

FLINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
4-7-16 Meeting

Commissioners Present

Dale Suomela, Chair
Stephanie Wright
Michael Hurley
Maurice Davis
Heather Burnash

Staff Present

Jon Moore, Planning & Devel. Analyst
Claire Nowak-Boyd, Planner I
Angela Wheeler, Staff Attorney

Commissioners Not Present

2 Board member vacant seats
Mildred Smith

ROLL CALL:

Chairman Suomela called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. Roll was taken and a quorum was present. The meeting was held in the Planning and Development Conference Room, Flint City Hall.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

M/S - Hurley/Davis

Motion to adopt agenda as presented.

Unanimously carried by voice vote.

ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES:

M/S - Hurley/Davis

Motion to adopt the meeting minutes from both the regular meeting of March 3 and the special meeting of March 7 as presented.

Unanimously carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC FORUM:

LeAnne Barkus of 412 W. First, Vice President of the Carriage Town Historic Neighborhood Association, spoke on behalf of the CTHNA to strongly oppose demolition of 314 W University Avenue.

R.L. Mitchell of 759 E Lyndon Avenue of the Association of Harristown Historic Houses, spoke about an eviction he had experienced.

Joe King, a Civic Park Resident of 27 years, said that demolition is needed but he's not sure it is being gone about in the right way. He expressed that the Civic Park Association needed to be approached and included in decisions about demolition.

Beth of Civic Park stated that she agrees with Mr. King, raising questions about how the determination is made whether a particular house is structurally sound or not, noting that the most dilapidated houses were not always the ones to be brought up for demolition.

Commissioner Hurley stated that the Land Bank owns the houses and are making the decision

of what makes the list. He stated that the board would be interested in getting their input. If they would like to give opinions, they can do so. Jonathan Moore offered to help facilitate a discussion.

Joe King asked another procedural question, which Commissioner Suomela discussed with him. He noted that some items have appeared on the agenda and been pulled by the owner. Joe King stated that this is unlikely to happen with Land Bank property. He noted that the Land Bank inspects its own properties for demolition, rather than a City inspector. He said they're not there to stop demolition, but to gain a seat at the table.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS:

Applicant: Thomas Henthorn, President, Whaley Historic House Association, and Samantha Engel, Executive Director, Whaley Historic House Association

Property Owner: Whaley House Historic Association

Location: 624 E. Kearsley Street, parcel # 41-07-451-048

Replacement of fire-damaged roof on third floor and supporting member and load bearing brick. Repair if chimneys.

Thomas Henthorn, applicant, brought photos showing their photographic documentation of the features of the Whaley before its demolition, per the Commission's previous request.

The plans by H2A Architects to repair the roof on the 3rd floor of the roof were presented, as well as some of the dentil and cornice work that needs to be repaired as a result of the fire. Some of the shingles on the 2nd floor will have to be replaced—they are curling up because of the heat. Mr. Henthorn stated that the demolition of the roof damage has begun, and this application is to replace the roof.

Currently the roof is synthetic so they plan to go back with the same, but would hope for a slate roof if it is possible as a part of insurance negotiations. Commissioner Hurley asked whether they are doing structural work that could support slate. Mr. Henthorn said definitely yes.

Commissioner Burnash clarified what this COA is for: roof, chimneys, dentil and cornice work, that is it. They are unsure how salvageable the chimneys are at this point. Most of the woodwork is salvageable. Gutters were part of the roof. Most of it will have to be replaced. Once the roof comes off, the gutter system would come off with it. They will use historic materials for everything except the roof surface. Dentil work will be re-milled. They are getting non-dimensional lumber made for the inside. They made the case that it's a character-defining feature of the house. Commissioner Burnash asked whether from the exterior it would be an exact replica. Mr. Henthorn said yes, a replica of the pre-fire house.

Mr. Henthorn asked again whether the commission would like them to seek an additional COA if they are able to get a more historic building material. Commissioner Hurley said that would indeed be appropriate.

M/S - Hurley/Wright

Motion to accept the application as written.

Yea: M. Davis, M. Hurley, S. Wright, D. Suomela

Nay: None

Recused: Burnash

Motion carried 4-0

Applicant: Genesee County Land Bank

Property Owner: Genesee County Land Bank

Location: 2305 Humboldt Ave, parcel ID # 40-02-401-036

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with cracked foundation unfit for habitation/unreasonable for repair

Carol Freeman, Project Manager at the Genesee County Land Bank is present with Inspector Anthony Dunn.

