

The City of Lake Forest
Historic Preservation Commission
Proceedings of the May 23, 2018 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, May 23, 2018, at 6:30 p.m., at the City of Lake Forest City Hall, 220 E. Deerpath, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Historic Preservation Commissioners present: Chairman Grieve and Commissioners Wells Wheeler, Elizabeth Sperry, Jan Gibson, Bill Redfield, Bob Alfe and Carol Gayle.

Commissioners absent: None

City staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

1. Introduction of Commissioners and staff, overview of meeting procedures.

Chairman Grieve reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission and asked the members of the Commission and staff to introduce themselves.

2. Consideration of the minutes of the April 25, 2018 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The minutes of the April 25, 2018 meeting were approved as submitted.

3. Continued consideration of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to authorize construction of a detached garage at 449 E. Illinois Road.

Property Owners: Chris and Deb Jensen

Representative: Edward Deegan, architect

Chairman Grieve asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he noted that at the last meeting, the Commission approved the work proposed on the residence, a partial demolition and construction of a replacement addition. He reviewed that the Commission continued consideration of the proposed garage to allow consideration of modifications that might mitigate the impact of the garage on the neighboring property. He pointed out that at the last meeting; the Commission did not identify any inconsistencies with the applicable standards, explaining that the continuation was for the purpose of allowing the concerns raised by the neighbor to be diligently considered. He stated that since alternatives for the garage roof massing were not available for Commission review at that time, the Commission decided to pause to allow consideration of whether there is an option that still meets the applicable standards, but also addresses, at least to some extent, the concerns of the neighbors. He clarified for the petitioners that the Commission's role is to review and deliberate on whichever option they choose to put forward.

Mr. Deegan reviewed the activity since the last meeting. He stated that the Jensens

met with the neighboring property owners to hear their concerns and discuss the plans. He stated that alternate plans were considered with the goal of decreasing the appearance of mass of the proposed garage from the neighboring property. He reviewed the site plan noting that neither the location, nor the foot print of the garage have changed since the last meeting. He reviewed the elevations of the proposed garage as it was presented at the last meeting. He noted concerns were raised about the high window on the south facing gable end, and the lack of windows on the lower portion of the south facing elevation. He presented a revised elevation of the south elevation reflecting window modifications with the roof form as originally proposed. He then presented modified plans noting that the south facing gable was removed and replaced with a hip roof to reduce the mass of the roof form and to present a lower height when viewed from the property to the south. He presented sightlines from the neighboring property noting the reduced visual impact as a result of the modified design.

Ms. Czerniak stated that since the last meeting, the petitioners followed the Commission's direction, studied alternatives and met with the neighbors. She stated that the modified roof forms minimize the mass near the neighboring property adding that the modified roof is not visible from the streetscape. She noted that although the revised plan may not be a better architectural solution, it responds to the neighbor's concerns. She stated that the plan now proposed strikes a reasonable compromise.

In response to questions from Commissioner Gibson, Mr. Jensen confirmed that the revised plan now presented is not the preferred option, but noted that they are willing to proceed with the modified plan as presented in an effort to be responsive to the neighbors and to allow the project to move forward without further delay.

In response to questions from Commissioner Alfe, Mr. Deegan confirmed that consideration was given to pulling the roof back to the main ridge but noted that configuration created an awkward form that would be visible from the driveway. He also expressed concern that maintenance and water issues could result from that option. He stated that as a result, the hipped form is proposed as a compromise.

Commissioner Wheeler stated support for the plans are originally presented but acknowledged that the petitioners made changes in response to negative feedback from the neighboring property owners. He stated that as presented, the roof form is a bit unusual, but stated that the solution is reasonable and borrows a form from the residence.

Commissioner Gayle observed that the petitioner explored a direction suggested by the Commission in an effort to respond to the neighbor.

Commissioner Redfield stated support for the revised plan. He stated that the lower profile roof will not be as visible as the roof proposed in the previous plan when viewed from the neighboring property.

In response to questions from Chairman Grieve, Mr. Deegan confirmed that some

storage space is lost in the garage as a result of the modified plan along with the ability to cathedral the interior space.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Grieve invited public comment.

