

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
February 10, 2022 – Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Roll Call

Present: Chair Noel Weidner and Commissioners Asha Andriana, Monique Chase, Sarah Doherty, Andrew Elders, Lou Garapolo, Rebecca Houze, Nicole Napper, and Daniel Roush
Absent: Commissioner Rachel Will
Staff: Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner

Agenda Approval

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the agenda. Second by Commissioner Doherty.
Motion approved 9-0.*

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Elders to approve the minutes for January 13, 2022. Second by Commissioner Houze. Motion approved 9-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. HPC2022-3: 328 N Cuyler Ave (DaMon Wardlow):** Certificate of Appropriateness to add an egress skylight on the side slope of the roof (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said the applicant previously attended the Architectural Review Committee meeting on September 23, 2021, for window alterations but agreed at that time to retain the historic, decorative window on the front gable end as this is required by the Guidelines. However, the applicant wishes to add a bedroom in this portion of the attic and the decorative window does not meet egress requirements. As such, the applicant is now requesting to add an egress skylight on the north slope of the roof. The skylight would allow the applicant to proceed with their attic renovation according to building codes while retaining the historic decorative window on the front elevation.

DaMon Wardlow, the homeowner, said the room was already a bedroom, it just wasn't up to code. Thomas Donalek, the architect, further explained that the third floor was used for bedroom and living spaces previously but was damaged in a fire and is being replaced as part of this work. The use is in keeping with the history of the house but the proposed change will make it safer.

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

Commissioner Garapolo said he applauds the use of the egress skylight to save the window on the front and he is in favor of the proposal. Commissioner Elder asked if it is in front of or behind the dormer and Mr. Donalek said it is in front. He said it will be about 2-3 inches above the roof

material. Commissioner Elders asked about the egress plan and Mr. Donalek said the skylight will be accessible from the floor and can be equipped with a hanging ladder.

Commissioner Houze asked if the illustration shows the correct proportion of the skylight. Mr. Donalek said it shows the specific unit as it will be viewed with the angle of the roof. Commissioner Houze agreed with Commissioner Garapolo and said she is glad the decorative window will be preserved. Chair Weidner agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Elders. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: None

- B. HPC2022-4: 828 Woodbine Ave (Mike and Veronica Rundell):** Certificate of Appropriateness to enlarge a basement window on the side elevation to provide required egress (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Jim Venderheyden, the architect, said they will be enlarging the existing window downwards to meet the egress requirement.

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

Commissioner Garapolo asked if there is enough dimension in the side yard to serve as an exit. Mr. Vanderheyden said they have three feet, just enough room to meet the requirement. Commissioner Doherty asked how far the fence is from the house and Mr. Vanderheyden said the fence is on the lot line.

Chair Weidner asked about the walkway and Mr. Vanderheyden said there is currently a sidewalk but it will probably be removed. Chair Weidner said he is concerned about water coming into the window well with the concrete sidewalk. Mr. Vanderheyden said this is an old sidewalk that just comes to the front of the house and is not used; the owner wants to remove it entirely.

Commissioner Doherty said if it meets code, it seems like an easy solution. Commissioner Garapolo said it is a minimally visible, great addition.

Motion by Commissioner Napper to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: None

- C. **HPC2022-5: 1022 Ontario St (Debra McQueen and Kenneth Pagni):** Certificate of Appropriateness for a dormer addition on west side elevation to accommodate second-floor bathroom expansion (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Debra McQueen, the architect, said they have lived here almost 24 years so they know the details of the house intimately. They will have the crown molding milled to match and the trim on the windows will match. The window in the dormer is the same size as the window on the rear elevation.

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

Commissioner Garapolo said he appreciates the sketch and doesn't have a problem with the proposal. He asked if the new dormer roof is higher than the existing dormer. Ms. McQueen confirmed and said this is the height needed to have a shower. The roof will probably be slightly lower than the main ridge but will be higher than the one on the east. They won't make it any higher than it absolutely needs to be. She said the other dormer is a little steeper and this one will match the roof of the main house.

Commissioner Roush said this is what we would hope to see as an addition. The dormer is pushed back, the scale is sympathetic. This is a worthwhile project. Ms. McQueen said the existing bathroom is very small and the dormer will be held back from the back wall to maintain the full gable at the back of the house.

Commissioner Houze agreed that it is sensitively designed. She said it is a beautiful old house and this will work well.

Chair Weidner asked about the small windows under the eaves on the west elevation. Ms. McQueen said these windows are at the floor level in a low closet space. The one at the rear would be eliminated by the dormer; there is no way to keep it. Chair Weidner said the south elevation makes the gable look more prominent, so the sketch is helpful. He agreed with the statements of the other Commissioners.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Chase. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: None

- D. **HPC2022-6: 1024 Superior St (Gaston and Paola Messineo):** Certificate of Appropriateness to add a window on the front-facing gable end and two skylights, one on each side roof slope (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Drew Nelson, the architect, said this is currently an unfinished attic and they want to put a primary suite here. They ran into issues with egress, light, and vent. If they left the window, they'd still need

to meet egress so would need to replace with a casement window. He said they looked at a three-window alternative, but felt it was too much. The two windows give adequate ventilation as double-hung windows, but do not provide enough daylight; that's why the two skylights are proposed. If they leave one window, the skylights would have to be larger to contribute to ventilation and light. He said they thought this was the most appropriate option without the windows or skylights being too large. There are a number of houses on the block with multiple windows, including the neighboring house.

