



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Historic Districts Commission

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Chairperson Brian R. Dunphy, Vice Chairperson Jason Thompson
Members: Steven Branstner, Dr. Jay Eastman, Micheal Kilpatrick, Dr. Richard Stamps,
Sue Thomasson, Charles Tischer, Nicholas Winters

Thursday, January 12, 2012

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Dunphy called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium.

ROLL CALL

Present 8 - Steven Branstner, Brian Dunphy, Dr. Jay Eastman, Richard Stamps, Jason Thompson, Charles Tischer, Sue Thomasson and Nicholas Winters

Absent 1 - Micheal Kilpatrick

Also Present: James Breuckman, Manager of Planning
Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting
Sandi DiSipio, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2012-0016 December 8, 2011 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Aye 8 - Branstner, Dunphy, Eastman, Stamps, Thompson, Tischer, Thomasson and Winters

Absent 1 - Kilpatrick

COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Dunphy introduced and welcomed Ms. Sue Thomasson, our new Commissioner. No other communications were brought forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Melinda Hill, 1481 Mill Race, Rochester Hills, MI 48306 is hoping in the new year that the Commission will take a good look at the resources within our

community, and complete an overview of how these properties look. She has noticed some deterioration happening, and it concerns her. This Commission has the opportunity and the duty to look at properties to see if there is any demolition by neglect occurring. She would hate to see it get to the point that the properties are in such bad shape the City decides to demolish or remove them. There is a problem right now with 1841 Crooks Road - the O'Neill Pottery property. There are other properties in similar condition, and she asked the Board to take a look at them and see if there is any appropriate action that needs to be taken.

NEW BUSINESS

2012-0017 **1855/1899 Washington Road (HDC File #12-001)**

Applicant: CP Ventures LP/Christopher Cousino
Sidwell: 15-01-227-015, 034 & 035
District: Winkler Mill Pond
Request: Certificate of Appropriateness
- New Construction

Chairperson Dunphy read the request into the record and called for an overview of the staff report.

Ms. Kidorf explained this is a proposed single family house on the west side of Washington Road near the north end of the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District on the east bank of the pond. The owner has combined three parcels that are presently vacant. The Commission approved the demolition of a non-contributing house at 1899 Washington in 2005. Staff is not sure when the house at 1855 Washington was demolished. This portion of the district contains mostly non-contributing properties except for directly across the pond, which does have a view of this property. The applicant is proposing to construct an 11,385 square foot house with an attached 2,900 square foot two level garage. The proposed two to three-story house is proposed of stone and cedar siding, and is in a rustic mountain style. It is proposed for near the center of the site and accessed by two driveways, one to access the garages in front of the house and one to access lower garages in the rear. The house is proposed near the high point on the property and a pool and cabana house are proposed for the rear of the property. The pool is part of the current request, but the applicant does not yet have the information on what the cabana will look like and will need to return to this Board for approval. The district is almost wholly residential in character, with houses dating from the 1830's to the 1990's. A few of the houses retain agricultural outbuildings. The foundation of Winkler Mill is visible and two of the mill dams are still functioning. The district has sloping terrain and is heavily treed.

Ms. Kidorf explained the history of the district. It was developed around the Winkler Mill and a wool carding mill owned by Levi Cole, who also owned the majority of the property in the nineteenth century. In the 1920's the first suburban and summer homes appeared in the area. Most of the residential development around the mill pond took place after World War II, particularly beginning in the 1970's. The district has sixteen contributing resources and forty-three non-contributing resources, and two that require more research to

determine their status. Ms. Kidorf indicated she is not going to go into a lot of detail about the house as the applicant probably has planned a presentation. To summarize, the proposed structure is a two to three-story house with a sprawling footprint, and a stone and siding exterior. The walls of the house are proposed to be an astoria blend natural stone, the windows would be aluminum Marvin windows in a bronze color, and there is a screened-in porch located in the rear of the property. The house is proposed to have a natural cedar shake roof with decorative copper finials and chimney cap.

Chairperson Dunphy turned the floor over to the applicants for their presentation.

