



Living with History

MINUTES

CITY OF MILWAUKEE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Monday, February 16, 2009, 3:00 PM

Room 301A, Milwaukee City Hall

Matt Jarosz, Chair

Sandra McSweeney, Vice-Chair

Sandy Ackerman, Pat Balon, Ald. Robert Bauman,

Randy Bryant, Ann Pieper Eisenbrown

ROLL CALL

Chair Matt Jarosz called the meeting to order at 3:04 P.M.

Commissioners Present: Sandy Ackerman, Pat Balon, Ald. Bauman, Matt Jarosz, Ann Pieper Eisenbrown

Commissioners Excused: Randy Bryant, Sandra McSweeney

Staff Present: Carlen Hatala, Paul Jakubovich, Vanessa Koster

MINUTES

Approval of the January 20, 2009 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes

THE MOTION: Pat Balon moved and Sandy Ackerman seconded a motion to approve the January 20, 2009 HPC minutes. The motion carried unanimously

Chair Matt Jarosz asked commissioners if there was any objection to hearing Item 6A before the other business on the agenda. There were no objections.

NEW BUSINESS

3123-3125 N. Sherman Boulevard. Install Aluminum trim over wood trim. Applicant: Carol Rubitsky (7th Ald. District)

Staff Paul Jakubovich gave an overview of the project. The aluminum trim was installed without a Certificate of Appropriateness and a complaint was made by a neighbor. The Department of Neighborhood Services forwarded the complaint to Historic Preservation. The preservation guidelines for the Sherman Blvd. Historic District state that aluminum trim is not allowed. Staff recommended denial. The matter had come before the HPC before but there were errors made in the decision letter that led to confusion about the applicant's time for appeal. Vanessa Koster indicated that the applicant had re-applied for a COA so that she could appeal.

Staff Carlen Hatala explained that the ordinance required a public hearing before the commission if the COA were denied but that staff had made an error and the public hearing did not get scheduled.

Ald. Bauman questioned why the commission had to hear the matter again. Staff went into more detail on the above.

The applicant, Carol Rubitsky, was recognized.

Pat Balon asked Ms. Rubitsky whether or not she had taken the opportunity to speak with her neighbors since the last time the matter had been reviewed by the commission. She

also asked if the applicant had spoken with staff on how to resolve the matter. Ms. Rubitsky replied that she had not spoken yet with the neighbors or staff and had not resolved how to correct the violation affordably.

Pat Balon asked who the contractor was and how they proceeded without a permit. Ms. Rubitsky replied that she had been the contractor and had thought no permit was needed and that the guidelines referred to aluminum siding and not just trim. Staff Paul Jakubovich added that he had spoken with three plan examiners and they all responded that a permit was required for aluminum trim.

Pat Balon indicated that she understood Ms. Rubitsky's frustration but that going to the Historic Preservation staff first would have given her options that would have been economical.

Ms. Rubitsky indicated that with the tough economic times she is struggling right now. The aluminum could be removed but the wood underneath needs work. She added that she had been under the impression that the historic district designation for Sherman Boulevard would be temporary, only until the National Register district was created. She wanted the commission to give her suggestions about contractors and how to proceed.

Ald. Bauman asked staff if a property owner's ignorance of needing a Certificate of Appropriateness is a criterion for allowing work done without one.

Staff Paul Jakubovich answered that all exterior work requires a Certificate of Appropriateness except painting.

THE MOTION: Pat Balon moved and Sandy Ackerman seconded a motion to deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of aluminum trim. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. Public hearing on the application for Historic Designation of the Nicholas Senn Building 300-318 W. Juneau Avenue (Commonly called Sydney Hih) (6th Ald. District)

Staff Carlen Hatala gave a brief overview of how the original petition for interim designation had been withdrawn and that a new nomination was submitted as a result of Ald. Bauman's suggestion at the last meeting that the time to preserve the building was now. She outlined three possible criteria for recommending designation, e-1, e-3 and e-9.

THE MOTION: Ald. Bauman moved and Pat Balon seconded a motion to open the public hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

Staff Carlen Hatala swore in those who wanted to testify.

Gail Fitch was recognized. She had submitted the new nomination for the building. She stated that the building possessed a lot of history from the being the site of medical breakthroughs to being an icon of the counter culture. There was not a lot left from that

part of Juneau Avenue so the building should be preserved. The staff report spoke for itself.

