

The City of Lake Forest
Historic Preservation Commission
Proceedings of the October 28, 2020 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was conducted remotely in compliance with Governor's Executive Order 2020-07, issued on March 16, 2020 that suspended certain Open Meetings Act provisions relating to in-person attendance by members of a public body due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Historic Preservation Commissioners present remotely: Chairman Bruce Grieve and Commissioners Carol Gayle, Jan Gibson, Steve Lamontagne, Ron Levitsky, Robin Petit, and Elizabeth Sperry

Commissioners absent: None

City staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development
Jennifer Baehr, Assistant Planner

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

Chairman Grieve reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission and announced that an in-person meeting is not prudent or feasible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He asked the members of the Commission and staff to introduce themselves.

2. Consideration of the minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Consideration of the minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting was postponed.

3. Lake Forest Preservation Foundation Awards – Presented via video by Laura Luce.

Ms. Luce reviewed the awards recently presented by the Preservation Foundation to properties in various categories and showed photos of the awarding winning structures.

**4. Continued consideration of a request for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness approving the demolition of the existing residence at 259 Mayflower Road. No replacement structure is proposed.
Property Owner: Desmond LaPlace
Representative: Jim Opsitnik**

Chairman Grieve asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Opsitnik explained that he has always been attracted to older homes with distinctive architectural styles. He gave an overview of his work on restoration projects. He noted that his work led him to becoming a Board member of the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation and serving as its president for two years. He stated that the property at 259 Mayflower Road in its current condition is not as significant as it once was, before the lot was subdivided. He noted that modifications made to the structure over the last 20 years destroyed most of its integrity. He acknowledged that the home has some attractive interior elements but overall the residence is not historically or architecturally significant. He stated that in response to a request from the Commission at a previous meeting, he prepared a timeline of the work that has occurred on the site since Mr. LaPlace purchased the property. He explained that since the previous meeting, Mr. LaPlace placed a covenant on the property restricting redevelopment of the property for a period of five years.

Ms. Baehr stated that the petition was initially presented to the Commission last month and at that time, the Commission continued the petition with direction to staff and the petitioner to respond to the Commission's comments and questions. She reviewed that the questions focused on various topics including the configuration of the buildable area on the site, the history of subdivisions involving the subject property and the surrounding properties, demolition activity that has occurred on the site since the petition purchased the property, and a review of the demolition criteria and how deferred maintenance factors into evaluating those criteria. She stated that the petitioner offered to explore the potential of placing a covenant on the property consistent with his stated intent that the property will not be redeveloped for a minimum of five years. She confirmed that the petitioner submitted a Declaration of Restrictive Covenant to the City to that effect. She stated that the staff report reviews the subdivision history of the area which helps to explain the unusual configuration of the lot. She added that the staff report also includes information on the required setbacks and on the access easements that exist on the property. She stated that by right, the buildable area on the site is very limited. She explained that the condition of a structure due to neglect cannot alone, absent other compelling factors, be used to justify a demolition. She stated that the Commission must find that overall, the criteria for demolition established by the City Code are satisfied.

Commissioner Sperry asked for clarification on what additional materials and information are presented to the Commission now that differs from that presented at the last meeting.

In response to Commissioner Sperry's questions, Mr. Opsitnik stated that since the previous meeting, the property owner, Mr. LaPlace, has agreed to place a covenant on the property that will prevent the property from being developed for a period of five years, satisfying one of the criteria for demolition as defined by the City Code. He added that the tree house on the property will be donated.

Commissioner Gayle asked if a period of five years as it relates to redevelopment of the property is sufficient in the opinion of City staff and other members of the Commission.

Ms. Czerniak responded that the five year period is specifically referred to in the City Code. She noted however that the Code does not require that a covenant be placed on the property but in this case, the property owner chose to do so to make it clear to all parties that he is committed to preserving the property as open space for a minimum of five years. She stated that the City does not have the ability to require the property to remain undeveloped for a longer period of time.

In response to questions from Chairman Grieve, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that if a new residence was proposed on the site after the five year period, under the current Code, the design aspects of the proposed residence will require review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Commissioner Gibson encouraged the petitioner to consider extending the covenant beyond five years. She expressed concern about the possibility of the lakefront becoming more densely developed over time.

Commissioner Lamontagne asked about the access easement on the property.

In response to Commissioner Lamontagne, Ms. Czerniak stated that the access easements will not be extinguished or altered as a result of the demolition. She explained that the easements grant rights to the neighboring properties which do not have frontage on a public street. She noted that the property owner and any owners of properties that benefit from the access easement are responsible for maintaining the driveway.