Mr. Chris Cousino, representing the owner, CP Ventures, is present to seek approval to move forward on the construction of the home. He introduced others present tonight; Mr. Paul Samartino, the design architect, and Mr. Tom Wujczyk, the builder. Considerable time and effort has been spent putting together the drawings in the package. Mr. Cousino feels that the project lends itself well not only to the community, but the district in preserving the historic character and the existing natural beauty of the property. Mr. Samartino explained the proposed home and the vision for the site. There is about 50 foot of fall on the site from the high point down to the waters edge. That was a big consideration on where the home was placed and how the home is designed to maximize views and utilize the extreme grades so as not to disrupt a lot of the grading. The team took into account the trees on the site; really trying to minimize the disruption of the trees. A considerable amount of trees will be spaded and moved to keep them on the site. A lot of attention is being paid to the 100 year old trees found on the site, the home is being worked around these trees. The home itself is designed to blanket the site. The home will be sunk two to three feet below the high point of the site, so when you pull up to the home, you will be sunk into a little bit of a motor court. The home will be more of a low-lying, been there for many years, rustic mountain feel; that is what the design team is trying to achieve. The natural stone comes from Montana and has unique features. In some of the extreme site condition cases, Mr. Samartino explained they will bring in stone outcroppings to give the home the feel that it's been there and is imbedded into the landscaping. He explained the hand-split, wavy cedar siding in a clear stain. The stone has a nice blend of rust and taupe, and the roof will be a natural cedar. There is a four car garage accessible from the courtyard of the home, and that grade dropped about 20 feet. To maximize the natural beauty this area will be utilized as the rear access of the lower garage. Mr. Samartino indicated a home of this size would usually have a six to eight car garage, but in this case he was able to tuck a four car garage under a four car garage which helped alleviate the footprint of the garage on the home. A cedar trimmed screened-in terrace is planned for the rear.

Dr. Stamps commented that the developer, architect and builder are in attendance and asked if the owner was present. Mr. Cousino responded he is representing the owner. Dr. Stamps indicated that it looks like a gorgeous house, but it is quite different from anything he's seen in Rochester Hills or Oakland County. He made reference to the Aspen Colorado model renderings provided by the applicant. He is quite blown away by the project and commented that we have a historic district here which represents a time period,

a kind of a place and an architectural style, and what is proposed looks like it's from the Rocky Mountains.

Mr. Samartino pointed out that when people are on Washington Road, they will only see glimpses of the home. People will never see this home unless they are on the pond or in a helicopter. With the grade, topography and the trees that are currently on site, the house will be well screened. He explained the design is such that the home won't be on display, the developer/owner wants to keep it subtle. This was all taken into consideration when designing the house.

Chairperson Dunphy feels this will be a critical issue as the Commission reviews this request. He stated he shares Dr. Stamps' concern with not only the difference in architectural style of the house compared to what else is in the district, but also the massing of a structure of that size. Chairperson Dunphy is concerned not only with what is visible from the road, but also what is visible from across the pond. There is a contributing property across the pond that the Commission needs to give some thought to. The Board needs to review the landscaping and screening very carefully. He appreciates what has been done to try to mitigate the impact that the structure has and that the property owner doesn't want to be on display, but believes the Commission will be looking for some assurances that what is planned will not be an "in your face" kind of project. This will be an issue for the Commission when reviewing this project in the context of the rest of the district.

The applicant had provided the Commission with an aerial photo of a house at 1965 Washington earlier in the meeting, and Dr. Stamps asked if the intent for this was to remind the Commission that the subject home would not be the first large structure to be placed into the neighborhood. Mr. Samartino agreed that yes, the home is large, but the lot coverage is only 7.2%, where 25% is allowed by ordinance. The home at 1965 Washington has a lot coverage of 17.8% and has a larger footprint than the proposed home at 1899 Washington. The aerial was just a representation of precedence in the area.

Relative to the Parcel and Building Areas for Stoney Creek and Winkler Mill Historic Districts listing provided by staff, Mr. Breuckman explained this report was generated by the City's MIS Department showing the parcel area, building footprint area and building coverage by address. The aerial photo of the home at 1965 Washington is clearly different than the footprint that was shown in the GIS system. Also the parcel area takes into account the area of the lots going into the pond - the property lines go to the center of the pond. So, the figures the applicant has provided are upland area, which is a somewhat more accurate depiction of the relative size of the property to the land.

Mr. Branstner commented that according to the building footprint area report, the 1965 Washington house is shown at 5,551 square feet, while the applicant indicated the home is 12,000 square feet. Mr. Breuckman indicated the square footage shown in the report is for the house that was demolished in order to build the new larger home.

Chairperson Dunphy called for any public comment.

Ms. Melinda Hill, address previously given, came forward and indicated she has some concern with the mass and scale of the house in this historic district. She lives down the street and is well aware of the subject property. What concerns her is that the home will be constructed on the high point of the property and will be visible from Washington Road. There are trees on the property, but not enough. The lines are difficult to see, but the site plan shows the house spread all across the property, sloping down from the high point of the property toward the pond and back toward Washington Road. The plan is not marked to show what trees will remain or what trees will be removed. The home will definitely be seen from the other side of the pond and from Washington Road. The house to the east of the proposed home is one of the historic homes, sits up but has a lot of trees in front of it so it's hard to see. The one next it going to the east is a relatively new home. There was a lot of discussion when this home was proposed to be built because of its size, yet the home sits way down and from the streetscape, no one even knows this house is there. The house at 1965 Washington has recently been remodeled, but it is one-story from the street side. This proposed home will have a completely different look and is totally out of character with what is the district. This is a great concern as the City completed a study of the two contiguous districts, did a report with the County and expressed a great deal of concern in trying to protect both historic districts. She asked the Commission to take a hard look at what is proposed for approval - she is not against seeing a home or having it built, only that she questions the compatibility. It is unfortunate some plans were brought to the Commission this evening and not included in the packet. There was not enough time for the public or the Commission to review all the information. In this case, it is very important that the Commission has some perspective on how this home will appear against the homes in the area, both across the street, next door and across the pond. These site views need to be presented to the Board. Ms. Hill asked that the Board consider postponing any final decision tonight.

