

FLINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2018

Commissioners Present

Dale Suomela, Chair
Heather Burnash, Vice-Chair
Michael Hurley
Stephanie Wright
Beverly Davis

Staff Present

Corey Christensen, Zoning Coordinator
Andy Aamodt, Planner I
Kelly Kiertzner, Assistant City Attorney

ROLL CALL:

Chairman Suomela called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. Roll was taken and a quorum was present. The meeting was held in the Committee-of-the-Whole Room, 3rd Floor, Flint City Hall.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

M/S – Hurley/Burnash

Motion to adopt the meeting agenda.

Unanimously carried.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND DISPOSAL:

M/S – Davis/Wright

Motion to adopt the previous meeting minutes from April 5, 2018.

Unanimously carried.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Jay Bolton spoke. He was at the meeting for informational purposes, as he is interested in buying a home in Carriage Town. He wanted to know the process for remodeling a home. Commissioner Suomela summarized the application process and the HDC guidelines.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS/NOTICES TO PROCEED:

Applicant: Jacob Atkinson, Carriage Town Ministries

Property Owner: Carriage Town Ministries

Location: 218 W. University, Parcel ID 40-12-476-027

New construction of gazebo.

Jacob Atkinson, Business Manager of Carriage Town Ministries, presented the project. Carriage Town Ministries was approached by a Grand Blanc Schools 6th grade wood shop and geometry class to design a gazebo for the property. It will be built of treated dimensional lumber, with plywood decking, and asphalt shingles on top. The purpose of the project is to beautify the area.

Commissioner Hurley and Suomela asked if the photos provided will be the same gazebo as the proposed project. Mr. Atkinson stated those are past projects they have worked on and this gazebo will be similar, with the only difference that this proposed gazebo will not have a ramp. Their budget could not cover the ramp.

Commissioner Hurley wanted clarification of the site and the surrounding Carriage Town properties. Mr. Atkinson responded that the gazebo will be right next to the garden, so it will be helpful in giving shade for people working in the garden.

Commissioner Suomela asked about the ramp in regards to the building code. He mentioned this structure might need to be handicap accessible, so the project might not comply with the building code. Mr. Atkinson stated he has corresponded with Mike Reiter, building inspector, and Mr. Atkinson will make sure the structure is built to code and will pass inspection.

M/S –Hurley/Wright

Motion to approve application as presented, at 218 W. University, as a “Notice to Proceed”.

Approved unanimously.

Applicant: Flint Cultural Center Corporation

Property Owner: Flint Cultural Center Corporation

Location: 1103 Manning Court, Parcel ID 41-07-426-020

Demolition.

Mark Sinila, Chief Operating Officer of Flint Cultural Center Corporation, presented the project to demolish the house at 1103 Manning Court. Todd Moyer, Director of Operations for Flint Cultural Center, joined him. Mr. Sinila explained the site, and the site’s history in regard to J Dallas Dort. The house is now a safety hazard because of its deterioration and mold. The house’s repair would cost thousands of dollars. The insurance agent is asking them to demolish it for fear of someone getting hurt. Mr. Sinila expressed they are not trying to change history, rather trying to innovate the site. He suggested the blight is not remembering the history well, and FCCC has plans to use the site to better remember history.

Commissioner Suomela asked if this is the last structure standing on Manning Court. Mr. Moyer clarified there is one other home besides this. That one is privately owned.

Commissioner Wright asked if there is a monetary number on the estimate to renovate the home. Mr. Moyer stated a conservative estimate to restore it to a non-historical condition would cost around \$160,000. By now, to assess structural issues he thinks it would cost greater than \$200,000.

Commissioner Hurley asked how long FCCC has owned it. Mr. Moyer replied the FCCC has owned it since the mid-1990s.

Commissioner Burnash mentioned the Commission has denied structure demolitions that were in worse condition than this structure is now. She asked how FCCC has let this house come to this state and why it has not been tarped or better protected. Mr. Moyer stated FCCC has not felt it was their best use of resources to focus on tarping and protecting the house. They wanted to focus their resources on community enrichment.

Commissioner Hurley stated the Secretary of Interior’s guidelines would define this as “demolition by neglect.” Mr. Moyer stated they were not using the house for anything, so they did not want to use their resources on it.

Commissioner Wright asked how they were able to keep insurance coverage with the hole in the roof. Mr. Moyer clarified it is FCCC's liability. The house structure itself is not specifically insured.

Mr. Sinila expressed FCCC is looking to incorporate history into the future proposed plans.

Commissioner Suomela brought up a controversial situation in the past where FCCC requested demolition of about four of their owned houses on Manning Court. FCCC did so because they wanted to build a parking lot, because there was no good access to parking from Kearsley Street. Commissioner Suomela wanted to know why this subject house (1103 Manning Court) was left standing. Mr. Moyer responded that the previous demolition was for the purpose of the parking lot. FCCC moved three of the houses for free, but the fourth was not structurally sound enough. This subject house was not necessary to be moved for the sake of the previous plans.

