

NEW BUSINESS

2024-0148

Request for a Certificate of Appropriateness - File No. PHDC2021-0001 - for a two-story addition to the side of the house at 1046 E. Tienken Rd., zoned R-4 One Family Residential, Parcel No. 15-01-352-036, Vincent Sinacola, Applicant
(Staff Report prepared by Kristine Kidorf dated 3-4-24, Location map, Site Plan, Floor Plans and Elevations, Materials, and Application had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record.)

Vice Chairperson Granthen introduced this item as a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a two-story addition to the side of the house at 1046 E. Tienken Road. She noted that the applicants were Vincent and Lauren Sinacola and invited them to the front table.

Mr. Sinacola stated that they appreciate everything that the Commission does and acknowledged that the Commissioners have a very hard job. He explained that when they bought their house in 2019, they bought it from Ms. Sinacola's father, and in 2016 they were in front of the Commission asking for a second-story addition on the home. He noted that at that time, they had one child and the stairs were tough to get up and down, and it allowed them to put an extra bedroom in upstairs. He stated that since that time they have had three more children and now have a family of six. He commented that their three bedroom home has become too small for them; and he stated that more space is not just a want at this point, it is a necessity.

He noted that his wife grew up in this neighborhood and her parents lived there for 32 years. He stated that they wanted to raise their kids there and absolutely love the neighborhood; however, they are outgrowing their home. They are asking for an addition on the west side to allow them to have extra bedrooms, a basement that they currently do not have, and extra closets. He explained that about a year-and-a-half ago they engaged Gary Kwapis of Heins & Kwapis Architects who had done their first plans presented in 2016 and instructed him to keep the historic nature of the home, the community and the neighborhood. He added that they took careful consideration about setting the addition back and making sure that the siding differentiates itself from the existing structure. He stated that the goal is to keep it to the period, and make sure that when people see it they know that it is different, but it would still be the same. In addition, if it was to be removed at anytime in the future, it would still have the same front facade and would not change the original house or footprint. He commented that it was keeping with what the Department of Interior is looking for when it comes to rehabilitation and additions.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if any of the Commissioners had any questions.

Dr. Stamps asked for staff input, noting that there were written comments about the massive nature of the addition.

Ms. Kidorf noted that the size and massing of the addition more than doubles

the size of the house and would not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards. She commented that the question that comes into play is relative to the review of the addition back in 2016. She noted that she suggested at that time that perhaps the house would be considered non-contributing because the addition was placed on the house, which the Commission approved. She stated that the big questions for the Commission at this point are whether or not the house still contributes to the Historic District the way that it is right now; and if it does, whether or not the proposed addition meets the standards. If it does not contribute to the District, the question is whether the addition is compatible with the District.

Dr. Stamps stated that he was delighted to see audience members in attendance and stated that he would like to hear comments.

Mr. Sinacola asked if he could speak to the question of whether the house is contributing. He pointed out that if looking back to the meeting minutes from 2016, there was a lot of conversation about whether or not approving the first addition was going to make the house non-contributing. He noted that at that meeting, Chairperson Dunphy asked the Commission if they were prepared to go ahead with the motion that was presented as notice of receipt with the understanding that the resulting structure will no longer be a contributing resource to the District. He noted that it did go forward and was approved as such. He mentioned that Ms. Kidorf noted a couple of times in the current staff report that it was the Commission's decision whether to say it is contributing. He explained that they have done these plans under the understanding that it was going to be a non-contributing asset and they have scaled it to what they see in their immediate neighborhood where there are multiple homes that have front elevations off the street that exceed what they are asking for. He mentioned that there is one home with 129 feet facing the street, and one with 80, another with 82 and another with 83 all within the Stoney Creek District. He added that there are homes outside of the neighborhood and into the greater district that are over 6,000 square feet. He commented that they did their best to keep it within their neighborhood because that is what people see.

Dr. Stamps noted that he remembers the meeting where it was approved, and he stated that he would echo tonight what he said then. He thanked the Sinacolas for saving the resource; however, he was a bit nervous at that time because of the second story addition. He commented that he understood all of the rationale and didn't remember that it shifted to non-contributing. He stated that he is leaning toward approval, as the Sinacolas have done their due diligence and are trying to be good citizens. He noted that he would remind himself that at the time when the first addition was approved, it set the Commission on a slippery slope. He asked what would happen if this is approved tonight, and the next house wants to expand. He noted that it would set a precedent by approving it tonight, and it would reaffirm the precedent that will take what used to be a 19th century historic village and turn it into yet another suburb off the edge of the City of Rochester. He commented that he understands what it is like to fit five children into a two-bedroom house.

Mr. Elias stated that he agrees with Dr. Stamps. He noted that while he was a single child, he has six kids now, and he appreciates families of the largest size

living in Rochester Hills. He commented that he is in favor of going forward with approval.

Mr. Tischer asked Dr. Stamps if he would say that it is non-contributing now, because that would make a big distinction in his mind. He commented that if it is contributing, there is no way he would approve something like this; however, if it is not, that can put it into a different light.

Vice Chairperson Granthen opened the floor for public comment.

