

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
April 14, 2022 – Meeting Minutes
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm

Roll Call

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

Agenda Approval

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

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

Minutes

Chair Weidner noted that his name is spelled wrong in the second-to-last paragraph on page 1. Planner Trexler said she would fix this.

Motion by Commissioner Elders to approve the minutes for March 10, 2022. Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 6-0.

Regular Agenda

- A. Advisory Review: 634 S Elmwood Ave (Jordan Frank):** Advisory Review for solar panels proposed on front-facing roof slope (Gunderson Historic District).

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

Rick Akins, from sunrun, was present on behalf of the project. He said the dots on the roof plans are projections that had to be avoided.

Commissioner Garapolo said the Guidelines don't allow for solar on the front. Commissioner Elders agreed and asked about the rectangle on the rear slope behind the dormer. Mr. Akins said that is a flat roof. Panels can't be affixed to flat roofs because they can't drill through. On a larger building, they would use ballast blocks but that is too much weight for a residence. If drilled through, the roof won't drain property. Commissioner Elders asked about the south slope of the dormers on the front and Mr. Akins said only one would fit per dormer and they don't normally do that. He said he also doesn't know about fire setbacks in this location and the extra conduit would be unsightly. Commissioner Elders said he understands the desire and need, but it wreaks havoc with the Guidelines and the reason the historic districts exist.

Commissioner Roush asked for clarification on the role of the HPC in this case. Chair Weidner explained this is Advisory Review and they provide recommendations to the homeowner. Commissioner Roush said a lot of the roof is visible and he agrees with Commissioner Elders.

Chair Weidner said the gain does not offset the visual impact and it's not worth it to put three more panels there. He advised against it. Commissioner Andriana agreed.

- B. HPC2022-17: 719 N Oak Park Ave (Allison and Luke Siebeneck):** Certificate of Appropriateness to restore original full-width front porch (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler said the applicant attended the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) meeting on January 27, 2022. She gave an overview of the project.

Rosanne McGrath, the architect, was present. She said she can describe more of the project details if needed. Chair Weidner suggested moving to the discussion.

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

Commissioner Garapolo said the ARC was in favor and he approves. Commissioner Elders said the design softens the front of the house and makes it look more welcoming. Commissioner Andriana said she likes the proposal and doesn't see any issues.

Commissioner Elders asked if the columns will be paneled. Ms. McGrath confirmed and said they will match the pilasters around the front door. Chair Weidner asked if the pilasters were added in the 1950s. Ms. McGrath said the wall steps out, so she thinks the pilaster detail around the front door was original but the pediment was added. The pilasters go with what they think might have been the original style of the house. Commissioner Napper said the project looks good.

Motion by Commissioner Elders to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

- C. HPC2022-18: 219 Forest Ave (Melissa & Patrick Ashby):** Certificate of Appropriateness to renovate front porch including replacing the decking, stairs, and skirting with a synthetic material (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview and said the applicant attended the ARC meeting on March 24, 2022.

Melissa Ashby, the homeowner, was present. She said they will attempt to refinish everything above the deck boards. The intent is to refinish first, then replace if needed.

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

Commissioner Garapolo said he is pleased the comments of the ARC were taken to heart and he approves of the direction. He said the scope states the stair risers will be composite and asked for clarification on what will be refinished. Ms. Ashby said the wood stairs and porch flooring will all be composite. That is where most of the damage is. The only modification is that it would be a wood color as the white material shows dirt. Commissioner Garapolo said they do not typically approve composite risers, but the stair tread may be composite.

Commissioner Elders said he appreciates that they took the recommendations of the ARC seriously and the finished product will look that much nicer.

Commissioner Roush asked the material of the lattice and Ms. Ashby said it's the same composite material and will be a thick lattice in a square grid. She confirmed that it will be built and is not in pre-made sheets. Commissioner Roush said this is a vertical element and asked about the HPC's history in approving this. Chair Weidner said the Commission typically approves synthetic materials for anything you walk on, but for more visible elements there's a concern that it will look like plastic. You don't see that on historic homes, you see a painted surface. Ms. Ashby said it's not shiny and does not look like plastic; it is a matte finish. She said most of the trellis is covered by vegetation. Chair Weidner said in the past the Commission has focused primarily on railings and balusters and this is more than they typically see proposed. He noted that the homeowner originally proposed a synthetic railing, as well.

Commissioner Elders said he's not sure he would see the difference in the riser material from the street. Commissioner Garapolo recommended walking around outside the historic districts to see some synthetic materials. He said it stands out visually. Chair Weidner said there is a range of materials; there is plastic and there are materials that try to look like wood.

Commissioner Roush asked if the ARC weighed in on the risers and Ms. Ashby said it was stated that anything below the decking was ok not being wood as that's where the rot and damage is coming from. That's where things are exposed to the elements, especially on the north side. Chair Weidner recounted the ARC review and said it makes sense to have synthetic materials closer to the ground so it doesn't deteriorate as quickly.