Tom Wigen, 450 Heather Lane, stated his appreciation for the Jensen's response to his concerns and his wife's concerns. He commented that at the meeting with the Jensens, he thought a drawing with only one gable, an east facing gable, was presented and questioned whether the plan now presented is consistent with the drawing presented during the on-site meeting. He acknowledged that the Jensens have made concessions. He stated that he and his wife have enjoyed the view from their back yard for four years and would like to continue to enjoy it. He questioned whether the sightline studies presented accurately represent the views from his backyard. He asked for clarification on the plan that is presented for approval.

Julie Smit, 450 Heather Lane, stated that the proposed garage will be visible from Heather Lane which is a public street. She described the beautiful streetscapes with historic homes, trees and views of the skyline that are visible in the neighborhood. She stated appreciation for the Jensen's efforts to compromise.

Hearing no further requests to speak from the public, Chairman Grieve invited a response to public testimony from the petitioner.

Mr. Deegan explained that the plans presented for approval are consistent with the plans discussed with the neighbors. He stated that the modifications involved removing the south facing gable. He stated that no changes were made to the other elevations.

Chairman Grieve invited final questions or comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Wells reiterated his support for the garage as originally presented and expressed his disappointment that it met with resistance. He stated that it is difficult to move away from something that is a graceful, elegant architectural solution. He stated however that if the petitioners are requesting approval of the alternate plans now presented to appease the neighbors, he will support the petition.

Commissioner Gayle stated that the plans presented are a compromise noting that the petitioners made a genuine effort to talk to the neighbors about their concerns. She stated that the revised plan presents an architecturally viable solution, one that merits the Commission's support. She stated support for the plans as now presented. She added that she appreciates the efforts of the petitioners and expressed her hope that the compromise offered creates good relations between the neighbors.

Commissioner Redfield agreed with Commissioner Gayle's comments.
Commissioner Gibson also acknowledged the efforts of the petitioners and the

compromise that was made. She stated that the revised design reduced the mass and pleases the neighbors. She stated support for the petition.

Commissioner Sperry also stated support for the petition as now presented. She expressed appreciation for the flexibility of the petitioners.

Commissioner Alfe stated that the revised plans present something that will work for everyone.

Chairman Grieve stated that based on the Commission's comments, it appears that there is support for the revised plans and appreciation for the willingness of the petitioners to compromise for the neighbor. He noted that the Commission always considers all perspectives as it works to evaluate projects based on the applicable standards. He pointed out that there is no requirement that a neighbor must like all aspects of a project noting that a project must work architecturally and must meet the standards. He reiterated the Commission's appreciation for the petitioners' efforts noting that the decision to accommodate the neighbors was the petitioners. He stated that based on the comments, the Commission appears to feel that the revised plans satisfies the standards. He invited a motion.

Commissioner Wheeler made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness approving the detached garage as revised and as presented to the Commission. He stated that the motion is based on the findings detailed in the staff report and incorporates the testimony and the Commission's deliberations as additional findings. He stated that the motion is subject to the following conditions.

1. Plans submitted for permit must reflect the project as presented to and approved by the Commission. If, in response to the Commission's comments or during the final design development process, modifications are made to the plans presented, plans clearly detailing the areas of change must be submitted and will be subject to review by staff, in consultation with the Chairman as appropriate, to verify that the plans are consistent with the intent of the Commission and the approvals granted.
2. The City Engineer is directed to review the grading and drainage plans with particular attention to off-site impacts on the properties to the south which are at a lower elevation.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gayle and approved by a vote of 7 to 0.

4. Consideration of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness authorizing demolition of an existing residence located at 770 Washington Road. No replacement structure is proposed.

Property Owner: Swift Washington/Michigan Management, LLC (Swift Siblings)

