# NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

# **September 17 2014**

# Wednesday 7:00 P.M. – Northville City Hall – Council Chambers

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

Chair Johnson called the Historic District Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Argenta, Field, Gudritz, Hoffman, Johnson, Vernacchia

**Absent:** None

Also Present: Consultant Elmiger

Building Official Strong City Manager Sullivan DDA Director Ward

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: none

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION Hoffman, support by Gudritz, to approve the agenda as written. Motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that the agenda had previously been corrected to show that Case #7 had been withdrawn.

# 4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES: Aug. 20, 2014

Chair Johnson asked that all references to Acting Chair Hoffman be changed to Vice Chair Hoffman.

Commissioner Vernacchia asked that on page 7, under **Letter Regarding 417 Dubuar**, at the end of the second paragraph, the minutes be changed from: "Per state law, anything that affected the exterior of a property in the Historic District needed HDC approval." to "Ms. Elmiger said that Per per state law, anything that affected the exterior of a property in the Historic District needed HDC approval.

Motion Hoffman, support by Field to approve the minutes of August 20, 2014, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

#### 5. REPORTS:

### A. CITY ADMINISTRATION:

City Manager Sullivan introduced Craig Strong, the City's new part-time Building Official. City Manager Sullivan explained that the City Council had approved a contract with Carlisle Wortman Associates, Inc., 605 S Main Street, Ste., 1, Ann Arbor, MI to engage a division of that company – Code Enforcement Services – to administer the City's Building Department. City Manager Sullivan said that when the City of Northville had contracted with the City of Plymouth in 2010 to share Building Department personnel, Northville's building activity had been at recession levels. However, building activity was now close to pre-recession levels. Concurrent with this significant rise in activity, the City needed increased emphasis and improved processes for dealing with building site management – things that occurred outside the building envelope, including attention to the tree ordinance, soil erosion, grading and drainage, and Historic District Compliance. The contract with Carlisle Wortman provided Mr. Strong, who had extensive background in this type of work including working with Historic Districts, and who would be in City Hall three half days per week. A separate part time building inspector would be working in the field. Building Official Strong would be charged with reviewing processes and suggesting new procedures in the areas just mentioned.

Building Official Strong spoke to issues and concerns specifically related to the Historic District. Consultant Elmiger would continue to do reviews for the HDC. As Consultant Elmiger was an arborist she would also be taking additional responsibilities regarding the tree ordinance. Mr. Strong would be performing inspections in the Historic District and would also be enforcing the tree ordinance. Mr. Strong said that he was available by cell phone at any time.

- B. CITY COUNCIL: none
- C. PLANNING COMMISSION: none
- D. OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENTAL LIAISONS: none
- **6. PUBLIC HEARING:** None.
- 7. CASES TO BE HEARD BY CASE:

CASE #1 ROBIN BOLITHO 134 N. CENTER

DEMO WALL, PLANTER, STAIRS & CONCRETE, NEW WALL, PORCH CAP, STAIRS & RAIL, REPLACE WALKWAY & AWNING, INSTALL GLASS PANELS, PAINT BUILDING

David Bolitho was present to speak on behalf of this application. Robin Bolitho was also present. Specifically, the application was:

### to demolish

- the entire existing wall and planter adjacent to the back porch
- the concrete cap on the porch
- porch stairs
- concrete at foot of the stairs

#### to construct new:

- a block wall approximately 25 feet long, painted the same color as the building
- a concrete porch cap with an additional 12 inches added to the porch depth
- porch stairs
- railing for porch and stairs (there was no picture of this as it would be custom made in order to accommodate deliveries)

#### to renovate:

- replace paver walkway north of building with hand trowelled concrete, a material recommended by DDA Director Lori Ward.
- replace plastic awning in back of building with a burgundy sunbrella type awning, thus matching the awning on the front of the building
- tuck point exterior walls as needed and paint the entire building with the existing color

Mr. Bolitho noted that the application had also listed, under renovation, "Install glass panels on five window openings on the north side of the building." However, they were postponing this and would bring it back for later review. Also, the sketch showed the parking lot employee entrance to the building. They were proposing to replace existing with horizontal "Hardie" siding and trim and paint it the same color as the building.

