

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
July 11, 2019 - Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers, 7:30 pm**

Roll Call

Present: Chair Christopher Payne and Commissioners Jennifer Bridge, Sandra Carr, Rebecca Houze, Laura Jordahl, Aleksandra Tadic, David Sokol, and Noel Weidner
Absent: Commissioners Tom Abrahamson, Lou Garapolo, and Darrick Gurski
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner
Attorney: Gregory Smith, Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins

Chair Payne announced that there are speaker forms in the back for both agenda and non-agenda public comment. Speakers will be called up at the appropriate time.

Agenda Approval

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Tadic; Motion approved 8-0.

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Bridge to approve draft minutes for June 13, 2019; Second by Commissioner Jordahl; Motion approved 8-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. HPC2019-40: 333 N Oak Park Ave (Liz and Seth Franz):** Certificate of Appropriateness to renovate front porch (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District). The applicant attended the Architectural Review Committee meeting on June 26, 2019.

Chair Payne introduced the application and Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Frank Heitzman, the architect, and Liz Franz, the homeowner, were present. Mr. Heitzman gave a presentation, providing the history of 333 N Oak Park Ave. He explained the history of the Shingle style in Oak Park as well as the history of applying the Prairie style to non-Prairie style houses in the early 19th century. He explained the two schemes provided: Scheme A moves the porch back towards the Shingle style and Scheme B continues the Prairie style look. He said the porch is out of character with the house and in Scheme B, while the columns look similar to the historic columns, he proposes to make them slightly smaller.

Motion by Commissioner Jordahl to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Weidner.

Chair Payne said the ARC raised the point that if the porch is historic, it should be repaired and maintained rather than creating a third version of the porch. Commissioner Jordahl said an effort should be made to maintaining the existing porch and asked about its condition. Mr. Heitzman explained that the stairs have rotted and the structure needs to be rebuilt. The ceiling will be maintained; they plan to strip and stain it. He said the balusters are 2 x 2's and not milled, so were probably added later, and the columns are ok but are over-scaled. He confirmed that the columns are square and tapered.

Commissioner Houze asked if they have considered going back to the 1890s version of the porch. Mr. Heitzman said they prefer the size of the current porch. Ms. Franz said the door has also been moved. Chair Payne noted that Scheme A is not returning the porch to its original appearance, but creating a new history. The applicant should either maintain the existing porch or reconstruct the 1890s porch. The discussion of details, like the size of the columns, is more debatable.

Commissioner Jordahl said that the Architectural Review Guidelines state that new porches should be “similar” to historic porches so there is some flexibility. The Prairie style is predominant at this point and should be maintained.

Commissioner Weidner said he agrees with the ARC and the porch is historic. Shrinking the columns is ok. Scheme B follows the Architectural Review Guidelines. Commissioner Carr agreed that Scheme B is appropriate and Scheme A would have a better argument if it looked more like the original, including shingled knee walls. Commissioner Tadic agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Houze to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness to renovate the porch with the condition that the applicant use Scheme B as presented. Second by Commissioner Weidner. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Jordahl, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Tadic, Commissioner Weidner, and Chair Payne

NAY: None

- B. HPC2019-41: 427 N Euclid Ave (Peter and Kate Gancer):** Certificate of Appropriateness to remove windows over the porch on the south wall, restoring elevation similar to original design (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District). The COA was approved by the HPC in October 2016 with conditions and must be re-approved.

Chair Payne introduced the application and Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Pat Magner, the architect, was present. Mr. Magner said that the current owners purchased the house after the porch had been enclosed but the original drawings show it open. The plan is to pull the wall back and remove the windows that are now enclosing the porch space.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Tadic.

Commissioner Sokol said the plan is a good one. Chair Payne noted that he approves of the project.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Houze. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Jordahl, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Tadic, Commissioner Weidner, and Chair Payne

NAY: None

- C. HPC2019-42: 310 N Grove Ave (Byron and Audrey Lee):** Certificate of Appropriateness for a dormer addition to accommodate an interior attic renovation (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Payne introduced the application and Planner Trexler gave an overview. Planner Trexler recommended, based on the Architectural Review Guidelines, that the Commission consider recommending a hip or clipped gable roof to match the house and existing dormer. Planner Trexler also recommended that the front of the three skylights is likely visible from the street so may not meet the Architectural Review Guidelines.

Jon Pimentel, the project manager, and Candy Scott, of Mood Design + Build were present. Mr. Pimentel said that the project is an attic addition and they are willing to incorporate the recommendation that the roof of the dormer be altered to a hip roof.

Motion by Commissioner Jordahl to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Tadic.

Commissioner Sokol asked if the applicant is willing to remove the first skylight from the plans. Mr. Pimentel agreed that they would.

