

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
October 8, 2020 – Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:00 pm**

Roll Call

Present: Interim Chair Rebecca Houze and Commissioners Jennifer Bridge, Sandra Carr, Lou Garapolo, David Sokol, and Noel Weidner
Absent: Commissioner Chase
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner
Attorney: Greg Smith, Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins

Agenda Approval

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Sokol.
Motion approved 6-0.*

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to approve the minutes for September 10, 2020, with the edits mentioned. Second by Commissioner Bridge. Motion approved 6-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. Advisory Review: 201 S Humphrey (Betsy Leong):** Advisory Review for new garage to replace existing, non-historic garage (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

The applicant, Betsy Leong, was present. She explained the proposed “party door” to provide pedestrian access from the side. This door will not be used by cars. The new garage door will be located on the alley to meet Zoning requirements.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Bridge.

Commissioner Garapolo said the standards indicate that the garage should be compatible with the main house. He said he does not feel this is met. The roof and details should match the house. Ms. Leong said the colors and shingles will match the house. Commissioner Sokol said he hears what Commissioner Garapolo is saying but does not think the overhang on the garage has to match the overhang on the house, particularly as we do not know if the original garage had this feature.

Commissioner Weidner said the Commission usually asks that applicants to consider matching details from the house such as the roof type and deeper eaves. He agreed with Commissioner Garapolo. Chair Houze said this is a corner lot so attention to these details is important, but this garage appears appropriate.

Commissioner Weidner recommended considering narrow profile clapboard siding to match the house. Ms. Leong confirmed it will be 3- or 4-inch so should match the house.

- B. Advisory Review: 718 N Marion St (Andrew and Sara Riley):** Advisory Review to build a new garage, existing garage not historic (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Debra McQueen, the architect, was present on behalf of the applicant. She explained the project and said the garage will have a hip roof, in keeping with the other garages in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Garapolo asked about the siding on the house. Ms. McQueen said she believes it is cedar siding. Commissioner Garapolo asked how it will relate to the Hardie board proposed for the garage. This was discussed. Commissioner Garapolo said he approves of the overhang and roof pitch and has no additional comments.

Commissioner Carr agreed with Commissioner Garapolo and said she appreciates the extra attention to detail, such as the use of brackets.

The Commission discussed the siding in more detail. It was noted that the house has two different siding profiles. Ms. McQueen said she thinks it makes the most sense to match it to the rear of the house, since that is where the garage is located. As the garage is near the back of the lot, a discrepancy from the front of the house would be less noticeable.

- C. HPC2020-12: 241 S Scoville Ave (Caroline McLean):** Request to alter previously approved Certificate of Appropriateness to permit Hardie board siding on new garage (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Cary McLean and Brian Kusper, the homeowners, were present. Ms. McLean said Bob Lee (of Robert E. Lee & Sons), who demolished the historic garage, did not think it was built before 1950. She said there is no evidence the original garage was historic. She said the trim will be cedar but they are requesting Hardie board as it is maintenance-free and fire resistant. Mr. Kusper said they want to match the house as best as they can.

Motion made by Commissioner Sokol to open for discussion; Second by Commissioner Garapolo.

Commissioner Garapolo said based on the photo provided, the proposed material does not match the house and using the Hardie board would be a mistake. Ms. McLean said there are a lot of garages in their neighborhood that are drastically different from the houses.

Chair Houze asked for staff clarification on the date of construction. Planner Trexler said the historic permits were not available at the time this application was submitted as they were sent out to be digitized. As such, the construction date was based on the Sanborn maps and the garage design.

Commissioner Sokol asked if the photo shown represents the reveal proposed. Ms. McLean said the house has a 3" reveal and the Hardie board has a 4" reveal. She said the color in the photo is not representative of the color they will use. She said the reveal is slightly larger but the garage is 25 or 40 feet away from the house. Chair Houze asked why the Hardie board was requested. Ms. McLean said it is less cost, does not need to be repainted, is sustainable, and has a fire-retardant value. Chair

Houze said Hardie board does not match historical materials and has a different appearance. She noted that this is a corner lot. Commissioner Weidner said wood comes in a profile that matches the house and was previously approved. He said it doesn't look the same, no materials are maintenance-free, and he doesn't agree with the sustainability argument. He said it would not look how envisioned when previously approved.