Mr. Bolitho referenced sketches he had provided, labeled "Existing," and "Proposed Plan." He noted that bollards would be placed in front of the new, extended porch, thus protecting it from truck damage. Also, the new plan would better conceal the downspout and other utilities located on the rear of the building. Appropriate landscaping would be added in the spring.

Commissioner Hoffman reviewed the information so far. The purpose of the proposed changes was to accommodate loading and unloading of trucks, and to give a uniform appearance to the building. He confirmed with Mr. Bolitho that no seating would be located in the rear. There would be a straight wall hiding the air conditioning unit, with a planter for an additional feature.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hoffman, Mr. Bolitho said that a tree and/or raised landscape beds would be placed to the left of the AC Unit.

In response to a question from Commissioner Argenta, Mr. Bolitho said the color of the building would match the yellow shown on the picture of the rear of the building.

In response to a question from Commissioner Field, Mr. Bolitho confirmed that the new awning would be burgundy, and not the red currently shown in the photographs.

Commissioner Argenta referred to Consultant Elmiger's August 25, 2014 letter regarding this application. Specifically, page 1 of that letter referred to scaled and dimensioned drawings, printed to scale, and including:

- existing and proposed site plan showing all the changes
- existing and proposed building elevations of the rear of the building, and
- existing and proposed sections and other details as needed.

Commissioner Argenta said that this information had not been provided. Eventually the Building Department would have all this information, but the HDC was supposed to see everything that went to the Building Department. The HDC could not approve this application without seeing those drawings.

In response to a question from Commissioner Argenta, Mr. Bolitho said that they were still trying to ascertain who owned/was responsible for the large planter at the rear of the building.

In response to a question from Chair Johnson, Mr. Bolitho said they were hoping to complete this project before snowfall.

Chair Johnson suggested that a subcommittee be authorized to give final approval to this project, once complete drawings were submitted. Commissioners Field, Argenta and Gudritz volunteered to serve on this subcommittee.

Discussion followed. Chair Johnson noted that the application was not yet complete, so no action could be taken tonight. In response to a question from Mr. Bolitho regarding whether painting could proceed, Chair Johnson referred to Consultant Elmiger's review letter, which stated that because the building was being re-painted the same colors, no review of the paint was required, and painting could proceed.

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Gudritz,** that a subcommittee made up of Commissioners Argenta, Gudritz and Field be authorized to gather all the application materials and act on the Commission's behalf regarding accepting the application as complete and then granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for this project. **Motion carried unanimously**.

CASE#2 GENNA DAVIS 336 LINDEN

**FENCE** 

Chris Davis, homeowner at 336 Linden, was present to speak on behalf of this application, which was to remove an existing picket fence and install a six-foot semi-private fence along their south property line in the rear yard. Mr. Davis noted that this request amended their original request, which was for a six-foot privacy fence. However, they had decided that a semi-private fence softened the effect and thus they were requesting that instead. Mr. Davis presented pictures of the semi-private white fence to the Commission.

Mr. Davis referred to pictures of the existing fence, which had been installed on their property by the previous owners of 320 Linden. That fence was in disrepair and was not salvageable.

Chair Johnson noted that a new requirement of the Ordinance was that the smooth side of a new fence would go toward the neighbor's property. Chair Johnson confirmed with the Applicant that the appearance of the fence was the same on both sides.

Since this proposal was to replace a wood fence with a vinyl one, Commissioner Hoffman asked if there were other properties with vinyl fences in the Historic District.

Commissioner Argenta said that there were other vinyl fences in the Historic District. The HDC Design Standards were silent on the subject of fence materials; the Zoning Ordinance also did not have a requirement regarding materials. Brief discussion followed as the Commission confirmed that this information was correct.

Mr. Davis referred to a letter of mutual agreement with the present owner of 320 Linden, Tom Tocco, regarding this fence. Commissioner Hoffman confirmed that the new fence would be completely in the yard of 336 Linden.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Vernacchio, Consultant Elmiger said the proposed location of the fence met zoning requirements.