Commissioner Napper said her only issue is not having the risers be white. Ms. Ashby said this was her personal preference as she has kids and the stairs get dirty. Commissioner Napper asked if it would help that it's synthetic and therefore easier to clean. Ms. Ashby said it would still show dirt more. Commissioner Andriana said she doesn't love the brown color but it makes sense.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that the risers be painted wood instead of a synthetic material. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

Ms. Ashby asked for clarification. Planner Trexler said the project was approved with the condition that the risers be wood. Chair Weidner said they can be any color, they just have to be wood. Ms. Ashby said she doesn't want to mix wood and composite. Commissioner Garapolo said this has been done on previous projects. Ms. Ashby asked if she can come back to another meeting and Chair Weidner said she is welcome to bring an amended proposal to the next meeting.

- D. HPC2022-19: 332 S East Ave (Kristen Hirsch):** Certificate of Appropriateness to replace French doors on porch (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said the applicant attended the Architectural Review Committee meeting on March 24, 2022.

Kristen Hirsch, the homeowner, was present.

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

Commissioner Garapolo said the revised proposal is really in tune with what the ARC discussed and he has no problem with this proposal. Commissioner Roush agreed and said the project looks very good. Commissioners Elders, Andriana, and Napper agreed. Chair Weidner said this is a great solution to satisfy the need to remove the French doors, which he understands have been giving the homeowner problems for a while.

Motion by Commissioner Napper to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

- E. HPC2022-20: 307 S Cuyler Ave (John Vriner):** Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish existing garage, new garage not visible from the street (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

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

John and Lucinda Vriner, the homeowners, were present. Mr. Vriner said they have owned the house for 39 years and replaced the garage windows a few years after moving in. There are only two windows and they do not have asbestos. He asked about the Cook County demo permit. Commissioner Roush said this would be a question for the project architect but a county demo permit will likely be required.

Commissioner Garapolo said it is clear that the existing building is in poor condition. He said he likes that the new garage will be hidden and has no problem with the project. Commissioner Elders agreed. Commissioner Roush agreed and said not all garages are created equal. Mr. Vriner agreed with Commissioner Roush and said the garage doesn't match anything on the house; it was built between 1917 and 1927 inexpensively. It was a very minimal construction even when it was new.

Commissioner Napper asked if this location will just be landscaped and Mr. Vriner confirmed. He said they will probably put some large trees there and some additional pavers by the new garage.

Commissioner Andriana said she agrees with the previous Commissioners that it's time for this garage to be demolished. Chair Weidner said he appreciated the pictures with the level; it's clear how far the garage is leaning.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Napper. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

- F. HPC2022-14: 205 S Harvey Ave (Josh and Megan Abrego):** Certificate of Appropriateness for window alterations on the front elevation as part of previously approved renovation project (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Chair Weidner introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said this is part of a larger project that was reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission last month. The approval was given with the condition that the homeowner come back for final approval on the front elevation window changes as additional information was needed. She summarized the proposed window changes and staff recommendations.

Josh Abrego, the homeowner, was present. He said the only thing he has to add is that the existing windows are Marvin windows from 2003.

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

Commissioner Roush said the concern isn't necessarily the taking out of the Marvins but the changing of the rough openings. He asked why this is needed. Mr. Abrego said the current window is about 1.5" from the porch roof, so snow stacks up and this causes water damage. On the interior they will be putting two bedrooms. To have proper egress, you'd have to come out of the tower window.

Commissioner Andriana said she is having a hard time with this because it is changing the look so much. Chair Weidner agreed and noted what Commissioner Roush said at the last meeting, that they have two historic photos and they show the same windows. Commissioner Andriana said they look very similar if not exactly the same.

Commissioner Napper said because they have to modernize the floor plan and multiple kids will be living there, it makes sense to add a window. She said she was ok with the window addition previous and is still. Chair Weidner said this aligns with the staff recommendation. The homeowner is taking on a lot here and there should be some compromise to get the building active again. Commissioner Garapolo said he looked at some other houses in the Village with corner towers and they all seem to have the double set of windows, so that doesn't really concern him. The real problem is the proportion of the existing windows. He said he understands the code issue but the solution should be to go to tempered glass to retain the existing size. Mr. Abrego said he can live with that and he likes the taller windows too.

Commissioner Roush said if they are allowing the new window, it is important that the headers and sills align. Commissioners Garapolo and Andriana agreed. Chair Weidner agreed and said that's not what is shown. Mr. Abrego said the proposed changes were made to align with the smaller window. The Commission discussed the window alignment, as they are not currently aligned. Commissioner Elders said it wouldn't be detrimental to have two windows a little higher so they don't conflict with the porch roof.

Chair Weidner said he is leaning towards what is proposed in the packet. He said he looks more to the first floor for the vertical elements and those won't change; he would be willing to compromise. Commissioner Garapolo said it would be a mistake to make the two windows smaller and Commissioners Elders and Andriana agreed. Commissioner Napper said she's fine with that as long as the new window is approved. Commissioner Garapolo and Elders agreed.