Planner Trexler asked the applicant if they have determined what siding they will use on the dormer. Ms. Scott said they propose using Hardie plank. She said it is difficult to match stucco and the dormer will be set back from the street. Chair Payne asked the Commission if they have concerns about the cladding. Commissioner Carr said she has no issues as long as the roof shape is changed. Chair Payne said that the Hardie plank will create contrast and make it visible that the dormer is an addition and not historic.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness to approve the project as proposed. Following discussion from the Commission, Commissioner Sokol amended the motion to specify two conditions: that they only create the two rear skylights (not the front) and that the dormer roof is changed to a hip roof. Second by Commissioner Weidner. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Jordahl, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Tadic, Commissioner Weidner, and Chair Payne

NAY: None

- D. HPC2019-45: 527 Woodbine Ave (527 Woodbine LLC):** Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition and replacement of historic garage, building a rear addition, and replacing an exterior door on the side elevation (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Payne introduced the application and Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Jon Pimentel, the project manager, and John Masterson, the owner and contractor, were present. Mr. Masterson said that they took the garage down as they didn't know was needed. The previous owner had been told the garage was unsafe to use. They demolished it for safety reasons. The new garage will be set farther back so will be less visible. Mr. Masterson also discussed the windows and said they plan to keep all front windows as close to existing as possible.

Motion by Commissioner Weidner to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Carr.

Commissioner Jordahl asked when the garage was demolished and if they had a permit. Mr. Masterson said the garage was demolished after the architects photographed it. They understood that they had a permit, which he indicated was a permit for interior demolition on the house.

Commissioner Carr indicated that the addition should be differentiated but she didn't know how. Chair Payne said in the past the Commission has approved a reveal for stucco buildings. Commissioner Sokol agreed this would be appropriate and said he does not have any issues with the proposed garage setback.

Commissioner Weider said he approves of the addition and confirmed with Mr. Pimentel that the roof height and style will be the same as the existing house. He asked about the windows and Mr. Pimentel said that one window will be removed. Commissioner Weidner said windows and doors should match historic. Mr. Masterson explained that the side door is not original and they are concerned about glass on that door, but indicated that otherwise, they will select doors appropriate for the historic house. Commissioner Weidner said staff should approve the final doors and windows. Chair Payne said staff should also provide final review of the reveal. The Commission expressed agreement.

Motion by Commissioner Jordahl to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed with the condition that staff approve the final doors, windows, and reveal. Second by Commissioner Weidner. Motion approved 8-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Jordahl, Commissioner Sokol, Commissioner Tadic, Commissioner Weidner, and Chair Payne

NAY: None

- E. HPC2019-43: 931 Chicago Ave (Frank Lloyd Wright Trust):** Certificate of Appropriateness to remove additions on the east and south elevations diminish footprint and allow for visitor flow (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Payne outlined the process. He said that the public will be given the opportunity to speak following the property owner. The public will be given three minutes each. The Commission will discuss the project at 931 Chicago Ave first and 925 Chicago Ave second. He said that review of the new design is not under the purview of the Commission at this stage.

Celeste Adams, President & CEO of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, and Karen Sweeney, Preservation Architect and Facility Director at the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, were present. Ms. Adams gave a PowerPoint presentation and explained the overall plan of the Trust. She said they plan to build a new visitor and education center and return 931 Chicago Ave to the Civil War era. She said the Trust has been at this site for 45 years and currently has around 500 volunteers and 90,000 visitors annually. Their purpose is to teach about Frank Lloyd Wright.

Ms. Adams said that the proposed new education center will open up the site and make it welcoming. It will enable the garage of the Home & Studio to become a gallery and 931 Chicago Ave will become a library. Demolition of 925 Chicago Ave is the last resort of the Trust. She said the Trust found they cannot reuse the house due to ADA access and found rear additions to be inappropriate for the site. She said that the tourists will be directed into the Village for services such as food. She noted that in life nothing stands still and the Trust believes it is time to look forward with a non-intrusive design to fulfill their mission.

Lisa DiChiera, from Landmarks Illinois, said that 931 Chicago Ave is one of the oldest houses in Oak Park. The east wing appears to have been added prior to Frank Lloyd Wright's living next door and the south addition appears to have been built by 1905, possibly by Wright. She said this is a contributing property including the additions and returning the house to 1865 is not appropriate.

Doug Gilbert, 220 S Maple, said he will speak to both addresses. He supports the Trusts goals but objects to demolition and partial demolition. He asked that the Commission look closely at the additions and said the Sanborn maps clearly indicate that the east wing was present by 1905. With elements like the bay window, it is hard to imagine Wright was not involved. He said that 925 Chicago Ave is a contributing building that was built prior to Frank Lloyd Wright. There are very few of this house type left. He said the proposal has an extreme adverse effect and he is concerned about the precedent this would set.