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

Commissioner Elders said he doesn't have a problem especially if they are keeping the proportion of the existing window. It would not look like a later addition. Commissioner Garapolo said altering the front elevation is not recommended and he would be in favor of keeping the existing window and going with larger skylights. He noted the egress skylight previously reviewed. Mr. Nelson said the egress skylight has to be 42" off the floor, which messes with the configuration of the bedroom.

Commissioner Doherty said changing the front elevation is not ideal but a similar project was approved a few months ago. The Commission discussed this project in the Gunderson District.

Commissioner Roush said the two windows look good and this feels like a nice solution. Commissioner Chase asked if they need two skylights or if they can use one. Mr. Nelson said they can get away with one but proposed two for symmetry. Commissioner Chase said she is not in favor of adding two skylights when one would suffice. Commissioner Garapolo agreed and said he also agrees with Commissioner Roush that the two windows look better than one, but looking better isn't what the Commission is about. He said he has a problem with going to two windows. Mr. Nelson said one window and one skylight would not meet requirements. Commissioner Elder said he prefers adding one window and one skylight.

Commissioner Roush asked if they could just add two skylights on one side. Mr. Nelson said they could. Commissioner Garapolo said he likes this suggestion. Commissioner Houze said they should try to preserve the look of the front elevation even if they aesthetically prefer two today. When the decision was made for the project in the Gunderson District, they paid close attention to the neighboring houses and based the decision on that. She said she would prefer keeping one window and adding two skylights. Mr. Nelson said this is the only single window on a two-story house on the block. Chair Weidner said with the Gunderson example, the problem could not be solved with a skylight. Commissioner Doherty agreed.

Chair Weidner said they need to preserve the front of the house and two skylights on the same side might be a good solution. Mr. Nelson said this is possible but they would have to replace the window with a casement. Commissioner Elder said for a mild instance like this, why even bring it to the table? Why would it not just be denied by staff? Commissioner Houze said the Guidelines stress preserving the primary façade. Each proposal has different problems and questions that have to be solved, and that's why the Commission has made different decisions in the past.

Chair Weidner asked for clarification from the Commissioners on their preferences. Commissioners Doherty, Chase, and Garapolo said they prefer one window. Commissioner Roush said he's okay with two; they are brought these dilemmas because there are circumstances and value judgements that must be made within the Guidelines. Commissioner Andriana said she prefers the two windows. Commissioner Napper agreed on the two windows and said the house is so symmetrical, she would prefer one skylight on each side. Mr. Nelson explained the size the skylights would need to be if there is only one window: 21.5" by 54" each. Chair Weidner noted the other gable and Mr.

Nelson said it is pretty low and they are putting the utilities in this area. Chair Weidner said they should consider two windows, one skylight, and see if they have a consensus. The architect has done his due diligence here to make this home usable.

Motion by Commissioner Napper to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project with the condition that they go with the two windows and keep the west skylight but eliminate the east skylight. Second by Commissioner Elders. Motion approved 6-3.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Garapolo, and Commissioner Houze

- E. HPC2022-7: 543 N Ridgeland Ave (Tom Dahl):** Certificate of Appropriateness to restore the original, full-width front porch (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said the original porch was removed and replaced by a stoop at some time after 1950. The applicant previously attended the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) meeting on May 27, 2021. The ARC's recommendations are in the packet; the ARC overall approved of the project and the applicant has met their requests.

Tom Dahl, the homeowner, was present. He said they appreciated the guidance of the ARC and took their recommendations into account.

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

Commissioner Garapolo asked what the material is under the porch. Mr. Dahl said the intent is wood trellis, but landscaping will mostly hide it.

Commissioner Elders said he likes that the porch softens the addition on the side. He said he thinks the Queen Anne references are a little early for this house, though. He said there are other Christianson examples on RuskinArc that have Tuscan columns. He asked if the fretwork is original. Mr. Dahl said he believes it is not. Commissioner Elders said the design could be simpler and he would like to see Tuscan columns but he may in the minority.

Commissioner Doherty said this project will bring back the charm and character of the house. Given that it's on a main thoroughfare, it will be a great addition. Commissioner Houze said this was already reviewed by the ARC and she is happy with the proposal.

Commissioner Elders and Chair Weidner discussed the detailing. Chair Weidner clarified Elders' concern that the starting point for the design [the non-historic fretwork] is misleading. Commissioner Elders said he is not opposed to it, he just worries about false historicism. The house is simple in mass and line.

Motion by Commissioner Napper to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: None

- F. HPC2022-8: 1025 Superior St (Henry Williams):** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a coach house (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Henry Williams, the homeowner, said that due to the age of the structure and the fact that it was built on the ground, the exterior load-bearing walls starting to give way.

