



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Historic Districts Study Committee

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*Chairperson Julie Granthen, Vice Chairperson Jason Thompson
Members: Darlene Janulis, Kelly Lyons,
Tom Stephens, Charles Tischer, and LaVere Webster*

Thursday, January 14, 2021

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Julie Granthen called the meeting of the Historic Districts Study Committee to order at 5:38 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present 5 - Julie Granthen, Darlene Janulis, Kelly Lyons, Jason Thompson and Tom Stephens

Excused 2 - LaVere Webster and Charles Tischer

Quorum present.

Also present: Sara Roediger, Director of Planning & Economic Dev.
Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning
Kristen Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting
Maureen Gentry, Recording Secretary

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no Communications presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Granthen opened Public Comment at 7:39 p.m. Seeing no one wishing to speak online or in the Auditorium and no email communications received, she closed Public Comment.

DISCUSSION

2020-0582

Request to delist the historic district property at 1021 Harding Ave., located east of Livernois, north of Avon, Parcel No. 15-15-327-002, Paul Miller, Applicant
(Reference: Application documents were placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof).

Present for the applicant were Paul and Jackson Miller, 1021 Harding Ave., Rochester Hills, MI 48307 and Kim Widiker (Paul's former wife), Oakland Township, Michigan.

Ms. Widiker noted that they had gone before City Council, and Mr. Miller had asked her to speak. She related that as everyone might know, the property had been in Mr. Miller's family since the 1970's. They had lived in Rochester since the early 1960's. Mr. Miller had been on the Historic Districts Commission. She owned two historic properties in Oakland Township, so she knew that history and not keeping houses was very important in having to come before the City Council and the Historic Districts Commission to request to be delisted. That decision was very difficult, but it was not feasible to repair the house with the amount of damage done by the fire. It was not feasible for anyone to afford to renovate. She asked where the process went. They understood that City Council had asked for a recommendation. They would discuss it, but after the meeting, she asked what would happen.

Ms. Kidorf advised that the next step would hopefully be to have a draft study report at the February meeting for the HDSC to review and adopt. There were three reasons the Study Committee could consider for elimination: loss of the physical characteristic of the historic district; insignificance; or defective procedure for establishing the district. She would focus on whether it had architectural integrity. Once the report was adopted, the clock would start for the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review. After 60 days, the Final Report on the elimination of the district would be presented at an HDSC Public Hearing to see if there were any changes or comments. Finally, a recommendation would be sent back to City Council. She felt that the earliest it would go to Council would be May or June.

Ms. Widiker stated that City Council requested that it be expedited. She said that she understood the process, but commented that the State moved at its own speed. She pointed out that the exterior photos did not show the level of damage, and it had been boarded up and painted to match the brick to look better. She asked if someone would go into the house and how the decision was made about delisting.

Ms. Kidorf said that she would be drafting the report. She had requested permission to go onto the property. She reminded that just as when something was designated, only the exterior of the building(s) was considered. She said that the photos were appreciated.

Ms. Widiker noted that there was also a video. She said that she knew that the exterior was important, but the construction determined how the interior had to be addressed. It was a double brick structure. If the inside

was not fixed, the outside could fall down. She assumed that anything could be done for a price, but the cost would be exponential, and not only for the owner. As a real estate appraiser, she claimed that it was not something a buyer would undertake. Adding an historic district would make it an economic hardship on the property itself. There was a fire three years ago. Mr. Miller had to take care of his mother, and that was why it took so long to try to do something. It was urgent now because the City and the neighbors were ready for a resolution.

Ms. Kidorf asked if they had a repair estimate or appraisals of what the property was worth.

Ms. Widiker said that they did not have them, and coming up with the money even to go before the HDSC had been difficult. She hoped that no one was in a situation to not be able to work. She claimed that it would be difficult to come up with more money. It would be expensive because of the way the house was constructed, and many things could go wrong.

Ms. Kapelanski mentioned that the Building Dept. was aware of Ordinance violations. They questioned the soundness of the structure, and the applicant was asked to provide a structural engineering report. Ms. Widiker said that Mr. Miller did submit one. Mr. Miller agreed that he paid for and had a structural engineering report sent to the Building Dept. Ms. Kapelanski said that it did not come to a final conclusion.

Mr. Miller said that he was told that it was not an accredited structural engineering report with all the steps needed to restore the house. Mr. Jackson Miller said that they had several reports done to see if it was sound.

Ms. Janulis questioned whether there was a report from an insurance adjuster, or if there was no insurance on the home.

Ms. Widiker said that there was not, which had to do with the age of the property. Certain companies did not want to insure. Mr. Miller was switching to a State policy and the fire happened in the gap. The Fire inspector did a report stating that it was an accident.

Ms. Janulis said that she would be interested in seeing the report. There was not enough information currently - not enough objective information - for her to make any decisions. If there had been insurance, an insurance adjuster would have listed the cost. She said that she had not seen Mr. Miller's engineering report. Ms. Kapelanski said that she would get a

copy of it. Ms. Janulis asked if the City would pay for an independent engineering report. Ms. Kapelanski said that she would have to follow up with Building. They were trying to determine if the structure was sound.