Representative: Michael Adelman, attorney

Chairman Grieve asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of

interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Adelman introduced the petition stating that the property owners, the twelve surviving children of the Swifts, are requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to authorize demolition of the house and garage at 770 Washington Road. He stated that the owners have no plans to redevelop the property now or in the future. He stated that the house has been for sale for some time and to date, there has been no interest in it. He noted that the consensus within the real estate community is that the property is unsaleable with the residence. He provided some background information stating that the house was purchased in 1959 by Hampton and Margaret Swift. He noted that Mr. Swift passed away in 2014, and Ms. Swift passed away in January, 2017. He noted that the twelve surviving children are working to close out the estate of their parents. He stated that the three story Italian Revival residence totals 12,000 square feet and was constructed in 1910. He stated that the house sits on approximately four acres of property that is zoned R-3. He stated that the house was designed by architects Frost and Granger, the son-in-laws of the president of the Chicago and Northwestern railroad. He noted that Frost and Granger are not notable residential architects but instead, their area of excellence was designing train stations. He stated that the residence at 770 Washington Road is very large and would be very expensive to restore if in fact it is worth restoring. He stated that the residence is neither historically important, nor architecturally significant and as a result, does not warrant the investment necessary to restore it. He stated that last summer, the owners engaged the firm of McQuire and Igleski to conduct an historical assessment of the property. He stated that the report that was produced was very informative, but did not make a persuasive argument for preservation and restoration of the house. He noted that the Commissioners were provided with the opportunity to tour the house and the site and were provided with a staff report to assist in the evaluation of the petition based on the applicable criteria. He reviewed the five demolition standards stating that the structure is not of such historical, cultural, architectural or archeological significance that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest or contrary to the general welfare of the people of the City and State. He noted that the original house was nothing remarkable adding that the later additions were not sympathetic to the structure. He stated that the structure does not contribute to the distinctive historic, cultural, architectural or archeological character of the district as a whole noting that the residence does not evoke feelings of awe or cause passersby to stop for a second look. He stated that the residence is not comparable to other important historic structures in the community such as those pointed out by Art Miller in his letter. He noted that many historic buildings in the community evoke feelings that this residence does not. He stated that demolition of the residence would not be contrary to the purpose and intent of this chapter or to the objective of historic preservation. He stated that the City's preservation ordinance is not intended to preserve every old building but instead, to preserve, protect and restore those that warrant it. He stated that the structure is not of such old, unusual or uncommon design, texture or material that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty or expense. He stated that the size of the structure would make it costly to reproduce. He stated that the design is not unusual, complex or ornate and would not be difficult to reproduce. He stated that the

owners have no plans to replace the existing residence or develop the property in any way. He concluded stating that the important architectural and historic fabric of the community needs to be preserved however, every house cannot be preserved and every old house is not worthy of preservation. He stated that preserving every old house is not the intent of the Code. He noted that some properties have the bones and integrity worth going to the mat for, but this property does not.

Ms. Czerniak stated that staff was first contacted by the property owners over a year ago to meet and walk the property. She noted that this petition was not brought forward in haste, she noted that extensive due diligence was completed. She stated that staff's initial response, prior to research and input from consultants, was that demolition of the residence may not be appropriate given its age and prominent location in the historic district. She noted however, that staff recognizes that the Commission and the City must be selective about to what we preserve in order to protect the integrity of the City's preservation ordinance. She stated that attempting to preserve every old structure is an approach that could undercut support for the ordinance. She commented that the Commission must be selective about what should be preserved based on an evaluation of each individual petition in the context of the criteria. She stated that the Commission must decide which structures are worth fighting to preserve and in those cases, fiercely hold its ground. She noted that the Commissioners each had an opportunity to tour the house and grounds and review reports prepared by consultants hired in one case by the petitioner, and in the other, by the City. She added that some members of the Preservation Foundation were also offered the opportunity to tour the house and grounds. She stated that after review of the documentation presented and after multiple on-site inspections, staff has concluded that this structure satisfies the criteria for demolition. She noted that in comparison to other historic structures in the community; the detailing, workmanship, later additions and overall importance does not rise to the same level. She noted that setting aside the current condition and later additions, the residence does not evoke the same feeling of other prominent properties such as 830 N. Green Bay Road, a property that was recently purchased and restored. She noted that the City hired Susan Benjamin to conduct extra due diligence on this petition given the importance of the Commission's decision on this matter. She noted that Susan Benjamin has been before the Commission a number of times, most often advocating for preservation of structures and in support of local landmark designations. She stated that Ms. Benjamin conducted her own analysis of the structure and property and was provided with the documentation in the Commission's packet and the opportunity to tour the structure and site. She introduced Ms. Benjamin.

