

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission  
December 8, 2022 – Meeting Minutes  
Remote Participation Meeting, 7:30 pm**

**Roll Call**

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

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to re-elect Commissioner Roush as Acting Chair. Second by Commissioner Doherty. Motion approved 6-0.*

**Agenda Approval**

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

**Non-Agenda Public Comment**

None

**Minutes**

*Motion by Commissioner Doherty to approve the minutes for November 10, 2022. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.*

**Regular Agenda**

- A. HPC2022-63: 127 S Scoville Ave (Tarryn Rutherford):** Certificate of Appropriateness for window alterations on the side elevations and a two-story rear addition as part of a deconversion to a single-family dwelling (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Acting Chair Roush introduced the item and Planner Trexler gave an overview. She said this project has been reviewed twice by the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) and the applicant has made a number of changes based on the ARC's advice.

Chris Bremer and Josiah Simmons, the architects, were present. Mr. Bremer said this is a deconversion of a 2-unit building to single-family. He said they've tried to leave the front intact and the sides are mostly window alterations. They added a window on the north façade and added simulated divided lights near the back as recommended by the ARC. The only recommendation they didn't take is differentiating the base on the addition.

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Andriana.*

Commissioner Doherty asked if the detailing on the new windows will be the same. Mr. Bremer said yes, the trim will match existing.

Commissioner Chase said this is sensitively done and factors in a lot of details on the house. It still feels historic but it doesn't have the same mish-mash of things going on. Acting Chair Roush agreed that this cleans up some ad-hoc changes.

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

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

**B. 307 S Harvey Ave (James Podraza) (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District):**

- a. **HPC2022-61:** Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of a historic garage, application revised from previous meeting per recommendations of the Commission.

Acting Chair Roush introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Jim Podraza, the homeowner, was present. He said one of the requests was that the structural engineer not be involved with the contractor; he is not. He said he relayed the rules to the structural engineer and asked for an honest assessment.

*Motion by Commissioner Chase to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Doherty.*

Acting Chair Roush said the estimate to repair is about \$25,000 more than to replace with a standard garage. He thanked Mr. Podraza for provided plans for what he intends to build and costs for that as well. He said the nicer garage is still less expensive than the cost to repair the garage and take down the tree.

Commissioner Chase said she appreciates that the tree can remain. She said this clearly demonstrates disrepair. She said she appreciates the work of the homeowner so they can feel comfortable with this decision. Commissioners Andriana and Garapolo agreed. Commissioner Garapolo said they asked the homeowner to provide quite a bit of additional information and he has been responsive.

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

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

- b. **Advisory Review for proposed new garage.**

Acting Chair Roush introduced the application. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Commissioner Garapolo said he's disappointed that there hasn't been a decision on the siding as that's one of the bigger concerns he had. He said he does not recommend Hardie. Stucco would be in-keeping with the house. As the existing garage is wood, he would recommend a wood product. Mr. Podraza said his contractor found a 3" reveal wood option that is just about as expensive as stucco so at the moment he is inclined towards stucco. It would match the house and there is an upkeep incentive. Commissioner Garapolo said he is encouraged to hear that. Acting Chair Roush asked if it will be a true stucco and Mr. Podraza confirmed. Acting Chair Roush said that's helpful and that was his only question.

Commissioner Doherty said she appreciates the reuse of the historic windows and is glad the tree will remain.

**C. HPC2022-62: 424 Pleasant St (Nick Schmuck & Cora Bruemmer):** Public Hearing on the Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a historic garage (Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District).

Acting Chair Roush introduced the public hearing. Attorney Smith conducted a swearing in of the witnesses. Planner Trexler gave an overview.

Present on behalf of the applicant were: Tom Bassett-Dilley and Joe Juhl, the architects; Erik Bosi, the contractor; and Nick Schmuck and Cora Bruemmer, the homeowners. Mr. Bassett-Dilley said their presentation will be what they found when they further reviewed the existing garage. He said the contractor, Erik Bosi, is here as well. Mr. Bassett-Dilley provided a presentation discussing the issues with the existing garage. He said it was built in 1921 and the house was built in 1902. Issues he described included that the garage is below the crown of the alley so water comes in. He described what repair would entail and said they would need to raise the garage enough that the water won't drain in and they can meet code and avoid rot. He mentioned the updated garage design and said that's what the cost estimate is based on.

*Motion by Commissioner Garapolo to open for discussion. Second by Commissioner Andriana.*

Commissioner Chase said she finds it disingenuous that they included the homeowners carrying two mortgages in the cost estimates. She said she doesn't understand why garage work would make them unable to move into their home. Acting Chair Roush said the financial argument is pretty airtight. He said he understands Commissioner Chase's comment, that portion may not have been necessary.

Staff read the list of exhibits into evidence and Acting Chair Roush accepted the exhibits. The Chair asked if there are any members of the public who wish to cross-examine or provide public comment. There were none. No written public comments were received.