Chair Weidner said he noticed the bay window originally had transoms; this is something the homeowner may consider. Hard cement was used by the basement block window and is splitting; this needs to be ground out and re-tuckpointed. Mr. Abrego said the whole foundation will need to be repointed and he understands about the transoms. He said they have a construction loan appraisal this weekend, which will be a limiting factor. Commissioner Elders said you can get a window that looks like it has a transom but operates as a double-hung.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that the existing vertical size of the windows be retained and the new window is approved in the same proportion. Second by Commissioner Elders. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

- G. HPC2022-21: 201 S Harvey Ave (Teresa Melcher):** Certificate of Appropriateness to restore original front porch and build a rear addition (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

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

Kristin and Keith Jones, the architects, were present. Ms. Jones explained the three renderings and said the front porch matches the plan on the Sanborn maps. No historic photos were found but they drew on houses in the area including the neighbor at 205 S Harvey. She said there is an existing rear addition that appears to be original. That would be extended to create an on-grade entry. Mr. Jones said the skylights are existing.

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

Commissioner Elders said it looks great and the front porch will have a big positive impact on the front of the house. He said they may find remnants of the historic foundation when they start to dig. Mr. Jones said if so, if they are close, they would consider adjusting the porch design to match. He said it's their understanding that this porch burned down at some point and the owner at the time decided not to rebuild. Commissioner Elders said it's ok if they don't match the footprint exactly; the proposal is well-scaled.

Commissioner Elders said the back of the addition is a little too modern and looks like a garage door. It is very clearly of 2022. Mr. Jones said they wanted the natural light and view of the backyard. They street façade is more in keeping with the house and uses double-hung windows.

Commissioner Garapolo asked about the horizontal band dividing the rear windows. Mr. Jones said this is part of the window system and will be wood on the interior and have aluminum cladding on the exterior. Ms. Jones said the trim will be white. Commissioner Garapolo said he doesn't have a problem with the large windows in the back but he does have a problem with the metal roof. That is a foreign element to the house. Mr. Jones said the material gives a sense that it's an addition but is

complementary. Standing seam metal roofing has been around since the 1850s and could have been seen on Victorian farm houses. It is also a lower roof and is a high-quality roofing system. Ms. Jones said they understand the concern and this is why they used asphalt on the front porch. The color of the metal will tie in visually. Commissioner Elders said he understands the argument but this is not something that would have been seen on a suburban residence historically. Commissioner Garapolo agreed and said he doesn't have any other problems; the front porch addition was done well.

Commissioner Elders asked about the doors to the side of the rear addition and it was confirmed that they are existing and won't be changed.

Commissioner Roush commended the homeowner and said their values are reflected in the work of the architect. He said he disagrees with Commissioners Garapolo and Elders; this is an addition, it's differentiated, and it's not on a primary façade. We're treating it as three front facades because of the visibility. However, it checks the boxes of what additions on houses like this ought to do and is a good project. Chair Weidner agreed and says the addition reads as 2022 but it is tied in with the clapboard siding. Commissioner Napper agreed it is fine as designed. Commissioner Garapolo said these points make sense. He retracted his comment on the metal roof. Commissioner Elders expressed concern about precedent. Mr. Jones said they had a similar project approved about 16 months ago. Commissioner Andriana said if there is already a precedent, this changes her stance.

Commissioner Elders asked about the balusters and Mr. Jones said they will be square, wood balusters. Commissioner Andriana said she approves of the porch.

Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Napper. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Climate Conversation:** Update to be provided by Commissioners participating in the conversation for the Oak Park Climate Plan.

Chair Weidner said he and Commissioner Chase took part in a call with Village staff to discuss preservation's role in the climate plan. He encouraged Commissioners to check the link he sent and to let him know if they want to participate in the sustainability discussion.

- **Synthetic material discussion:** Commissioner Elders suggested that the Commission acquire samples of a variety of synthetic materials to compare. He said the Commission is going to see this again and he doesn't want to deter homeowners or be too stringent. Possibly the Commission can have a subset of materials that are pre-approved.

Commissioner Garapolo said they have viewed some samples before and in his opinion they don't look good. Commissioner Elders said there often advances in building technology and they should stay up-to-date.

Chair Weidner said the Commission has stood pretty strongly against synthetic materials. Porch flooring has been allowed, but all other porch elements need to be wood. All homes take maintenance. Commissioner Elders agreed about the maintenance and said his mother restored a landmark house in Galewood; they have replaced the stairs two or three times in the last 40 years. They finally replaced with synthetic because they are getting too old for the yearly upkeep.

- **Painting brick:** Commissioner Elders said the Commission doesn't have any purview over paint color but painting masonry is irreversible. It is in many cases very detrimental. He said he doesn't know if this should be brought into their purview but should be discussed. Chair Weidner agreed. Planner Trexler said education is part of the Work Plan; Commissioners may consider doing some research and coming back to report to the Commission. She described the current enforcement process through building permits and that painting does not typically require a permit.

Chair Weidner said A Day in Our Village is coming up and is an educational opportunity. Commissioner Elders said anything that would preclude a National Register nomination should be against the Guidelines. Chair Weidner said the Commission should put something together and see what other communities do. He said he appreciates the concern.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Elders to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Garapolo. Motion approved 6-0.

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

NAY: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.