Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, July 11, 2019
TIME: 5:30 pm-7:00pm
PLACE: Eastern County Government Center
Office of Community & Economic Development- 2nd floor
415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI

Call to Order
• Chair Ralph called the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting to order at 5:30 PM

Roll Call
• Secretary Smith conducted roll call:
  o Commissioners present: Alec Jerome, James Mann, Alice Ralph, Patti Smith, Katie Remensnyder, Peter Kelley, Blake Swihart, Matthew Cook
  o Commissioners absent with notice: Leslie Pinney
  o Staff present: Melinda Schmidt

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting:
Chair Ralph had no voice, so delegated chair duties to vice-chair Jerome. Vice-chair Jerome asked if there were any corrections to the agenda. Staff requested Conant Farm be added to the Local Historic Districts section of the agenda.

Commissioner Kelley motioned to add Conant Farm to the Local Historic Districts section of the agenda. Commissioner Swihart seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Vice-chair Jerome called the agenda to a vote. The agenda passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting: May 2, 2019:
Vice-chair Jerome noted the May minutes were accidentally left out of the packet, and stated the May minutes will be approved at the September meeting.

Citizen Participation: none

Commissioner follow-up to citizen participation: none

Application Reviews:
4063 E. Huron River Drive
• Vice-chair Jerome called the 4063 E. Huron River Drive Application hearing to order.
• Staff reviewed the application and summarized the proposed work, which includes a flat system installed correctly using black EPDM rubber and new metal trim that would be a slightly different color as close to the current trim. The current trim was custom painted and new trim would be just a base metal color. The new metal color will be as close to the original as possible.
• Chair Ralph clarified the metal trim will be painted.
• Commissioner Kelley moved to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application for a roof replacement at 4063 E Huron River Drive as submitted with pictures, which includes a flat roof system using black EPDM rubber,
new flashing, and new metal trim as close in color to the original trim as possible; based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation 6 and 9.

- Commissioner Mann seconded the motion.
- Commissioner Swihart moved a friendly amendment to amend the motion to read: approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application for a roof replacement at 4063 E Huron River Drive as submitted with pictures, which includes a flat roof system using black EPDM rubber, new flashing, and new coated metal trim as close in color to the original trim as possible; based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation 6 and 9, with the condition that the new trim color from the standard palate is approved by Washtenaw County Historic District Commission Staff prior to installation.
- The motion was passed unanimously.

Business and Reports:

Staff Report
Staff Melinda Schmidt updated the Commission on the following items:

- Local Historic Districts Updates
  - Annual Audit: Staff has started the annual audit process. Staff will present the findings of the audit at a September Board of Commissioners Working Session.
  - Conant Farm: Conant Farm property owners requested that the HDC visit the farm prior to any applications filed. They would like to give a tour of the property, explain their vision for the farm, and discuss the difficulties they are facing as they plan rehabilitation of the many buildings on the property. Specifically, they are having trouble finding available and affordable tradesmen and contractors to lift one of the houses and fix the foundation, finding drainage solutions, and utilizing the buildings as they are. Commissioners agreed visiting Conant Farm would be helpful and support the property owners, and requested specific questions and issue be disseminated before the visit. Staff will send out a poll to establish a visit date in late August, and post the special meeting.

- Programming and Promotional Updates
  - Staff distributed promotional brochures to the HDC. Commissioner discussed placing them in township offices, real estate offices, and at local historical societies.
  - Tours: Staff reminded commissioners of the heritage tours postcards available to distribute at local historical and cultural events. Please notify staff if you want some postcards for an event.
  - Washtenaw County Consortium: The Consortium is preparing to promote events county-wide related to the Women’s Suffrage centennial. If you would like to add to the event calendar, notify staff.

- CLG Updates
  - Washtenaw County, in partnership with Northfield Township Historical Society, received a CLG grant to complete the reconnaissance level survey of Northfield Township. The project will start in August and continue through September 2020.

- Items for Consideration of Adoption or Approval by Commission
  - Staff Approval: Staff and several commissioner attended an MHPN workshop for HDCs in early May. At that training, MHPN suggested HDCs create a resolution defining and approving staff approval in order to expedite some applications. MHPN provided a suggested template for the resolution, which staff edited for the WCHDC’s unique situation. Staff suggests administrative approval for changes to a structure or property that do not significantly impact the site layout or design of a building and provided a draft for commissioners.
    - Commissioner Remensnyder consisted this useful, and recommended striking “or installment” from number 9.
    - Commissioner Ralph recommended adding “dimensions” to numbers 5 and 8.
    - Commissioner Swihart recommended changing “professional” to “certified” on number 7.
- Commissioner Jerome recommended adding “profiles” to number 12.
- Commissioners requested an additional whereas clause that stipulates staff post the application publicly and share with the commission two weeks prior to an expected decision.
- Staff will revise the resolution for the September HDC meeting.

  Site Visit Subcommittee: At the May WCHDC meeting, commissioners expressed interested in creating a site visit sub-committee to join staff at site visits for COA applications. The sub-committee would visit the site and report their findings to the HDC during the application hearing, but cannot discuss any opinion of decision at the site visit or anyplace outside of the application hearing.
  - Commissioner Jerome added that the deliberation during the last COA hearing would have benefitted from a site visit.
  - Commissioner Cook suggested three commissioners serve on the subcommittee.
  - Commissioner Jerome suggested commissioners rotate their service on the subcommittee.
  - Commissioner Ralph noted the rotating subcommittee should take advantage of expertise.
  - Commissioner Jerome moved to create an ad-hoc review subcommittee for application site visits.
  - Commissioner Ralph seconded the motion, and amended to request staff flesh out a resolution creating the subcommittee for the September meeting.
  - The motion passed unanimously.

- Demolition permit: Staff suggested including a public hearing as part of the demolition permit process. Staff has drafted an additional section in the Guidelines for the Consideration of Applications for the Demolition of Structures within Washtenaw County Local Historic Districts. The additional section, entitled “Application Consideration Process,” was approved by commissioners, who considered it an opportunity for the public, including neighbors, to express their thoughts.

  Treasurer Report: none

  Other Reports: (committees, other) none

  Items for Discussion:
  - Potential Projects and Commissioner Updates
    Commissioner Smith discussed the Women’s Suffrage in Washtenaw County Tour idea. Historical tours have been successful in Ann Arbor, and she is interested to doing one in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor regarding women’s suffrage. She noted the tour needs to be sensitive to those who did not gain the right to vote at the time of the amendment as well. Commissioner Mann noted that Sojourner Truth spoke for suffrage in Ypsilanti. Commissioner Kelley suggested including worker discrimination against women in Washtenaw County. Commissioner Ralph suggested including Gordon Hall because of its connection to feminist Katherine Dexter McCormick.

  Adjournment: Commissioner Smith motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:33pm. Commissioner Mann seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The next HDC meeting is scheduled for September 5, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at Eastern County Government Center Office of Community & Economic Development 2nd floor 415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI