



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Historic Districts Study Committee

1000 Rochester Hills Dr
Rochester Hills, MI
48309
(248) 656-4600
Home Page:
www.rochesterhills.org

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

Thursday, February 11, 2021

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Julie Granthen called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. using Zoom software.

ROLL CALL

Present 6 - Julie Granthen, Darlene Janulis, Kelly Lyons, Jason Thompson, Tom Stephens and Charles Tischer

Excused 1 - LaVere Webster

Quorum present.

Also present: Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning
Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting
Maureen Gentry, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2021-0063](#) December 12, 2019 Joint HDC/HDSC Meeting

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

Aye 6 - Granthen, Janulis, Lyons, Thompson, Stephens and Tischer

Excused 1 - Webster

[2021-0064](#) January 14, 2021 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Lyons, seconded by Thompson, that this matter be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 6 - Granthen, Janulis, Lyons, Thompson, Stephens and Tischer

Excused 1 - Webster

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no Communications presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Granthen opened Public Comment at 5:35 p.m. Seeing no wishing to speak online or in the Auditorium and no communications received, she closed Public Comment.

DISCUSSION

2021-0090

Review of the Preliminary Report for 1021 Harding Ave. regarding the request to delist the property - City File No. 20-034. The property, located east of Livernois, north of Avon, totals two acres, is zoned RCD One Family Cluster, Parcel No. is 15-15-327-002, Paul Miller, Applicant

(Reference: The Preliminary Study Report was 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, Oakland Township, Michigan.

Chairperson Granthen noted that some members were able to visit the site recently. Ms. Kidorf said that she did not realize that some members who showed up were actually from the Historic Districts Commission and not the Study Committee, and she thought she had included them as members in the Report. She said that she would update that.

Ms. Kidorf summarized the Report. She advised that the property had four buildings, two of which were historic, the house and the barn, and two of which were not - the shed and pump house. The property was established as a fruit farm in 1870 by Henry and Ellen Ostrom. There had been a photo of the house included that showed some things that were not there at the time of designation. The barn was different. The Ostroms lived in the house until at least 1910, and by 1925, the property was owned by Isaac E. Boomer, President of the Michigan Builders Supply Company, who also built houses across the street. Records showed that the property was owned by Mrs. W. W. Jersey in 1938. At that point, it showed that the house was built in 1863, and there was a description of the house and original barn, which was not there at the time of designation in 1978. She noted that the request regarded whether the historic district should be eliminated. Per the local Ordinance, the criteria the Committee could consider for removing an historic district included lost physical characteristics that enabled establishment of the historic

district, insignificance, which meant that it was not historic in the way it had been previously defined in 1978, and defective procedure, meaning that the historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures. She stated that the biggest thing was lost physical characteristics. As they were aware, there had been a tragic fire in November of 2017. The Study Committee needed to determine whether the home retained its physical characteristics to still be contributing to the district.

Ms. Kidorf stated that in her opinion, even though there was fire damage, and a lot of the windows were gone, and the interior was in very poor condition (although she reminded that the Study Committee did not look at the interior), the form of the house was still there. The brick was still there, although its condition might not be as it appeared. The Committee could take that into consideration to some extent. In her opinion, the property still retained its historic integrity, which would be required for the National Registry of Historic Places. She said that she would be happy to answer any questions.

Ms. Janulis said that she believed that the request was to delist from its historical significance, which included the barn, rather than a request for demolition of the house. On the survey, it was noted that the owner had put a metal roof on the barn. She asked if the barn had historical significance with a metal roof added.

Ms. Kidorf said that she assumed that the HDC had approved the metal roof installation so that it would meet the Secretary of Interior Standards, but she did not think that a roof change in itself would make the building non-contributing. She said that she could not find out a lot about the barn, and she indicated that it was a good point.

Ms. Widiker said that it appeared that there was not a lot of data as to when the barn was actually constructed. She knew that it was shown at the time of the initial historic designation, but she stated that it was clearly not the original barn.

Ms. Lyons said that she appreciated the effort that went into the Preliminary Report. She found it very helpful, and she thanked Ms. Kidorf for preparing it. Chairperson Granthen agreed, and said that it was a very interesting report and very well done and documented.

Mr. Tischer thanked Ms. Kidorf for putting together the Preliminary Report. He agreed with the findings in the Report. Mr. Stephens also agreed with the comments about the Report.

Vice Chairperson Thompson said that he appreciated the work Ms. Kidorf put into the Report, and that she had turned it around within a month. He remarked that it was money very well spent by the City. Chairperson Granthen agreed that it was great that she was able to prepare such a comprehensive report in such a short time frame.

Ms. Janulis recalled that at the last meeting, she had asked about an Engineering report, and she had been told that there was a certified, sealed and credible report, but she had not seen it. She asked if she was the only one who did not get it, noting that she had a hard time downloading some of the documents. Ms. Janulis asked if someone could tell her what it said.

Chairperson Granthen said that the report was dated January 31, 2019. Mr. Tischer asked if someone could summarize the report for Ms. Janulis, and Ms. Lyons suggested that someone might screen share the conclusions.