Motion Argenta, support by Hoffman, to accept the application as complete. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

**Motion Hoffman, support by Gudritz,** to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Northville Historic District Design Standards 3.4 fences, 3.21 materials, and 5.18 paint and color, for the white color as presented this evening. **Motion carried unanimously.** 

CASE #3
LAURA & TRENT CHRISTENSEN

**GENERATOR** 

# GUTHRIE 417 DUBUAR ST.

Homeowner Trent Guthrie was present to speak on behalf of this application, which was to seek approval for the location of a generator that had actually been installed 11 months ago. Mr. Guthrie apologized for not previously seeking approval, explaining that they had been unaware that they needed approval for the generator. He also noted that there had been three inspections during this time as the homeowners had previously sought HDC approval for porch fans, light and mailbox, fencing and brick pavers, and gutters. Mr. Guthrie affirmed that they wanted to be fully compliant with the rules of the Historic District.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hoffman, Consultant Elmiger said that she was not aware of any other generators in the Historic District. Since the recent severe storms several permits had been pulled for generator installation in the City but these were not for the Historic District.

Commissioner Argenta said that while the Zoning Ordinance did not address generators it did address air conditioning condensing units, which were similar in size and purpose. AC units had to be placed in rear yards. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the Historic District Design Standards were silent regarding generators.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hoffman, Mr. Guthrie said this was a natural gas generator. It cycled on and off as necessary.

Addressing his comments to the Chair, Commissioner Vernacchia initiated a discussion regarding HDC jurisdiction in this matter. Wasn't generator approval a function of the Building Department under the Zoning Ordinance? It seemed counter intuitive that the homeowner would need to seek approval for this generator – which was outside the home – from the HDC. None of the Historic District Design Standards spoke to these types of equipment. Location could be regulated through Building Department and Zoning standards. Commissioner Vernacchia had some discomfort with the HDC reviewing HVAC types of equipment.

Chair Johnson commented that while this was new territory for the HDC, the outside appearance of properties within the Historic District fell under the purview of the HDC and therefore it was appropriate for the Commission to review location and placement.

Chair Johnson asked Consultant Elmiger to research whether the Historic District Design Standards should include a section on AC and generator units.

Commissioner Gudritz thought it was appropriate for the HDC to review anything exterior to a property that affected that property's appearance for Historic District appropriateness and compliance.

Commissioner Field said that in his time on the HDC, they had never heard an application for an AC condensing unit, and a generator was similar equipment. He quoted Section 6 of the *Historic District Design Standards, Building Systems*, page 6-7, as follows:

The building structure: mechanical equipment and electrical equipment are referred to as its systems. These systems are not regulated by the Historic District Commission . . .

Commissioner Field continued that he read the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act 169 of 1970 to address buildings, but not *everything* outside buildings. He felt approving generator placement was

outside the purview of the HDC. Generator placement and size should be covered within the Building Code.

Responding to a question from Chair Johnson, Commissioner Argenta said that a generator was part of the interior mechanical system of a building.

Commissioner Hoffman said that *Design Standards* 6-7, already referenced by Commissioner Field, did say:

Install systems in areas and spaces that will require the least possible alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building.

Consultant Elmiger referenced Section 42 Historic Preservation of the City Code, which read in part:

42-25.(1) Permit. A permit shall be obtained before new construction or other work affecting the exterior appearance or interior work which will cause visible change to the exterior of the resource within the historic district is performed."

### 42-2. Definitions.

*Work* means construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, reconstruction, restoration, painting, landscaping, color change or demolition.

*Historic resource* means a publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of this state or a community within the state or of the United States.

Discussion continued. Based on their reading of the State Act and local ordinance, Commissioners Vernacchia and Field continued to oppose action by the HDC regarding generators, air conditioner units, etc.

Commissioner Gudritz suggested that further research be done regarding this issue, especially to discover what other Historic Districts were doing regarding this kind of review and approvals. Chair Johnson asked that Consultant Elmiger and Building Official Strong canvas other Historic Districts to see what they were doing in this area. Commissioner Hoffman expressed support for doing further research.

Commissioner Argenta commented that in the case before the HDC tonight, the generator was in the rear yard. He thought the Commission could act on this application.

