



# MINUTES

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

**Tuesday, August 23, 2022  
7:00 P.M. (Minutes approved 9/27/22)**

## CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

In absence of chair, staff called meeting to order at 7:09 pm.

## ROLL CALL

### Commissioners Present:

Stefan Szumko - Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti  
James Ratzlaff – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti  
Delrhea Byrge—Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti  
Jimmy Huffman – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

### Commissioners Absent:

Alex Pettit – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti, excused  
James Chesnut – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti, excused  
Jeff Muir – Washtenaw County, City of Ypsilanti

### Staff Present:

Christopher Jacobs, Community Development Manager

## ELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIR

Commissioner Ratzlaff moved to elect Commissioner Szumko as this meeting's chair. Commissioner Byrge seconded. Roll call vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Huffman (second: Ratzlaff) moved to approve the agenda.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**--none

**PUBLIC HEARING**—none

**OLD BUSINESS**

## **408 N Huron**

*\*Rebuilding a foundation wall*

Applicant: Thomas McKee, applicant, present.

Staff Report: Per packet.

Discussion: Applicant: Doing foundation work, old stone foundation. Prior owner added a Michigan basement. Original stone foundation only went 18" deep. Homeowner and contractor discovered this fact when they started their repair. Because of that instability, what was going to be a repair became work because much of the foundation on that south side then crumbled/collapsed. Only the south side is being discussed now. Homeowner believes the other walls are fine. Contractor told homeowner that the stone is unsalvageable and concrete block is the only viable material option for the foundation work. Commissioner noted that staff report states that proposal is inappropriate and outside of the Standards and Guidelines and commission had a brief discussion regarding what exactly is inappropriate—it is appropriate to best support the building, and some conversation about the Standards and a wood window vs a vinyl window vs a glass block window below grade. Conversation about the fact that the notice to proceed was recommended by staff because the historic foundation materials and basement window are being replaced, out of necessity.

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Szumko) moved to issue a notice to proceed for the rebuilding of the stone foundation wall with concrete block and modern glass block basement windows as proposed because the work began as a repair and became an emergency replacement, and an inadequate foundation wall could be viewed as a hazard to the safety of the occupants.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

## **421 N Adams**

*\*Remove asphalt siding, repair and paint wood once exposed*

Applicant: Applicant present. Confirmed proposal. Commissioner confirmed that the colors are from Sherwin Williams' historic palette—applicant confirmed.

Staff Report: Per packet.

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Byrge) moved to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the work proposed at 421 N Adams (Application PHDC 22 0072) to remove asphalt siding and repair, caulk, prime, and paint the revealed historic wood siding, with the conditions that horizontal joints between boards will not be caulked and that a powerwasher or other harsh cleaning or stripping agents will not be used.

Relevant Secretary of the Interior's Standards:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

### **513 N River**

*\*New shed and patio.*

Discussion: Szumko explained that he must recuse himself from this vote.

Motion: Szumko moved to postpone this item until the next meeting because quorum is lost without his participation. Ratzlaff seconded.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **5 and 7 S Washington**

*\*New awning covers on existing frames*

Applicant: Applicant present.

Staff Report: Per packet. Commissioner Szumko read the staff review into the minutes and requested discussion. Hearing none, requested a motion.

Motion: Huffman (second: Ratzlaff) moved to issue a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed awning recovering in slate canvas at 5 and 7 S Washington, with writing only on the valance and no lighting under or on the awning. The proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

#### **305 E Forest**

*\*Re-side non-contributing house in vinyl siding*

Applicant: Applicants present. Confirmed their proposal.

Staff Report: Per the packet.

Discussion: Applicants described how the house is non-contributing and its immediate neighbors are non-contributing also. Also described that many of the immediate neighbors have also been re-sided. Most in aluminum, some in vinyl. Commissioner clarified that this house is in the historic district

but is non contributing to the district. Applicant further clarified that the home does not contribute to the district because its date of construction was outside of the period of significance for the district, it relates more to the homes in the neighborhood immediately to the north, and it is on the very edge of this district. Staff stated that the main question of this application is, is the wood siding beyond repair and, if it is, is vinyl an acceptable substitute in this case? Commissioner clarified that siding will be smooth, applicant confirmed. Another commissioner asked about condition of wood siding. Applicant confirmed that the nails are splitting all the wood, the contractor stated that all boards would have to be replaced, and applicant reiterated that the previous owners who removed the aluminum siding without a permit and did not do anything to repair or prepare the wood siding properly for paint. Commissioner asked what the contractor would do to protect the wood under the proposed vinyl siding? What would proper insulation look like in this case? Commissioner explained that these nails that have been exposed were not meant to have been exposed so can't be painted over. Some discussion about construction of the house and the damage the house has. Commissioner referred to page 89 of the meeting packet as helpful information the commission can use. Discussed how the size of the proposed vinyl will match what's on the house now.