Ms. Widiker agreed that the report had been included in the packet. She noted that the report had been requested by the City, because they were concerned that the building was hazardous and was going to fall down. It said that the building was structurally sound, and it would not fall down on someone, but it was uninhabitable. The damage was not just to the windows and walls; the entire section of the second floor was completely missing. Mr. Miller could not afford to fix it, and no potential buyer would purchase it, because the cost to renovate would far exceed its value when it was done. She reiterated that the house would not fall down, but it was not habitable.

Vice Chairperson Thompson recalled that there had been an economic hardship article included in the packet. He asked who had provided that, and Ms. Kidorf advised that Mr. Stephens had. Vice Chairperson Thompson asked what economic hardship the HDSC could consider in the process to delist. Ms. Kidorf said that unfortunately, for a delisting, there was no economic hardship criteria. If the HDC was considering a Notice to Proceed to demolish the house, they could consider economic hardship. Per State law, when the HDSC considered a delisting, the physical characteristics, significance or defective procedure were the only criteria they could consider as to whether or not to delist a property.

Ms. Widiker said that she understood that it was important to preserve the outside and what a home looked like 150 years ago. She asked the

Committee to take into consideration that the home looked like a billboard of a house, and it was not sustainable.

Vice Chairperson Thompson said that he could appreciate where Ms. Widiker was coming from. He stated that unfortunately, there was a very narrow scope and charge that the Study Committee had, and there were limited criteria things had to fall within. Economic hardship was not one of the criteria they could consider. If it were, he felt that the conclusion might be different. He pointed out that even if the report was accepted and the recommendation was to maintain the home, City Council could do what they wanted. That might be the place the applicants could make that argument. He said that he could only speak for himself, and he was not unsympathetic, but the Study Committee had to follow the very narrow guidelines in scope and focus for the purpose of the request.

Mr. Tischer agreed with Vice Chairperson Thompson. The interior of the house was in pretty bad shape, but the Committee had to consider the outside. Ms. Widiker asked if it would be possible, if the Committee accepted the Report, to add comment such as some members felt a certain way, and that there were extenuating circumstances. When it did go before City Council, Council would understand that the HDSC had absolutely done its job, but they could see how the members felt about the property.

Mr. Tischer said that if they could not make additional comments, it would be reflected in the Minutes. It could be brought up at the Council meeting as reference. Vice Chairperson Thompson added that they still had to have a Public Hearing, which would give the public an opportunity to comment, and all the discussions would go to City Council.

Ms. Janulis said that if what was before them was demolition, it would be understandable, given the condition of the house. The applicant wanted to delist it, so that had brought up her question about the barn. She viewed the property, but she felt that she had to do more homework. Before last month's meeting and the site visit, she stood outside and walked around. It was pretty clear that it was uninhabitable, and the barn needed work. The problem she was having was separating the two. There was a big difference between delisting the property and a Notice to Proceed to demolition, because of the barn and the value and the historical significance of the land.

Vice Chairperson Thompson said that it went to the limited scope of the Committee. They could only propose, if directed by Council, studies for

new districts, adjusting the boundaries of existing districts or delisting a district. The Committee could not decide about a demolition; that would fall under the purview of the HDC. Ms. Janulis said that she appreciated that. It was her third meeting in three years, and she felt that it was good to go through things for people who were newer and less familiar.

Ms. Lyons wished to echo Ms. Janulis' comments about the barn and mention Ms. Kidorf's Report. She felt that it had been well researched, and she supported the actions and would support a motion to adopt with the modification to correct the current members. She thought that it was important for them to talk about the limitation that they had, but it was a very important property. The barn was important, and the house, as it stood, remained important because they looked at the exterior. Just because it was an expensive endeavor did not make it not valuable. She hoped that something could come of it. It was sad for the City and for the family, and she was sad to hear about its state at the moment.

Mr. Jackson Miller said that they greatly appreciated the sympathy and understanding that they could only make a decision based on the facts they had. He noted that the structural report stated that in order to fix the house, it would require removal of some of the stone masonry. It included acknowledgment that the upstairs was mostly destroyed, including the roof. He understood that in order for a house to change a roof and receive approval by the HDC, it had to remain in the same scope of its historic nature. The barn was thought to be historic without having any kind of historic roof and clearly not being the original barn.

Mr. Paul Miller thanked the Committee for its work. He understood the constraints they were working under for their charge and mission. He felt that the rest of the discussion properly belonged before the HDC and then City Council. He was surprised that in reviewing the Report that he had not seen anything new. Ms. Kidorf did reference possible information regarding an earlier construction of the house. That was what he had always heard and understood from the early 1960's. In terms of the historic value of the district, if the house was found to be unsafe and needed to be demolished, he would argue that the only historic value was because of the house. Minus the house, and he agreed that the barn had been there for 80-90 years, the barn on its own had no historical significance. He did not believe that the property itself had anything so monumental that the dirt would be historically significant. They would have to see where the HDC and the discussion of the economic hardship or the unfeasibility of rehabilitation went. It would then depend on City Council approval of one or the other. He said that he looked forward to

discussing things more in the future.