Commissioner Levitsky asked about the maintenance of the property after demolition of the structure.

In response to Commissioner Levitsky, Mr. Opsitnik stated that the property will be maintained as open space by the property owner, Mr. LaPlace. He explained that some of the plantings on the property will be relocated and new trees and vegetation will be added to enhance the site. He added that Mr. LaPlace has engaged a notable landscape architect to assist with the landscaping planned for the site. He added that the landscaping will enhance the entrance to Mr. LaPlace's home.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Grieve invited public testimony. Hearing none he invited final comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Gayle stated that she is conflicted about whether the petition meets the applicable criteria. She observed that the Commission is concerned about how a future replacement residence will fit on this unusual site. She added that Mr. LaPlace

and Mr. Opsitnik have done a good job of addressing some of the Commission's concerns noting in particular the willingness to place a covenant on the property. She stated concern that the demolition was started prior to the Commission's approval and expressed her hope that this situation serves as a learning experience for all parties.

Commissioner Lamontagne stated that setting aside the fact that demolition of the structure started prior to the Commission's review, it appears that the proposed landscaping and other improvements to the property will enhance the overall area. He stated that removal of this structure will enhance the approach to the lakefront properties located at 261 and 263 Mayflower Road.

Commissioner Levitsky expressed concern about the number of demolitions recently presented to the Commission. He stated that although he is disheartened by the petitioner's wish to demolish the home, he understands the reasons why and agrees with the findings included in the staff report which are supported by Ms. Benjamin's evaluation of the existing residence.

Commissioner Pettit agreed with her fellow Commissioner's comments. She noted that the details of the proposed landscape plan are not entirely clear.

Commissioner Gibson stated that in her opinion, the demolition request does not satisfy criteria one or two. She stated that the existing residence has significant history adding that servants' quarters, coach houses, stables and barns are important to the history of Lake Forest. She agreed that the residence is in bad shape adding that the neglect of properties should be addressed in order to prevent situations such as this one. She noted that Ambrose Cramer was a fine architect and the structure in this petition is an example of his work. She stated that the style of the existing residence is intentionally modest and underwhelming. She acknowledged that many modifications have been made to the home over the years adding however there are still some original Cramer elements. She stated that it appears that the existing residence could still be preserved.

Chairman Grieve commented that the Commission can debate whether or not the residence is worthy of preservation, as opposed to demolition, adding that no Commissioners appear to disagree that it is a property of note. He stated that the question is, given the condition of the residence today, and all the other challenging factors involved with this particular property, is demolition warranted. He acknowledged that past policies and processes allowed certain things to happen that impacted the property in ways that may not be permitted today particularly with respect to how the area was subdivided and the access easements that were placed across the property. He stated that the current situation appears to be a confluence of various unfortunate circumstances. He stated that in his opinion, the Commission must look at the residence and property as it exists today and determine whether the criteria for demolition are satisfied based on the current circumstances. He noted that although the interior elements of the structure may be compelling, the

Commission does not have purview over the interior of the home. Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Grieve invited a motion.

Commissioner Lamontagne made a motion to approve of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the residence at 259 Mayflower Road based on the findings presented in the staff report and subject to following conditions.

1. As offered by the petitioner, prior to the issuance of a permit authorizing demolition of the structure, a copy of the recorded covenant prohibiting construction of a new residence on the property for five years from the date of approval shall be provided to the City.
2. The demolition work shall proceed diligently to completion once appropriate permits are issued to minimize disruption to neighboring properties.
3. During demolition activity, all trees and vegetation, unless otherwise approved by the City's Certified Arborist, shall be protected from damage. If determined to be necessary by the City's Certified Arborist, trees close to the areas of demolition activity shall be treated with pre and post construction measures as determined to be necessary by the City's Certified Arborist to increase the chances of long term survival.
4. The residence shall be removed in its entirety, including the basement and the site cleared of all debris. The area of the basement shall be filled with material approved by the City and graded even with existing grades on the site. The fill shall be compacted as directed by the City.
5. On an ongoing basis, before, during and after demolition, the property must be maintained. All grass shall be mowed on a regular basis and trees, shrubs and other vegetation shall be regularly maintained to avoid the appearance of an unkempt or overgrown property.
6. Any new structures proposed for the property in the future, shall require review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission based on the applicable standards in the Code to assure compatibility with and a positive contribution to, the Historic District.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Petit and approved by a vote of 6 to 1, with Commission Gibson voting nay.

5. Continued consideration of a request for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new residence on a vacant lot located at 774 Washington Road. The Commission will also consider the associated site plan, tree removal and the landscape plan.

**Property Owners: George and Mary Sperzel
Representative: Edward Deegan, architect**

Chairman Grieve asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Deegan gave an overview of the property. He noted that since the previous meeting, the petitioners decided to eliminate the entry walls proposed on either side of the north curb cut. He noted that a second curb cut is proposed between two parkway trees. He displayed images of the existing vegetation on the site and in the City parkway. He stated that since the previous meeting additional shade and evergreen trees have been incorporated into the landscape plan. He explained that in response to comments made during the previous meeting, the location and orientation of the detached garage was reconsidered and an auto-turn study completed. He stated that the auto-turn studies concluded that neither moving the garage closer to the home, nor turning the garage toward the home were workable. He stated however that since the previous meeting, the size of the motor court and the width of the driveway were reduced to lessen the amount of impervious surface on the site. He noted that by reducing the width of the driveway, the potential for impact on the parkway tree is also reduced. He noted that pavers are now incorporated into the driveway to further reduce the amount of impervious surface. He reviewed the refinements made to the windows and front entry in response to the Commission's comments at the last meeting. He added that the rear elevation was modified to reduce the expanse of glass in the sunroom and dining area. He provided perspective views of the house and curb cuts as viewed from the street.

Ms. Baehr explained that this petition was continued by the Commission at the last meeting with direction to the petitioner to conduct further study on various aspects of the project including: the location of the detached garage, elimination or shifting the south curb cut to reduce the impact on the heritage trees in the parkway, reducing the amount of impervious surface, and refinements to some of the design aspects of the residence. She noted that the changes made since the last meeting include reducing the overall impervious surface on the site, eliminating windows on the rear elevation to minimize the potential for light spillover, and shifting the front entry porch to align with the doors and windows. She stated that a fiber cement, composite product is proposed for the siding instead of natural wood as presented at the last meeting. She stated that staff recommends that a natural product be used for the siding consistent with the City's Design Guidelines and the historic importance and character of the surrounding neighborhood. She explained at the last meeting staff recommended the elimination of the additional curb cut to protect heritage trees in the parkway. She stated that given the petitioner's interest in the curb cut remaining in the location proposed, the City, at its own cost, hired an independent certified arborist to conduct testing on the trees. She noted that the testing confirmed that the trees are in good condition and worthy of preservation. She stated that in an effort to accommodate the petitioner's preference, the City's Certified Arborist requests that the curb cut be shifted to the north to preserve the youngest heritage tree which likely has many decades of longevity remaining if care is taken to protect it. She stated that there is a condition recommended in the staff

report addressing this issue. She stated that overall, based on the revisions to the plans since the last meeting, the plans now appear to more fully satisfy the standards in the Code. She noted that findings in support of the petition are included in the staff report.

In response to questions from Chairman Grieve, Mr. Deegan explained that the siding product proposed is a cement based product and in his opinion, the composite product is almost indiscernible from natural wood siding from the streetscape. He stated that the property owners prefer the composite product for ease of maintenance. He confirmed that the petitioner is willing to work with staff to determine the final location for the south curb cut. He stated that the petitioners would like to preserve the parkway trees.

In response to Commissioner Levitsky's request for clarification on the parkway trees, Ms. Baehr explained that in order to protect and preserve the most significant heritage tree, the City's Certified Arborist is recommending that tree number 366 be removed to allow the curb cut to be shifted north, away from the remaining tree, in an effort to increase the chance of protecting and preserving it. She noted that the current location of the driveway threatens both of the trees. She stated that the City Arborist was insistent that efforts be made to increase the chances for survival of the tree that is identified as the most significant. She explained that while it is unusual to allow heritage trees in the parkway to be compromised if there are alternative solutions, the City Arborist is willing to support removal of tree 366 in the interest of acquiescing to the petitioner's desire to have two curb cuts.

In response to questions from Commissioner Levitsky, Mr. Deegan explained that the modifications made to the driveway and motor court were in response to the auto turn study that was completed which indicated maneuverability could be improved with the changes.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's questions about the design of the front porch and color palette, Mr. Deegan stated that the porch columns are now aligned with the oculus window and front door. He pointed out that the oculus window now has a brick surround. He stated that the exterior walls will be off-white, the trim a brighter white, and the main roof forms a natural cedar shingle with copper accents.

