

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
April 11, 2024 at 7:30PM – Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

Present: Chair Lou Garapolo and Commissioners Asha Andriana, David Bates, Monique Chase, Scot Mazur, Jessica Paul, Amy Peterson, and Ron Roman
Absent: Commissioner Mark Weiner
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner

Agenda Approval

Motion by Commissioner Roman to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Chase. Motion approved 8-0.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Roman to approve the minutes from March 14, 2024. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 8-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. Advisory Review: 233 S Euclid Ave (Sara Moskowitz):** Advisory Review of proposed new coach house to replace existing, non-historic garages (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Garapolo introduced the item. Planner Trexler provided a summary.

Chris Wollmuth, the architect, was present for the project. He said this is a coach house for in-laws. He said they picked up on some of the details of the house, including the vertical siding. He showed similar scale coach houses on the alley and said there is also a multi-story apartment building behind the house. The coach house will provide more privacy in the backyard.

Commissioner Roman asked about the walkway through the middle. Mr. Wollmuth said the homeowners like that features from a coach house down the block and it is similar to their current circulation path.

Commissioner Peterson said they've done a lovely job pulling elements from the house and asked how someone will know this is not historic. Mr. Wollmuth said details like the siding and windows are adapted and not used in exactly the same way. The archway is a new feature. Chair Garapolo asked about the patio and Mr. Wollmuth said it has a pergola.

Commissioner Chase asked about the use of windows at the garage level. Mr. Wollmuth said the south side will be more storage and a potting area will be in the turret, so they wanted light. On the north siding they didn't want blank walls.

The Commission discussed the turret. Commissioner Roman asked staff to explain conjectural features. Planner Trexler said they are historical elements that might not have existed originally, such as adding a cupola to an Italianate house that never had one. It creates a false sense of history. Chair Garapolo said he has concerns about the turret, though he knows there is one on the house. Mr. Wollmuth said it is part of the language of the home and is relating the two buildings.

Chair Garapolo said the intent of the Guidelines is there was never a turret on the garage. He asked if the functions would work without the turret. Mr. Wollmuth said it would be difficult. The first floor will be a potting area and the second floor a reading nook. It will get good morning and evening light. The shape came as much out of function as aesthetics. Chair Garapolo suggested using a more squared-off element like the front of the house. Commissioner Peterson said a boxier shape would be more appropriate.

Commissioner Paul said the garage looks modern enough that no one will think it's historic because it has a turret. A lot of Oak Park coach houses have a nod to the main house. She said she doesn't think it's conjectural. Commissioner Andriana said when she sees a turret, she thinks historic. The blocky part of the front of the house doesn't say a certain time period. Commissioner Roman said the turret on the front of the house also isn't as substantial. Chair Garapolo agreed and said it's more a segmented corner.

Chair Garapolo recommended the applicant look for a better solution. He said the Commission likes the windows.

B. 412 N Grove (Seth & Catherina Kaufman), Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District:

- a. **HPC2024-6:** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish historic garage.

Chair Garapolo introduced the item. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Chris Wollmuth, the architect, was present. He explained the photos show the stair-step cracks on all sides of the building. Some of the masonry units themselves are compromised, even in the middle. There has been some effort to re-tuckpoint. The tuckpointing itself has cracked. The homeowners have to reset the garage door every few years. He said he attended the Architectural Review Committee and they discussed finishing over the top of the masonry, but the worry is the building is moving. The only way to stabilize the building would be a new foundation and it may not be possible to support the building to do that. He said the garage doesn't relate to the house much. It doesn't have the same sizing and doesn't add a lot to the neighborhood. The homeowner doesn't want to invest in it.

Motion by Commissioner Roman to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Andriana.

Commissioner Roman asked if there's any alley and Mr. Wollmuth said no. He confirmed that the owners want to build a 3-car garage. Commissioner Roman asked if that's the driving factor, not that it's falling down, and Mr. Wollmuth confirmed. He said they park in it currently.

