

Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
June 9, 2016 Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Village Hall, Room 101, 7:30 pm

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Rosanne McGrath, Greg Battoglia, Rebecca Houze, Laura Jordahl, Don McLean, Regina Nally, Christopher Payne, David Sokol, Aleksandra Tadic
ABSENT: Fred Brandstrader, Dan Moroney
STAFF: Douglas Kaarre, AICP, Urban Planner/Historic Preservation

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Sokol to approve the meeting agenda as submitted. Second by McLean. Motion approved 9-0.
AYE: Battoglia, Houze, Jordahl, McLean, Nally, Payne, Sokol, Tadic, Chair McGrath
NAY: None

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MINUTES

Motion by Nally to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2016 meeting as submitted. Second by Battoglia. Motion approved 9-0.
AYE: Battoglia, Houze, Jordahl, McLean, Nally, Payne, Sokol, Tadic, Chair McGrath
NAY: None

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair McGrath introduced new commission member Aleksandra Tadic. Ms. Tadic is an architect working for CH2M, a large international firm. She is the area manager of the transportation group, and often works on historic preservation projects, including the CTA Wilson Station project in Chicago. The commission members introduced themselves:

- David Sokol is an art historian, retired Chair of the Art History Department at UIC, serving on this commission for the third time in three different decades, and has written a history of Oak Park and a monograph on Unity Temple.
- Laura Jordahl is serving her first year on the commission and is a former architectural designer.
- Rebecca Houze is an art historian at Northern Illinois University and formerly served on the Berwyn Historic Preservation Commission. She is interested in architecture and design.
- Don McLean is a graphic designer and lives in one of the historic districts. He is in his second year on the commission.
- Rosanne McGrath is an architect who owns her own local firm and often works on small projects of the kind often seen by the HPC.
- Greg Battoglia is an architect in his fifth year on the commission.
- Regina Nally is an architect in her sixth year on the commission. She works for the U.S. Government in Historic Preservation for the General Services Administration.
- Chris Payne has been on the commission for two years and is an architect.

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Commission Meeting Procedures

With several new commission members there are some new procedures they should review again. In order to improve the level of documentation they receive with applications, they updated the Certificate of Appropriateness application and added the submittal requirements on the back, including revisions to the wording.

The second procedure they have been working to improve is making a motion for approval. They try to follow Roberts Rules of Order to run meetings. They make a motion first to open a project for discussion, rather than make a motion to approve before discussing. This prevents them having to go back to amend a motion later, though motions may always be amended if needed.

The next issue is on how to draft a motion. They reviewed a handout which showed a method for writing a motion, which was prepared by the Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions. It's a guide to writing a motion that tries to address why we are approving a project and what we are approving, then it will show in the public record more than just that it was approved as submitted. It will give us a defensible record should we need it in the future.

Commissioner Battoglia stated a concern that if you miss a point in the motion it could be a slippery slope.

Chair McGrath feels that if all the main points are in the motion, it's better than having none of them.

B. HPC 2016-13: 717 South Boulevard (717 South Blvd LLC): Planned Development to construct a five-story mixed-use building on a vacant lot (Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District) – continued from the April 14, 2016 Historic Preservation Commission meeting
Architect John Schiess was present.

Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the application. The vacant property at 717 South Boulevard is located within the *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District*. A non-contributing resource was demolished from the site in 2008. As there is no demolition involved, this project requires a Certificate of Advisory Review. The proposal is to construct a five-story mixed-use building that will house a small commercial unit on the first floor, tenant parking on the rear first floor, and then condominium units on floors 2-5. The building will be masonry with precast panels, fiber cement board and a green roof. The Architectural Review Committee received a presentation from the applicant at their March 23, 2016 meeting. At the meeting the applicant provided an overview of the proposal. The HPC discussed the presentation at their meeting on April 14, 2016 and provided the applicants with a number of comments. The applicants have made several revisions to the floor plans and elevations, including changes to the design of the balconies, the height of the building, change in use of colors and materials on the east and west side elevations, and a change in the window fenestration on the side elevations.