Commissioner Garapolo said he is impressed with the response from the architects in terms of Commission comments and the cost estimates. He said he knows they aren't considering the new garage, but he is pleased with the revised design. Commissioner Andriana agreed. Acting Chair Roush said he appreciates the seriousness with which the cost estimates are done. The applicant could have priced the previous garage design but went the extra mile to give Erik something to really look at. This was a real estimate for a real garage that is an improvement on the project.

Commissioner Chase asked if any salvage will be done. Mr. Bassett-Dilley said that's their intention but they haven't gotten into the specifics yet. Commissioner Doherty asked if they can reuse windows. Mr. Bassett-Dilley said yes, their initial plan was to reuse windows from the house in the garage but that's a good idea.

Acting Chair Roush closed evidence and opened Commission deliberation. Commissioner Garapolo said he thinks the information presented shows the team has done a good job and has justified the demolition. He said he would be in favor and the proposed garage will hopefully be close to what was shown on the screen earlier. Commissioner Doherty agreed and said now they have figures, she's okay with the demolition. Commissioner Chase said she's okay with the demolition and appreciates that this gives the Commission a template of the kind of information they can get to make these decisions. Acting Chair Roush agreed with the Commissioners.

*Commissioner Garapolo made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.*

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

*Commissioner Garapolo made a motion to approve the draft resolution with final editing to be completed by staff and the Chair. Second by Commissioner Chase. Motion approved 6-0.*

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

**D. HPC2022-53: 742 N Marion St (Todd & Anastasia Valentine):** Public Hearing on the Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a residence (Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District).

Acting Chair Roush introduced the public hearing. Attorney Smith conducted a swearing in of the witnesses. Planner Trexler gave an overview. Ms. Valentine clarified that they did not demolish their own house [interior], their insurance company did. Acting Chair Roush said the presentation packet was clear and they understand. He said the applicant may provide their presentation.

On behalf of the applicant, the following were present: Glenn Smutney, the architect, and Todd and Anastasia Valentine, the homeowners. Mr. Smutney described their efforts to establish the construction date of the house and said it can be very general. He said their project is very different from others as they are reaching the last portion of the period of significance. He said they know construction was likely started in July of 1941 but it is hard to establish when construction finished. He said they likely moved in in February of 1942. There was no Certificate of Occupancy issued nor were there any inspections. He said the other item they have is tax bills. The Cook County Tax Assessor noted the building as 62 years old on that bill, which would date it to 1942. He said while the building has been included with 1941 as the construction date, it's in the last moments of that year and it's likely that it's 1942.

Mr. Smutney described some of the issues of restoring the house. He said they have to create an insulated shell to meet energy codes. The heat from the house removes moisture from the brick. He said without the heat to dry the brick out, we're setting ourselves up for long-term failure. It becomes a technical issue of putting the house back together. Acting Chair Roush said the Commission reviewed the packet and it demonstrated the efforts on the construction date. He

asked that they table the building science and said there is a good body of work in the Midwest of restored masonry buildings that have performed.

Mr. Smutney asked that the tax bills be added to the evidence. Acting Chair Roush said they would be accepted into evidence and asked staff to read them. Planner Trexler asked that they proceed with the public comments while she looks up the documents.

Steve Citko and Maria Citko read their letters into the record. Their letters were in support of demolition.

Planner Trexler read the tax records provided by the applicant into evidence: both from Cook County Assessor, one from 7/2/2009 stating that the house was 67 years old and one from 2/14/2003 stating that the house was 61 years old.

Planner Trexler read the remaining letters from the public into the record, including two letters in support of demolition and one opposed.

Acting Chair Roush said the Commission may now ask questions of the applicant. Commissioner Chase said she's curious about the tax information and asked if they have the first tax bill. Ms. Valentine said this was years of collecting documents. She said she is not sure what will be considered. The occupancy permit was never issued. The next best thing she can provide is taxes. Ms. Valentine said Dr. Wanderer was living in another home in 1941 and in the census, he signed his name in October of 1941 on Forest Ave. What makes it difficult is Dr. Wanderer was called to service.

Mr. Smutney said he talked to the Cook County Tax Assessor and they only have documents that go back to 1973. Ms. Valentine said there had to have been a hand-off from the Village to the Assessor. All of these documents, everything has provided a 1942 date. Dr. Wanderer was a great man, he was a local physician of this community. He lived on the property and worked on the property. The closest thing we believe is taxation.

Commissioner Garapolo said the storm and this damage was two years ago. This project came before the Commission a year ago. He asked why there hasn't been any work done. Ms. Valentine said they were a small claim and had two rooms that flooded with water. At the time of the damage, millions of people in Texas were living without heat and water. She said you can't tarp a roof until you have a representative come up and determine that this is a legitimate claim. It took them weeks. The first representative was four weeks later. Due to Covid, she wasn't permitted to investigate the attic and she left the house flooded. She said the staircase has collapsed, the floor buckled, and cabinets fell off the wall. A small claim had gone to a catastrophic claim. She said they created a hole to create airflow and she woke up to everything covered in black from the attic. They lived in this home for three months in filth and chemicals until they could be relocated. She said they are stuck between the insurance and the Village. They had the best insurance that was available but it will never come close to repairing what was lost.