**Motion Vernacchia, support by Field** to accept the application for this request only as complete. **Motion carried unanimously.** 

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment.

Robert Sochacki, 223 Linden, reminded the Commission that he was the one who brought this issue to the HDC. He emphasized that the layout of the properties in the Historic District did not always follow conventional plot layouts, and the placement of generators etc., in rear yards could be a true nuisance to a neighbor. Applications such as this one needed to be reviewed in context of the area around the specific property in question. In the current case, the side of the house in question was the rear of Mr. Sochacki's home. Originally this generator had been placed by the side wall and behind the garage, but not behind the residence. Now its placement had been moved further out from the side wall and was still behind the garage; it did affect Mr. Sochacki's property.

Commissioner Argenta noted that a regulation regarding placement of a generator should be more than just in a rear yard. Regulations should require shielding of generators and AC units, depending upon placement on the property. Schematics could be included showing how and where units could be placed and whether or not they needed to be shielded.

Motion Hoffman, support by Gudritz, to grant a notice to proceed for this case only, referencing Northville Historic District Design Standards 6.7 Mechanical and Electrical Systems. Motion carried unanimously.

CASE #4
JULIE AND DAVID COLE
121 HIGH STREET

**FENCE** 

David Cole was present to speak on behalf of this application, which was to install approximately 130 lineal feet of a new 6-foot tall wood fence, including a 10-foot wide double swinging gate. This would replace an existing aging fence and be placed in the same location as the old fence.

Chair Johnson confirmed that the applicant understood that the straight side of the fence was required to face the neighbor's property.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hoffman, Mr. Cole said that there would be no paint color. The treated wood would be natural and would fade with time.

In response to a question from Commissioner Argenta, Mr. Cole said the fence would be 6 feet high. He had spoken with both affected neighbors regarding the proposed fence installation.

Commissioner Argenta noted that a six-foot high fence of this type approached "stockade" in appearance, though the top edge was scalloped. Stockade fencing was prohibited in the District.

In response to a question from Commissioner Gudritz, Mr. Cole said the fence to be replaced was 4 feet high at its peak, and went down to about 3 feet. The Coles had two Labradors; a neighbor also had a dog that was a jumper. They needed a taller fence.

Commissioner Vernacchia confirmed that the posts would be 6 feet but the scallops would be lower than that.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Gudritz, to accept the application as complete. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Field** to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Northville Historic District Design Standards 3.4 fences, for the pressure treated wood remaining natural color as presented this evening. **Motion carried unanimously.** 

Agenda note: Case #6 was heard before Case #5.

CASE #6 CRAIG SERRA

ADD STAIRCASE TO DECK

#### **222 WEST**

Chair Johnson said that Commissioner Field had disclosed that he was related to this applicant and would need to be recused from this case.

Motion Hoffman, support by Vernacchia, to recuse Commissioner Field from this case. Motion carried 5-0 (Field abstained).

Craig Serra was present to speak on behalf of this application, which was to construct new deck stairs on an existing deck and to enclose the bottom portion of the deck; the deck was located on the rear side of their home. Referencing illustrative photographs and sketches, Mr. Serra said they would match existing colors, styles and materials, including the existing baluster design for railing on the staircase, and the existing lattice design from the existing fencing. They would match the existing lower wall design for the enclosure under the deck. The staircase would allow for a safe exit from the kitchen/rear of the house. Currently the only rear exit was through the basement; the basement stairs were very steep with 6.5" treads.

In response to a question from Commissioner Vernacchia, Mr. Serra said that they planned to begin the project within 2 weeks of approval and complete the project within 2 weeks of the start date.

Referring to the consultant's letter of September 8, 2014, Commissioner Argenta confirmed with Consultant Elmiger that the Building Official would review the plans for conformance with the Zoning Ordinance, including setback and lot coverage requirements. If there were any issues with ordinance conformance, the applicant would have to return to the HDC for further review.

Motion Argenta, support by Gudritz, to accept the application as complete. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Argenta** to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 3.23 decks, 3.21 materials, 5.18 for paint colors as indicated on the application. **Motion carried unanimously.** 

Commissioner Field returned to the meeting.