In response to questions from Commissioner Sperry about the use of synthetic materials, Ms. Czerniak stated that it is within the purview of the Commission to approve the use of a synthetic product in a particular situation however it is difficult to mandate the use of a specific manufacturer or assure a quality installation. She stated that a condition could be added requiring a mock up of the exterior materials prior to work proceeding on the full installation. She stated that the benefit in this particular case is that the property owners are working with an experienced and knowledgeable architectural team which could perhaps give the Commission some greater confidence that the quality of the product and installation methods will be very carefully monitored.

She acknowledged the Commission's interest in having a broader discussion on this topic.

In response to questions from Commissioner Sperry, Mr. Deegan agreed to provide a mockup of the fiber cement product. He stated that they would use a high quality material and manufacturer. He acknowledged that there are many types and qualities of composite sidings available adding that some are thin and do not provide the depth and shadow of natural wood. He stated that the proposed product is very similar to the appearance of natural wood.

Commissioner Sperry expressed concern about setting a precedent by approving the use of a synthetic material in the Historic District.

In response to questions from Commissioner Sperry about the color palette, Mr. Deegan stated that the intent is not to have an entirely white home. He stated that the flower boxes and shutters will be a different color. He stated that the color of the stone pavers has not been selected yet.

In response to questions from Commissioner Lamontagne, Mr. Deegan stated that the windows sills on the brick walls are limestone and that in areas where the composite siding is proposed, the sills will be wood. He stated that a composite material is also proposed for the trim, fascia boards and soffits. He stated that the composite siding will have a smooth finish. He confirmed that the detached garage remains generally in the same location as in the plan presented to the Commission at the last meeting. He explained that the driveway from the north curb cut to the motor court was straightened to improve the ingress and egress to the detached garage. He confirmed that the location of the detached garage is in compliance with the required zoning setbacks.

In response to questions from Commissioner Gayle, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that natural materials are predominately found on the historic homes in the surrounding neighborhood. She stated that moving away from the longtime standard of natural materials could set a precedent for future petitions. She suggested that if the Commission chooses to allow an exception for composite siding, a compromise could be to require the trim, fascia and soffits to be wood.

Mr. Deegan stated that there is no intent to set a precedent for the use of synthetic materials in the historic district but rather to provide this property owner with a lower maintenance home. He stated that natural wood could be used for the trim, soffits, and fascia boards if so directed by the Commission.

In response to questions from Commissioner Gayle about the hardscape materials, Mr. Deegan confirmed that the areas where pavers are proposed are included in the impervious surface calculation however, the pavers are more permeable than asphalt.

Commissioner Gayle asked the petitioner to consider expanding the use of pavers to further reduce the impervious nature of the hardscape.

In response to questions from Chairman Grieve, Mr. Deegan stated that the second curb cut will not be installed until the project is near completion to lessen impacts to the parkway trees during construction.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Grieve invited public testimony.

Rommy Lopat, 410 Woodland Road, asked if the pavers in the driveway will be manufactured pavers or granite pavers. She suggested that there could be a distinction between using synthetic siding on new homes versus historic homes. She agreed that allowing the use of synthetic products extensively in the historic district will be a significant change.

Hearing no further public testimony, Chairman Grieve invited rebuttal to public comment from the petitioner.

In response to public testimony, Mr. Deegan stated that the exact material of the pavers has not yet been selected. He stated that the paver selected will be appropriate for the neighborhood and not a uni-lock product.

Chairman Grieve invited final comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Levitsky commended the petitioner on the refinements made to the plans since the last meeting and commended City staff on their efforts to preserve the parkway trees in this area.

Commissioner Gibson pointed out that there are substantial areas of wall where the composite siding will be used. She stated that given the prominent location of this property in the Historic District, natural materials should be used. She commended the petitioner on the refinements made to the window proportions. She noted some continued concern about the potential for light spillover.

Commissioner Petit agreed with the concerns raised by some of the other Commissioners about the use of synthetic materials. She stated that there may be an argument to be made about allowing greater flexibility for the use of synthetic products on new homes versus historic homes she noted however that it is important that the Commission be consistent. She commended the petitioner on the changes made since the last meeting particularly the relocation of the chimney and the refinements to the front elevation.

Commission Sperry commended the petitioner on the changes made to help to soften the overall appearance of the home. She agreed with Commissioner Gibson's

concerns about the potential for light spillover and the use of a composite material in such a prominent location in the Historic District.

