

**NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**March 16, 2016**  
**Wednesday 7:00 P.M. – Northville City Hall – Council Chambers**

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

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

**Present:** Allen, Argenta, Field, Gudritz, Hoffman, Murdock

**Absent:** Tartaglia (excused)

**Also Present:** Planning Consultant Elmiger  
Three citizens

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Dennis Engerer, The Village Workshop, Northville, MI expressed some concerns about the proposed PUD project for an assisted living community in the Foundry Flask area. He and other Village Workshop members had been excited about some of the changes that had occurred in that area, and were pleased that there were plans to bring the Farmers' Market there. He had believed the idea was for a creative district – where people could go to experience theater, crafts, etc. He did not think an assisted living facility fit in with that ideal, and did not represent the very best use for the old Foundry Flask building and the area generally. The Foundry Flask building did have a historic relationship with other buildings in the area, including The Village Workshop. Historic uses had included manufacturing everything from church bells to school furniture to aircraft. He would like to see the Foundry Flask building continue in some way with that historic theme.

Mr. Engerer hoped that the proposed developers would look at other areas. This particular site, next to the Tipping Point Theatre, next to the Village Workshop, next to Rick Cox's building – the old valve plant – did not seem the appropriate location for assisted living. Mr. Engerer had seen various conceptual drawings and plans that showed this part of town being a lively focal point for people entering Northville. Before any decision was made he hoped that people in the community would be able to express some of their concerns.

Chair Allen explained the process completed thus far. The applicants had been before the Planning Commission about a month ago to seek eligibility for a PUD (Planned Unit Development). They were granted eligibility on a 5-2 vote. This did not mean the final project was approved, however.

Chair Allen asked Planning Consultant Elmiger to comment further.

Planning Consultant Elmiger said that nothing more had been submitted since the developers had received PUD eligibility. The next step, should the applicants move forward, would be for them to submit a site plan for Planning Commission review.

Chair Allen further explained that should the applicants move forward, after site plan review there would be public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council levels. As far as the HDC was concerned, the only jurisdiction they had was regarding the Foundry Flask building, as a portion of the building was within the Historic District. Even then, the HDC had no jurisdiction over use – that was the purview of the Planning Commission and City Council.

Chair Allen said the conceptual plan presented to the Planning Commission included the demolition of the Foundry Flask building. If that went forward, the HDC would go through the process for

demolishing a building in the Historic District. If the applicants decided to keep the building, at some point in the process the HDC would review the building for conformance to Historic District standards.

Chair Allen emphasized that questions regarding use would be better asked at the Planning Commission and City Council levels.

Commissioner Field reiterated that only the structure was within the Historic District; the parking lot was not. The HDC would only review what was happening to the building; should the building remain the HDC had no control over what was done inside.

Commissioner Hoffman noted that he and Commissioner Argenta had participated in the latest revisions of the Master Plan, and Mr. Engerer was correct in that the area had been planned as a creative district. Part of the HDC's purview was impact on the Historic District. The HDC could weigh in regarding the impact of the proposed development on the historical section of the City. Along with Mr. Engerer, Commissioner Hoffman had concerns about an assisted living development being compatible with the Master Plan in that area.

Chair Allen said that at this point they didn't know even if the applicants were going to resubmit. To a certain degree this was still speculative.

Commissioner Field pointed out that if the applicants were successful at the Planning Commission level, it was more difficult for the HDC to decide against the project. He urged Mr. Engerer and other interested parties to participate at every level of the process.

Mr. Engerer asked if the City knew for sure whether the applicant was intending to demolish the building completely.

Chair Allen said the conceptual site plan presented to the Planning Commission showed the building as being demolished. Again, actual site plan drawings had not been submitted.

Carter Guider, The Village Workshop, asked about the criteria for demolition.

Chair Allen said there were guidelines for demolition within the Historic District Standards. This would be a major demolition so a public hearing would be triggered. The applicant would have to prove to the HDC why this resource was no longer viable.

Planning Consultant Elmiger further reviewed process: The applicant would come to the HDC requesting that the building be demolished and would provide information that was required by the ordinance. The HDC would then determine if the building was historically significant. If the HDC determined that the building had historic significance, a public hearing would be scheduled. If the HDC determined that the building did not have historic significance, then the HDC could go ahead at the same meeting and make a decision regarding the demolition.

