't look like something else in its texture. If a patio is historic, we'd try to preserve it, but this deck is not historic. Expansion joints will be needed, but the patio itself will not be stamped to look like brick or something else. Homeowners will be running a trench with gravel and drainage from the house under the patio toward the street. Plan to put footing under steps. If steps turn out to be not re-usable, they'll re-create them from concrete.

Motion: Ratzlaff (seconded by Szumko) moved to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed work at 215 N Adams to pour a concrete patio behind the house with the condition that the concrete slab will be installed with an expansion joint so that the new concrete will not be in direct contact with the house and foundation. Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards are 9 and 10.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

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

#10- New work shall be removable.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous.
Motion carried.

STUDY ITEMS

330 E Forest

**Would like to replace existing wood fence with a non-wood fencing product*

Homeowners want to gauge HDC's openness to this material. This material is 100% polyethylene. It has a plastic-y feel and texture and likely wouldn't be approved by the Commission. There are other materials like Azek that are smooth but there is none of that product available and no one installs it, according to the applicant. Supplies are low now. With wood fences, one issue is that the vertical pieces need to be far enough apart that they can fully dry out. And an opaque paint or stain applied once the wood is dry helps protect the fence from moisture and UV damage. With fences, one issue is that this fence is trying to look like wood, but it doesn't truly look like wood, either. Commission encouraged homeowners to bring another material back if they can find one—they have approved synthetic materials in the past that are smoother and look less like rough wood, but don't think they could approve this one. Homeowners think they'll likely end up with wood because other materials are so hard to get.

202 E Forest Ave

**Wheelchair ramps for childcare center for High Scope*

Looking to install two ADA ramps, one on rear and one on front. Looking to use wood and once it dries out, looking to paint. Has used Douglas fir in the past, but because of the budget constraints they are proposing pressure-treated wood to be painted once it cures. One issue that does come up with ramps is that the Commission does prefer a skirting under the ramp, almost like a porch. Commissioner notes that for young children, choose materials that will wear well for kids. Commission would definitely be open to other designs and materials—horizontal metal pipe rails are durable and tend to disappear. Lots of vertical balusters tend to

draw the eye and almost create a wall effect as the ramp switches back and forth. Metal handrail for children might be better—no slivers. Maybe consider something that will not need to be painted. Could consider a composite deck board that appears smooth—not with the simulated wood grain.

Commissioner notes that an addition to the house appears on the drawing. For additions, commission would be looking for harmony with the historic structure, but also differentiation between the historic building and the addition. HDC has approved composite siding for additions, like a Hardi-plank-type of siding. It might be fine if the reveal on the house is different than the reveal on the addition because it differentiates historic from new.

206-210 N Washington

**Potential demolition with new infill construction*

Avalon Housing's Michael Appel: Thanks for talking with us about this project. We are excited to have the chance to redevelop this property. We arrived here by way of our response to the City of Ypsilanti's request for proposals for this site for affordable housing. There are two outbuildings behind the main building, and those will be preserved. Also distributed to the commission are photos of the current condition of the interior. The original historic house has been added to many times, and then a major event defined the space—a fire. Fire damage alone might be fixable. The other issue, however, is that framing throughout is irregular and insufficient. Reframing the entire structure would be required, and more and more issues would become apparent as you demolish and work. Add to that the water damage the building has sustained and it becomes even more difficult to reuse the structure.

Commission notes that any wood undamaged by the fire and water would be valuable for salvage or reuse.

Commission and attendees looked at historic photos of the building when it was a home.

One commissioner stated that it is becoming apparent to him that there is not much of the original structure available to preserve. The commission is charged with preserving the community's historic buildings, but in this case, there may not be much of the historic material left to preserve. The pathway to demolishing within the historic district is narrow and prescribed. One component of that decision-making process will be what will be built on the site instead.

Avalon has looked at a few options, especially at the outset of the project. The current configuration allowed for some reuse, but the units have fewer windows (especially in bedrooms) and so the quality of life they'd offer isn't what Avalon would want. Avalon needs to get a certain number of units built to support the cost of the common areas. Looking at reducing the parking and building a three-story building. Haven't gone through City's site plan review, so a long road ahead, but with proximity to bus stations and stops, Avalon thinks there would be support for reduced parking here. Mostly one- some two-bedroom apartments. Commissioner notes that infill within a historic district is tricky and rare. What we need to do is figure out how the new proposed building will be harmonious with the neighborhood. Commissioner would like to see shots/drawings/renderings of the new proposed building IN the neighborhood context. Show the neighboring buildings when you show the new proposed building. It will help the commission visualize the proposal.