This property has been inspected by the Genesee County Land Bank. She brought approvals from the SHPO showing there's significant damage to the structure, and that it would be prohibitively expensive to rehab. She stated the SHPO "Doesn't have any problem with its demolition."

Carol Freeman noted that they attended a meeting of the board of the Civic Park Association. The cost to rehab would be \$225,000, and the post-rehab value \$20k. Demolition would cost \$11k. There is always a chance they may not be able to do demolition. Many houses in Civic Park exceed demolition costs they have been given. Their funds are Hardest Hit Funds and from MSHDA, solely for demolition. Land Bank doesn't have funds for rehab at this time.

Antonio Dunn checks to make sure everything is appropriate before making a final decision. Often the interior looks worse than the exterior. Often the foundation will have cracks and bulges that are very costly, or windows have been replaced.

Commissioner Davis stated that this house was labeled "Retain historic integrity" in 2015, and asked how that change could happen in one year. Ms. Freeman said the structure may have deteriorated. He said what's in Civic Park is designated as a Green Neighborhood, so there is zero effort to help rehab things there. Some properties are more deplorable than others, and noted that Hardest Hit Funds don't often take out the poorest condition properties. He urged the Land Bank to find rehab funding. He compared the wave of demolition to black removal.

Carol Freeman said they cannot touch a privately owned building, which protects some of the worst condition buildings. Others are too costly to abate. In terms of the area, The Department of Treasury working with MSHDA drew the boundary. She noted the elimination of rehab funding.

Commissioner Davis noted that they face Green Neighborhoods and blight removal. He noted taxes seemed to have increased concurrently. He noted that old windows in Habitat for Humanity seem to come out of old houses, and that he is concerned that windows are being fenced there.

Jonathan Moore stated that the intent of a Green Neighborhood is not just vacancy. He noted that they hope to make the area around Civic Park School a little more of a hub. The GN2

designation allows for more gardening and experimentation, and is denser than GN1.

Commissioner Hurley said there are no photos that show the basement cracking or other things that would help them make the decision. Antonio Dunn noted that there are cracks, but his photos did not capture them.

Commissioners and Angela Wheeler discussed the possibility of postponement until better photos could be taken and neighborhood groups consulted.

M/S - Hurley/Burnash

Motion to postpone discussion of the Genesee County Land Bank Applications until next month's meeting for the purpose of further documentation of reasons for demolition. Applications include: 2305 Humboldt Ave, 2321 Humboldt Ave, 2314 Basset Pl, 1210 W Dayton St, and 1209 W Dayton St.

Unanimously Approved

Commissioner Burnash will be present by phone next month.

Applicant: Genesee County Land Bank

Property Owner: Genesee County Land Bank

Location: 2321 Humboldt Ave, parcel # 40-02-401-032

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with cracked foundation unfit for habitation/unreasonable for repair

Applicant: Genesee County Land Bank

Property Owner: Genesee County Land Bank

Location: 2314 Basset Pl, parcel # 40-02-401-015

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with cracked foundation unfit for habitation/unreasonable for repair

Applicant: Genesee County Land Bank

Property Owner: Genesee County Land Bank

Location: 1210 W Dayton St, parcel # 40-02-258-019

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with cracked foundation unfit for habitation/unreasonable for repair

Applicant: Genesee County Land Bank

Property Owner: Genesee County Land Bank

Location: 1209 W Dayton St, parcel # 40-02-404-002

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with cracked foundation unfit for habitation/unreasonable for repair

Applicant: Nick Hoffman

Property Owner: Same

Location: 503 Garland St., parcel # 40-12-478-026

(Renewal) Installation of handicap ramp. Installation of 36” exterior steel door per city code. Installation of six exterior wall mount lamps on rear wall of building.

Nick Hoffman, the applicant, noted it took quite some time to find the contractors. The work has already been completed. He stated that the handicap ramp doesn't interfere with design. He stated that the door is for escape in case of emergency. He stated that the six lights on the back have been signed off on already by the electrical inspector. Commissioner Hurley asked whether there's any different from the work that was approved the first time. They are in the process of doing the whole building at the same time.