CASE #5
GREGORY PRESLEY/MALLOURE
500 W. CADY

**DEMOLITION** 

Gregory Presley, 317 West Dunlap, Northville, MI and architect for the proposed project, was present to speak on behalf of this application, which was to demolish the existing home at 500 W. Cady, based on the grounds that retaining the resource was not in the interest of the majority of the community. Mike and Julie Malloure, homeowners, were also present.

Mr. Presley explained that the Malloures had recently purchased this property, and would like to demolish the existing brick ranch and build a new home.

Referencing the consultant's letter of September 8, 2014, Mr. Presley said that they were not asking for review and comments on the new building. They had provided some conceptual architecture but would return with complete plans after the approval to demolish was received.

Mr. Presley noted that the consultant's letter had requested "a written narrative description of the proposed process to accomplish the demolition. Also, specific methods for protecting the existing 19" Maple tree in the front yard should be provided." In response to this request, he had provided this evening a letter dated September 17, 2014, which did provide a narrative description of the requested information.

Mr. Presley explained the justification for this request to demolish. Of the three criteria that could be used for such a request, they had chosen "Retaining the existing home is not in the interest of the majority of the community." The one story ranch home was built in 1952; some others of this type had been already torn down. The home had wood frame construction on a CMU foundation with brick cladding and an asphalt shingle roof. It was a typical early 1950s home, typically used in Northville as an infill project. Mr. Presley said the home was not a complimentary home to the Historic District because:

- It had a 2-car garage forward of the house, thus emphasizing the car.
- There was no sitting porch on the street, de-emphasizing pedestrian interaction. Most of the homes on the block and within the Historic District had sitting porches.
- 1,000 square feet on a single level made it difficult to make a significant alteration without overwhelming the original structure and without violating alteration guidelines of the Historic District, which encouraged no more than a 50% alteration of a structure. A 1,500 square foot home would not meet the needs of the owners, who were seeking to create a four-bedroom home for their family. Adding a second story would change the essential character of the home and would not be in the spirit of the Historic District standards.

Mr. Presley said they proposed a 3,500 square feet home on 2 levels with the following features and characteristics:

- A detached garage in the rear yard, with a porte-cochere access.
- A wrap sitting porch.
- 24.7% lot coverage, which was less than the 30% lot coverage allowed. The present home was 13% lot coverage.
- Architecture more in keeping with the rhythm, proportion and massing of the existing streetscape and more consistent with what was normally seen in the Historic District. Utilizing photographs and sketches, Mr. Presley described the existing streetscape and the proposed streetscape should the desired home be built. To the west was a 1.5 story bungalow. To the east was a full 2-story farmhouse-style home. Mr. Presley said that the proposed home would be more complementary to the Historic District than the existing home.

Commissioner Vernacchia thought the home was larger and higher than other homes in the surrounding area. Mr. Presley said that the average roof height was 28 feet, which was less than what would be permitted.

Commissioner Gudritz read from the document, *Guidelines for the Consideration of Applications for the Demolition or Moving of Structures Within the Northville Historic District:* 

## A. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

The Northville Historic District Commission's legal responsibility is the protection of the historic resources within the Historic District. The demolition or moving of any historic resource constitutes an irreplaceable loss to the Historic District and to the City of Northville. The

demolition or moving of even a non-contributing resource can have serious consequences for the District as a whole. Consequently, demolition and moving are strongly discouraged. The demolition or moving of historic resources within the Historic District must always be the last resort.

Commissioner Gudritz noted that this was the Commission's charter, which they were under oath to uphold. With this in mind, he asked Mr. Presley for more justification to demolish this home under consideration. Using the grounds that "retaining the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community" did not seem fully appropriate in this case; that justification was more appropriate for building a public structure or space, such as a library, park, or mall, from which the whole community would benefit. How did the demolition of a single home, and the new construction of a single home, benefit the whole community?

Mr. Presley said the new construction would be more complimentary to the character of the Historic District.

Commissioner Gudritz commented that the homes surrounding this property were moderate, older homes. He questioned the justification for tearing down this home to add a big foot home to the neighborhood. How did this proposal complement the greater community?