Mr. Valentine said part of the delay was the insurance company. The house was completely gutted and ready to rebuild. The insurance company re-evaluated. The quotes coming in were exorbitant. He said a tremendous amount of work has been done. The house wasn't gutted and their items removed until August 2022. It will be exorbitant in cost. Ms. Valentine said they didn't dictate this process, the insurance company did. She said there is nothing more humbling than losing everything you own. This is the only financial way they can rebuild their home.

Acting Chair Roush said to close the loop on this question, it was a year ago that a project was approved. There is an argument that there was a path forward. Ms. Valentine said \$900,000 with a \$100,000 variance. The house is \$500,000. She said they're going to have to build fire pumps, sprinkler systems, a water heater. She said they want to retire in their home and they can't afford that. Acting Chair Roush deduced that Ms. Valentine is indicating it was the prohibitive cost of the HPC-approved project that brought them back to the HPC. Ms. Valentine said the architect had great plans but he never talked about cost. Commissioner Napper said if the cost to rebuild is \$900,000, what is the new construction cost. Ms. Valentine said the house is \$500,000-525,000 but you can't reconfigure it in the same way. She explained some of the details. Commissioner Napper asked about the cost to rebuild and Ms. Valentine asked how they can get that when they're not even sure they're permitted for that. Commissioner Napper asked what they would do if demolition is approved. Ms. Valentine said that will build a respectful home. Mr. Smutney said to build a simple home would cost somewhere in the \$600,000 range based on \$225 per square foot.

Acting Chair Roush said they are asking for the HPC to change the contributing status of the house, but this is an economic hardship conversation. He said they cannot delist the building. A month ago there was considerable belief that the house is contributing. Economic hardship would be a different thing. Ms. Valentine said this will be better for this property.

Acting Chair Roush requested that the Commission move to deliberation. Commissioner Andriana said the last time, they agreed it is historically significant. Now they presented taxes and things stating otherwise. She asked if they base the date on the permit or if the structure must be standing. Commissioner Doherty said the central issue is the qualifications of the National Register for historical integrity, and at what point does it no longer retain integrity. Acting Chair Roush said feedback indicates the property is contributing. Attorney Smith asked staff to explain how date errors are handled. Planner Trexler explained an alternate case in which a building was listed as contributing but the building permit was a decade after the period of significance. She said in this case, the State Historic Preservation Office said it would be considered an error and can be crossed off the contributing list. Commissioner Chase asked how much the building has changed. Acting Chair Roush said it hasn't changed in a huge way as visible from the street. Ms. Valentine said she's not sure that's true and the Commission should look at the permits. Mr. Valentine said the garage is now a window.

Commissioner Andriana said it is contributing and this seems like an economic hardship conversation. Commissioner Garapolo agreed it is contributing and said demolition doesn't follow the Guidelines. He said you can talk about hardship, but this looks like demolition by neglect and he would not approve demolition. Acting Chair Roush said the building is contributing and the path to demolition is not in this room. He said he is strongly opposed to a demolition approval. Commissioner Chase said she doesn't want to encourage demolition by neglect and she doesn't think this is demolition by neglect. She said she doesn't think it's in their purview to decide but they should help them move forward in the fastest way possible. Acting Chair Roush said the path forward may be through the Village Board. Commissioner Garapolo agreed. Attorney Smith clarified that if the HPC does not approve the COA, the applicant may appeal the Village Board or may request a Certificate of Economic Hardship. Acting Chair Roush said it will have to be a compelling case if they come back for a COEH. He said he doesn't think it's a \$225 per square foot endeavor. The Commission will take a hard look at these things. Commissioner Garapolo agreed.

*Commissioner Garapolo made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed. Second by Commissioner Doherty. Motion denied 1-5.*

*AYE: Commissioner Napper*

*NAY: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*Commissioner Garapolo made a motion to approve the draft resolution with final editing to be completed by staff and the Chair. Second by Commissioner Andriana. Motion approved 6-0.*

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Staff said that meetings are set to return to in-person in 2023 and January's meeting will likely be at Village Hall Council Chambers.

**ADJOURN**

*Motion by Commissioner Doherty to adjourn; Second by Commissioner Chase. Motion approved 6-0.*

*AYE: Commissioner Andriana, Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Doherty, Commissioner Napper, Commissioner Garapolo, and Acting Chair Roush*

*NAY: None*

The meeting adjourned at 9:45PM.

Minutes prepared by Susie Trexler, Historic Preservation Urban Planner.