

Historic Preservation Commission
Proceedings of the November 17, 2021 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was conducted remotely in compliance with the 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: Chairman Maureen Grinnell and Commissioners Jan Gibson, Ron Levitsky, and Robin Petit

Commissioners absent: Three positions vacant.

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

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

Chairman Grinnell stated that she found it to be inadvisable to have an in person meeting due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She 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 from the October 28, 2021 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Consideration of the minutes of the October 28, 2021 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was postponed.

**3. Consideration of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow construction of single story additions on the front of the home and the addition of dormers on the existing residence at 210 Mayflower Road.
Property Owners: Kavitha and Sanjay Gandhi
Project Representative: William Sturm, architect**

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

Mr. Sturm introduced the project and noted that the property is about two acres and is located west of Mayflower Road, on a ravine. He stated that the property is fairly open with the home set back an extensive distance from the road, near the edge of a ravine. He presented the proposed site plan and explained that two additions are proposed on the east side of the home noting that one addition

accommodates a bedroom renovation and the other, an expansion of the garage. He noted some of the existing asphalt at the front of the house will be removed and the portion of the driveway northeast of the house will be expanded to accommodate the garage addition. He stated that the asphalt at the front entry court to the home will be replaced with pavers. He stated that the intent is to preserve the two existing trees in front of the home but noted that the trees are in decline and have been for a few years. He stated that the home was designed by renowned architect Ed Dart and constructed in 1955. He noted that Mr. Dart designed many residences and churches throughout the Chicagoland region including the sports complex at Lake Forest College, Water Tower Place in Chicago, and Staiger Hall at Northwestern University. He noted that he worked with Mr. Dart on the Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Westchester. He noted that his own firm was previously hired to renovate the residence in this petition, mostly interior work, with a modest expansion to the master bedroom and dining room. He reviewed the existing floor plan of the house. He stated that two additional garage bays are proposed to expand the existing two car garage to the east. He stated that the bedrooms on the south side of the home will be expanded to create bedroom suites that will be more functional for the homeowner's children as they grow older. He reviewed the details of the proposed changes to the floor plan and noted that an activity room will be added as well. He stated that sliding translucent paneled doors are planned on the south elevation of the garage to allow the space to open to the front entry court and become a gathering area. He stated that a small enclosure is planned to hide the trash area on the east side of the garage addition. He stated that it is his belief that Dart was influenced quite a bit by Frank Lloyd Wright with the design of this home. He explained that the additions as proposed, have curved areas to add a modern element to the home and slightly break up the home's rigidity. He noted that new eyebrow windows are proposed on the additions duplicating the existing windows. He stated that the exterior materials on the additions will match the existing materials. He stated that some of the existing windows are in poor conditions and cannot be reused adding that the new windows will be consistent with the existing windows in appearance. He pointed out a curved planter proposed on the east elevation to add detail to the solid wall. He stated that the bathrooms will have either translucent glass block or curved translucent panel openings. He presented images of the glass block and translucent panels noting that the insulating qualities of each will be a factor in the decision. He stated that windows will be added on the north side of the east elevation at the top of the wall to provide natural light into the garage recognizing the intent to use the space for cars but also for gatherings on occasion.

Ms. Baehr stated that the home is setback from the street a significant distance and has a very low-profile and as a result, it is not from the streetscape as some other homes in the area. She noted that this home is a Contributing Structure to the Local Historic District. She explained that the proposed additions are modest in size and are extensions of the existing north and south wings of the home and, as a result, the appearance of the home as viewed from the street does not change

significantly. She reviewed that the proposed exterior materials match the exterior materials on house and the roof forms on the additions will follow the existing roof lines on each of the wings. She noted that the house, with the proposed additions, is well under the maximum square footage and height permitted for this size property. She noted that there is an error in the staff report, she stated that in staff's opinion, Standard 9 is met. She stated that a letter was received from a neighbor to the south expressing support for the project. She added that comments were also received from the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation and were provided to the Commission. She stated that overall, the petition, based on staff's review, is in keeping with the unique character of the home, and given that the additions are modest, the integrity of the original home is not threatened. She stated that the staff report includes a recommendation for approval of the petition.

Commissioner Levitsky thanked Mr. Sturm for his presentation and complimented the proposed project. He asked whether the additions would make change the appearance of the home from a ranch style home to more of a U-shape as a result of the additions to the two wings. He questioned how much the appearance of the house would change. He observed that the garage addition appears to have large expanses of unbroken walls.

Mr. Sturm stated that in his opinion, the appearance of the front of the home will not change significantly. He reiterated that the home is quite a distant from the road and noted that it is difficult to get a view of the entire house from one point. He stated that the courtyard that the planned courtyard will replace an asphalt motor court. He stated that by setting the auto court back, away from the front entrance, a gathering space will be created for gathering at the front of the house. He stated that many of Dart's buildings have fanned wings that move out from the center. With respect to the garage walls, he explained that currently, the south wall of the garage is a solid mass. He stated that landscaping will be added around the addition and the sliding glass panels will offer an accent and a diversion from the solid wall with a bit of the oriental charm that the house already has. He stated that Dart's buildings blend the structure and landscape and noted that the sliding door will provide aesthetic relief.