Ms. Benjamin noted that she came into this project feeling neutral noting however that her opinions are filtered through her experience in writing and advocating for many National Register nominations and her work conducting surveys to update documentation for many historic districts. She stated that this is not an easy job. She stated that in her opinion, house is not Italian Renaissance Revival as described by others, instead, it clearly embodies the Arts and Crafts style. She noted that the simplicity and materials are characteristic of the Arts and Crafts movement. She noted

however that the residence is compromised in terms of style and integrity. She referenced a house in the English Countryside style by Bailey Scott. She stated that the work of Frost and Granger is steeped in the English tradition, handsome houses, Tudor elements and elements in the Arts and Crafts movement. She noted that the train station is a terrific example of their work along with the comfort station in West Park, buildings at the College, and Granger's own house. She noted that in the 770 Washington Road residence, the cohesion and artistry has been compromised. She acknowledged that the house is identified as a Contributing Structure in the Historic District Survey likely because of its age in combination with its size, style, and materials. She noted however that other buildings in Historic District have a strong stylistic impact which this house does not. She noted that other buildings in the District have detailing on the interior and exterior that one would expect to find on a house in the District, which this house does not have. She noted that the standards for listing a building as a Contributing Structure individually differ from those used to include a property in a District. She noted that this residence is not a strong contributor to the District and does not make a strong statement. She stated that the house does not have the impact or importance other houses have. She stated that 75 percent of the windows have been replaced with windows of an unsympathetic style and character. She noted that originally, the house was meant to have quoining at the ends to enclose it pointing out that the horrific additions to the house have compromised the original design and intent. She acknowledged that the additions are more than 50 years old but noted that the age of the additions does not make them sympathetic to the original design. She stated that in her opinion, the detailing and the organization of the windows never did contribute significantly to the building. She noted that the house does not have the regularity, or repetition that you look for when you analyze a historic building or work of art. She stated that this house was not a strong contender even in the day, the design was good, but not strong. She noted that the elements of the house that are interesting have been compromised by the window treatments and lack of craftsmanship over the years as renovation of the house has occurred. She noted for instance the lack of concern and attention paid to tuck pointing which impacts how a building looks. She noted that the projecting bay does not have the color or texture of the other stucco on the house and in fact, may be dryvit. She noted the visibility of the addition from the streetscape. She reiterated that the interior of the house does not have the strong stylistic artistry that is found in many other residences in the community. She stated that the house overall does not have the strength or integrity that she would have hoped for given its location on a prominent site. She noted that the platform that was removed from the south side of the house early on and was important to the overall design. She stated that as a preservationist, the house does not evoke feelings of importance or integrity. She noted however that how the property relates to Triangle Park is important and landscape features of the property may be important. She noted that the siting of the house on the property contributes to the character of the district even though the house itself is not important. She stated that if the building is demolished, it will be important to preserve the natural features of the site; the topography, the designed landscape and hardscape, the pond with rock features and the overall character of the site. She stated that although reluctant to support any demolition, in this case, she agrees that approval of demolition is appropriate. She stated that the house has lived

its life. She stated that the house does not have the integrity it had when Frost and Granger designed it.

Ms. Czerniak stated that a request for demolition is before the Commission for consideration. She clarified that no replacement structure or redevelopment of the site is proposed or intended by the property owners. She noted that findings in support of the demolition and recommendations for conditions of approval are presented in the staff report. She noted that in addition to being within the Local Historic District, the property is also in the Historic Residential and Open Space Overlay District which means that any redevelopment of the site that may be proposed in the future would be evaluated on standards that are intended to preserve open space and natural and historic features of properties. She noted that any redevelopment of the property would also be considered and evaluated in the context of the Local Historic District and the prominence of the property within that District.

In response to questions from Commissioner Gibson, Mr. Adelman confirmed that the property was listed for sale in October, 2017 and remains on the market. He stated that he found the McQuire report to be interesting, but noted that the body of the report does not support the conclusions. He pointed out the difference of opinion among professionals about the architectural style of the house as originally intended.

In response to questions from Commissioner Sperry, Mr. Adelman stated that there has been one showing since property was listed.

In response to questions from Commissioner Wheeler, Ms. Czerniak explained that the Commission is charged with evaluating the petition based on the applicable criteria, adding that the length of time a property is on the market is not one of the applicable criteria. She commented that the architectural and historic significance of a structure is not determined by how long a property is on the market. She stated that instead, the criteria require the Commission to consider whether the residence has architectural and historic integrity, distinction and a character worthy of preservation.