Ms. McLean asked how they can determine the construction date of the garage. Commissioner Sokol said that is not what is before the Commission. He said he does not think Hardie board looks like wood and he is not inclined to approve this.

Attorney Smith noted that the applicant is asking about options to review the age of the garage. If the garage is found to not be historic, this would be an Advisory Review and not binding. He said he does not think the applicant has this information but could bring more information forward. Planner Trexler said the historic permits were returned to the Village last week and can be reviewed. If the garage is determined to not be historic, the applicant would have to come back for Advisory Review at the next Historic Preservation Commission meeting. Attorney Smith confirmed.

Commissioner Weidner said based on the photos, the garage looks historic. Chair Houze agreed and said she was particularly looking at the windows when assessing this. Commissioner Sokol said an effort should be made to clarify but this is changing the issue. He said there is nothing more to discuss until more information is provided on the construction date.

The Commission took no action.

D. HPC2020-29: 1118 Wenonah Ave (Floyd Mohler): Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish existing garage and build a new garage (Gunderson Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Floyd Mohler, the homeowner, was present. He said he feels he has met the requirements of the Commission and is available for questions based on these materials.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Carr.

Commissioner Garapolo said he walked down the alley and the street and the garage looks like it could be repaired. Chair Houze asked for Commissioner Garapolo's thoughts on the cost estimates. Commissioner Garapolo said everything has a cost and this property is a part of the historic district. Commissioner Weidner said it looks like just concrete and roof repair work, which does not equate to demolition in his opinion.

Mr. Mohler said he has provided professional opinions that replacement is required. He said the previous owner flipped the house and made it look better on the exterior but did not do repairs. He said the garage is rotting from the inside out. It would have to be lifted to be repaired. He explained what the contractors have told him about why repair would not be possible. Mr. Mohler said spoke to several contractors who wouldn't repair the garage due to liability associated with safety in lifting the garage.

The Commission reviewed the cost breakdown in more detail.

Chair Houze this is an interesting alley but this garage is in the center of the alley and is minimally visible. She said she feels the applicant has done due diligence is responding to requests. She said she prefers preservation but the difference in cost is apparent and she would vote to approve this application.

Attorney Smith said the staff memo and the Chair have stated that the garage is minimally visible. Additionally, the applicant has provided documented evidence stamped by a structural engineer showing that repair would be about 50% more than replacement. He recommended caution in setting this recommendation aside.

Commissioner Carr clarified with the Chair that they are considering visibility from the street only, not the alley. Chair Houze confirmed. Commissioner Carr said the Guidelines recommend replacing with like materials and the applicant is proposing vinyl siding. She said the previous applicant was held to wood siding. She said maybe this would make demolition and replacement more palatable. They should use the same standards used for the application in June.

Commissioner Bridge said the applicant has proven that the garage needs to be demolished but agreed with Commissioner Carr that the details of the proposed garage could be improved. Commissioner Garapolo agreed with Commissioner Carr's suggestion. Commissioner Bridge asked if the requirements for new construction would be binding and Planner Trexler confirmed that they would.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the garage demolition and new construction with the conditions that the new garage feature a gable roof and wood clapboard siding to match historic garage and house. Second by Commissioner Sokol. Motion approved 5-1.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Sokol, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: Commissioner Weidner

- E. Advisory Review: 835 Lake St (Michigan Avenue Real Estate Group):** Advisory Review of proposed new building in the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District and within 250 feet of Oak Park Landmark Unity Temple (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Interim Chair Houze introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She noted that the Commission is being asked to respond to the proposal based on two factors: as a new building in a historic district and as a new building within 250 feet of a Landmark, in this case, Unity Temple. She mentioned that both the Unity Temple Restoration Foundation and Wight & Company have reviewed the proposal.

Present on behalf of the applicant were: Jay Keller, architect; Dan Campbell, project manager; Tom Meador, developer; and John Schiess, expeditor. Jay Keller gave a presentation of the proposed building. He said that while it is six stories, the top story is stepped back so it will read more as a five-story building. He said the building will align with the adjacent buildings and will incorporate strong horizontals, which is an element seen commonly in the zone of influence. He said they have done sun studies for Unity Temple and Scoville Park. There will be no shadows and Unity Temple and only winter shadows on the park.