Commissioner Chase said this is the type of garage they want to preserve. She said she sees nothing that shows it must come down. It is historic and has character. Chair Garapolo said other homeowners have kept old garages and built a new one. He asked if this has been considered. Mr. Wollmuth said the difficulty is how they relate aesthetically. He said he doesn't

think they could find or would want to replicate the block. Chair Garapolo said it doesn't have to be block. He said it's a shame to lose this garage since it seems to still be functional. He said it's not required, but they typically ask for a 3rd party professional to give an opinion about the garage and how long of a life it has. The fact that it needs repair and maintenance is not a reason to tear it down. Mr. Wollmuth said it's beyond maintenance when physical stones are breaking. He said it won't last 10 years.

Commissioner Peterson said they can't tell the structural integrity from the photos. That's why they ask for structural engineer reports. Mr. Wollmuth explained the issues again and said he thought this was communicated by the photos. Commissioner Andriana said they don't typically make their decision based on photos. That is what they ask of others. Demolition of garages is taken seriously.

Chair Garapolo said they mentioned a solution might involve the foundation or maybe they can shore up the wall. These should be explored, including how much they will cost and what the process will be. Maybe doing that would save the garage. He also mentioned the possibility of building another structure next to it solve the problem of parking an additional car.

Mr. Wollmuth said the last time he got cost estimates was for a wood garage and it was \$60,000 for a new foundation. You would have to support the structure in place and excavate under. Commissioner Chase said she doesn't see any evidence of the foundation problem in the packet. Chair Garapolo said he understands Mr. Wollmuth's point, but they can't take that information from another project. They need to see this as a discrete project.

Chair Garapolo asked if the whole garage is block and Mr. Wollmuth said yes, except the bump-out at the rear. Commissioner Chase said that could have been a motorcar pull-through. Mr. Wollmuth said yes, or a carriage house.

The Commission took no action.

- b. **Advisory Review:** Proposed new, 3-car garage

This item was tabled until the previous item is completed.

C. 830 Woodbine Ave (Jerzy Muszynski), Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District:

- a. **HPC2024-7:** Certificate of Appropriateness for renovation project including second-floor addition, opening the enclosed front porch, restoring the lap siding, and altering windows on side elevation.

Chair Garapolo introduced the item. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Mr. Wollmuth said zoning would permit it to be 16" taller. The floor heights are not extravagant and the peak of the house is set back considerably. He said he used a laser to measure the heights of the adjacent houses. The house to the south is 28' and the house to the north is 30'. They are proposing a higher peak but it's set back. He said they added a dormer to the side addition so it relates. He said he drove up and down Forest Ave and there were five houses on the 700 block with 2-story side additions. There were more on the 600 block. This kind of addition is normal for this area. He said they will also remove the shingle siding and restore the horizontal wood siding underneath.

Motion by Commissioner Roman to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Mazur.

Chair Garapolo asked for a description of the porch. Mr. Wollmuth said the current enclosed portion has a dramatic slope away from the house but the eaves are plumb. This suggests it was previously an open porch. There is a 5-foot cased opening from the house. The front door is located in the screened portion and will remain in that location.

Commissioner Peterson asked about the square footage on page 12. Mr. Wollmuth said that's the footprint. Commissioner Peterson asked if they're adding more than the current overall square footage to the house and Mr. Wollmuth confirmed. Commissioner Chase said she has an issue with that as it's fundamentally changing the housing stock. It's not remotely the small bungalow it was.

Commissioner Peterson asked about the ARC review of the side addition and Chair Garapolo said it previously didn't have the dormer and had a more dramatic roof. Commissioner Peterson said she knows people are buying these bungalows and saying there is not enough space, but this is tripling the space. Chair Garapolo asked for clarification on the amount added. Mr. Wollmuth said they're probably doubling it.