Mr. Thompson would also like to see how the mass and roofline appear against the other structures in the area. He is not comfortable or prepared to move on a decision tonight. Mr. Thompson commented he is concerned with the size and massing of the structure and asked the applicant if he has anything depicting how the home would look from Washington Road.

Mr. Samartino indicated yes and brought up some renderings from his power point information. He added that the landscape architect's game plan is to hide the home and keep it very private. They will do everything in their power to bring the necessary trees in to keep the home obscure from Washington Road. Mr. Samartino does not have the final landscape plan at the moment, simply because it is a five acre site and it will be a little bit of an evolution. The landscape plans are being developed and the applicant will gladly present them to the Commission once the intricacies are worked out, it's just not available at this time. Mr. Samartino added that the proposed house is one foot below the City's permitted building height of 35 feet to the mid-point, well below the lot coverage restrictions and within the setbacks, so care has been taken not to break any of the building requirements.

Mr. Thompson stated his greatest concern is how the proposed home fits into the district. Mr. Samartino explained that with the materials selected, the

home's really going blend in with the natural site.

Mr. Breuckman pointed out that one of the things staff talked with the applicant about is that we don't have a good landscape plan to review - the renderings presented are not a plan. The Commission needs to have a plan that shows what is being proposed because ultimately the HDC is approving the entire site, not just the structure. This troubled Mr. Breuckman, but staff decided to bring the issue forward figuring it was going to be more than a one meeting job. We don't have all the information necessary to feel comfortable making a decision at this time. These concerns have been expressed to the applicant.

Mr. Tischer asked what material will be used for the northern driveway. Mr. Samartino replied asphalt. Mr. Tischer then asked what the construction timeframe is. Mr. Wujczyk indicated they are hoping to break ground in early March in order to get the frame, stonework and roof done in the summer with the interior being completed next winter.

Mr. Tischer explained he would like to see the landscape plan before taking action.

Dr. Stamps indicated it would have been useful if someone had come forward months ago for discussion of general ideas, then had the plans drawn up before returning to the Commission for approval. That would have relieved some of the anxiety the applicant is experiencing tonight. Dr. Stamps explained that the Board members are citizens just like the applicant, but there is a burden of stewardship responsibility on their shoulders. If this is approved, then the next person will be here to build a bigger house, and on and on. Dr. Stamps is still trying to grapple with the architectural style, the size and the fact that the home is proposed on the highest point of the parcel. He feels a little caught off-guard and if pushed for a decision tonight it would be no. Dr. Stamps would like to know what kind of trees are being brought in, how many, where they will be placed and how they will mask the house; a detailed landscape plan is absolutely necessary in order to review this project.

Mr. Branstner offered he has concerns about the scaling, massing and compatible materials. He then read the Secretary of Interior Standards #9 and #10 relative to new construction being visually compatible in terms of size, scale, design materials, color and texture and said if the Commission approves this request, we set a precedent that may eventually cause this district to lose its historic designation. It's historic because it has quaint historic structures that are on average 2,500 square feet, and this proposed home is four times that size.

Dr. Eastman stated he is not so concerned about the size of the home, and in that general area there are at least three or four other houses that are the same size, he is more concerned with the landscaping and view. We need the landscape architect or a representative present to explain the proposed landscaping. He feels the Commission wants to be assured that the applicant will do as they say they will in terms of making this a property that is not overwhelming.

Mr. Tischer requested that staff get more information relative to the 1965 Washington Road home - was it approved by the HDC, etc.

Chairperson Dunphy stated what he is hearing is that the Commission is not prepared to approve or deny the request at this meeting, and asked if anyone would like to put forth a motion to postpone.

Mr. Breuckman stated that on the plot plan, it calls out "see sheet 2 for cross sections" - staff did not receive these cross sections. Mr. Breuckman feels the cross sections particularly where the slopes are, would be very helpful to understand what we are dealing with in terms of height and layout of the site.

Dr. Stamps pointed out to the applicants that the board members can't just say what they want to say or do what they want to do. Everything they do must be in accordance with the Department of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines. The Commission does what the guidelines and the legislation that governs this Commission allows them to do.