Pablo Garcia, of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and 938 Chicago Ave, said that he supports this project. The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust is offering a real gift to Oak Park.

Richard Katz, 711 Clarence, said he supports the proposal. He is a Community Design Commission member and a Frank Lloyd Wright Trust interpreter. The project is a necessity and he hopes the house is successfully moved. Reuse does not make sense in this case.

Mike Poirier, 308 N Elmwood, said he supports the overall plan. He said that historic preservation is important to him and he lives in a historic house. He asked which furthers the cause of historic preservation.

Ms. Adams responded to the comments by stating that 925 Chicago and 931 Chicago Ave were confused in an article and 931 Chicago Ave is the Civil War era house. 925 Chicago Ave was noted as "not significant." She restated that the demolition is a last resort and the Trust has identified a moving option. She addressed the dates of the houses, stating that it is unclear if 925 Chicago Ave existed when Frank Lloyd Wright lived next door and encouraged the Commission to stay with the facts, which are the building footprints.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Carr.

Commissioner Tadic said she understands the visitor and education center is needed but struggles with the move and demolition proposal. Commissioner Jordahl asked if the demolition [of the additions of 931 Chicago Ave] is to increase green space. Ms. Adams said it will allow for circulation and a more park-like setting. It will return the house to ca. 1865 and tell the story of the beginning of Oak Park. She said the Trust does not tell the story of Wright's mother and the integrity of the house is more important. Any additions compromise the integrity.

Commissioner Weidner said he is opposed to the Certificate of Appropriateness as presented. He said the additions are within the period of significance. He recommended more discussions with the Architectural Review Committee. Commissioners Tadic and Carr agreed. Ms. Sweeney said the original portion of the building is identifiable because it has different framing, but they don't know where the original fenestration was. She said the additions appear to be layers of porches that were enclosed.

The Commission took no action.

- F. HPC2019-44: 925 Chicago Ave (Frank Lloyd Wright Trust):** Certificate of Appropriateness to move or demolish the house at 925 Chicago Ave (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

The applicant did not have additional comments. The public was invited to comment.

Frank Lipo, Executive Director of the Oak Park-River Forest Historical Society, said that a lot is not known. There are opportunities to work with the Historic Preservation Commission and the community. He urged the Commission to take no action.

Patrick Loughran said he is a life-long resident of Oak Park and community is important. He said he is excited about the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust opportunity and has no connection to the Trust. He said Frank Lloyd Wright sat in front of boards with similar opposition and he is discouraged that this may be a missed opportunity.

Jean Smiling Coyote said she supports moving 925 Chicago Ave. She raised a concern about the old trees on the property which may be removed in either the demolition or the moving of the house. She also said historic brick pavers should be saved.

Lisa DiChiera, from Landmarks Illinois, said she opposes demolition. She said she understands education but demolition sets a bad precedent and moving should be a last resort. 925 Chicago Ave is a contributing building within the historic district whether or not it was built prior to Frank Lloyd Wright's living down the street. Incorporation and reuse are a responsibility of the Trust, and the space behind the house should be used for any new construction. The Commission has denied previous demolition requests and this demolition would be unprecedented.

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Jordahl.

Commissioner Sokol said that moving should be a last resort. He noted that the second Hemingway house was successfully moved in the district. However, he doesn't feel that the alternatives have been fully considered.

Commissioner Weidner said the building is definitely contributing and is important to the context of the historic district. Commissioner Carr agreed and compared removing the house to removing a tooth within the street. On Trust walking tours, context is part of the educational experience.

Commissioner Tadic said the job of the Commission is to protect the historic fabric of the district. She said the Commission should take no action. Commissioner Houze said she does not support demolition and likely will not support moving. The Architectural Review Guidelines specifically address the importance of site. The house is a key part of the context in which Frank Lloyd Wright reacted and created his own designs. Removal of a house makes it more difficult to understand context. Commissioner Jordahl agreed and said the Commission is stewards of the historic districts. The house is a contributing building and the Commission must adhere to the Architectural Review Guidelines. Commissioner Bridge said she is sympathetic to the Trust's mission but demolition is not the way forward.

Chair Payne said the last three demolition requests have been near Oak Park Landmarks. The Commission has discussed this with each request. There is a Landmark in this case, as well. This is a opportunity to show modern adaptive reuse. He said the Ordinance does not allow demolition unless there is a safety issue.

The Commission took no action.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to adjourn. Second by Commissioner Weidner.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Urban Planner Historic Preservation.