Paul Demcak was recognized. He stated that the research and report spoke for itself and that the building has cultural and historic significance. He referred to the letter of support submitted by the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance. Mr. Demcak added that former Mayor Norquist referred to all these buildings as being important. If the Senn Building were to be demolished the new development along Juneau Avenue would look like just an office park. He said he appreciated Mr. Ruvin's first development concept which saved the building and incorporated it into the new construction on the site. He showed a sketch of the Senn Building he had made while he was a student. It showed the Senn Building with new construction behind. Mr. Demcak urged the commission to consider or ask themselves how important this building was to Milwaukee.

Dawn McCarthy registered her support of the designation but did not wish to speak.

The chair Matt Jarosz indicated that he was entering the letter of support from the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance into the record.

David Florsheim was recognized. He indicated that he was one of the owners. He added that the original concept was to preserve the building but as the plans finalized, the development became more feasible without it. He said the building is falling apart. Mr. Florsheim stated that they want to work out a concept that would preserve the Senn Building. He did not know the condition of the building or all the options yet. He wanted the commission to hold off until they could evaluate their prospects and incorporate the building into another plan. The building was under no threat of demolition.

Rob Ruvin was recognized. He stated that he had purchased the building in 2005 with the intention of saving it. He asked for time to work out plans.

Pat Balon asked if they had established what it would cost to demolish the building. David Florsheim answered that they had not done so because they don't anticipate taking it down.

THE MOTION: Ald. Bauman moved and Ann Pieper Eisenbrown seconded a motion to close the public hearing. The motion carried.

THE MOTION: Pat Balon moved and Sandy Ackerman seconded a motion to recommend historic designation based on criteria e-1, e-3 and e-9.

There was further discussion.

Ald. Bauman said the commission has been rolling the designation over for 6 months and now these [local] men were solely back in charge. He asked what impediments the designation would put on the developer. He asked what argument would be used to hold over the designation for more months. He was concerned that all of a sudden there could be a new owner/buyer and a demolition permit is taken out. He thought that it made no difference if the designation were acted upon now or later since the owners now want to save the building.

David Florsheim emphasized that their saving the building would not mean returning it to its historic appearance. If it received historic designation then they would have to return it to its historic appearance.

Matt Jarosz stated that the commission understood the circumstances and that they were proceeding with caution. The longer the building sat, however, the more precarious it became. He wanted to see adaptive use of the entire block.

In answer to Mr. Florsheim's question about why the building was being considered for designation now, Matt Jarosz replied a nomination was submitted now. The commission has no control over that.

Mr. Ruvin asked for time to show the commission tentative plans.

Ald. Bauman indicated that if the vote were today he'd he would vote no for the designation because he did not want to go through the Goll Mansion scenario again. He said the first nomination for the Senn Building was the result of a labor dispute so there were ulterior motives. He did not want to prematurely put a straight jacket on the design for a new development. He would be happy to hold the designation.

Staff Carlen Hatala explained that the design guidelines in the study report stated that the designation applied only to the building and not adjacent property.

Matt Jarosz asked the commissioners if there were any drawbacks to holding over the nomination. Ald. Bauman answered no.

THE MOTION: Ald. Bauman made a motion to hold the nomination for one month. Sandy Ackerman seconded the motion. NOTE: This motion took precedence over the earlier motion to recommend designation. The motion carried unanimously and the designation will be brought back next month.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Staff updates on preservation projects.

Staff Paul Jakubovich showed before and after images of restoration projects or new construction projects in historic districts. The properties that were shown included 1918 N. 2nd Street (new carriage barn); storefronts at 225 E. Wisconsin Avenue; 1949 N. Palmer Street; the Mayer-Durner Buildings at 2002 N. King Drive; sign at 1218 E. Brady Street. These may be nominated by the commissioners for a design award. Matt Jarosz thanked staff for the updates and said it was a morale booster.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission is Monday, March 16, 2009 at 3:00 PM, Room 301-A of City Hall, 200 E. Wells

ADJOURNMENT

THE MOTION: There being no further business, Pat Balon moved and Sandy Ackerman seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:05 P.M.