Ms. Kidorf clarified that the matter would not be going before the HDC. That was a separate process. If he wanted to apply for a demo of the house, that would have been an application to the HDC, not a request for delisting to the City Council. They were two different processes. She agreed that if the house was not there, it would lose the physical characteristics and be eligible for delisting. The house was there and appeared to have integrity. If Mr. Miller wanted to stop the delisting process and apply to the HDC to demolish the house, it would be a different process.

Mr. Miller said that he understood. He did not wish to change the trajectory of the vote going downstream. He was all in favor of it going to City Council if that was the next step.

Mr. Jackson Miller noted again that any repairs would cause some of the stone masonry to be removed. He claimed that the masonry was part of what made it historic, and he asked if that could be considered in the decision.

Ms. Lyons advised that an historic property did not have to be fully intact as it was with all the original materials to be classified on the historic list. She asked Ms. Kidorf if she could add some background about the limitations. She knew that the HDC had approved some newer materials over the years. It was her understanding that a property did not have to be 100% historic, and she asked if that was correct.

Ms. Kidorf said that it had to retain enough fabric and appearance to convey the same integrity and appearance that it did at the time of designation. Comparing photos from 1978 and currently, with the exception of the fire damage, the house was pretty much in the same historic integrity as it was in 1978. She was not sure which stone work Mr. Miller was referring to. She knew that it had a stone foundation and brick walls. Although they were not in great repair, they were there as they appeared in 1978.

Mr. Jackson Miller said that in the structural report from 2019, the conclusion said that in order to fix the house, it would require removal of the brick walls. Ms. Kidorf said that it was a pretty common practice in any historic rehabilitation to rebuild masonry. As long as it was done in keeping with the Secretary of Interior Standards, it would not detract from the historic integrity of the property.

Vice Chairperson Thompson said that the masonry would cross into the purview of the HDC, which could issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. It was outside of the scope of the criteria the HDSC was looking at for the purposes of whether or not the district should be maintained.

Mr. Tischer said that in those types of situations in regards to masonry, owners were allowed to maintain and fix the outside of historic homes. The HDC just wanted to make sure it was in keeping with the Secretary of Interior Standards. That would include a roof as well. For example, if someone wanted to install an asphalt roof, it would be something the HDC would take a look at and determine whether it was appropriate or not.

Hearing no further discussion, Ms. Lyons moved the following:

MOTION by Lyons, seconded by Tischer, the Historic Districts Study Committee hereby adopts the Preliminary Report for 1021 Harding Ave. subject to correcting the listing of the current HDSC Commissioners, and requests that the Report be transmitted to the State Historic Preservation Office and the Planning Commission for review and comments.

Vice Chairperson Thompson reminded that all the notes, the minutes and other documents would be included in the City Council packet. For the purposes of the Study Committee, there was a very limited scope, but all the points raised were legitimate and would be considered by City Council.

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

Aye 6 - Granthen, Janulis, Lyons, Thompson, Stephens and Tischer

Excused 1 - Webster

Chairperson Granthen stated for the record that the motion had passed. She wanted to mention to the applicants an idea she had passed along. Since the subject property was surrounded by green space, she wondered if part of the property might be purchased by the Green Space Committee at a fair market price, and if those funds could then perhaps help repair the house. It had occurred to her because of the unique location of the house surrounded by green space. She suggested that if they were interested, they could contact the City for assistance.

Ms. Janulis said that as Chairperson of the Green Space Advisory Committee, she knew that they did have funds to look at property.

However, all the property they had purchased was below fair market value. She did not want people to get excited and be disappointed. The Committee would be happy to look at it. The applicants would have to fill out an application with Parks and Forestry in order for them to take a look at it. She said that the Committee did not really like knocking down houses, but it was something they could consider.

Ms. Widiker asked about the next step. She believed that the Report had to be sent to Lansing, and SHPO had 60 days to respond. There would be a Public Hearing in front of the HDSC. Ms. Kidorf agreed that the Report would get transmitted to the State Historic Preservation Office and to the Planning Commission. 60 days from the transmittal, a Public Hearing would be held. She pointed out that the April 8 HDSC meeting would not give them 60 days, so the Public Hearing would have to be at the May 13th meeting, unless a special meeting was called. She stated that they would make sure they were in compliance and move things along as quickly as possible. Ms. Widiker asked the purpose of the Public Hearing. Ms. Kidorf said that it was required by State law anytime an historic district was changing so that people could comment. Ms. Widiker asked if the Report would be sent to City Council after that. Ms. Kidorf said that after the Public Hearing, the Committee would consider a Final Report. That could potentially happen at the same meeting, if the Committee desired. Once the Committee adopted the Final Report, it would get transmitted to City Council.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to come before the Historic Districts Study Committee.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Granthen reminded the Commissioners that the next Regular Meeting was scheduled for March 11, 2021 (subsequently cancelled).

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Historic Districts Study Committee, Chairperson Granthen adjourned the Regular Meeting at 6:28 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

All yes

Julie Granthen, Chairperson
Rochester Hills
Historic Districts Study Committee

Darlene Janulis, Secretary