



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Historic Districts Commission

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Chairperson Jason Thompson, Vice Chairperson Julie Granthen
Members: Darlene Janulis, Kelly Lyons, Susan McKinnon, Steve Reina,
Dr. Richard Stamps, Tom Stephens, Charles Tischer

Thursday, September 12, 2019

7:00 PM

Rochester University Barn, 800 W. Avon Rd.

CALL TO ORDER

After Mr. Jaymes Vettrano of Rochester University had taken the members on a tour and outlined the barn's renovations, Chairperson Jason Thompson called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. at the Rochester University Barn.

ROLL CALL

Present 7 - Julie Granthen, Darlene Janulis, Kelly Lyons, Steve Reina, Richard Stamps, Jason Thompson and Charles Tischer

Excused 2 - Susan McKinnon and Tom Stephens

Quorum present.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2019-0403](#) June 13, 2019 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Janulis, seconded by Lyons, that this matter be Approved as Presented . The motion PASSED by an unanimous vote.

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

Abstain 1 - Reina

Excused 2 - McKinnon and Stephens

COMMUNICATIONS

A) *Article in TUGTA News dated 8-27-19 regarding the Sears and Roebuck (Rochester University) Barn*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Thompson opened Public Comment at 7:15 p.m. Seeing no one come forward, he closed Public Comment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2019-0204 Survey Priorities Discussion

(Reference: Staff report, prepared by Kristine Kidorf, dated September 3, 2019 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof).

Ms. Kidorf recalled that at the last meeting, they talked about surveying. Because of their responsibilities as a Certified Local Government (CLG), they were charged with doing some ongoing surveying, and they came up with a generic survey plan to get through the first CLG reporting. However, they needed to work on a more concrete plan. The HDC had asked about some of the newer subdivisions, which had also been recommended in Jane Busch's survey in 2002 about the suburbanization of Avon Township. She and Ms. Kapelanski had spent a long morning driving around and looking to see if there were any possibilities. She picked out the subdivisions that were pre-1960, and some she thought might have some historic integrity to warrant a further look. They could decide if there was enough information to include it in the survey plan as an option for which, she reminded, they needed Council's buy-in before moving forward. They could create a survey action plan based on all of the options they had discussed, and they would submit it to City Council. She suggested that they might want to include the Historic Districts Study Committee in a joint meeting to talk about it.

Ms. Kapelanski noted that Council would have a joint meeting with the Planning Commission in January, and their thought was to have the HDC at that meeting and submit the priorities for the survey plan. There were the post-war subdivisions, and they talked about potentially resurveying the existing historic districts to see if the boundaries needed to be modified. Staff was looking for some direction from the Commission. They felt that having a joint meeting with the HDSC would be a good idea before meeting with Council. They would like to know the HDC's thoughts about resurveying the Winkler Mill and Stoney Creek Districts and about looking at the post-war subdivisions.

Dr. Stamps asked if the Meadowbrook Subdivision, north of Avon, east of Adams (the OU faculty sub) had been looked at. Ms. Kidorf did not think they drove by it. Dr. Stamps noted that the area had all been farmland, and now it was a subdivision. There were a couple of mid-century modern

homes there that were pretty special, especially the northern-most one on Adams Rd. by the fraternity houses. He noted that Lawrence Tech. had sent students there to document it, because it was such a good example of that period architecture.

Vice Chairperson Granthen mentioned an older home on Rhineberry. Dr. Stamps knew that it was a subdivision from about 1956 on of mixed periods. There were Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced houses, and he claimed that a couple were beautiful examples of mid-century modern. Vice Chairperson Granthen pointed out that there was an old French bread oven in one of the yards. Dr. Stamps said that it was State land, so it might not be eligible to be put on a list. Ms. Kidorf said that it did not mean that it could not be surveyed, and Dr. Stamps agreed that it should be surveyed and documented.