John Schiess, Architect, provided an overview of the history of the site – from the residential development in 2007, to Forest Park Bank in 2011 until now. They held a public meeting on April 14 and received some comments back, including one to remove the commercial space. He reviewed the revised renderings and floor plans. The balconies changes to glass, the side window pattern has changes and they have moved the fifth floor back. The development team of Jenny Builders and John Schiess also completed the SoHo project at Home and South.

The Commission discussed the revisions to the proposal and had the following comments:

- The additional setback of the fifth floor from the front and rear facades makes sense from a contextual design standpoint, and helps to diminish the building's impact on the adjacent lower scale buildings. The Commission appreciates the responsiveness to this suggestion.
- The commercial space would be a benefit to the building and to the overall exterior design, as it is in a commercial district, and should be retained.
- The changes in the window fenestration on the side facades are an improvement.

Chair McGrath discussed again the making of motions and discussing applications.

C. **HPC 2016-14: 1014 and 1018 Pleasant Street (Rossell): Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish two houses (Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District)**

Property owner Al Rossell was present

Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the application. The two houses at 1014 and 1018 Pleasant are listed as Contributing Resources in the *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District*. 1018 Pleasant is thought to have been constructed c. 1885 and altered c. 1912 into the current Prairie appearance. 1014 Pleasant was constructed in 1895 and designed by E. E. Roberts and current alterations also c. 1912. Both properties were owned by the same owners. The preservation ordinance defines only Non-Contributing Resources. It talks about various items for looking at demolition requests. It talks about significant historic and architectural characteristics and qualities that contribute to the character of the district. With these two properties, my staff recommendation is that they retain the same characteristics that they had when the district was created and when the period of significance for the district ended in 1930. We also have confirmation from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency that they remain Contributing Resources within the Ridgeland/Oak Park National Register Historic District. Also, in my opinion they do not meet the definition of Non-Contributing Resources as defined in the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Staff Recommendation is that the Commission take no action on the Certificate of Appropriateness application as outlined in the ordinance.

Al Rossell, property owner of the two properties since the 1970s with his wife who died two years ago, is there to assert his property rights. He has looked at several options. He looked at a conservation easement. He does appraisals and has found that in Oak Park the IRS gives very low values because the historic preservation ordinance doesn't allow you to tear it down. The other option is that the neighbor of the apartment building next door wants to use it for a parking lot. I've had other offers from developers who would offer more. Frankly almost everything in Oak Park is a contributing structure.

Also, he thinks about tearing it down after his wife has died and make a memorial park. He wants his property rights back. When the Village wanted to make this historic district he never got a notice. They never told him they were going to take away one of his property rights. Is anyone here familiar with eminent domain? I'm not asking for money, but when you take away someone's property rights, you have to compensate them. I just want my property rights back. You can either cut my two houses out of the historic district, or you could give me the Certificate of Appropriateness. Maybe I won't tear the properties down. That's for me to decide, not you. I guess you could pay me something. My neighbors on the block don't want to be in the historic district either.

Motion by Nally to open the application for discussion. Second by Jordahl.

Al Rossell noted that his house is three inches away from a large apartment building on the east side, and the architecture is completely different on every building on the block until you get to the end and there's two graystones, and the park is now having weddings every weekend. Guests can't park on the street. Where I think I've lost money is that I don't get the same rate of appreciation in my neighborhood as people who are outside of the historic districts. There is no logic that says being in a historic district improves property values. Nobody can prove that because there's never been a study.

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Chair McGrath noted that there have been many studies on property values in historic districts, just never one in Oak Park. Also, the Commission can only vote on applications based on the historic preservation ordinance and architectural review guidelines.

Commissioner Battoglia noted that while the subjective issues you raised are important, the Commission cannot use them when reviewing the demolition request.

Al Rossell stated that listed his properties as Contributing Resources was subjective.

Commissioner Battoglia stated that a property is a Contributing Resource if it is built within the period of significance of the historic district. If it was built after that it is Non-Contributing.