Commissioner Hurley mentioned there were ideas, for a while, about what this house could be used for. Mr. Moyer stated they have consulted an architect who stated the home could not survive being moved because it is not structurally sound.

Commissioner Hurley mentioned the City could cite them for demolition by neglect.

Commissioner Suomela stated he is uncomfortable about FCCC's second request, because it overlaps this current request. It requires approval of this first request. Mr. Sinila explained that the house exists where they plan to install a courtyard, where the connection between the proposed school and auto exhibit takes place. The courtyard would also serve students who want to visit Sloan Museum. Mr. Moyer stated that the subject site is very crucial for the school's future site plan. Commissioner Suomela said theoretically the new plans could be built around this subject parcel, with the home still remaining in place.

Mr. Sinila mentioned that blight is affecting the area, and they are willing to put historic exhibits in the Sloan Museum that will well-represent the Historic District. They are trying to enhance the lives of children.

Commissioner Suomela suggested this situation is definitely demolition by neglect. He mentioned if FCCC can spend \$22 million to build a new facility, there should be money to repair the house.

Mr. Moyer mentioned he is curious if a precedent was set by the demolition of previous Historic District houses for the parking lot. Commissioner Suomela said that case should not have set a precedent for this case.

Commissioner Burnash suggested the applicants come back before the Commission next month, with more documentation regarding the demolition. Documentation in this case should be from general contractor or architectural professionals saying the house is beyond repair.

M/S – Hurley/Burnash

Motion to postpone the application for the June 7th meeting, with the applicants providing sufficient documentation regarding the demolition.

Carried unanimously.

Applicant: Flint Cultural Center Corporation

Property Owner: Flint Cultural Center Corporation

Location: Bounded by Sloan Museum to the south, and Robert T. Longway Blvd. to the north, Parcel ID 41-07-426-020, 41-07-427-008 and various adjacent parcels

New construction of school.

Mark Sinila presented the charter school application. The school will be grounded by arts and sciences. Grand Valley State University has approved the charter. The school will start by being K through 6, then up to K through 8 in year four. The design will be similar to the new design to the Flint Institute of Arts building, as well as the plans Sloan Museum has for future renovations. The design will be modern.

Commissioner Suomela asked if the school will be owned by FCCC. Mr. Moyer stated it will be owned by FCCC but ran by the charter school board of directors under the guidance of GVSU. Mr. Moyer stated that some of the other campus properties are owned by the parent company, FCCC.

Mr. Moyer advocated that this project is a good opportunity to provide specialized, quality education.

Commissioner Suomela asked if the school will be part of the Flint Public School system. Mr. Moyer replied that it is a separate entity, and that it is not their goal to be competition, but rather to be a unique opportunity.

Commissioner Davis asked if the school model will be similar to Educare's mission towards the water crisis. Mr. Sinila confirmed this facility will be a strictly educational facility.

Commissioner Hurley asked what happened with the street vacation. Mr. Sinila and Mr. Moyer explained the street vacation request that is going through City Council.

Commissioner Hurley asked what the auto exhibit will be like. Mr. Moyer explained that there will be a smaller space for car displays.

Corey Christensen and Andy Aamodt explained to the Commission that the only Historic District parcel pertaining to the school's current plans is parcel 41-07-426-020. That is the scope of the Commission's action. The Commission discussed that it is difficult to vote on this item until the demolition is approved or not. The Commission explained the other option for the applicants would be to redraw their plans to avoid the Historic District.

Commissioner Burnash asked what the timeframe of the plans is. Mr. Sinila stated the plan is to open the school in September of 2019.

Mr. Sinila and Mr. Moyer acknowledge the postponement of their application is their best option.

M/S - Chairman Suomela, without any objection, postponed the application for the next meeting on June 7th.

OLD BUSINESS:

Saginaw Street Bricks Update

Kelly Kiertzner updated the Commission that the Transportation Division issued a permit for construction of service lines below that part of Saginaw Street. The permit required the bricks be put back. Ms. Kiertzner will communicate with Transportation about the replacement of the bricks. Transportation will

confirm the location of the bricks, as well as the permit information that stipulates the process in which the bricks are replaced at the end of construction.

Ms. Kiertzner confirmed UM-Flint is not involved here, as the service lines are to the Citizen's Bank Building.

Ms. Kiertzner mentioned Betty Wideman, of Transportation/Street Maintenance, would like to come to a meeting to ask questions and obtain information. She would like to understand the maintenance of Saginaw Street.

Member Vacancies

Andy Aamodt updated the Commission on possible candidates that can be recommended to the Mayor.

NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S –Burnash/Wright

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Unanimously carried.