



Rochester Hills Minutes

Historic Districts Study Committee

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*Chairperson Jason Thompson, Vice Chairperson Julie Granthen
Members: Steven Branstner, Suzanne Carlson, James Hannick,
Sue Thomasson, LaVere Webster*

Thursday, November 15, 2012

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Thompson called the Special Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium

ROLL CALL

Present 6 - Steven Branstner, Suzanne Carlson, Julie Granthen, James Hannick, Sue Thomasson and Jason Thompson

Absent 1 - LaVere Webster

*Also Present: Jim Breuckman, Manager of Planning
Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting
John Staran, City Attorney
Sandi DiSipio, Recording Secretary*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2012-0450 September 13, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Aye 6 - Branstner, Carlson, Granthen, Hannick, Thomasson and Thompson

Absent 1 - Webster

COMMUNICATIONS

File No. HDSC 08-002 - Letters of support for historic designation of 6841 and 6875 N. Rochester Road:

Jennifer French, 1392 Otter Dr., RH, MI 48306 - received 11/08/12

Deborah Grimes, 1234 Lakeview Dr., RH, MI 48306 - received 11/08/12

Keith D. Grimes, 1234 Lakeview Dr., RH, MI 48306 - received 11/13/12

Eric Swanson, 1202 Lakeview Dr., RH, MI 48306 - received 11/14/12

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public came forward to speak on non-agenda items.

NEW BUSINESS

2012-0126 Location: 1631 and 1651 W. Avon Road, located on the south side of Avon, between S. Livernois and Old Perch Roads, Parcel Identification Numbers 15-21-126-036 and 037, zoned RE, Residential Estates.

Purpose: To receive public comment regarding a proposal to decrease the historic boundary to exclude the new house at 1651 W. Avon, in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976 (MCL 15.261 et seq., MSA 5.3407(3) et seq.) and the Rochester Hills Historical Preservation Ordinance, Section 118-131.

Chairperson Thompson opened the public hearing at 5:33 p.m.

Ms. Melinda Hill, 1481 Mill Race, Rochester Hills 48306 came forward and commented that staff claims they initiated the request to delist the property located at 1651 W. Avon Road as a designated historic district in order to maintain accurate boundaries for historic resources. Yet the report says very little about the property at 1651; only that there is nothing historic about the parcel or the recently built home. In the June 14, 2012 Study Committee minutes, Ms. Kidorf explains she did not spend an extensive amount of time on research because it is only a boundary change, just enough to justify the retention of the existing district with a smaller boundary. Ms. Hill suggests the Committee read the minutes from HDC's July 12, 2001 meeting where the proposed demolition of the garage at 1631 W. Avon and the proposed lot split were discussed. The Commission had concerns about the demolition if it meant that the lot split would create a lot in such close proximity to the historic resource in which the HDC would have no purview. An opinion from the City Attorney was to be obtained regarding this issue. Like any other new project, the HDC is looking for compatibility and protection for the adjacent historic resource. Neighboring properties play an important role in preservation, especially in historic districts. She referenced the March 14, 2002 HDC minutes where a Certificate of Appropriateness was given for the demolition of the garage at 1631, as well as a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new garage and other improvements to the home. Complete plans for both the renovations at 1631 and the new home at 1651 W. Avon were shown and discussed at that meeting. A legal opinion regarding the potential lot split and HDC's purview were promised by staff. The fact that the HDC would have some purview over the adjacent property helped move the demolition and ensuing lot split to take place. The consensus of the HDC was they had concerns as to what this lot split meant and their having any charge over what would be built next door. The only minutes provided to the Study Committee were from the November and December 2004 HDC meetings talking about the approval of the new home at 1651 W. Avon. Ms. Hill explained she was on the Commission in 2001 and 2002 and everyone was very clear about what was happening with this property. She understands some of the reasons for the boundary change request, but is sorry to see how this is played out. She does not think the Committee has been given complete background information. The charge of this Committee is to complete a factual report regarding the property's

historical value and provide that information and any appropriate recommendation for changing a district to the City Council. Ms. Hill believes the report should contain an actual aerial map of the properties involved and the proposed new boundary, not the utility map that was included. She inquired whether the Committee received clarification regarding the split of the lots running up the driveway at 1631, as this question was asked at the last meeting. She opposes the Committee's recommendation regarding the proposed new boundary due to the fact that this Committee has had insufficient information to appropriately make such a recommendation. She believes it is detrimental to the existing historic resource. Ms. Hill added that Study Committee member Ms. Carlson does not live in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District, but rather resides in the Stoney Creek Historic District.

Chairperson Thompson closed the public hearing at 5:39 p.m.