Chair McGrath also noted that one of the houses was designed by architect E. E. Roberts, which adds to property's significance.

Commissioner Nally stated that she is unclear what is being asked of the Commission.

Al Rossell stated that he is asked the Commission to say it is either okay to demolish them by declassifying them or carve them out of the historic district. If they were torn down someone's going to have a say on what goes back up, but if he wants to make a park, that should be his prerogative and not theirs. That applies to the zoning. The point is that he owns these properties and he was placed in the historic district without his approval and without notice. When he bought the property it was zoned R7-Multiple Family, which is one of the reasons he bought it.

Chair McGrath stated that they could examine the properties to see if they qualified as Non-Contributing Resources. But it seems as though the staff report was fairly thorough in making the case that they are Contributing Resources. The Commission can't provide money or remove them from the historic district. Even the State Historic Preservation Office has looked at the properties. It seems it would be difficult.

Al Rossell stated that he understood. He then wished to discuss economic loss. What is their definition of significant? When Mr. Kruver wanted to tear down 117 S. Kenilworth, it was going to cost him an extra \$500-600,000 to not tear them down. To him that was significant. He could qualify for a significant loss. Mr. Rossell knows what his properties would qualify for because he's had them appraised, and he's had offers from developers orally, so he knows what his loss would be. So his question to the Commission is what is a significant economic loss - \$200,000? Then he would qualify under the hardship.

Commissioner Nally stated that the Commission's confusion is that they don't have a clear understanding of what it is you want to achieve. You're not proposing a project or use change or anything in particular to have an understanding of your proposed need or identified loss as a result of that is. She would underscore that a historic district - a governmental body has the right to identify something that provides a public good and to have some taking - if you want to call it that - of private property for the public good. That action was taken decades ago. If there was a loss at that time regardless of what kind of notification you had, it has been over 40 years later that you are asking for reconsideration of your proposed loss. But without definition of what it is you are trying to gain, we could relate to your position better if you had some sort of definition of your objective. Without that we are hard pressed to give you any kind of particular on how we can help you.

Al Rossell stated that he understood and he appreciated that. The loss doesn't come about until there is a loss. At this point the loss is the failure to be able to demolish it.

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Commissioner Nally stated that the ability to demolish the property is one feature of the property, not all of it.

Al Rossell stated that may be, but you still took it. There are other property rights, but there was a taking. When he's ready to do something and now he can't, because it was taken away.

Commissioner Nally stated that you can still do many other things with your properties.

Al Rossell stated that their decision is based on whether or not he can demolish them. They are not the Plan Commission. They can have a review on what he builds and what it looks like. People in Oak Park who gave easements just got the short end of the stick because they are in historic districts.

Commissioner Sokol stated that was just not true. He got a substantial deduction on his easement.

Commissioner Nally stated that they have no jurisdiction over easements or property values.

Al Rossell stated he knows, but the IRS looks at Oak Park and says that the historic district prevents demolition, so you're not giving away as much as you thought you were giving away. My house might be worth more as land value than as a house.

Chair McGrath stated that you could sell your property and let the next owner argue for demolition.

Al Rossell stated that he did not buy in to the historic district so he has the standing. If he sold it then they would not have standing or hardship. He knows this might be going in circles.

Commissioner Nally stated that this body cannot change the ordinance. That is an act of government done by the Village Board. We serve as advisors to the Board.

Al Rossell agreed and said that's a moot point.

Commissioner Nally stated that the Village Board can hear hardship pleas, but it has to be based on a specific action you're looking to take. A theoretical approach will make it difficult to act on.

Planner Kaarre provided direction on procedure. If the Commission takes no action this evening, Mr. Rossell would be required within 15 days to request a public hearing on the Certificate of Appropriateness before the Commission. If the Commission were to officially deny the COA following the hearing, then Mr. Rossell could either appeal the denial to the Village Board or apply for a Certificate of Economic Hardship. If that were denied he could also appeal that to the Village Board.