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

Commissioner Garapolo asked for clarification on the picture at the bottom of photo page 1. Mr. Williams said the double-door garages are on the adjacent property. The coach house has a single garage door, but it's just a façade. There is nothing behind it. He said it seems to have been built as three single-room apartments and a fourth storage room. It's four compartments that don't connect in any meaningful way. Even if you could add a foundation, it's only three feet off the alley. The second-floor door on the alley was the second-floor entrance and there was an external stairway. It was never used as a coach house.

Commissioner Napper asked when it was last used as a dwelling and Mr. Williams said he thinks the 1990s. Commissioner Napper asked if any structural professionals have looked at it. Mr. Williams said his brother-in-law was a project manager and inspector, and he looked at it previously. The cost would be prohibitive to do the necessary work. Nothing was obtained in writing.

Commissioner Roush asked about plumbing and Mr. Williams said it is very old. Part of the application process for the County demolition permit was the plumbers have to seal the downspout. It was so full of debris, they couldn't get a probe down. The electrical is knob-and-tube. Nothing is salvageable as far as utilities are concerned. Commissioner Roush asked if he received the Cook County demo permit and Mr. Williams confirmed he did and said they removed asbestos and the plumbers will have to dig in the yard to cap the downspout.

Commissioner Napper asked about the intent and Mr. Williams said his objective is to demolish it and let the next owner decide what to do. Commissioner Chase asked if a future owner would be able to put an ADU here. Planner Trexler said the Village Board just approved ADUs so that should be possible. Commissioner Elders asked, if the lot is not big enough for an ADU, could this building be brought up to code. Mr. Williams said no, especially since you would have to start at the foundation level.

Chair Weidner asked about the foundation. Mr. Williams said there are concrete footings 6-8 inches deep that run around the perimeter of the building. Some have cracked. If you go inside, the floor has 8-12 inches of open space below, then just ground. There is no slab or building-wide foundation.

Commissioner Doherty said she hates to see coach houses like this go. Buildings like this were where servants and the Black community lived. She recommended documenting the building for the Historical Society.

Commissioner Houze asked about the motivation for the demolition and Mr. Williams said it is detrimental to his ability to sell the house. Commissioner Napper said it is also a liability. Commissioner Elders said it may be a fire trap and might harbor rats or vermin. He said it's a nice-

looking building and if it was in structurally good shape, it would be an asset. However, in the current condition, it would keep the neighborhood safer if it was demolished. Mr. Williams said he did have it painted last year.

Commissioner Roush said this is a significant building and they haven't seen a structural or architectural report. It doesn't appear to be an imminent threat, but he wants Oak Park to be a place where people get the most out of their property. Mr. Williams said he refinanced his home and one of the conditions of the loan was to either raise or repair this building. He noted the cost and said even if you did all the repairs, it wouldn't be a viable place to live in 2022. Commissioner Napper asked about insurance and Mr. Williams said the insurance is just based on the main house. The house has a single bathroom on the second floor and his wife recently had to move out because she can't deal with the stairs.

Commissioner Houze said this is an interesting and unusual coach house. She said there is a precedent for allowing demolition for coach houses in poor condition, but they've required a contractor report explaining what is wrong with the building and what would be needed for repair. Additionally, learning more about the history of the coach house would be helpful so we have a better sense, if we approve demolition, what we are doing.

Commissioner Roush asked about the process and if a report or estimate of cost is needed. He said he has no doubt a report could be found to that effect. Chair Weidner said they've asked for this in cases where the state of the coach house is not obvious. He wondered if a report from a structural engineer would show something they don't already know. He said coach houses have a significant history and contribute a lot to the Village.

Mr. Williams said he would love to just leave it but the refinancing wouldn't allow that. Chair Weidner said he doesn't recall a project where this was an issue; he asked Commissioner Garapolo and Planner Trexler, and they agreed.

Chair Weidner walked the Commission through the options. Commissioner Garapolo recommended that a report be provided at the next meeting. Commissioner Napper said this would help complete the record. Mr. Williams said he can produce a document at the next meeting, but the question then is what a reasonable dollar amount would be. He asked if he just needs to add a report or appraisal. Chair Weidner confirmed and said there should be a structural report. Clearly it would have to be gutted, but can it stand for another 100 years and what would be necessary to make it habitable.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Preservation Futures Talk

Chair Weidner recommended the Commission look up a presentation that happened on Tuesday and is available on YouTube. The presentation was given by Elizabeth Blasius on Chi Hack Night and is called "Future of Preservation."

- Updates to the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Architectural Review Guidelines

Chair Weidner said the Village Board approved the updated Architectural Review Guidelines and Ordinance this week. Planner Trexler said these will go into effect starting with the Architectural Review Committee meeting this month. She explained some of the changes and said she will be providing additional information.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Elders to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Napper. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Elders, Commissioner Garapolo, Commissioner Houze, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Roush, and Chair Weidner

NAY: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.