Commissioner Peterson said she understands it's hard to live in a 1000-square-foot house with a family, but this is no longer a bungalow. Mr. Wollmuth said this is common on the street. Commissioner Roman said this is the smallest house there. Commissioner Peterson agreed and said that's why they are all going extinct. She suggested removing the side addition and just going up so you can still see the bungalow from the street. Chair Garapolo asked if the side addition can be moved to the back. Mr. Wollmuth said it can, but the owner was hoping to preserve green space in the back. This lot has 13' to the property line. Commissioner Chase said she questions the commitment to greenspace when also having a large garage in the back. She said it couldn't be negative to move it to the back rather than having it on the side.

Commissioner Chase said a small house is appealing to a smaller family. Commissioner Andriana said they see this a lot, where people are turning these starter homes into massive homes. It makes living in Oak Park not an option because there are no starter homes left. She said they want to make concessions to people, but if they want to have diversity, keeping these bungalows is important. Commissioner Bates said this is less important than diversity, but taking bungalows away makes the neighborhood less distinctive.

The Commission discussed the option of removing the side addition. Commissioner Roman said he would support this. Commissioner Peterson said it's a promising direction but she would need to see it. The Commission recommended the applicant return with a revised application moving the side addition to the rear. The architect agreed to return with an amended application.

The Commission took no action.

- b. **Advisory Review:** Coach house to replace non-historic garage.

Chair Garapolo introduced the project. Planner Trexler provided a summary.

Mr. Wollmuth, the architect, was present. He said the gable has a similar detail to the house where it dies into the roof. The idea is to not build out the second floor, that will be up to the

future owner. He said he provided floorplans to show what drove the window locations. He said he is happy to answer questions.

Commissioner Roman asked if it is meant to match the house or the addition. Mr. Wollmuth said the gable detail is on the original house. Commissioner Roman asked about other garages in the alley. Mr. Wollmuth didn't have information. He said it could be a coach house, meant to encourage higher density and smaller living spaces.

Chair Garapolo said he likes the windows but recommended using all double-hung sash windows on the alley side instead of the two higher windows. Mr. Wollmuth said these were to provide privacy and a focal wall on the interior.

Commissioner Chase asked why they will do this work if they're not going to build it out. She said it feels very speculative. Commissioner Roman said the other garages on the alley are all very small. This would stick out. Chair Garapolo said this is allowed by zoning. Commissioner Chase asked about the relation to the house and Mr. Wollmuth said it can't be bigger than the house.

The Commission discussed owner-occupied residences as applicants vs. developers. Commissioner Andriana said historic preservation is about keeping the community in place and keeping the integrity of a place. Houses are getting bigger and bigger in a time when homes are already unaffordable. Mr. Wollmuth said he agrees, but they can't look at the motivations of people. They are hard to parse out. Commissioner Bates referenced an elevator addition that was needed to get the owner around the house and said the need mattered.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Speaker Series continues May 9:** Alyssa Frystak from [PlaceEconomics](#) will be speaking about historic preservation, economics, and affordable housing on **May 9 at 6:30PM**
- **Day in Our Village:** June 2, 2024. Sign up to volunteer by contacting Chair Garapolo.

Commissioner Peterson provided some recommendations of materials that would be helpful. She asked staff if they can get a QR code that links to the historic resources database. Planner Trexler said she will look into this. She gave a summary of other materials that can be provided.

- **Discussion of structural engineers' letters.**

Commissioner Peterson introduced the item. Planner Trexler explained what she recommends applicants provide. She noted the cost of structural engineer letters and said the Commission can't make specific things required but can encourage them. The applicant has to prove their case. The Commission discussed the cost and Chair Garapolo explained why they are costly. Commissioner Paul said if you want to restore your home anyway, it's a good investment. Commissioner Chase suggested they provide a sample letter. Chair Garapolo underscored the need for a structural engineer to evaluate. Older garages are built much differently from what the new code calls for. Old wood is much stronger. He said to decide, he would need that kind of evaluation.

Commissioner Roman asked about saving garages and which ones. Commissioner Chase emphasized historic masonry garages and said they have been saved in the past.

Commissioner Mazur asked how visibility from the street is determined and Planner Trexler explained.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Chase to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Peterson.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.