Avalon wants to clarify: Avalon is not the current owner. The City can say no to Avalon in two ways—one through these formal processes like HDC and Planning Commission review, but also through the fact that they're the seller and can just say no to Avalon for no reason whatsoever. Avalon plans to talk with preservation planner more and then also plans to talk again with City Council again to say, "We spoke with the historic

district commission and here's what we're hearing" and then discuss with Council Avalon's ideas to make sure they're on the right path.

Discussion about the four criteria for demolition—applicant needs to make a case for one of those. Chair asks preservation staff to send to the commissioners the process to review for demolition within a historic district. Avalon highlighted the two criteria they think best supports demolition. Commissioner expressed that one criterion that they thought resonated was the significant community benefit the redevelopment would offer.

Avalon seeks the reassurance that Avalon's reasons for suggesting demolition would likely satisfy the commission. It seems they got that here. The next piece would be showing in detail what is proposed for the new build, and Avalon thinks it is likely that they will seek assurance from Council that they are on the right path before submitting serious drawings/elevations/plans to the HDC. Want to hear from the Commission what would be desirable in the new design. Staff will provide some feedback and resources if that's helpful. If the only thing the commission would approve is a small project with some townhouses, that's worth knowing. The commission states that the two outbuildings that really do contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood, and those two outbuildings are significant. Commission will likely require any applicant to preserve and maintain those two outbuildings. This neighborhood could be considered a transition area and that could afford opportunities for more dense usage than just single-family. There is a lot of diversity of uses in the immediate area—autobody shop, multifamily, single family, a funeral home. Thank you for bringing the proposal forward—this is a big undertaking. Looking at styles in the area, the Kresge building (the old Huron Hotel) has kind of a similar look—red and orange brick, downtown is all brick. Think about how your proposed materials will fit into the texture of the neighborhood. Is there an aftermarket on bricks and the old wood? Yes, it would be great to offer those materials.

Avalon asks how the relationship will work with SHPO—looking at federal funding and how the demolition in the historic district will ramp up SHPO's oversight. Thinking about how to navigate the local, county, state questions with the federal funds—HOME funds for sure, and maybe others.

304 E Forest Ave

**Potential wood-burning stove and potential new garage windows*

Homeowner could not attend but staff described that homeowner has stated that they are considering a wood-burning stove either in the garage or the house, which necessitates a conversation about appropriate chimneys, and they are also considering adding windows to the non-historic garage. Commission is open to this and is open to looking at the type of chimney that comes with the stove, but the chimney needs to be long enough to keep the tar ash from the building. Also, it was noted that our district's roofing fact sheet calls for not leaving a mill finish on metal. Metal that penetrates a roof should be a color similar to the roof shingle. Commissioners are open to the chimney looking modern because it differentiates between what's historic and what is new. When it comes to the secondary, non-historic outbuilding and new windows, commissioners were open to this possibility and would just need more details about the proposed windows. Commission stated that the Standards don't really allow vinyl. They would encourage the homeowner to come back to the commission with a study item once more details are proposed for the new windows. Alternatively of course, the homeowner could just complete an application and pay the permit fee—the choice is theirs.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS—one administrative paint approval at 318 E Cross. Letter mailed to homeowner April 12.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Property Monitoring

- a. Commissioners/Staff discussed property concerns and property issues under review.

2. Updates from Staff

- a. Update on potential new historic district commissioners: City Council is scheduled to nominate and potentially vote on the new commissioners on 4/19.

3. Commissioner Comments

- a. **Meeting schedule:** back in December, commission agreed to meet twice a month in the construction season, and agreed to revisit this schedule in April. Does commission want to consider a change in that meeting-every-two-weeks rhythm? Consensus: defer a decision about changing that every-two-weeks schedule until there are new commissioners on board.
- b. **Vice chair:** currently don't have one and let's revisit this once new commissioners are on board.
- c. **New commissioner orientation:** yes, and all commissioners will be invited as well. Orientation to the Standards themselves. Good topic: New infill, elements of design, and how to review. Think about a public meeting so that the public can hear the info about alternative materials. Infill is really good too because the new neighborhood on Park is coming also. Staff will start to line up a training on the infill piece and then hopefully commission can count on the statewide training May 14 for an alternative materials component.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS—none

HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS

Approval of the Minutes of March 8, 2022

Motion: Szumko (second: Muir) moved to approve the minutes of March 8, 2022, as submitted.

Approval: Roll call. Unanimous
Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

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

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:00 p.m.