Commissioner Wheeler stated that he does not take a request of this type lightly. He noted that his preference is to see structures preserved and kept vital for as long as possible.

In response to questions from Commissioner Gayle Mr. Adelman stated that in all likelihood, the property, with the house, will never be sold. He pointed out that showings has not even been requested by curiosity seekers which would normally be the case for properties that are historically or architecturally significant. He stated that Mr. Martin, a Lake Forest contractor who often takes on restoration projects, walked through the house and stated that in his opinion, no one will buy the house. He noted that it will take millions and millions of dollars to restore the house and make it livable for today's buyer. He stated that the house is not worth that kind of money, even if the sale price was a million dollars. He questioned whether anyone is impressed with the house when they visit.

In response to comments from Mr. Swift, Ms. Czerniak clarified that whether a property is owned by an individual or a bank is not criteria used to evaluate the appropriateness, or lack thereof of demolition of a structure. She reiterated that the Commission is charged with basing its decision on whether or not the house is important, has architectural or historic significance and is worth preserving.

Commissioner Redfield commented that he looked at that house externally and there is nothing that appeals to him. He stated that he formerly owned a large significant house.

In response to questions from Chairman Grieve, John Swift confirmed that during the time of his family's ownership, there were quite a few changes made to the house. He stated that his family purchased the house in 1959, when Lake Forest was much smaller. He stated that the first fire was in the basement and the family moved out of the house for an extended period of time while repairs were completed. He noted that in a separate incident, sewage backed up into the basement and the road was dug up to make the necessary repairs. He stated that still today, there is seepage into the basement and backups during heavy rain storms. He stated that a second fire, a five alarm fire, occurred in 1988 or 1989, behind a wall. He stated that some of the older kids were at home and they managed to save some of the furniture from the house. He noted that the fire shot up to the third floor and caused significant damage. He stated that after that fire, his mother had all of the chimneys plugged. He stated that there was also a fire in the garage. He reviewed the additions and changes made to the house to accommodate the growing family.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Grieve invited public comment.

Marcy Kerr, Executive Director of the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation, spoke on behalf of the Board of Directors noting that the Board meets to discuss the petitions before the Commission meets. She stated that the Board feels strongly that more time is needed to review the petition and the information in the Commission's packet. She stated that based on the Board's review of the petition to date, based on the criteria in the Code, the Board concluded that the criteria for demolition are not met. She stated that the home is historically and architecturally significant due to its age and the fact that it was designed by significant architects, Frost and Granger. She stated that the Board found that demolition would be detrimental to the neighborhood as would any future subdivision of the property into smaller lots. She stated that the Board finds that subdivision of the property would change the historic character of the neighborhood and negatively impact historic Triangle Park. She stated that the Board concluded that the property contributes to the distinctive historic and architectural character of the historic district adding that the Frost and Granger designed home could be restored to its original state. She added that the character of the house contributes to the historic character of the historic Triangle Park neighborhood. She stated that the Board also determined that the demolition of a contributing historic

structure, one designed by significant architects and located in the Historic District, is contrary to the purpose and objectives of the District and Lake Forest's mission and ordinances. She stated that the Board concluded that the 1910 architecturally and historically significant home would be difficult to replicate in quality, materials and craftsmanship. She stated that the Board recommends that no Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition be issued until plans for a replacement structure are available for review and are approved by the Commission. She stated that the Board finds that approving a demolition without plans for a replacement structure is contrary to the City's preservation ordinance. She stated that approval of the demolition of a significant Frost and Granger home would be a sad decision adding that Frost and Granger are significant Chicago architects who also have an historic presence in Lake Forest. She reminded the Commissioners that their job is to safeguard the historic character of the City. She noted that subdivision of the property will change the historic character of the site and the neighborhood. She expressed the Board's concern that a decision to approve the demolition would establish a dangerous precedent for similar properties and in the long term, would be detrimental to the unique character of the community. She stated that there are already numerous properties on the market for buyers who desire smaller properties or a newly build home. She stated there is no shortage of inventory for those products. She stated that approval of demolition will provide a financial gain for the seller and new investor as opposed to someone who would acquire the property because they value preservation. She stated that the Preservation Foundation cannot stand behind those who value financial gains over those who chose to live in Lake Forest because of its unique and beautiful historic character and over those who have already invested in homes both old and new, near this property and throughout Lake Forest. She stated that the Historic Preservation Commission is an appointed body that represents the citizens of Lake Forest and is charged with preserving the historic character the City. She noted that the Commission was established in 1997 to continue the City's long tradition of taking proactive steps to preserve the historic character of Lake Forest. She stated that the Commission should avoid a rush decision on the request to demolish the house to allow subdivision of the property at 770 Washington Road. She stated that the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation encourages the preservation of the historic sites and landscapes and opposes the petition as submitted.