Commissioner Gayle stated that the changes made to the plans greatly enhance the appearance of the home. She stated however that it still appears that there are large expanses of glass on the rear elevation. She asked that the petitioners keep in mind that if they wish to have two curb cuts and a motor court, expanding the use of pervious materials in those areas will be of real service to the community. She stated that in her opinion, natural materials should be used in the historic district even on new residences.

Commissioner Lamontagne commended the petitioner for addressing the Commission's comments and concerns from the last meeting. He suggested that the Commission should be open to considering different materials as they become available. He stated in this particular case however, there are quite a few unknowns about the material proposed. He stated that a mockup of the material would be helpful.

Chairman Grieve stated that the enhancements made to the plans since the last meeting are notable. He noted that there are aspects of the project that will require some additional work as design development continues including further consideration of a reduction in the amount of impervious surface and refinements of the color palette. He stated that in his opinion, the Commission is open to new information and change but noted that in this case, in the midst of considering a specific petition, it can cause discomfort to move away from established policies without a fuller discussion. He asked for further input from the Commission on whether the requirement for natural materials should be waived in whole or in part for this petition.

Commissioner Petit suggested that the petitioner provide a mockup of the synthetic material to allow the Commission to get a sense of the quality, installation and appearance.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Grieve invited a motion.

Commissioner Petit made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new residence based on the findings presented in the staff report, subject to following conditions.

1. Modify the site plan to shift the south curb cut away from tree #365 in combination with reducing the width of the curb cut to 12 feet and the use of construction methods for that portion of the driveway that minimize excavation and soil compaction.
2. Natural materials shall be used for all trim fascia and soffits. Natural materials

shall also be used for the siding. The use of composite siding will be subject to further review by the Commission and an inspection of a mockup on site to allow evaluation of the quality, appearance, and installation method of the composite material.

3. Additional areas of pervious materials shall be incorporated into the hardscape to reduce the overall impervious surface on the site. Pavers shall be in keeping with the character of the Historic District.
4. At the time of submittal for a building permit, samples of the proposed color palette shall be provided to staff for review.
5. Plans submitted for permit must reflect the project as approved by the Commission. All modifications made to the plans as a result of refinements made in response to the Commission's direction and discussion and as a result of final design development, must be clearly detailed and called out on the plans submitted for permit. The plans submitted for permit 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.
6. At the time of submittal for a building permit, detailed drainage and grading plans must be submitted. The plans shall clearly reflect all existing trees and identify those proposed for removal. Grading and filling shall be limited to the minimum necessary to meet accepted engineering practices in the interest of minimizing stress on the trees intended to remain. The plans shall be subject to review and approval by the City Engineer in consultation with the City's Certified Arborist.
7. Tree Protection Plan – Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a plan to protect any trees identified for preservation during construction must be submitted and will be subject to review and approval by the City's Certified Arborist. Chain link fencing shall be required to protect trees intended for preservation in addition to any pre and post construction treatments or maintenance required by the City's Certified Arborist.
8. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a detailed, landscape plan shall be submitted and will be subject to review and approval by the City's Certified Arborist. The plan shall provide for the required replacement inches on site to the extent possible using good forestry practices and shall identify any remaining inches for which a payment in lieu of planting will be required prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. If during construction additional trees on the site are compromised in the opinion of the City's Certified Arborist, additional replacement inches or payment in lieu of on site planting may be required. The landscape plan shall also be in keeping with general character of the neighborhood and provide adequate screening to

help minimize any off site impacts.

9. Replacement inches for the parkway tree to be removed shall be used to enhance parkway plantings adjacent to the property and in the general area.
10. Details of all exterior lighting shall be reflected on the plans submitted for permit. No landscape lighting is proposed based on the current plans. For all exterior lights on the residence, garage or elsewhere on the site, cut sheets of all light fixtures shall be provided. All fixtures shall solely direct light downward and the source of the light shall be shielded from view from off the property by the fixtures.
11. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a plan for construction parking and materials' staging shall be submitted to the City for review and will be subject to City approval in an effort to minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. The existing topography and trees and vegetation shall be protected from impact. Due to the curving road no parking of construction or contractor vehicles is permitted on the street. Off-site parking at the public parking lots located nearby should be utilized.

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

6. Consideration of a request for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a detached, three car garage and a two-story rear addition and exterior alterations to the existing residence located at 420 Washington Road. Property Owners & Project Representatives: Deborah Kiersch and Erik Wisch

This petition was postponed at the request of the petitioners.

OTHER ITEMS

8. 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.

9. Additional information from staff.

The Commission approved the 2021 Historic Preservation Commission meeting calendar.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Baehr
Assistant Planner