Chair Houze invited public comments. Planner Trexler said the Commission received three letters, all of which expressed concern about the design.

Greg Marsey, a member of the public, provided a presentation. He said he has been working with members of the Courtland Condominium Association Board; the President of the Association submitted a FOIA request and he will be referencing some documents included between Wight and Company and the developer's team. Mr. Marsey walked the Commission through the apparent design evolution, which resulted in a monochromatic color palette. He said the color of the building looks very similar to the color of Unity Temple, probably as a nod to Unity Temple. He said both elements adjacent are primarily masonry with some lighter elements. He recommended the Commission consider a color palette that more closely matches the buildings directly adjacent.

Wendy Greenhouse, a member of the public, provided a comment. Ms. Greenhouse said she lives in the neighborhood. She said the new design answers many of the objections raised in 2018 but the building appears to be out of scale for the site. She said she would like to see the size scaled back and would like the Commission in particular to address the color palette. She expressed concern that the developer is reluctant to revise the design.

Commissioner Sokol said he thinks that this design does not do any violence to the historic district or Unity Temple. He said the new design has addressed the issues of scale and shadows and he does not have any related concerns. He said the public comments were compelling and it would serve the area much better to have the modest change of the color palette to reflect the buildings flanking the proposed building.

Commissioner Weidner said he would like to reiterate the importance to protecting Unity Temple, including during construction. He said the scale and emphasis on horizontals are an improvement on the previous proposal. The setback is great and keeps it pedestrian-friendly. He said was concerned about the amount of glass and glares that might reflect on the park or Unity Temple but it sounds like the applicant has addressed this. He agreed with Commissioner Sokol that the public comments were compelling. He noted there are some different colors present, including the obsidian base and wood paneling on the balconies.

Commissioner Garapolo said he likes the building and agrees with the comments made about the color palette. He said he is concerned with the width of the building but the applicant said the setback on the east will be increased to 10 feet and that may help. He said the materials and height are compatible with the district and he likes the design. He asked for clarification on garage access from the alley.

Commissioner Carr said she was concerned with the setback on the east as the existing building on the east has little setback. She said the new building will have an impact on the sunlight for the building to the east. She said overall the building fits in with height and setback, and she approves of the design.

Commissioner Bridge said she agrees with the previous comments and overall it sounds like they are taking care in terms of scale and impacts. She said this is vast improvement over what was proposed before.

Chair Houze agreed and said she appreciates the limitation on the height but the scale seems massive in relationship to the neighboring buildings, which are much daintier and have a delicacy in architectural style. She said the comments on color make sense. She said it may be an issue of the rendering but the window frames look very bold and a little chaotic. She asked what will be on the

roof (roof gardens, solar panels) and said she likes to see Oak Park's history of progressive architecture continued.

Mr. Keller addressed the comments and questions. He said their intent was not to match Unity Temple, which is more of a gray compared to the proposed champagne color. He said the developer would be willing to alter the colors. He addressed the Commission's questions and discussed the setback, windows, and alley. He shared a traffic exhibit. He said operable windows have a thicker frame, which is indicated in the renderings. He said the roof will be decks for the top floor units.

Chair Houze asked about the target price-range and clientele. Mr. Meador said the intended clientele will be professionals in their mid-30s; this would be the last step before someone buys a house. Chair Houze said she likes to see new buildings contribute to the diversity of area.

OTHER BUSINESS

- The Commission discussed the current commission vacancies and the recent Village Board comment that the Commission should maybe be smaller. Chair Houze said there are four pending applications but the Village Board has not been putting these on the agenda over the last few months. The Commissioners agreed that the need for a certain number of architects for the Architectural Review Committee and to balance that and represent other groups means that a larger number of Commissioners is important. Commissioners expressed that they have found candidates and filling the Commission seems to be a procedural issue.
- Chair Houze said the Village Board heard the appeal for 203 S Marion St at their meeting on Monday. She provided a summary to the Commission of the decision. Several members of the Commission expressed concern that development and historic preservation have been handled as items that are necessarily separate but this is not the case.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Sokol to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Weidner. Motion approved 6-0.

AYE: Commissioner Bridge, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Weidner, Commissioner Sokol, and Interim Chair Houze

NAY: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:35PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.