Ms. Czerniak stated that the Commission was established in 1998, years after many changes were made to the house. She stated that the additions and alterations likely would have been done differently, in a manner more compatible to the original house, if the Commission had been in place prior to the work being done. She stated that today, with the Commission in place, the City has the ability to oversee changes to historic structure; additions, replacement of materials and significant repairs and alterations. She stated that the Commission's role is not to preserve every old building, but instead, the role of the Commission is to preserve, protect and when appropriate, guide change in the historic districts to assure that the integrity of historically and architecturally significant structures is preserved. She stated that being selective in determining which structures are important and merit preservation serves to strengthen and support preservation efforts in the City and support for preservation

overall.

Chairman Grieve commented that often, when the Commission is undertaking a review of a petition, a concern about precedent is raised. He clarified that each petition is considered on its own merits based on a review of the criteria as they apply to a specific petition. He acknowledged that the City and the Commission has a bias toward preservation but noted that the Commission exists to evaluate projects based on specific criteria. He noted that if no changes were intended to be allowed in the historic districts, the Commission would not exist. He stated that it is not the Commission's job to figure out how to save everything but instead, to evaluate petitions based on the criteria. He stated that the Commission will look at this petition individually and regardless of the final decision, the decision on this petition will not set a precedent for future petitions which will each have their own unique set of facts and characteristics. He invited comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Gibson said that she obtained a postcard with a picture of the house from 1910 and 1915 acknowledging that the house looks different today. She noted that windows make a significant difference in the appearance of a house, as is the case with this house. She noted that today, there are many aspects of the house that are wrong. She noted the changes in windows from the originals which included six over six lite patterns. She stated that if the house were to be restored, and the windows changed back to be consistent with the original windows, the house would have a much different feel and would be more prominent on the hill. She stated that the house needs a chance noting that it has not been on the market long, only since last October. She stated that she went through the house on April 7th and noted that the house was cluttered with belongings and debris making it difficult to access some rooms. She questioned why it was not staged more appropriately for sale acknowledging that the family members may still be going through belongings. She questioned however why a real estate agent would take anyone through the house in its present condition. She noted that the main entry hall and staircase are appropriately scaled for the house. She noted that the living room is elegant. She said that the house was constructed at the end of the Edwardian Era, in the simple Arts and Crafts style and as a result, does not have significant moldings. She stated that she would have loved to sit in the elegant dining room and enjoy a dinner with 20 people. She stated that the scale of the house is reflected on the inside. She noted that there is nothing structurally wrong with the house noting that it is broad shouldered and sturdy. She stated that the house fits the community, is part of the community's fabric, and is at ground zero. She noted the social prominence of the Warner family pointing out that the property on which the house is located was originally part of the Oakhurst Estate. She noted the Warners' support for the hospital and their early role in establishing the Hospital Foundation and their contributions to the community. She stated that she thinks it is a misconception that there are only a limited number of buyers who can afford the property. She noted that executives of various businesses have bought old houses in Lake Forest and restored them. She stated that she sees the same potential for this property. She stated that she has heard that a potential buyer was interested in seeing the house but was not sure

whether the property was for sale or not. She stated that the house needs a chance, it needs to be cleaned up and actively marketed. She stated that she personally likes the house.