Al Rossell asked if he could waive the time period for requesting the public hearing since he is going out of town. He's not in a hurry to demolish the properties.

Planner Kaarre stated that as long as it is mutually agreeable he did not see any reason why that would be a problem.

Commissioner Battoglia also stated that he could also submit a new Certificate of Appropriateness application again in the future.

Commissioner Sokol stated that he was involved with the original setting up of the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and he was on the HPC at the time. There were at least 5 public hearings

including several at Village Hall and one at the library. They were very well attended. There were many articles in the paper.

Al Rossell stated yes, but no one said you couldn't tear your house down.

Commissioner Sokol stated that he was just playing games now and this is ridiculous.

Chair McGrath called for a motion. No motion was made; therefore, the commission took no action on the Certificate of Appropriateness application.

D. **HPC 2016-25: 831 N. Grove Avenue (Binning/Farina): Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a rear two-story and second-floor addition and one-story mudroom addition on a one-story bungalow (Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District)**

Property owner Darrell Binning and architect Mark Zinni were present

Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the application. The house is a Contributing Resource within the *Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District*. The one-story Prairie School bungalow was constructed by Buettner and Buttendorf in 1911 for owner Fred Bluhm. The rear stucco garage was constructed in 1920 by F. C. Bluhm, and is also a Contributing Resource within the historic district. The applicant is proposing to remove portions of the roof, rear and side walls in order to construct a rear two-story and second-floor addition, as well as a one-story mudroom. The front wall of the second-floor of the addition will be set back 22'-2" from the front wall of the house. The side mudroom porch is being added on the south side at the rear where the addition begins. The applicant has worked to lower the height of the eave line of the second floor, has added windows to the front of the addition, and designed the side mudroom porch and addition in keeping with the character of the house. The stucco cladding will match existing materials, as will the wood casement windows in the addition, and the existing wood casement windows will be retained. The historic garage will also be retained. The proposed rear two-story and second-floor addition, and side mudroom addition, appear to meet the Guidelines, and staff is recommending approval as submitted

Mark Zinni, MZA Architects, provided an overview of the design. The proposal breaks down the scale, delineates old from new. The mudroom also helps to delineate where the original house ends.

Motion by Sokol to open the application for discussion. Second by Battoglia.

Commissioner Sokol noted that it was similar to another project recently approved and felt it was a good project.

Chair McGrath noted an inconsistency between the elevation and the rendering.

Mr. Zinni noted there was an error in the rendering.

Commissioner Tadic asked about matching the fenestration of the front windows elsewhere on the house.

Mr. Zinni stated that they used muntins in the important rooms such as the living room and dining room.

Commissioner Payne noted a problem with the overall scale of the project. The floor and rear addition are more than doubling the size of the house.

Commissioner Nally stated that it's like the addition is taking over the house and is leading the character identity, not the house. She inquired if they looked at other solutions where the roof could be lowered and dormers could be added. Roofs on this house are a major character-defining feature. To add a second-story addition that removes more than half the original roof structure cuts out so much of the character of the house that very little is remaining other than the charming front porch. She would prefer to see the rear raised and the use of dormers. It would be a more elegant solution.

Chair McGrath noted that they need to make sure that their review is based on the Architectural Review Guidelines, which allow for a second floor to be added.

Commissioner Payne noted that it may be more appropriate to use a gable rather than a hip to lower the height and use cross-gables.

The Commission discussed roof alternatives – gable versus hip. The hip roof has a better aesthetic than a gabled roof addition. A hip roof addition recedes better than a gabled addition.

Commissioner Houze noted that this is a particularly charming and distinctive bungalow, and she understands the desire to add more space, but the current proposed completely changes the character of the house. It no longer looks like a bungalow. She suggested looking at lowering the height to soften the massing and profile.

Commissioner Jordahl agrees that a hip addition works better than a gable aesthetically and how it regresses. She feels the proposed massing is acceptable.