Burnash asked whether it was just for the lights, door, and ramp. The applicant said yes. Commissioner Hurley noted that lighting should be on the application if this regards lighting. Lighting was amended to the application.

M/S - Hurley/Davis

Motion to approve the application as amended.

Unanimously Approved

Applicant: Nick Hoffman

Property Owner: Same

Location: 314 University Ave., parcel # 40-12-476-016

Demolition of vacant deteriorated structure with foundation damaged, all value stripped.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he has been HDC chair twice in the past. He noted that he's part of the founding fathers of Carriage Town. Yes he wants the house for his property, as an add-on to his house, the Randolph House, which has beautifully restored. He does not want to tear the house down. He has tried to buy another lot and have the house moved. He has had a sign on there. He stated that he has threatened no one and has entertained offers, and would be willing to give the property to someone with a plan for restoration. Two of four offers were group homes. Living next door to the property has been challenging. He has been in the neighborhood 34 years. He noted it has been a dentist's office and a rehab facility, which was then vacated. It became a hotel of ill repute. House has been through a lot. Roof is leaking, and the garage is damaged. He did note there is very nice woodwork in the house.

He noted the property he owns nearby, and that his house is very expensive to insure, partially because of the house next door. He claimed that those signing the letter don't have burnouts next to their home. He claims that everyone who made an offer backed out, and thus he took the sign down. The cost of demo will be high. He stated that the walls were shaking. He noted there has been a fire. He noted he is doing estate planning and would like to turn his home into a resource center in the future. "Somehow something has to go" and he doesn't want it to be Randolph House. "Just to take off the front is about \$14k." He doesn't think there is enough physical room for restoration. He noted it has been cut up into apartments and some of the woodwork has been

stripped. His house was built in 1872, and he claimed his house once owned half a block. He noted some homes in Carriage Town have been delisted. Notes that property value has declined. Worried about demolishing other vacancies in the neighborhood too. Stated that he has rehabbed 17 properties in the neighborhood, and emphasized his work as a business owner.

Commissioner Hurley asked if there's anything else he would want the board to consider regarding demolition. The applicant offered the Commissioners to do a walk-through if they would like to see it.

Commissioner Burnash asked if the house had been appraised. The applicant stated there is no electrical or mechanical, and animals live in the basement. Commissioner Hurley asked whether there's proof from an engineer regarding structural conditions. The applicant stated that he should have kept potential buyers' notes on the condition of the house, and noted that the dental office is beginning to separate.

Commissioner Burnash asked whether windows were intact. Yes. Commissioner Burnash asked whether there was brick damage. Yes — says applicant — because of settling. Commissioner Burnash inquired about the woodwork, and the lack of pictures of it. Applicant stated that the shell around the woodwork is falling down. He noted it was left open for a while, and a couple of doors were taken. The buffet was damaged. He is afraid of fire.

Commissioner Burnash stated that she would like to see figures from an engineer or contractor showing the pricing of restoration.

Angela Wheeler discussed another legal option for with a delay for demolitions that are not a health or safety issue.

Commissioners reviewed the detail drawings submitted by the Capitol Theater team, and noted that they were serious about the renovation.

M/S - Wright/Davis

Motion to postpone discussion of 314 W University, parcel ID# 40-12-476-016, until next month's meeting for the purpose of further documentation of reasons for demolition.

Unanimously Carried

New Business

Claire Nowak-Boyd presented a Commissioners discussed the training opportunity and expressed interest in pursuing it.

Commissioner Burnash asked about Saginaw bricks work, and Claire Nowak-Boyd explained the follow-up she had done.

Commissioner Hurley asked about HB 5232 and Ms. Nowak-Boyd gave a status update.

Commissioner Hurley asked about reappointing people to fully fill out the commission to make sure there's a quorum. Angela noted what has happened in the past. They discussed procedure. Angela can present a letter to Stacey Erwin-Oakes. In the past a resume has been presented.

Commissioners discussed appointments. Angela Wheeler will examine the charter. It is possible to remove the other member? Check bylaws, check with Angela. Angela will look at authority to remove a member from board. I noted state law.

Elections

M/S Hurley/Davis

Motion to postpone officer elections until next month's meeting.

Unanimously Carried

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S - Hurley/Burnash

Unanimously Carried