Mr. Miller stated that the engineering report had a professional seal, and it was an unbiased report. He said that no engineer would falsify the findings, which were subject to health and safety, and it was ethical. The report the Building Dept. had was accurate and unbiased. He had a number of engineers look at the house. One said that it would be cheaper to tear it down and build over, and he would give his professional opinion but not write a report. The Building Dept. required that before he (Mr. Miller) could do anything. He hoped that would put to rest any idea that the report was biased. If anyone else paid for one, it would be the same type of report. It would be \$20K to \$30k start to finish to determine what needed to be done at what step. Ms. Widiker remarked that outside of that report it was impossible to not be biased, and even the HDSC had to be somewhat biased due to its love of history.

Vice Chairperson Thompson summarized that the next step was getting a report from Ms. Kidorf. They would get everything in writing and move forward with that. He said that he would be hesitant about asking the City to pay for anything. He realized that if someone did not have resources that it would become overwhelming.

Mr. Jackson Miller wondered what additional information another report would provide over the structural report. Vice Chairperson Thompson said that Ms. Kidorf would put together the criteria, but an engineering report was outside of her expertise. Chairperson Thompson reminded that the HDSC/HDC were only interested in the exterior, not the interior.

Ms. Kidorf said that she would not be going inside. She did not think that a video was the best format, and she would like to see broader views of the interior. Ms. Kidorf added that she would be looking at all the buildings on the property, and would need those pictures.

Ms. Widiker said that they were told that because of the study there would be a cost of up to several thousand dollars, but the report would cost \$600. If the house looked good but if it could not structurally stay that way, it would be no good. She asked if it would cost \$2,000 more. Ms. Kapelanski said that the fees were for Ms. Kidorf to complete her work and to provide the report.

Ms. Widiker noted that they had asked for the paperwork for Avon

Township when the home was first on the list. She asked when the next meeting was. She said that they did a video because the front of house had no roof. The walls could cave in. The video made it easier to see. She suggested that they could take more photos. They wanted to provide everything they could. She stated that money was an object, especially during Covid.

Mr. Stephens asked what steps they had taken to look for funding that might be available, such as grants, over the three year period. He was curious what had been done.

Mr. Miller said that until the end of May, that was only an idea, as he was busy taking care of his mom. Since then, he had looked into it. He had some ideas, but he was dealing with the City. He got a call from the Mayor with a request to come in for a meeting with staff and the Mayor. He was told that he needed to have visible improvements to make the home livable in days. That was in September. He had several meetings with the Building Dept. He received a 72-hour notice of demo from Building. Ever since, there had been a lot of pressure. To make it livable, it would need a new roof, windows, doors and porches, which he could not produce. The grants all required a nonprofit, and it took a year or two to get the grant ready. The City was telling him that he was out of time. Since he was out of money, he could not do what he wanted, which was to restore. He was trying to sell it but if they tried to sell with a historical structure that was unlivable, there was a wide disparity as opposed to a property that was delisted. He did not have the money to fix it. The City wanted him to demo. If he did that, it would lose its value.

Ms. Widiker said that it was not a matter of being worth more as a historical home. If someone would buy it and renovate, it would be worth doing. It had been up for sale since. The question they were asked by people interested was, since it was historical, what the next step in the process was, and they were not interested then. If no one was interested in buying and no one could fix it, it was an economic hardship on the property. She asked if the City recognized that as part of the process.

Vice Chairperson Thompson said that he could not speak for the other members, but he looked at all the information as a component. Ms. Widiker recapped that Ms. Kidorf would look at what she had. They would produce more photos. They would get a copy of the engineering review to the members. She asked if there was anything else they needed to provide.

Chairperson Granthen said she would like to know more about what shape the barn and shed were in. Vice Chairperson Thompson said that Ms. Kidorf looked at all the buildings, which should be included in the report. Ms. Lyons asked if Ms. Kidorf would talk about delisting as it applied to the other buildings. Ms. Kidorf said that she would look at whether the house had lost integrity and if it would be enough with only the out buildings to retain the historical significance. She would look at the criteria and propose as a whole.

Ms. Widiker asked if she could get a copy of the criteria in the Ordinance. She would look at the Ordinance to be able to answer questions. They would take the boards off of the house. Ms. Kidorf said that if they removed the boards, she would like to know so she could be there. Mr. Miller stated that no boards would come off. Ms. Widiker asked if she could see the history of the house, and Ms. Kidorf noted that the survey sheets had been included in the packet.

Chairperson Granthen thanked the applicants for spending time with the HDSC members, who had learned a lot. She indicated that there was a lot more to learn. Ms. Widiker thanked the members for helping them with the process.

Discussed

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2020-0583

Request for Election of Officers - Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary for a one-year term

Nominations were made and accepted, and upon motion by Janulis, seconded by Stephens, Julie Granthen was unanimously re-elected as Chairperson; Jason Thompson was unanimously re-elected as Vice Chairperson; and Darlene Janulis was unanimously re-elected as Secretary for a one-year term to expire the first meeting in 2022.

A motion was made by Janulis, seconded by Stephens, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 5 - Granthen, Janulis, Lyons, Thompson and Stephens

Excused 2 - Webster and Tischer

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Granthen reminded the members that the next Regular Meeting was scheduled for February 11, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Historic Districts Study Committee and upon motion by Thompson, seconded by Lyons, Chairperson Granthen adjourned the Regular Meeting at 6:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

All yes

Julie Granthen, Chairperson
Historic Districts Study Committee

Darlene Janulis, Secretary