Commissioner Petit asked for more information on the translucent screens. She asked whether the divisions in the screens are intended to mimic the glass block on the home. She asked about the door adjacent to the sliding panels on the garage addition. She questioned whether the landscape stone at the base of the house on the south side will be extended. She asked about the existing stucco and the gutters and downspouts.

Mr. Sturm stated that there are a couple of manufacturers that make screens in the scale of glass block. He explained that the screen product is of interest to the petitioners because of its advanced thermal properties over glass block. He stated that the screen is plexiglass with insulation that does not fade or yellow. He

stated that he has used the product extensively and found it to be durable. He stated that another concern with using traditional glass block is that if a single block is damaged, it is difficult to replace. He stated that the new windows will be standard manufactured windows, white to match the existing windows on the home. He stated that the color of the stucco and trim on the additions will match the color on the existing home. He stated that a window, rather than a door, is proposed adjacent to the sliding panels to create a division between the existing home and the addition. He stated that consideration will be given to extending the landscape stone which is currently in place along the south side of the house for drainage purposes. He confirmed that the existing house is sided with synthetic stucco and said that the materials on the additions will match the existing materials. He stated that the house does not have gutters or downspouts.

Commissioner Gibson thanked the petitioner for bringing the project forward. She asked about the grade change on the site and expressed concern about the proposed increase in pavement on the site. She recommended working with an engineer to address drainage issues. She asked whether visitors would drive into the motor court or if it is intended as a patio and questioned whether vehicles will be able to turn around in the motor court. She stated that the tree in the southeast corner of the motor court is stunning and asked if and other vegetation around the motor court will be preserved. She questioned whether the new eyebrow dormers will match those on the existing house. She asked about the thickness of the glass block and whether the translucent panels will be curved. She asked if consideration was given to ways to break up the large expanse of solid wall on the bedroom addition. She suggested considering the addition of window boxes. She asked if the panels proposed for the south elevation of the garage will slide easily and whether one or more panels will slide. She questioned how stains on the garage floor from vehicles will be addressed if the space is intended to be used for gatherings. She stated that the project is exciting.

Mr. Sturm stated that drainage and grading plans will be prepared by a licensed engineer for review by the City prior to any work. He stated that although the additions add impervious surface to the site, the amount of asphalt on the site will be reduced. He noted that there is a drain in front of the house which is not aesthetically pleasing and explained that hope that a pipe can be installed to eliminate that need for the drain at that location. He stated that most of the front motor court will be pervious. He noted that the existing retaining wall on the north side of the house will be extended as needed to accommodate the grade change. He explained that the driveway is 12 feet wide and at the point where the driveway meets the motor court, the driveway widens to 15 feet. He stated that visitors will drive into the motor court. He stated that the planters at the front of the motor court will not be very tall but will screen headlights and mitigate views of vehicles from the front yard and the street. He stated that the drive approach and motor court are designed to provide a graceful way of entering the home adding that with the additions, the courtyard between the north and south wings will have a different feeling than currently exists. He confirmed that vehicles will be

able to turn around in the motor court as they do now. He stated that the property owners value the trees on the property a great deal and have been monitoring the trees long before planning additions to the home. He stated that there has been some storm damage to the tree on the southeast corner of the motor court and noted that the tree on the northeast corner of the garage is under stress. He said that efforts will be made to preserve the trees to the extent possible recognizing the existing conditions. He confirmed that the new eyebrow dormers are almost identical to the existing dormers. He pointed out that there is one existing dormer in the master bathroom that stands out and does not match the other dormers. He explained the intent to match the scale of the existing glass blocks. He stated that the difference between what is existing and what they are proposing is that the new panels are translucent, and the existing glass block is transparent. He explained that a translucent product is desired to illuminate the space. He noted that the translucent panels and glass block are four to five inches thick depending on the specific product. He confirmed that the panels will be curved. He explained that on the east elevation of the garage, the stone and planters that exist today on the east elevations will be replicated. He stated that there is an ornamental tree on the east side of the bedroom wing that is valued by the property owners which will be relocated further east and will soften the bedroom addition. He reiterated the intent to blur the line between the outdoors and indoors and want to take advantage of the opportunity to add relief and incorporate nature with the curved planter. He stated that both panels on the south elevation of the garage will slide easily. He stated that there are finishes that can be applied to the garage floor to minimize the potential for staining. He stated that as an architect, he is pleased to think that the original architect would see his building as having a lifelong after he is gone. He commended the property owners because they have the ability to do a lot more to the home and property but instead, they are only doing what is needed for their family.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Grinnell invited public testimony.