Commissioner Argenta said that the criteria for demolition in the Historic District Standards were available online. As Commissioner Hoffman had said, in addition to demolition, the HDC would be charged with looking at how this proposal would affect the rest of the Historic District.

Planning Consultant Elmiger and Chair Allen pointed out that minutes and agendas were available online, and could be a resource for anyone researching this matter.

Tracey Wormsbacher, The Village Workshop, asked about a timeline for this type of decision. She did the planning for Village Workshop, so if she was going to plan some things that would result in the

Workshop asking the City for permission for closing the street, etc., what timeline should she be looking at?

Chair Allen said he believed the process for approval would preclude any construction occurring this calendar year.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**MOTION Field, support by Argenta,** to approve the agenda as published. **Motion carried unanimously.**

**4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:** February 17, 2016.

The following corrections to the minutes were noted:

- Page 1, Commissioners Present: ~~Gudritz~~
- Page 6, first line, last word: change ~~allow~~ to allow

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Field,** to approve the minutes of February 17, 2016 as amended. **Motion carried unanimously.**

**5. REPORTS:**

- A. CITY ADMINISTRATION:** None
- B. CITY COUNCIL:** None
- C. PLANNING COMMISSIONER:** None
- D. OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENTAL LIAISONS:** None

**6. PUBLIC HEARING:** None.

**7. CASES TO BE HEARD – BY CASE:**

**CASE #1**

**ALEXANDER’S/GRAPHIC VISIONS  
122 W. MAIN**

**NEW PROJECTING SIGN**

Sue Dillon, Graphic Visions, Inc., was present on behalf of this application, which was to install a projecting sign at a second entrance to the business at 122 W. Main. She distributed a new rendering of the sign that included the minor change of removing the words “of Northville.”

Ms. Dillon said that Alexander’s had been a tenant of this building since it was first built and had good success there. He now had the opportunity to expand into the space next to him, and the building’s owner required that a second sign be installed. Since the Historic District allowed a combination of wall and projecting signs, they were proposing a projecting sign at this location. The projecting sign had a smaller footprint, thus supporting and complementing the existing sign.

Ms. Dillon directed the Commission’s attention to the schematic in their packets, which had as words “Alexander’s Custom Clothiers of Northville.” The applicant understood that there was an interpretation for this sign requiring a lesser number of units and therefore they were also showing an alternative without the words “of Northville,” even though it was part of this business’s name. This was the schematic she had just handed around.

The color for the sign and bracket would be Sherwin Williams 6341 Red Cent. For the cream color, they would be doing a custom mix in order to match the existing sign as closely as possible.

Ms. Dillon asked the Commission to give a decision as to whether the “of Northville” needed to be removed.

Commissioner Hoffman asked Planning Consultant Elmiger to comment on whether or not the “of Northville” could remain. Planning Consultant Elmiger said she had spoken with the Building Inspector and he thought there were six message units on the original schematic; his interpretation was that the “of Northville” must be removed so that the sign only had the permitted five message units.

Ms. Dillon acknowledged this requirement.

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

Chair Allen opened the meeting for public comment. Seeing that no one came forward to speak, Chair Allen returned the item to the Commission.

**MOTION Argenta, support by Gudritz, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as presented, with the words “of Northville” removed, referencing the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular Standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 4-21 materials, 4-24 signs, and 5-18 paint and colors. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **CASE #2**

**STUDIO 170/GRAPHIC VISIONS  
170 E. MAIN STREET**

**NEW WALL SIGN**

Sue Dillon, Graphic Visions, Inc., was present on behalf of this application, which was to install a new wall sign at 170 E. Main Street on the front façade, and another wall sign at the rear entrance.

Ms. Dillon said this space was the Utopia Salon and Spa, which was now going through a rebranding with a new name: Studio 170.

The front sign was 28.32 square feet. This was a pin-mounted sign, using a similar – though smaller – space to the old Utopia sign. The back sign was a black panel with white letters: an understated elegant approach. The window graphics would be minimal on the doors. There would be an announcement paper on the door for a short time explaining that Utopia was now Studio 170. All the mounting would be done with studs through mortar joints.