Commissioner Sperry stated that in the past, she had the benefit of serving as a Director for the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation. She added that she has been a real estate broker in the community for 10 years and has had the opportunity to see spectacular properties in the community noting however, that this property is not one of the spectacular properties. She noted that in addition to the issues the house has faced in the past, as outlined by Mr. Swift, recently, there was a significant water leak which caused significant damage to the house. She stated that the house completely lacks the gravitas of a great Lake Forest house. She stated that architectural elements on the house are in conflict with each other. She stated that the house is not a good example of a Frost and Granger design commenting that other Frost and Granger homes far exceed this home in quality and character. She stated that the later additions further diminish the house, significantly. She stated that the house no longer has the integrity to be considered an important historic structure. She stated that in her opinion, the criteria for demolition are met. She noted that the three car garage is inappropriate and commented that overall, the house is in serious disrepair. She stated that seven figures would be required to simply restore the house to a livable condition.

Commissioner Alfe agreed with Commissioner Sperry's observation that the house is not one of Frost's and Granger's strongest pieces of work. He stated that fact alone brings into question whether the criteria for requiring preservation are met. He stated that in the public comments, questions were raised about what will happen to the site in the future if the demolition is approved. He stated that redevelopment of the property is not a matter before the Commission in conjunction with the present request.

Commissioner Wheeler stated that he is not a fan of demolition however, he noted a situation where two homes were built in front of an important historic residence in the community and as a result, the importance of the original home was diminished. He stated that houses of this scale have an important relationship with the surrounding yards and the yard is necessary to achieve the proper balance. He stated that saving the house and subdividing the property would be an inelegant solution. He suggested that subdivision of the interior of the structure to create multiple units could be considered. He stated that he would not be supportive of preserving the house only to see smaller homes built around it which could likely occur given the size of the property. He stated that the house does not qualify as one that needs to be preserved. He stated that the house was a great house and it should be allowed to retire with dignity.

Commissioner Gayle stated that this petition is one of the most difficult matters to come before the Commission during her tenure. She stated that she is cautious about demolitions noting that important structures were lost in the 1970's. She stated that

determining whether or not a specific house should be preserved is not clear cut. She stated that she sympathizes with the Swift siblings who have the need to sell a property which is not saleable. She stated however that it is hasty to come to the decision to demolish the home now, even though others have stated that the property, with the house, will not sell. She stated that the house has a presence on the hill, and on the site. She acknowledged that in a way, the discussions about demolition and what will become of the property in the future, are linked. She stated that she is very uneasy about whether the property will be preserved in a way that retains the views from Triangle Park. She stated that she is nervous about the demolition without assurance that the Commission will have some control over what replaces the house. She stated that in one sense, she can see the separation between discussions about the house and the overall site. She questioned how much of what has been done to the house could be undone. She noted the comments of the Preservation Foundation about the historic value of the house. She noted that the Foundation appears to believe that someone will want the house adding that she does not know whether that is realistic. She stated that she believes that it will be difficult to find someone to restore the house. She stated that she does not approve of the demolition without a plan for the future of the site.

Commissioner Redfield stated that he was on the building committee for Ragdale. He noted that six or seven years ago, the Ragdale house was in a completely different state than when it was originally built. He noted that a decision was made to restore Ragdale to what it looked like in 1926, when Howard Van Doren Shaw died. He noted that a significant amount of money was put into Ragdale to complete the restoration. He suggested that this house could be in a similar situation if someone with a substantial bank roll wanted to restore it. He noted that Adrian Smith recently bought the Armour house on Green Bay Road and is restoring it. He suggested that someone might want to do the same with this house. He stated that it would be a shame if the house was demolished and then someone come forward who is willing to restore it. He stated that sometimes it takes a while to sell a home noting that it took four years to sell his house which was designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw. He described how the buyers found his house noting that they were tickled to have found it. He noted that there is a chance that something like that could happen here.

Chairman Grieve noted that the Commission is charged with considering the merits of an individual property against the criteria for demolition. He noted that the Commission's charge is to determine whether or not this house is architecturally significant and whether or not it is a structure of note. He noted that there are not criteria that ask the Commission to evaluate whether or not someone might buy the house in a week, or in a month, or a year. He noted that the Preservation Foundation has requested additional time to study the information provided to the Commission. He noted that he has heard some comments that are debatable, and experts have shared their perspectives. He noted that based on the information presented, this matter has not been rushed by any means however, it seems reasonable and fair to allow an additional 30 days for consideration by all parties. He noted that if a continuance is granted, it should not be interpreted as an indication of the

Commission's position.