Mr. Presley said the proposed home was not a big foot home. It was in line with the lot coverage of surrounding homes. He pointed out other homes on the street, including right across the street that had a full two stories. Other homes were farmhouse style. The proposed structure was also farmhouse in style and character. It fit more exactly with the neighborhood than a one-story brick ranch with a forward facing garage.

Commissioner Gudritz said that a 62-year old ranch style home did represent an era within Northville. The home was perfectly fine, i.e., nothing was wrong with it other than it was small. Commissioner Gudritz could not justify eliminating the era represented by that home within the Historic District to build another home that was more to the taste of the buyer. While modifying the current home might be difficult under the Historic District Guidelines, it seemed to be a more appropriate approach than demolition.

Commissioner Vernacchia asked about process. Should the HDC first decide whether the home had historic significance?

Consultant Elmiger explained process as required by ordinance:

- 1. The HDC first would make a determination whether the application was complete.
- 2. After that determination, the Commission would decide whether the structure was historically significant.
- 3. If the structure was historically significant, then the Commission needed to schedule a public hearing for the next month.
- 4. If the structure was not historically or architecturally significant, the Commission could make a decision this evening.

Commissioner Field directed the Commission's attention to the document: *Historic District Design Standards*. *City of Northville, Michigan*. The first paragraph of the Foreword read:

What is a Historic District?

A historic district is an area with special historic character or a "theme" that ties an area together, and that the community feels is worth preserving. In 1974, Northville City Council

passed a resolution that the architectural theme for the Northville Historic District is Victorian, in the era from mid 1850's to the latter 1800's. More specifically, the greatest concentration of notable buildings are "Gothic Revival" style. The Historic District Commission exists to encourage preservation of the theme and to provide information which will educate and assist property owners in keeping their properties compatible with the theme.

Commissioner Field then directed the Commission's attention to *Michigan Local Historic Districts Act* 169 of 1970, 399.201a Definitions:

(k) "Historic preservation" means the identification, evaluation, establishment, and protection of resources significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.

Commissioner Field felt that a 1952 1,000 square foot ranch style home did not meet the above criteria for historical significance. Additionally, nothing of historic significance had occurred in this home.

Commissioner Argenta agreed that the applicant's justification being "retaining the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community" was a stretch. Regarding the theme as mentioned in the Guidelines Foreword just referenced by Commissioner Field, Mr. Argenta pointed out that there were other structures of historic significance in addition to the Gothic Revival Style of the late 1850s, including bungalows, etc., defined within the Guidelines. The Historic District had developed through time, even to the point that "ranch" from 1940-1975 was a style with its own name within the Guidelines (1-15), a construction style no longer often practiced, and therefore in the past. The home was 62 years old; anything over 50 years old may be a historic home. Most homes in the Historic District did not have a historic event in their history, but they were still part of the fabric of the District. A structure could not be thrown out just because nothing of historic significance happened there.

Commissioner Vernacchia commented that there were a number of things that made a home contributing or not. Age was one factor, but it was not an automatic determinant. In this case the Applicants were arguing that the existing home did not conform with the theme of the Historic District as laid out in the City's guidelines. They were proposing constructing something that would be more conforming. Commissioner Vernacchia said he did not believe the present home had historical significance and in fact seemed out of place in the District. The proposed structure did seem more in keeping with the theme of the District. The Commission needed to follow process and decide whether or not the present home had historic significance.

In response to a question from Chair Johnson, Consultant Elmiger said that the process was if the Commission deemed the resource was historically significant or architecturally significant, the next step was to schedule a public hearing for the next month.

Commissioner Gudritz argued that the home be deemed historically significant. It represented a style and a time period, and was a fine but small home. He cautioned the Commission against eliminating an era of architecture – whether residential or commercial – within the Historic District. At the very least, a public hearing should be held.

Commissioner Hoffman wondered about consistency – other similar brick ranches similar to this one had been considered non-contributing and had been demolished within the Historic District. Perhaps those past discussions might be germane to the current case.

Chair Johnson noted that one of the goals of the Commission was to accomplish a comprehensive listing of all the buildings in the Historic District; the District did not have this list because the District was developed before current law required one.

Chair Johnson said that he supported the idea that the current home might be significant. A history of the home needed to be provided. A listing of other similar homes within the District would be helpful.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hoffman, Mr. Presley said that until they got a positive vote on demolition, they did not have a timeline.

Commissioner Hoffman supported having a public hearing on the demolition request.

Further discussion was held regarding consistent application of the guidelines, differences in neighborhoods within the Historic District, and the importance of trying to gather a historical record about the current property and home.

Commissioner Gudritz felt that some required information for this application was missing, especially regarding the history of the home.

Chair Johnson mentioned that interior shots would be helpful, but were not required.

Commissioner Vernacchia indicated he was ready to move the process forward and therefore made the following motion:

**Motion Vernacchia, support by Hoffman** to accept the application as complete. **Motion carried 5-1** (Gudritz opposed).

Chair Johnson opened the meeting for public comment.

Robert M. Sochacki, 223 Linden Street, Northville, opposed this request to demolish. He noted that his own home, located within the Historic District, was of a style – Japanese bungalow – not listed in the mission statement of the Historic District. If homes had to conform to the styles in the mission statement, could any home not thus listed be demolished? Mr. Sochacki reminded the Commission of past demolitions. He felt that the Historic District itself was being torn down.

Tim Luikhart, 521 West Cady, opposed this request to demolish. He called the Commission's attention to Section 2 of the Historic District Design Standards, pointing out that the Design Standards called for the rehabilitation of existing buildings and the Demolition Guidelines strongly discouraged demolition.

Jennifer Luikhart, 521 West Cady, opposed this request to demolish. She called the Commission's attention to the minutes of the HDC meeting of December 19, 2007, which she distributed to the Commission members. At that time, at the request of prospective owners there had been discussion regarding demolishing the subject structure, and the Commission had not wanted the demolition request to proceed. While there were differences between that request and tonight's request, this should be part of the property's history. Ms. Luikhart also distributed a document she had prepared entitled *Cady Street Lot Analysis*, which listed lots by address, year built, square footage, lot size, lot square footage, and percent of structure to lot. She pointed out that the subject structure was listed by several sources including the assessor's office as having 1230 square feet – not 1,000 square feet. She also mentioned that most alterations expanding homes were accomplished by adding rear additions. She felt that the proposed new home did not match the others on the street. She felt that the existing ranch home did not detract or take away from the neighborhood; the proposed new home was very large and would detract.

Ms. Luikhart continued that someone had approached her this past weekend because the person thought she was still a member of the HDC. The person described a process by which they were looking for an

older lot in town that "they could just tear down." This was not the first time this had happened. She referred the Commission to page 7 of the Demolition Guidelines: Questions to ask. She pointed out that the Applicant could not answer the questions because the property had been purchased to demolish.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hoffman, Ms. Luikhart said that her home, which was not on the *Cady Street Lot Analysis* mentioned above, was built in 1836, was roughly 1400 square feet, with a lot size of 125' x 125'. They had a separate carriage house as well.

Commissioner Vernacchia wondered if it would make a difference to Ms. Luikhart if the proposed replacement home was more modest in size and structure, and conform more with the square footage and percent of structure to lot as the other homes on the street. Ms. Luikhart encouraged adding an addition to the back of the current structure, thus maintaining the appearance and fabric of the neighborhood.

**Motion Hoffman, support by Gudritz,** to schedule a public hearing on this application to demolish at the next meeting.

Discussion followed regarding process and scheduling the public hearing.

In response to a question from Commissioner Field, Chair Johnson clarified that the determination of whether or not the subject structure was of historical significance would be made after the public hearing. In response to a further question from Commissioner Vernacchio, Chair Johnson said that it was not necessary to hold a final vote on the application at the public hearing, especially if it was felt more time was needed to study the issue.

In response to questions from Mr. Presley, Chair Johnson encouraged him to supply any appropriate information regarding the subject property. The HDC would be looking at this structure and site in particular, and would not make a general determination regarding all brick ranches in the Historic District.

Consultant Elmiger directed the Applicant and Commissioners' attention to the narrative on Historic and Non Historic Structures as found on 2-2 and 2-3 of the *Historic District Design Standards*. Consultant Elmiger noted that this section was modified when the District went through the Certified Local Government process. She would make sure the most up to date version of these pages was emailed to the Commissioners.

In response to a question from Commissioner Argenta, Consultant Elmiger said that the 50-year criterion was not singular – that is, there were other criteria that also had to be met in order to deem a structure historic.

After further discussion regarding scheduling the public hearing, the **motion on the table was withdrawn.** 

**MOTION Vernacchia, support by Hoffman,** to schedule the public hearing on this application to demolish on October 22, 2014 at 7:00 pm. **Motion carried unanimously**.

Chair Johnson noted that October 22 was for the public hearing only. The regular HDC meeting would still take place on October 15.

Ms. Luikhart called the Commission's attention to a recent study completed by the City of Plymouth: *Plymouth Residential Infill Survey*. Chair Johnson requested that Consultant Elmiger forward a copy of the survey to the Commissioners.

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As noted above, this agenda item was withdrawn.

### 8. DISCUSSION

## **Grants for Historic District Survey**

Consultant Elmiger said she had spoken with SHPO (Michigan State Historic Preservation Office) and had tried to contact the Americana Foundation regarding the City's interest in doing a Reconnaissance Level Survey of the Historic District, as the current survey did not follow current state guidelines. There was also no clearly defined period of significance identified for the District; the new survey would provide this. Also, commercial buildings designated as an historic structure would be eligible for a federal tax credit.

Consultant Elmiger continued that SHPO did not provide grants for Reconnaissance Level surveys – they preferred Intensive Level surveys. Since there was a cost and process to apply for a grant, Ms. Elmiger did not recommend moving forward with a Reconnaissance Level survey grant application at this time.

Consultant Elmiger had been trying to contact someone at the Americana Foundation – she had yet to talk to a person there. However, the Foundation did have a grant program particularly targeting preservation of historic structures in Michigan, but the grants were only awarded to non-profit organizations. Commissioner Gudritz had suggested contacting the Historic Society. Ms Elmiger had done this and the Society had indicated interest in partnering with the City to apply for such a grant.

Chair Johnson asked about getting a grant from SHPO to do an intensive survey. Ms. Elmiger said she would follow up with SHPO and with Historic Consultant Kristine Kidorff regarding this.

In response to a question from Commissioner Vernacchio regarding who would do the actual work should a grant be received, Consultant Elmiger said that while that was still an open question, the Commission had received a proposal from Historic Consultant Kristine Kidorff.

After brief further discussion, Chair Johnson closed the discussion.

# **Structural Engineer**

Consultant Elmiger called the Commission's attention to two additional structural engineers who had submitted proposals to the City: Fitzpatrick Structural Engineering, P.C., Ann Arbor MI and Johnston Design Inc., Clarkston, MI. The Commission had previously received a proposal from Robert Darvas Associates, Ann Arbor MI. These structural engineers would be on call for structures deemed structurally unsafe and therefore were proposed for demolition.

Because there were now three structural engineers, the demolition application could be modified so that applicants could choose among the three approved structural engineers, depending on the type of demolition (wood, commercial, etc.) and budget involved.

Commissioner Hoffman confirmed that all costs for a demolition would be borne by the applicant.

In response to a question from Commissioner Vernacchio, Consultant Elmiger said that all the structural engineers were qualified to do all types of demolition work. By offering three structural engineers, applicants had a choice of who to use and what price to pay. She would draft language for the demolition application regarding this and bring it back to the Commission for review.

In answer to a question from Commissioner Argenta, Consultant Elmiger said that the new pages regarding historic and non-historic structures had been distributed previously, and were included in the document on the City's website. She would provide them again via email to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Gudritz confirmed that Consultant Elmiger would research further the HDC's role in determining placement of air conditioners and generators in the Historic District.

Consultant Elmiger asked the Commissioners to bring the documentation for Case #7 to the regular October meeting.

# **ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no further discussion, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl McGuire Recording Secretary

Approved as published 10/15/2014