Commissioner Argenta asked if the panel would be three-dimensional. Ms. Dillon said it would be flat. The client had made the decision to go photographic, so they would be doing a UV-compatible print, with flat cut letters to complement it.

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Field, to accept the application as complete. Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen opened the meeting for public comment. Seeing that no one came forward to speak, Chair Allen returned the item to the Commission.

**MOTION Hoffman, support by Gudritz, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as presented, referencing the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular Standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 4-21 materials,**

4-24 signs, 4-27 rear façade development, and 5-18 paint and colors. **Motion carried unanimously.**

## 8. DISCUSSION

Commissioner Gudritz began a discussion of the pending State legislation, which seemed to ~~decapitate~~ decimate the laws that were passed in 1970 regarding historic districts.

Chair Allen had confirmed that the City had been following this closely and had been letting their representatives know their reactions. He explained that he had forwarded email information today to the Commissioners from the Michigan Preservation Network, which gave an update as to where the bill was now. While changes had been made to the original bill (HB 5232) there were still concerns, which included:

- SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) was not included in the appeals process. It would be up to the local governing body how a historic designation was appealed.
- An elected official, along with a person in the construction trade and someone who lived in the historic district, must be on the local HDC. However, elected officials were prohibited by State law from voting on the same issue on different boards. If the elected official served on the entity designated for appeals, this could provide a conflict. For instance, in Northville, if the appeals went to the City Council, Chair Allen would be able to vote on an issue only once – either as a Council member or as an HDC member.
- Since the City received its CLG (Certified Local Government) from SHPO, who would regulate this if SHPO were removed from the process? Planning Consultant Elmiger pointed out that the CLG enabled the HDC and City to get grants. However, it did not establish any other kind of jurisdiction.

Commissioner Field said it would have been helpful for himself and perhaps Commissioner Argenta to have appeared in Lansing when this bill was first heard. He noted that the legislature only had to give 24 hours notice, and they did this when they wanted to push something through quickly. The HDC needed to have speaking points that they could use on short notice, such as the points Chair Allen had just made.

Commissioner Gudritz asked if there was value to the City passing a resolution opposing the proposed bill.

Chair Allen said the proposed legislation had changed so many times this might be difficult to do. It sounded like the bill's sponsors were surprised by how much uproar there was about this legislation.

Commissioner Gudritz said he felt there were many things in the proposed legislation that were disturbing.

Commissioner Field said that the HDC was looking at the legislation from the perspective of a fairly rational commission. Due to rigid attitudes on some local HDC's, there might be communities that would welcome the proposed legislation. Northville knew the current system worked and worked well. This should be communicated to the State legislature. The current law might need to be tweaked a bit, but not completely destroyed.

Commissioner Argenta commented that he sat on the DDA selection board for someone to help with the Strategic Plan. The entire DDA was in the Historic District. He asked the 5 candidates what would happen to the character of downtown Northville if the pending legislation passed and basically wiped out the current Historic District. He found it interesting that the general answer had been to not worry

about it – there was ways and means for the local entity to “do” their historic district. This just wouldn’t be tied to the State.

Other Discussion:

Commissioner Argenta reported on his “Committee of One” regarding an applicant from last month, Marygrove Awning, on behalf of 112 W. Main. The applicant had resubmitted the next day and Commissioner Argenta had approved the change, which included a white stripe down the center of the awning that divided it from the sign/awning next door.

Commissioner Argenta asked about the fence on the 3-acre property on Randolph, which had been approved some time ago. Would the fence have to come down now that the parcel had been split? Planning Consultant Elmiger said the fence had become an existing nonconformity. It could not be expanded or changed, but did not have to be removed.

Commissioner Murdock reminded the Commission that they had talked about taking a tour of the Foundry Flask building. This should be done before the HDC heard any proposals for that building. Brief discussion was held regarding the best way to do this. If the entire Commission went together, it would have to be a published meeting. Perhaps this visit could be scheduled right before or after a regularly scheduled HDC meeting, so that it could actually be part of the meeting. Alternatively the building could be visited in groups that were less than a quorum.

**9. ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing that there was no further comment, Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl McGuire  
Recording Secretary

Approved as amended 4/20/16