Board discussion relative to this request occurred after the Twist Drill public hearing, and resulted in a postponement of this request.

This item was postponed.

2008-0663

PUBLIC HEARING - FILE NO. HDSC 08-002

Location: 6841 and 6875 N. Rochester Road, located at the northeast corner of N. Rochester and Tienken Roads, Parcel Identification Numbers 15-02-300-004 and 015, zoned I, Industrial with an FB-1 Flexible Business Overlay.

Purpose: To receive public comment regarding a proposal to establish the subject property as an Historic District within the City of Rochester Hills, in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976 (MCL 15.261 et seq., MSA 5.3407(3) et seq.) and the Rochester Hills Historical Preservation Ordinance, Section 118-131.

Chairperson Thompson opened the public hearing at 5:40 p.m.

Mr. Greg Obloy, 4111 Andover West 2nd Floor, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302 came forward, explained he is present on behalf of Corporate Park of Rochester Hills, the owner, and gave the members a letter which he then summarized. He requests that the Study Committee make a negative recommendation with regard to the designation of this property as a historic district. His client has made this statement before at several meetings, and Mr. Obloy believes the property owner to the south has made a similar statement. He noted that under the National Historic Preservation Act which creates the criteria to establish historic districts, provides that if the majority of the property owners object to the designation, that it can't be considered a historic district. Mr. Obloy finds the Study Committee Report to be absent of any evidence that creates significance for this area. It is a biographical factual statement of a 30-year run of a successful company and a successful family, but when this run ended in the early 70's, the company was sold. National Twist Drill is no longer a stand-alone company, it's merely a brand that made cutting tools. The cutting tools are not novel, there is no innovation. They were one of thousands of vendors to the U.S. Navy during the war, not exactly significant. The company was founded in Detroit, not in Rochester. The fact that it was a large employer doesn't make it

historically significant. With regard to the McGregor family - they are very generous. Maybe the better thing for their contributions to the community of the schools or the hospital - is to place plaques on those lands recognizing the contribution. With respect to the buildings, an architect that was known for residential houses or a contractor known for innovation to design - neither of these facts make the building significant. It comes down to what does the City want. The buildings have stayed in the same condition for the past 30 years. If they are designated, that is what will remain for the next 20-30 years. It will chill redevelopment. It's not what the owners want and it's not what the community wants. He requests a negative recommendation to the City Council with respect to the historic district.

Mr. Brandon Noll, 6841 N. Rochester Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48306 came forward stating he agrees with and reiterates what Mr. Obloy expressed. The current condition of the property is where it essentially will continue to be if the designation happens. Given the appearance of the area and how the residents like to keep their homes, the buildings and the property does not fit in with what's happening in the area. It doesn't fit in with the new developments. Frankly, it's an eyesore. By designating it, it will keep the property in that condition. Not all press is good press. Some of the results of the recommendations here have created some negative press, and therefore impact on the business. We do operate a business there. Whenever something is written about us, we get phone calls from our clients. If the designation is made, the clients are wondering where they will go. If they decide to pull out, not only will Mr. Noll lose the business, but we'll also have 20 other people leave. This is an indirect result of what is going on here. He would appreciate a negative recommendation.

Ms. Sylvia Kaub, 6082 Charles Dr., West Bloomfield, MI 48322 came forward and indicated she is familiar with the Rochester area as she has been a Rochester Community Schools teacher for over ten years. As a resident, she's raised two daughters and appreciates the community. She is requesting a negative recommendation for the designation of the building as a historical site. Ms. Kaub explained she is a co-trustee of her father's trust; Rein Mozer. He was the owner of the southern building and well liked by members of City Council. He gave back to the community in so far as this building; starting with the Christmas Parade by letting everyone line up in his parking lot. Ms. Kaub appreciates the research that has gone into the report, but everything around the building is challenging. She asked what does the Historical Society want to do with this building. It's not a birthplace or a residence, like the Van Hoosen Farm, where the first woman surgeon was. This building is not for weddings or tea parties. She wants to know what the intentions are for this old, empty manufacturing building and warehouse. There's very little original historical features left. There have been a lot of changes to it, new tinted windows and new lighting, however there's been a lot of problems and it has been patched up; nothing for long term investments, but more like a band aid on serious problems that need to be addressed. There is also a question of asbestos - what is the historical value to asbestos or agent orange? This building is located in a nice residential area, and there is so much potential for this corner - retail, medical and professional. Everything that reflects the nice standard and quality of life in Rochester. The way the building stands right now, it's not lending itself to that. By allowing some changes, you can better serve the residents of Rochester by

providing more employment opportunities than this warehouse does. Most especially, you would be providing safety and security. She is afraid of what the empty dark warehouse could attract. Ms. Kaub indicated her dad had given back to the community so much, and she'd like for this situation to be a chance to give back to the community in a positive way.