Sheri Daugherty, 1058 E. Tienken Rd., stated that she had additional comment from a couple of residents that could not be here tonight. She stated that Emily Ferry of 1081 E. Tienken stated that they watched the Sinacola residence go from a dilapidated eyesore to the beautiful home it is today, and they supported the addition. Dan and Sandra Browning, 940 Van Hoosen Rd., conveyed that the Sinacolas have been valuable members of the community and renovated a property that would likely still be vacant today and expressed their support. Mena Sinacola is the oldest child of the Sinacola family and wrote a letter expressing that she needed more space, and stating that her younger brother is currently sharing a small room with her younger sister. Ms. Daugherty added that she lives two doors down from the Sinacolas and also approved of the addition.

Dan Schmitt, 1058 E. Tienken, noted that Ms. Daugherty was his sister, and he also had a couple of letters of support from neighbors, including Foster Engleman at 986 E. Tienken, and Kathryn Sprengel, 1055 Runyon Rd., supporting the addition.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked that the letters be given to Ms. MacDonald for the record.

Stephanie Renner, 1002 E. Tienken, stated that she and Jeff Williams are directly west of the Sinacolas and noted that she purchased the home 22 years ago and her love of historic architecture and the past propelled her to live in the district. She pointed out that in the north and west ends of the District, larger homes and entire condominium complexes have been built that are not period or size correct for the area. She added that most of the homes have been added on to or altered in some state, including her home back in 1922, and a precedence has been set and is nothing new to the District. She pointed out that if the vacant lot was sold to another family, they would not build an 800 to 1,500 square foot home, and a brand new standalone home would dwarf these homes and look totally out of place. She expressed support for the addition.

Lou Fischetti, 1005 Runyon Rd., stated that he lives in the home where Bertha Van Hoosen was born, and since 1992 he has put on two additions. He noted that a couple of years ago they put in a swimming pool and it is now the focal point of the neighborhood for the kids. He stated that he has been active with the Museum and not once has he been questioned about his additions. He expressed support.

James Martone, 999 E. Tienken, stated that he believes his house has been

referenced as being one of the oldest homes, and expressed support for the Sinacolas. He stated that if it were not for people like the Sinacolas, these homes would fall by the wayside. He stressed that they want to preserve the integrity of the historic district and the integrity of their families and live as a community.

Chairperson Granthen closed public comment.

Mr. Tischer asked if any of the older trees would be removed as he did not see a landscaping plan.

Mr. Sinacola responded that there are a few trees that will have to be removed where the garage is going; however, they are overgrown with three of them growing sideways because they had fallen down. He noted that there are brush and rock piles there and it would be cleaned up. He explained that their goal is to keep the mature trees in place and not remove them.

Mr. Tischer stated that if this passes, he would caution the Sinacolas to take care when digging to look for any historically significant treasures.

Mr. Sinacola mentioned that when they dug out the crawlspace during the first addition to reinforce the foundation as there were no footers in the basement, they found a safe that was full of water and nothing else.

Mr. McGunn stated that he would concur with Dr. Stamps' comments.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if Ms. Kidorf had any additional comments.

Ms. Kidorf stated that she would remind the Commission that this is not a precedent-setting body, and everything is taken on a case-by-case basis. She noted that just because this might be approved, it does not mean that everything similar must be approved.

Vice Chairperson Granthen suggested that a potential motion could make this clearer that this would not be precedent-setting.

Dr. Stamps thanked everyone in attendance this evening, noting that these meetings do not typically have that many attendees. He commented that their presence justifies the Commission's existence and reaffirms that there is community out there that shares the history and wants to preserve it. He stated that he would ask the question of staff as to how many structures are in the City of Rochester Hills and how many are listed as historic features. He noted that if he had asked that question ten years ago, it was probably twice as many as now, as many have been lost to fire and neglect. He stated that the value of those remaining is probably going up and he thanked those who preserve them.

He asked what the expectancy is of a new building, and commented that new homes are not built to last forever. He stated that he is less concerned about additions, especially those in the back, and believes they are okay as long as the historic feature is preserved.

Mr. Tischer made a motion to approve the certificate of appropriateness, stating that the existing house is not a contributing building, the proposed addition is compatible in massing, size and scale, and the proposed addition is in keeping with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines. He noted that by saying it is not a contributing building, that will help prevent the idea that this is a slippery slope. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stamps.

After calling for a roll call vote, Vice Chairperson Granthen announced that the motion passed unanimously.

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

Aye 6 - Altherr-Rogers, Elias, Granthen, Stamps, Tischer and McGunn

Excused 3 - Lyons, Thompson and Lemanski

Resolved, in the matter of File No. PHDC 2024-001, that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of an addition at 1046 E. Tienken in the Stoney Creek Historic District, Parcel Identification Number 70-15-01-352-036, with the following Findings and Conditions:

1) The existing house **is not** a contributing building in the Stoney Creek Historic District and the proposed addition **is** compatible in massing, size, scale and materials with the existing house and district;

2) The proposed addition **is** in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines, in particular standard numbers 9 and 10 as follows:

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.