Ms. Czerniak confirmed that the Commission always has the option of continuing a petition if there is a feeling that more time is needed to consider the material presented or if additional information is needed. She added that the public record can be left open, or closed, at the Commission's discretion. She suggested that if the Commission chooses to continue the petition, the continuance should be to a date certain.

Commissioner Sperry stated that the majority of concerns raised by the Commissioners seem to be related to what will replace the house. She pointed out that is a completely separate issue from what the Commission is being asked to consider now. She suggested that the Commission should be clear on that point.

Chairman Grieve agreed with the point made by Commissioner Sperry. He added that if the demolition is approved, the Commission will have a significant role in determining what ultimately replaces the house with oversight of the site plan and structures. He reiterated that the only matter before the Commission now is whether or not the request for demolition of the house meets the applicable criteria and whether the house is a significant architectural and historic structure that warrants preservation. He offered the petitioner an opportunity to respond to public comment.

Mr. Adelman stated that the petitioners disagree with many of the points raised by the Preservation Foundation however, he stated that the petitioners have no objection to a continuance if the Commission feels more time is needed to consider the information presented. He acknowledged that despite his disagreement with the comments, the Foundation is invaluable to the community. He stated that if the demolition is approved, a CEO of a large company may in fact buy the property and build a new house on the property that is worthy of its location in the historic district. He stated any restoration of the house would require that it be gutted down to the studs. He confirmed that subdivision of the property is not proposed and is not part of the petition. He stated that the criteria on which demolition requests must be evaluated are in the Code which itself is an acknowledgement that not every structure should be preserved. He stated that the preservation provisions in the Code work if they are reasonably applied. He stated that the house could be replicated noting that it is not complex in design or craftsmanship. He stated that the materials could also be replicated. He noted that in response to the last criteria, the owners have no plans to build a replacement structure or to redevelop the property. He stated that based on the analysis completed, the land contributes to the Historic District, but the house does not. He noted Commissioner Sperry's comments adding that she was previously on the Board of the Preservation Foundation and is a real estate broker. He stated that her comments were on point. He noted that a suggestion was made that the later additions could be removed however he questioned what would be left. He stated that the house was never an exceptional structure, even in its original form. He stated that if the demolition is allowed and someone builds a new home at the same location in the future, it would be an

improvement to the Historic District. He noted that the Commission would assure that the design and materials are of high quality.

Chairman Grieve invited final comments from the Commission or a motion.

Commissioner Alfe stated that he is comfortable with a continuance but stated that he is not sure what benefit a continuance will offer.

Commissioner Gibson stated that other options could be explored like cleaving off a portion of the property for a conservation easement to reduce the taxes.

Chairman Grieve stated that the purpose of a continuance would be to get more clarity on whether or not the house is significant, not to come up with alternatives for the site. He stated that type of discussion is not relevant to the Commission's role. He stated that if the matter is continued, the house will still be what it is today. He stated that the question before the Commission is, does the house meet the criteria for demolition.

Commissioner Sperry stated that if the Commission expects additional information, clear direction should be given on what information is expected. She noted that the Commission already has been given an extensive set of reports from the petitioner and from an independent, well respected third party hired by the City.

Commissioner Gibson again noted the prominence of the family for which the house was originally built noting that there is a social history to the house.

Ms. Czerniak offered that the Commission could grant a continuance simply in response to the Preservation Foundation's request, as a courtesy, given the important role the Foundation plays in the community. She stated that the Commission does not need to request additional information.

Chairman Grieve stated that in his opinion, granting the continuance is the fair thing to do. He stated that in 30 days, the petition will be evaluated based on the same information that is now available and based on the same criteria. Hearing no further comments from the Commission, he invited a motion.

Commissioner Wheeler made a motion to continue the petition to the July 27th meeting of the Commission.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Alfe and approved by a vote of 6 to 1 with Commissioner Sperry voting nay for the reasons she previously stated.

OTHER ITEMS

4. Opportunity for the public to address the Historic Preservation Commission on non-agenda items.

No testimony on non-agenda items was presented to the Commission.

5. Additional information from staff.

No additional items from staff were presented to the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Czerniak
Director of Community Development