Mr. John Ellwood, 1119 Lakeview Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48306 came forward and stated he is the President of the Cross Creek Subdivision Homeowners Association and lives in the backyard of the two buildings. There are concerns within the subdivision of what is going on with this old building. When he heard about the historical value, people were saying do we have to look at a water tower that is unpainted; this is a distraction. Investors have put a lot of money into the other corners and have greatly improved the area. The traffic flow has increased, this is evident in the sub. They would like to think that down the road something nice could be done with this property. Obviously, something that would bring in tons of traffic would not be what the subdivision wants to see, but something that would be more pleasing to the eye. The building had value in it's time, but Mr. Ellwood would not turn it into something that would permanently be there for a long period of time.

Mr. Eric Mozer, 6875 N. Rochester Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48306 came forward and explained he is a trustee of the Reinhold J. Mozer Trust, which owns the property at 6875 Rochester Road. He is requesting the National Twist Drill site be removed from the potential Historical Society's list. He stated his father has made this request in the past. This has been an on-going issue for ten years, and that is why he brought it up to City Council three months ago. He created the Race Rochester go-kart track just to keep the building going, paying for the heat, etc. He has not received any money for five and a half years, all the money goes directly back into the building. Mr. Mozer requests that the property be removed from the list. The building is on the market, and when developers come to look into it they are told it is on the historical list and walk away. If the building is designated historical it's going to be worse. The building in front is industrial, and if it's historical, it will remain industrial, which really limits the uses for the building. It is not ADA approved in the front. His father put in an extension in 1982, which is the warehouse area, and another extension in 1992. That is not historical; they are new buildings. It's very frustrating that this has been going on for ten years.

Mr. Fred Ferber, 6841 N. Rochester Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48306 came forward and said a lot has already been said, so he will keep it short. There was mention of the water tower, and Mr. Ferber stated there have been numerous problems with graffiti back there and cars driving in at night. Whether he continues to keep the property or sells it, sooner or later someone will build more on it, and the only thing that can be built is warehouse. Right now, the building is open five days a week. Mr. Ferber is quite sure that whoever purchases the property (possibly a logistics company) will run their business 24/7 because all logistics companies work 24/7. There is no one else that he can sell the building to. If you look at the southeast corner, which was developed very nicely, the property owners appreciate what happened to their land values. This is not the first time a meeting was held by the historical society. A few years ago, there was a meeting, they came through the

warehouse and looked at everything. A month later, Mr. Ferber said he found out that a poll was taken; a vote was supposed to be taken, but a poll was taken. After the poll was taken, the vote was scrapped. Now a few years later, we are going through the same questions. When he purchased the property, 50% of the roof was taken off. This is a great corner, and he had an insurance company looking at it before the economy broke to do something with medical. That developer proposed a beautiful park for the children along with whatever else he wanted to develop. Mr. Ferber thanked the Committee for their consideration and asked that they all be given a break.

Ms. Melinda Hill, address previously given came forward and stated that she is sure everyone already knows what she is recommending for this property, just as she's pretty sure where Council is going to go with it, and it makes her sad. Unfortunately, this community's government has little regard or appreciation when it comes to local history. So much more could be done to educate future generations to enhance the diversity of the community in using the historic resources to promote economic development that enriches Rochester Hills while making money for all concerned. She believes it's all about money and that greed is blinding innovative thinking. Ms. Hill pointed out that the Study Committee's charge is to do the research, follow the process, apply the criteria and complete a factual report regarding the property's historical value, and ultimately provide that information and a recommendation to City Council. It is not the Committee's charge to worry about whether the owner or neighbors like/dislike the proposed change. They don't need to prove hardship, nor have they. The report and recommendation should be based on facts, not feelings. Ms. Hill believes the report is a good one other than making the State's recommended changes and changing the district where Ms. Carlson resides. She believes the Study Committee has made a sound recommendation that would benefit the City and generations to come. Many other places in the state and country have established and rehabilitated historic property for the betterment of all, why not here in our own backyard. We have something special and we can hardly be bothered to fight to save and showcase it. She asked the Committee to make the necessary changes to make this the best final report in support of the recommendation to designate the Twist Drill property. Hopefully City Council will be innovative and preserve it too.

Mr. Barry Landan, 1845 Crestline, Rochester Hills, MI 48307 came forward and stated he is the broker for the Mozer Trust. They did not realize this property was still on the list. He had people interested in leasing and buying; they went to the City only to find out it was tagged, and they run. The national companies won't lease if the property is tagged because they are afraid of what the historical value may make them do within the building. Nobody will buy this property as long as it's tagged. The Trust does not have a lot of money. If the City wants tenants to rent, they won't come as long as it's tagged historical. There has not been a lack of interest, but they inquire and then they're gone.