Rommy Lopat, 410 Woodland Road, complimented the project. She added that she has always admired the house and the house next door for the contemporary style. She stated that the petitioners could use espaliers to break up the solid walls on the east and south elevations. She stated that window boxes could be difficult to maintain.

Hearing no further public testimony, Chairman Grinnell invited final comments or questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Gibson suggested that a condition requiring that an engineer be engaged to address drainage and topography issues. She stated support for the clerestory windows. She stated that in her opinion, espaliers to break up the blank wall may be too French in style. She thanked the property owners for being great stewards of the home.

Chairman Grinnell agreed with Commissioner Gibson's concerns about drainage and a condition requiring that an engineer be engaged by the property owners. She stated that the use of panels versus glass blocks needs further exploration.

Ms. Baehr noted that as part of the standard permit review process, a drainage and grading plan, prepared by a licensed engineer, will be required and will be subject to review and approval by the City Engineer before a permit is issued.

Chairman Grinnell stated that because a drainage and grading plan is a standard requirement for permitting, a condition specific to that item is not needed. She stated that it appears that there is a lot of enthusiasm for the project and a lot of respect for the efforts on the part of the property owners and Mr. Sturm to make very sensitive improvements to the home to make it more livable for the family and increase its life and usefulness. She noted that this is a mid-century modern house and there are not many in the community. She stated appreciation for the fact that the owners are willing to preserve and enhance the home. She invited a motion.

Commissioner Gibson made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for single story additions at the front of the residence and dormer additions. She stated that the motion is based on the findings presented in the staff report and is subject to following conditions.

1. Plans submitted for permit must reflect the project as presented to the Commission. If any modifications are proposed in response to Commission discussion or direction, or as a result of further design development, plans clearly detailing the areas of change must be included in the submission for permit along with the plans originally presented to the Commission. The plans 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. 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, at a minimum, foundation plantings around the additions. If during construction, trees on the site are compromised in the opinion of the City's Certified Arborist, replacement inches or payment in lieu of on site planting may be required.
3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a plan to protect trees and vegetation identified for preservation during construction must be submitted and will be subject to review and approval by the City's Certified Arborist.
4. Details of exterior lighting shall be reflected on the plans submitted for permit. Cut sheets of all light fixtures should be provided and all fixtures shall

direct light downward and the source of the light shall be shielded from view from off the property. The dark streetscape character shall be preserved.

5. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a materials staging and construction vehicle parking plan must be submitted to the City for review and will be subject to City approval in an effort to minimize and manage impacts on the neighborhood, neighboring properties and existing trees and landscaping during construction.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner petit and approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

OTHER ITEMS

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

Rommy Lopat, 410 Woodland Road, welcomed Maureen Grinnell as Interim Chairperson and stated her hope that she will be appointed as Chair moving forward. She commented on recent and upcoming difficult petitions and encouraged the Commission to prepare for future challenges. She offered her opinions on how the Commission process could be better managed to the benefit of the community, the public, the Commission as volunteers, and to avoid appeals to the City Council and even lawsuits. She encouraged the Commission to become familiar with the City Code in detail and encouraged the development of a reference guide to include applicable portions of the Code, the City's Ethics Ordinance, requirements of the Open Meetings Act, define Ex Parte contacts and other procedural matters. She stated that in her opinion, the Commission should not limit discussion to the petitions submitted but should also put initiatives forward when additional studies or information are needed. She reviewed the Le Colonial petition and commented on various aspects of the petition. She encouraged the Commission to review the materials that are given to architects and petitioners before they file a petition to come before the Commission. She stated that the Preservation Foundation would be glad to help the Commission on various initiatives. She questioned whether a petitioner could return to the Commission an endless number of times. She stated that in her opinion the Commission meetings could be better managed. She explained that according to the agenda, Commission hearings are to follow a defined procedure adding that in her opinion, the procedure is time consuming and can lead to confusion about what the Commission has decided. She noted deficiencies in the reports prepared by City staff including the lack of information about the surrounding area. She stated that in her opinion, petitioners do not provide much information about the context of the site and the nearby buildings. She stated that staff should identify issues confronting the Commission that should be factored into the final decision. She stated for example, is a contemporary white stucco house compatible with a neighborhood of Georgian brick home or is there enough information provided to determine the building height. She stated that the staff report should not state whether or not a

standard is met. She suggested that the Commission's discussions be streamlined rather than a free-wheeling discussion. She stated that in her opinion, a more organized discussion is needed citing which standards deserve more discussion. She stated that the Commission's standards and conditions should be more clearly incorporated into a motion. She thanked the Commission for the time and consideration.

There were no additional comments from the public on non-agenda items.

6. Additional information from staff.

No additional information was presented by staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Baehr
Planner