Ms. Janulis said that they had discussed ranking three on the post-war list of 11 highlighted subs. She came up with her top five or six that she felt would be worth pursuing. However, without further investigation, she did not think that she could really further rank the five or six. Ms. Kapelanski explained that the three options she had mentioned were to resurvey the Stoney Creek and Winkler Mill Districts or pursue the post-war subs.

Chairperson Thompson agreed that the discussion would be good to have at another joint meeting with the Study Committee. Vice Chairperson Granthen brought up the historic stone wall on Adams, and she thought that it might also be something to consider. There were many people who felt that it should be taken down when Adams was widened, but there was a big deal made about it, and it was not.

Chairperson Thompson thought that it would be easier to determine the priorities if both groups were presented the information at a joint meeting before the meeting with City Council. He reminded that nothing could move forward without Council approval. Ms. Kapelanski indicated that she would like to have a good idea of what they would present by mid-December, so there was material they had to prepare.

Ms. Lyons asked staff to refresh the members about the issues of resurveying the districts that had new houses. Ms. Kidorf said that they would ask Council to appoint a Study Committee to study the boundaries to see whether they should be changed to eliminate all of the new construction. She added that the third option included doing a more intensive level survey for some of the properties on the former potential list.

Dr. Stamps said that he was really impressed by the work that Ms. Kidorf had done, and he felt that it was very valuable. Ms. Janulis said that she had lived in the City 40 years, and when she looked at Ms. Kidorf's notes, there were six that she thought were the most interesting. She looked at Avondale Farms, for example, and then when she drove by it, she got a better feel and to see what it was that captured Ms. Kidorf's attention. She agreed that it was very helpful, and it gave her a chance to take a second look. When she had more time, she would look at the ones that were not highlighted, as well, because there was a reason they were on the list.

Dr. Stamps felt that the reality was that in 20 years, probably half of the homes would be torn down. The fact that there was some documentation was very nice. It would also be nice if they had photographs. Ms. Kidorf said that she started taking photos, but it got a little crazy. Dr. Stamps felt that the option of downsizing the contiguous historic districts and redoing the boundaries was an important issue. They kept having people come before the Commission asking permission to do something for a new house. The only reason they had to ask permission was because they were in an historic district, but he was not always sure why. He knew that it could shrink the historic district, but they would not lose any of the real historic structures.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked about making some of them individual districts. Ms. Kidorf said that she would not recommend that. Single districts were hard, because the State wanted a building to be individually eligible for the National Register, and it would be a little harder to justify. She thought that there was still enough consistency, particularly in Stoney Creek and around the pond for Winkler Mill, to keep a cohesive, contiguous district.

Chairperson Thompson said that tactically, it might be easiest to present to Council what they wished to do and the reasons why - not having to approve new construction in the district would be less cumbersome for a homeowner, for example. He suggested another joint meeting with the Study Committee next month.

Dr. Stamps said that as they reported back to the State, they could say that they had taken their task seriously, they had examined three different options, and they had prioritized and identified a need for at least a windshield survey to photograph. He claimed that some people living in new houses in the historic district recognized the value to their property. It increased the value of their property, because even though they were in a

modern house, they were in an historic district, and there was a certain appeal with that. Some people might not want to lose that designation. Chairperson Thompson said that as part of the process, if people wanted to move forward in that direction, they could, but if they wanted to remain in the district, he could not see a reason why they could not. Ms. Kidorf said that if there was a pride with staying in the district, Council could elect not to change the Ordinance.

Ms. Lyons wondered about reassessing both of the districts as one line item as their first priority. A second priority could be the interest in assessing the residential, post-war neighborhoods. Chairperson Thompson agreed that they could look at the existing and the potential, and it would be up to Council. Dr. Stamps said that the third option could be to go back to the old potential list to see if there were some that warranted another look.

Chairperson Thompson agreed that the documentation was very helpful, and he hoped that over time, they could get some photos. It was a reality that over time, some structures would be gone.

Discussed

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2019-0404 Tree Conservation Ordinance Draft

Ms. Kapelanski noted that at the last meeting, she had let everyone know that the Tree Conservation Ordinance was being revised, and that the historic tree designation was being removed. Staff could not find a list of historic trees.