Mr. Andrew Mozer, 182 Bedlington, Rochester Hills, MI 48307 came forward, explained he is Rein Mozer's grandson, and read Mr. Mozer's October 15, 2007 letter to Ms. Linda Raschke, City Council representative for District #2 (referenced letter is on file with the Planning Department). The letter requested

the property be removed from the historical list.

There being no other speakers wishing to comment, Chairperson Thompson closed the public hearing at 6:08 p.m. and opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Mr. Breuckman added that the Study Committee was provided with four letters that were received by the Planning Department from residents of the surrounding neighborhood in support of the historic designation (referenced letters are on file with the Planning Department).

Chairperson Thompson asked Mr. Staran if the Study Committee has the authority to stop a study that has been ordered and directed by City Council. Mr. Staran feels the Committee could stop it, but the City Council is going to ask for completion of the report. This is something that was initiated at the Council level. They did want the Study Committee to go through the process, so that it could come back to Council for a final determination one way or the other should this property be designated or not, rather than continuing on as a potential district as it has for the past years.

Ms. Thomasson clarified that the property is not designated, it is on a potential designation list. So, at this point, the applicant has asked that the Study Committee determine whether the property should or should not be designated. The Committee is not un-designating the property, as it has yet to be designated. Designation does not impact the interior of the building, only the exterior. Ms. Thomasson reminded the audience that the Study Committee's duty is to look at the historical significance, and it is City Council that has to weigh all of the opinions and income potential of the applicant.

Ms. Carlson reiterated that the Study Committee's charge is very limited and the outstanding factors do not play into what this Committee is charged with. Whatever the outcome, she hopes everyone will continue on and follow this through to the City Council.

Ms. Kidorf referred to the five comments from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). They noted that the photographs are 4-10 years old and suggested including current photos. They commented about the landscaped grounds (page 10, paragraph 1) - that the landscaped grounds were an attraction for sight-seers, however there is no discussion of the landscape in the context or in the description. Ms. Kidorf explained that because Dr. Busch prepared this report, she does not know where this information came from and suggested the Committee remove that sentence from the report. On page 11 about the significance of the district, SHPO suggested the words "must apply" be used instead of "be guided by the National Register Criteria". Criterion B significance statement - SHPO wants more clarification in the summary, and this information can be copied from earlier in the report. Under Criterion C, SHPO considers the building's style to be early International rather than Art Deco. This is somewhat of a judgment call, but it can be changed in the final report.

Chairperson Thompson asked if there were any SHPO comments regarding the

1631 West Avon property. Ms. Kidorf explained the Committee received these comments at the last meeting - SHPO wanted more clarification of the reason for modifying the district boundary. This change was incorporated into the draft final report which the Study Committee has tonight.

Chairperson Thompson asked if anyone is comfortable with making a motion on the 1631 West Avon final report. Because of Ms. Hill's comments relative to the 2001 and 2002 minutes not being in the packet, Ms. Thomasson has not read them and is not comfortable making a decision either way until she reviews this information. Mr. Breuckman indicated the Committee is not against a time-table to get this report back to City Council. Chairperson Thompson also wants to review the above-mentioned minutes before he makes a decision, and postponed this decision until the December meeting.

Chairperson Thompson then asked for a motion on the Twist Drill final report. Ms. Granthen summarized the changes to the final report as suggested by SHPO - on page 10, discard the language, on page 11, to use the word "apply", change Art Deco to early International.

MOTION by Granthen, seconded by Thomasson, **Moved**, that the Study Committee accepts the final study committee report with the suggested changes and recommend to Council that the proposed National Twist Drill Historic District be designated as a local historic district.

A motion was made by Granthen, seconded by Thomasson, that this matter be Accepted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 6 - Branstner, Carlson, Granthen, Hannick, Thomasson and Thompson

Absent 1 - Webster

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Thompson indicated the Study Committee needs to establish their 2013 meeting schedule.

MOTION by Carlson, seconded by Branstner, it is hereby **RESOLVED** that the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee establishes the 2013 Regular Meeting Schedule as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| January 10, 2013 (cancelled) | July 11, 2013 (cancelled) |
| February 14, 2013 (cancelled) | August 8, 2013 (cancelled) |
| March 14, 2013 | September 12, 2013 |
| April 11, 2013 (cancelled) | October 10, 2013 (cancelled) |
| May 9, 2013 (cancelled) | November 14, 2013 (cancelled) |
| June 13, 2013 | December 12, 2013 |

All meetings will begin at 5:30 PM Michigan Time.

Ayes: All Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED.