

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
Education Committee
March 25, 2013 Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Room 215, 7:30 pm**

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Christina Morris, Joerg Albrecht, Frank Heitzman, Rosanne McGrath, Drew Niermann, Gary Palese
ABSENT: Regina Nally
OTHER: Liz Holt
STAFF: Douglas Kaarre, Urban Planner

MINUTES

Motion by Heitzman to approve the January 28, 2013 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Palese. Motion approved 5-0.

AYE: Albrecht, Heitman, McGrath, Niermann, Palese

NAY: None

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Historic Windows: Continued discussion of window preservation policies

The Committee continued a discussion begun at the January 10 HPC meeting regarding the interpretation of the window policies regarding Advisory Review v. Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Review. The current interpretation of the policy decided by the HPC approximately 10 years ago is that replacing windows does not meet the definition of demolition, and therefore falls under Advisory Review in the preservation ordinance.

The current HPC members have expressed an interest in discussing this interpretation as many current members believe that window replacement meets the definition of demolition in the preservation ordinance and should require a COA review. Staff noted that various window permits are submitted, from the replacement of a few windows to an entire building.

Chair Morris arrived at the meeting.

Commissioner Albrecht stated that he agrees that window replacement is demolition, but many windows do have life spans and may need to be replaced at some point.

Commissioner Heitzman did not agree, and felt that historic windows can always be repaired and should be.

Commissioner McGrath stated that they need to define when window replacement is demolition – is it based on the number of windows proposed, or whether the appearance or material is being changed? The HPC currently considers the removal of historic siding or roofing as demolition, so she doesn't see why windows would be judged any differently. The inconsistency of the preservation ordinance is not fair to owners. Currently, if an application involves demolition, such as an addition, and windows are being replaced, it falls under the COA. If there is no addition, window replacement is advisory. It is not consistent.

Commissioner Palese stated that his condo building at 175-181 Linden deliberately sought Historic Landmark status so they could ensure that only casement windows would be installed. The building originally had casement windows, and they were all replaced by sliding windows in the 1970s, and

needed replacement again. The condo board wanted to make sure the architecturally correct window types were installed, and so became a Historic Landmark.

Chair Morris noted that it's not always easy to prove what the original windows were, if they were replaced in the past.

Planner Kaarre noted that the Guidelines state in those cases the new windows should be “*typical to the period of significance of the building.*” He then read the definition of demolition found in the preservation ordinance and Architectural Review Guidelines:

Demolition: The razing or destruction, whether entirely or in significant part of a building, structure, site or object. Demolition includes the removal of a building, structure or object from its site or the removal or destruction of its façade or surface.

Commissioner McGrath stated that windows are an important character-defining feature of any building, and their replacement is not any different than replacing siding or roofing. It should be considered demolition and require a COA, regardless of whether replacement is approved.

Commissioner Albrecht agreed, but said they need to be prepared to sell window repair to property owners. The change in interpretation may upset a lot of people.

Commissioner McGrath stated that the interpretation now is inconsistent. The change would make enforcement of the Guidelines more consistent, which is important, and which property owners should want to see.

Commissioner Heitzman stated that there are many people who would agree with the HPC that windows should be repaired and preserved.

Chair Morris agreed, but said there would likely be twice as many who would not. There is a perception issue they will have to deal with, and they should be prepared on how to respond.

Commissioner McGrath stated that although she feels replacing windows is demolition and should require a COA, she is not saying that the HPC shouldn't allow window replacement in some cases. She knows it may be the most appropriate solution in some cases. But the COA review is required to make sure that case is being made.

Commissioner Palese stated that any window replacement should require a COA. It affects the “façade or surface” as noted in the definition of demolition. Storm windows are also an issue. Many people hate to use them.

Commissioner Niermann stated that as a contractor he sees many people replacing their windows because they want their windows to be energy efficient and their old windows are drafty. Although window repair with storms makes older windows more energy efficient and less drafty, these are the biggest issues with most people.

Commissioner Palese stated that Fenwick High School is a good example. They wanted to know what their R-value (energy efficiency) was if they were to repair their existing casement windows. It's important that the HPC helps people understand what that would be.

Chair Morris asked how the HPC would deal with permits to replace one window, a certain number of windows, or a percentage of the façade. Then they need to consider how to sell the change in interpretation. It would be helpful to get the support of the Environment and Energy Commission (EEC).

Commissioner Heitzman stated that the EEC would support the HPC on this. They would not want old windows in the landfill or the continued use of plastic windows.

Chair Morris stated that IHPA allows the use of aluminum-clad wood replacement windows in Tax Freeze projects.

Planner Kaarre noted that the current Guidelines also allow window replacement under certain conditions:

- a) That the windows are not decorative windows;
- b) That window repair is technically infeasible;
- c) And that the replacement windows match appearance, operation, size, glass configuration, etc.

Decorative windows are defined as: *Historic windows that possess special architectural value, or contribute to the building's historic, cultural, or aesthetic character. Decorative windows are those with leaded glass, art glass, stained glass, beveled glass, prismatic glass, Luxfer prisms, or specially shaped windows such as lancet, round-arched, oriel, or Palladian windows.*

Technically Infeasible is defined as: *Not possible to accomplish something due to substantial additional cost in comparison to approved alternative methods that meet these guidelines.*

He noted that the HPC's previous interpretation that window replacement was an Advisory Review did not include decorative windows because of the above definition and guidelines.

There was consensus among the Committee that window replacement (no matter how many are being proposed) visible from the street meets the definition of demolition and requires a COA.

Chair Morris provided an overview of the Fenwick High School proposal to replace all of their steel casement windows. The HPC basically made them go through a COA process, as they were requested to show that they had looked at repair and that the replacement windows matched the historic windows as closely as possible. Fenwick was very cooperative and wanted to do the right thing. They did not feel that they would get what they needed by repairing the original windows (energy efficiency, better climate control, lead abatement) and that repair would be more expensive due to lead abatement. Their proposed replacement windows, although aluminum, will match very closely in appearance to the historic windows.

Commissioner Heitzman disagreed with the Fenwick proposal, and felt that they should not be allowed to replace their original historic windows, which are a large character-defining feature of the building. They could achieve all of their goals through window repair.

Liz Holt asked how the HPC would deal with an application from an owner to replace one window vs. an entire building.

Commissioner McGrath stated that they need to create easy to understand policies.

Chair Morris stated that the policies should ensure consistency of reviews, whether replace one window or one hundred. There are likely many instances where Staff can approve applications.

Planner Kaarre noted that this change in interpretation would only apply to windows that are visible from the street in Contributing Resources in historic districts. It already applies to Historic Landmarks and government-funded projects.

Commissioner McGrath stated that this policy is not really new, as the Guidelines reinforce the idea, it is just that enforcement has been inconsistent and will now be consistent.

Chair Morris reiterated that they need to be cognizant of public perception.

There was consensus of the Committee that the Window Policy in the Guidelines should include a submittal requirement checklist similar to the one found in the Roofing Policy of the Guidelines, which includes estimates for repair vs. replacement showing that repair is not economical.

Commissioner McGrath stated that her past clients have never been asked to provide window estimates, so she can't predict the reaction. However, her past clients have always wanted to do the right thing.

Chair Morris stated that they need to make sure applicants have options, such as repair, storm windows, interior storm windows, replacement of sash only, full replacement, etc.

Planner Kaarre recommended incorporating this change into the new Window Policy of the Guidelines and phase it in with the approval of the revised Guidelines. State in the new Guidelines that the policy is clearer and more consistent, only deals with windows visible from the street, and provides the checklist of submittal requirements and options.

The Committee agreed that phasing the change in with the approval of the revised Guidelines was a good idea. They also agreed they should get a statement of support from the EEC and full approval from the HPC at the April 11 meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Realtor Training Workshop: Chair Morris noted that a preservation workshop for local realtors will be held on April 5. Karen Doty has organized the training through the Oak Park Area Association of Realtors. Chris Morris, Doug Kaarre will discuss Oak Park's preservation program and guidelines, and Anthony Rubano from IHPA will discuss the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program.

ADJOURN

Motion by Albrecht to adjourn. Second by Niermann. Motion approved: 6-0.

AYE: Albrecht, Heitzman, McGrath, Niermann, Palese, Morris

NAY: None

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m. Minutes prepared Douglas Kaarre.

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