MOTION by Eastman, seconded by Tischer, in the matter of File No. HDC 12-001, that the Historic Districts Commission **POSTPONES** action until the February 9, 2012 regular meeting of the Historic Districts Commission on the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new house at 1855 and 1899 Washington Road in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District, Parcel Identification Nos. 15-01-227-015, 15-01-227-034 & 035, with the following Findings:

1. *The property is in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District and more information is needed to determine if the house is compatible in massing, size, scale and materials with the district.*
2. *The following information is needed:*
 - a) *Materials proposed for the north driveway;*
 - b) *A detailed landscaping plan showing existing trees to be removed and retained, any proposed plantings, proposed fencing and gates, information and materials on terraces, patios, and retaining walls;*
 - c) *A rendering or 3-D drawing showing the appearance of the house from Washington Road and the pond;*
 - d) *Material samples (if not provided at the meeting);*
 - e) *A parcel map showing the surrounding parcels and building footprints on the pond (including across the pond) and the proposed building footprint; and*
 - f) *Site cross sections to depict the relationship of the building to the existing and proposed topography.*

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

Aye 8 - Branstner, Dunphy, Eastman, Stamps, Thompson, Tischer, Thomasson and Winters

Absent 1 - Kilpatrick

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Election of Officers

Chairperson Dunphy opened the floor for nominations. Dr. Stamps stated if the current Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson would be willing to continue, he is willing to nominate them. Chairperson Dunphy and Vice-Chairperson Thompson both confirmed they are willing to continue to serve in their roles for another year. Dr. Stamps is reluctant to serve as Secretary for another year because of possible lifestyle changes after August, but agreed to stay on. It was suggested maybe this could be handled by staff as some of the other Boards do. The by-laws state that that someone from the membership shall be elected to serve as Secretary. Mr. Tischer offered to serve as Commission Secretary, and Dr. Stamps withdrew his offer. No other nominations were made and the Chair closed the floor for nominations. By acclamation, the following individuals were unanimously elected to serve as officers for 2012:

Chairperson - Brian Dunphy

Vice-Chairperson - Jason Thompson

Secretary - Charles Tischer

Study Committee Appointments

As Chairperson of the Historic Districts Study Committee, Mr. Thompson explained the board has been unable to establish a quorum for this Committee as there are only two sitting members at the present time, himself and another citizen representative. The other five members have not yet been appointed by City Council. In the past the seven member board required three Historic Districts Commission members and four citizens to serve on Study Committee. It has been past practice to seek volunteers from the HDC to fill these seats. Mr. Thompson is looking for a couple people from this Board who are also willing to serve on the Study Committee, so this can be reported back to Council. Ms. Thomasson stated she has already indicated she is interested in serving another term on the Study Committee and is currently one of the committee members in limbo. Mr. Thompson give a brief overview of the Study Committee's responsibilities. Mr. Branstner said he is also willing to serve on the Study Committee. The recording secretary was asked to submit the three names to Council for their consideration.

Earl Borden Awards

Chairperson Dunphy reminded the Commissioners to start thinking about the 2012 Earl Borden Awards, and asked that this be placed on next month's agenda. Dr. Stamps mentioned the that the foundation of the gatehouse to Meadowbrook Hall has been shored up and a new roof installed - this could be a potential candidate.

It was brought to the Board's attention that the 2011 Earl Borden Award plaques

for John Dziurman and Nathaniel Brock have not been received by the recipients. At last year's award presentation, it was realized the night of the ceremony the three plaques for distribution were not the correct plaques. So, after the ceremony the wrong plaques were returned to the Commission so they could be exchanged with the correct plaques. The City and the Commission were under the impression this exchange had been taken care of months ago, and the rightful plaque was given to the rightful award recipient. It has been brought to the Commission's attention this has not been taken care of. The City does have possession of the plaque that belongs to Oakland County, but not the other two. The recording secretary was asked to follow up on this issue.

Chairperson Dunphy then mentioned the Rochester Avon Historical Society and the fact they have launched a new website, Oakland Regional Historical Sites. It is a comprehensive database, and some of the initial data entry was based on the survey sheets provided by the City. A number of other municipalities have also gotten involved with this website. The Historical Society Board is very interested in sharing the website with this Commission, what they're doing with it and where they see it going. Dr. Stamps suggested this issue be placed on the February (or a future) agenda.

Mr. Thompson asked that an update of the status on the O'Neill Pottery property be available at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Chair reminded Commissioners the next Regular Meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2012.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Eastman, seconded by Tischer, Chairman Dunphy adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Brian R. Dunphy, Chairperson
Historic Districts Commission
City of Rochester Hills

Sandi DiSipio, Recording Secretary