

Historic District Commission
Minutes Of May 19, 2021
Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission (“HDC”) held Wednesday, May 19, 2021. Chair John Henke called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1) ROLLCALL

Present: Chair John Henke; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Keith Deyer (Harbor Springs, MI), Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Patricia Lang, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Member Steven Lemberg; Student Representatives Charles Cusimano, Elizabeth Wiegand (Grosse Pointe Woods, MI).

All located in Birmingham, MI unless otherwise noted.

Absent: Alternate Board Member Cassandra McCarthy

Administration: Nicholas Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

05-043-21

2) Approval Of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Willoughby

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the HDC Minutes of April 7, 2021 as submitted.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Willoughby, Dukas, Kolo, Deyer, Debbrecht, Henke, Lang

Nays: None

05-044-21

3) Courtesy Review

None.

05-045-21

4) Historic Design Review

A. 210 S. Old Woodward – The Plaza

CP Dupuis presented the item.

Roman Bonislowski spoke on behalf of the applicant team.

Mr. Deyer asked about the facade being balanced.

Mr. Bonislawki said the facade was designed to emphasize the occupiable side of the building while de-emphasizing the other end which he described as circulation and ramping down to the sidewalk. He said the facade remains harmonious while highlighting the occupied side.

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the Design Review application for 210 S. Old Woodward – The Plaza – with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant received approval from the Historic District Commission for the use of a non-cutoff light feature;**
- 2. The applicant received approval from the Historic District Commission for the projections into the right-of-way;**
- 3. The applicant must enter into a lease with the neighboring property owner, or retract the south fascia panel so that there is no projection into the neighboring private property; and,**
- 4. No planters were approved as part of this design.**

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Henke, Willoughby, Dukas, Kolo, Deyer

Nays: None

B. 255 S. Old Woodward – Cosmo Salon Studios

CP Dupuis presented the item.

Roman Bonislawski spoke on behalf of the applicant team. He said he anticipated that the building owner would return at some point in the future with a revised awning proposal for the building as a whole.

In reply to Ms. Dukas, Mr. Bonislawski stated that the proposed awnings for Cosmo specifically had the same form, projection and angle as the other awnings on the building. He said the only difference in the shape was that the awnings for Cosmo were not fully enclosed on the ends.

Mr. Deyer and Chair Henke said it would be their preference that the proposed uplighting only be added to the awnings with signage above them.

Mr. Deyer expressed concern that if all of Cosmo's awnings had uplighting that the building owner might want uplighting for all the building's awnings in the future.

Ms. Dukas noted that no such proposal was included in the current plans, and recommended the HDC make their decision based on the plans before them.

Mr. Willoughby and Ms. Dukas said they thought it more better for all of Cosmo's awnings to have the proposed uplighting both to establish the brand and to ensure a sense of visual continuity.

Mr. Bonislowski clarified that the planters were not part of this request.

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the Design Review application for 255 S. Old Woodward – Cosmo Salon Studios – with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant received approval from the Historic District Commission for the use of a non-cutoff light feature;**
- 2. The applicant must submit specification sheets for all proposed RTUs and provide screening for such, or obtain a variance from the Board of Zoning appeals; and,**
- 3. The applicant received approval from the Historic District Commission for the projections into the right-of-way.**

Motion carried, 6-1.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Debbrecht, Henke, Willoughby, Dukas, Kolo

Nays: Deyer

Mr. Deyer clarified his nay vote stemmed primarily from his concerns about the proposed uplighting and not from his opinions about the project as a whole.

Chair Henke stated that while he agreed with Mr. Deyer, his concerns were not great enough to vote against the plans in this case.

C. 100 & 136 Old Woodward – Parks & Wooster Buildings

CP Dupuis, Chair Henke and Victor Saroki, architect for the applicant, presented the item.

Ron Boji, owner, was also present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Boji maintained that the proposed plans would result in a historic hybrid between the original 1880s building and the 1960s mid-century building.

Chair Henke contended, in contrast, that the plans had to preserve either one iteration of the historic building or the other. Since the 1880s brick was removed, he stated that the plans should adhere to the mid-century design of the building.

Mr. Kolo, Ms. Dukas and Ms. Debbrecht agreed that the Parks and Wooster buildings should each maintain their distinctive exterior appearance from the other. Mr. Kolo expressed concern that to do otherwise would contribute to homogeneity in the downtown. Ms. Dukas and Ms. Debbrecht were not concerned about the first floor being combined into a single retail space as long as the exteriors continued to look like two different buildings.

Mr. Saroki said that could be done.

Mr. Willoughby stated that the HDC had to meet SHPO's historic design standards, even in cases like this where the more modern design proposed is perhaps more aesthetically appealing.

Chair Henke likewise noted that there is a difference between historic preservation and alteration, and that the HDC is charged with permitting the former.

After further discussion regarding other aspects of the project, the HDC and the applicant team concurred it would be helpful to get an outside opinion on potentially appropriate window heights. While there was initial discussion about possibly seeking an opinion from the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), CP Dupuis noted that SHPO is not allowed to weigh in on specific proposals since they would review any potential appeal of the HDC's ultimate decision.

CP Dupuis said the main goal would be for the HDC to approve plans that are defensible according to City ordinance and SHPO's historic design standards.

Chair Henke expressed concern that if the window heights are changed to a height that is not defensibly historic then it could possibly provide a basis for pursuing historic de-designation in the future. He said that one of his primary aims in this case was to avoid that potential outcome. He said that his concern not only related to this building but the precedent it could set for requests from owners of other historic buildings throughout the City.

Mr. Saroki noted that he and Mr. Boji had worked with Kristine Kidorf, a preservation consultant, often in the past and said they could seek her guidance on this project.

Motion by Ms. Debbrecht

Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to postpone this item to the June 16, 2021 HDC meeting, with the option for the applicant to come back for a study session at the June 2, 2021 HDC meeting.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Debbrecht, Willoughby, Dukas, Kolo, Lang, Deyer, Henke
Nays: None

05-046-21

5) Sign Review

None.

05-047-21

6) Study Session

None.

05-048-21

7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication

It was decided that Ms. Dukas would present a bit at an upcoming HDC meeting regarding the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions training she and CP Dupuis attended.

There was discussion that the owners of 743 W. Frank cut down two large trees on the west side of the house. It was noted that the proposal to remove the trees did not come before the HDC.

Chair Henke asked CP Dupuis to remind the owners of 743 W. Frank that historic designation of homes includes the trees on the property. Accordingly, the removal of proposed historically-designated trees needs to be reviewed.

A. Pre-Application Discussions

CP Dupuis said the owners of 743 W. Frank wanted to paint and redo the siding on the home.

Based on the HDC's comments, CP Dupuis said he would bring the owners of 743 W. Frank for a Design Review.

B. Draft Agenda for Next Meeting

C. Staff Reports

- 1. Administrative Sign Approvals**
- 2. Administrative Approvals**
- 3. Demolitions**
- 4. Action List - 2021**

05-049-21

Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Lang

Seconded by Mr. Dukas to adjourn the HDC meeting of May 19, 2021 at 9:53 p.m.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Lang, Dukas, Debbrecht, Willoughby, Kolo, Deyer, Henke

Nays: None

Nicholas Dupuis
City Planner