Motion: Ratzlaff (second: Huffman) moved to issue a notice to proceed for the work proposed in Application PHDC 22-0076 at 305 E Forest for the installation of 7-inch vinyl siding over the 7-inch wood siding on the house and garage because requiring the applicants to maintain and preserve the wood siding on this noncontributing house in this location among several non-contributing and re-sided houses at the edge of the historic district would cause an undue financial hardship. The siding must be smooth siding and not "wood grained."

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous. Motion carried.

## **STUDY ITEM**

### **401/407 N Huron**

Property owner: Museum director of operations Dave Egeler attended and reminded commission where this study item is (has been a study item at a previous meeting): newer, non-historic, non-contributing building—apartments behind the historic firehouse museum. Not ALL of these windows need to be replaced, but are looking at replacing all anyway to reset the clock on the next maintenance cycle/product lifecycle. Some of the sashes no longer fit properly in their openings because the building settled. Aluminum-clad wood windows are what are currently in the window openings now. Has looked into aluminum-clad wood but also would like to look at vinyl since the building is non contributing and there would be a \$30,000 cost savings.

At the last meeting when this issue was a study item, the commission had requested a couple more pieces of information: sample of product (he brought one but noted the actual product would be a beige or sandstone color and not white), and measurements showing current glass surface vs proposed glass surface (he emailed that to staff and staff included it in packet).

Staff had also received questions from a commissioner after the last meeting, and staff shared those with Dave so he could be thinking about these ahead of the meeting on 8/23. These questions were (summarized):

- 1) If the claim is that vinyl windows are now better than previous generations of vinyl windows, please bring supporting documentation.
- 2) If the claim is that it is difficult to get contractors to install windows, please bring documentation that shows the efforts that have been made to secure contractors and the lack of response.
- 3) If cost will be a factor in the discussion, please bring documentation showing the cost of several window options.
- 4) If building settling has occurred and contributed to the deterioration of the existing windows, but will not impact new window replacements, please bring documentation that supports this.

For the first question, he provided links to two articles. For the second, he provided his notes documenting companies/installers he called and documenting their responses. For the third, he provided a spreadsheet of products the Museum has considered and the costs of them based on estimates received. Dave did not seem to address the fourth question.

There was some discussion of costs and finances. Dave explained that for 38 windows, vinyl provides a savings of \$30,000 over total project; for nonprofit, a significant amount of money. With expensive options, the nonprofit would be underwriting apartments instead of the other way around. They (the Museum) are charging \$1300 for a two-bedroom apartment with garage, which is way below market rate. The organization needs to look at rental rates, they know that that is significantly below market rate, and they strive to keep costs down. Could phase job so that they replace only the ones that must be replaced and wait for the others to fail and then replace those when necessary. He'd really rather replace all at once. He spoke about talking with Ellen (preservation planner) about how the commission tends not to approve vinyl. He is suggesting it may be a way to help address costs. A couple apartments face Huron but many face the alley. Staff offered a clarification that when we are looking at finances and hardship, we aren't looking at individual applicants and their finances—instead, we are looking at the building/project and comparing the costs of the various options and that building/project and it has to be shown that for that building or project, these options are not feasible because of material/installation costs etc. It's not so much about the personal or organizational finances but instead it's about the building or project and its feasibility.

Some windows face Huron but most face the alley. Commissioner suggested submitting two different applications—one for the more public-facing windows and one for the secondary façade(s) because the commission approves or denies whole applications. Dave mentioned that if they approve two different window types on the building (some on one façade, some on another), there could be a color difference.

Commission suggested that since a couple commissioners are missing who have significant experience and institutional knowledge, the commission directs staff to reach out to those absent commissioners to get their feedback on this study item so that their feedback can be noted and

conveyed to Dave and so this conversation doesn't need to be had all over again when those commissioners return. Staff will do this.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**

None

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **1. Property Monitoring**

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

**2. Updates from Staff** – an update that a past decision is being appealed.

### **3. Commissioner Comments**

## **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**-none

## **HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS**

### **Approval of the Minutes of August 9, 2022**

Motion: Szumko (second: Ratzlaff) moved to approve the minutes of August 9, 2022, as submitted.

Approval: Voice vote. Unanimous  
Motion carried.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:50 p.m.**