Mr. Tischer asked about the Bebb Oak on Livernois. Ms. Kapelanski said that it was not on an official list. His concern was that the property it was on was for sale. Ms. Kapelanski said that Planning had met with several people interested, and they had made it very clear that the tree had to stay. Mr. Tischer pointed out that it was on the logo for the City.

Ms. Kapelanski stated that the TCO would now apply to the entire City instead of just to parcels platted after 1988. All properties would also have to save 40% of the trees. The present Ordinance only required subject residential subdivisions to save 37%. Larger trees removed would require not just a one-to-one replacement but additional replacement sizes. Currently, if someone removed a 20" diameter tree, it

could be replaced with a two-inch sapling, and that would change. She explained that the TCO was brought forward as an FYI. If anyone had comments, they were free to send them to Council, but it was Council's purview to approve.

Ms. Lyons felt that it was important to note that there were a lot of exceptions, especially for any occupied residential property that was less than one acre. It would not necessarily impact current residential owners on their own parcels; it was really about bigger development. Ms. Kapelanski stated that was correct. Single-family residential owners would still be allowed to remove up to three trees every six months.

2019-0405

Susan McKinnon, Conference Briefs

This matter was postponed.

ANY FURTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Stamps asked for an update about the barn at 1841 Crooks Rd. The HDC allowed demo by neglect of the home, which went down, and the barn had to remain. He said that he had looked at the barn, because the place was for sale. He walked there and at the time, the foundation looked fairly stable, and the roof looked okay. The danger was that trees and vegetation were growing right up to the foundation. If the roots went into the foundation, it could start to destroy it. He was worried about the barn. He did not know if they should request that an Ordinance officer inspected it. He thought that the owners could trim all the shrubs and things around the barn and help save it really inexpensively. If they did not do that, they would be starting down a slippery slope. He did not want to be on the HDC two or three years from now and say they should have stepped in. The City could tell the owner to either fix it, or the City would and send a bill.

Mr. Tischer asked if the property was still for sale, which was confirmed. He did not think the owners would do anything to the barn. Ms. Janulis wondered if it was not in compliance with the City's weed ordinance. The City told other property owners if they did not cut the weeds, the City would cut them and bill for it. She thought it was for anything over two feet. Ms. Kapelanski said that she would have to talk with Ordinance enforcement. She knew that they had a close relationship with the property owner because of the long history.

Ms. Kidorf said that she had gotten three or four calls from people

wondering what they could do on the property, but she had not heard anything in three or four months. They asked what kind of house they could build or what could be done with the barn. Ms. Janulis noted that the City got the authorization for the pathway, which had been a condition of approval to tear down the house.

Dr. Stamps announced that next year was Oakland County's 200th birthday. It started in 1820, which was only 31 years after George Washington passed away. Oakland County came into existence 17 years before the State of Michigan. It was a political entity with 320 people according to the 1830 census. The only government that people could go to for court cases and other things was in Mt. Clemens, so it was significant. He encouraged everyone to plan ahead for the theme of "learn from the past, live in the present, plan for the future."

Chairperson Thompson thanked Rochester University and Mr. Vettrano for letting the HDC use the barn and for showing them the work they had done, which he claimed was fantastic. He knew that it had been going on a long time. When he started on the board 18 years ago, there had been a concern that the barn would fall down and disintegrate. He stated that it was beautiful and wonderful to see.

Dr. Stamps pointed out that it was a landmark. He said that it was nice to see an institution of higher education step forward and set an example to others in the community and preserve such a gem. The members all clapped.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Thompson reminded the HDC members that the next Joint Meeting was scheduled for October 10, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Historic Districts Commission and upon motion by Mr. Tischler, seconded by Vice Chairperson Granthen, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the Regular Meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Jason R. Thompson, Chairperson
Rochester Hills
Historic Districts Commission

Charles Tischer, Secretary