Commissioner Payne suggested using double-hung windows for the regular spaces and casement windows in the special spaces, to complete the theme the applicant had mentioned earlier.

Commissioner Battoglia recommended the applicant verify that the project complies with the New Addition Policy in terms of not being more than 1/3 larger than the adjacent buildings.

Commissioner Nally stated that the project doesn't meet Guidelines 01, 03 and 04 of the New Addition Policy, despite similar approvals elsewhere. It changes the character of this house too much.

Motion by Sokol to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for 831 N. Grove Avenue as presented with the conditions that the drawings be updated with additional markings, and that clear proof is presented that the overall bulk of the proposed completed project as viewed from the street shall not be more than 1/3 larger than that of adjacent buildings, as per the Architectural Review Guidelines. Second by Jordahl. Motion approved 5-4.

AYE: Battoglia, Jordahl, McLean, Sokol, Chair McGrath

NAY: Houze, Nally, Payne, Tadic

E. Madison Street Update

Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the Madison Street “bend” proposal recently seen in the Wednesday Journal. He reviewed a site plan prepared by Burke Engineering. The Village Board has hired Burke Engineering, an engineering consultant, to study the feasibility of putting a bend in the 600-700 blocks of Madison Street in order to make the south Foley-Rice parcel deeper to make it more feasible for a larger development. The Village is working with one or more developers to purchase these properties. The proposal would result in the south parcel extending into the middle of Madison Street, which would result in the demolition of the south Foley-Rice building, the

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demolition of the Car-X building, also designed by E. E. Roberts, though only the east half of the building remains. And also the demolition of the west half of the north Foley-Rice building (Hill Motor Sales Company Building).

Commissioner Sokol stated that he was on the Village Board in 1971 and it was difficult even then to fill these buildings due to the narrow depth of these lots. This appears to be an attempt at a solution to providing that depth without changing the zoning and get into eminent domain and knocking down houses on streets behind it. That's what it appears, he's not defending or opposing.

Commissioner Tadic asked if this is meant to slow down traffic.

Planner Kaarre noted that the streetscape project is meant to move forward with or without the "bend" solution, which only came up recently. So they are looking at its feasibility at working into the streetscape proposal that has been developed over the last two years.

Commissioner Jordahl asked if there are development proposals for these sites that are in play?

Commissioner Nally stated that there must be or the Village wouldn't have moved come this far.

Planner Kaarre showed two renderings prepared by Burke Engineering.

Commissioner Tadic stated that the streetscape proposal that Altamanu created for Madison are such a great idea, and this proposal does not make any sense at all. It breaks up the interesting features and geometric aesthetics.

Commissioner Sokol also noted that we are also losing several very important buildings as well. The north Foley-Rice building is a really wonderful building.

Commissioner Payne asked if the Commission should care that two landmark-quality buildings are proposed for demolition?

Commissioner Nally stated that she believes the north Foley-Rice building is severed and dwarfed by everything else.

Commissioner Jordahl asked if the Madison Street Coalition wants this.

Planner Kaarre stated that they were just receiving a presentation, not voting or providing recommendations.

Commissioner Payne stated that the feasibility study was \$361,000.

Commissioner Nally stated that no public body spends that much money on something they are not seriously considering. She asked when the vote comes up again for Foley-Rice potential Landmark nomination.

Planner Kaarre stated not until January. He recommended that Chair McGrath contact Trustee Tucker to start a dialogue about the Commission's concerns and the Board's direction.

Chair McGrath noted that she will reach out and invite him to the next Commission meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

OTHER BUSINESS

St. Edmund School Closing: The Commission discussed the recent news of the official closing of St. Edmund School, a historic school in the *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District*. They discussed reaching out to the Village Board to get in front of any issues to make sure this significant historic building is preserved.

ADJOURN

Motion by Sokol to adjourn. Second by Nally. Motion approved 9-0.

AYE: Battaglia, Houze, Jordahl, McLean, Nally, Payne, Sokol, Tadic, Chair McGrath

NAY: None

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Douglas Kaarre.