

Historic Preservation Commission
Proceedings of the January 26, 2022 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, January 26, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was conducted remotely.

Historic Preservation Commissioners present: Chairman Maureen Grinnell and Commissioners Jan Gibson, Geoffrey Hanson, Ron Levitsky, and Robin Petit

Commissioners absent: Two vacant positions

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 determined that an in person meet was not prudent 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 November 17, 2021 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The minutes of the November 17, 2021 meeting were approved as presented.

3. Consideration of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a single car garage addition and expansion of the master suite on the west side of the existing residence located at 550 Hathaway Circle. A building scale variance is also requested.

Property Owners: Mike and Melissa Ginter

Project Representative: Michael Breseman, architect

Chairman Grinnell asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest.

Commissioner Petit stated that she lives close to the property under consideration and recused herself from participating in the agenda item.

Chairman Grinnell invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Breseman introduced the project and noted that structure, which is adaptively reused as a single family residence today, was constructed in the 1920s as part of the Meadowood Dairy Farm. He noted that the Meadowood Dairy Farm buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a Local Historic District. He

stated that the farm was subdivided in 1946 and the structure that is the subject of this petition was converted to a single-family home in 1953. He explained that over the years, there have been multiple additions to the structure including the addition of a garage in 1953, a second-floor master bedroom in 1989, and a mudroom in 2007. He stated that the various additions were made for the purpose of making the original barn structure more functional as a home. He stated that one of the goals of the current petition is to expand the garage. He noted that the existing garage is 18 feet and 8 inches square, making it difficult to park two cars in the garage and still allow space for maneuvering in and out of the vehicles. He stated that another goal of the project is to expand the master closet noting that the existing closet is small and awkward because it is built into the roof line. He stated that a new dormer is proposed on the south elevation to provide head room in the expanded master closet. He noted that the proposed dormer matches the existing dormers on the front of the home. He explained that the existing house has no basement for storage and to address that issue, the plan is to excavate below the existing two car garage and provide a stairway in the new garage bay to access the new below grade space. He stated that the proposed garage addition is at the rear of the home and is not visible from the street. He stated that the one-and-a-half-story massing of the structure will be maintained adding that the garage addition will follow the 12:12 pitch of the existing roof. He stated that the roof ridge of the proposed garage addition is five feet lower than the main ridge line of the house. He stated that the shed dormer proposed on the north elevation mirrors the existing shed dormer on the east side of the gable roof. He stated that the new dormer will create visual balance on the north elevation and make the gable form appear more grounded. He stated that the exterior materials on the addition will match those on the existing home: a cedar shingle roof, wood lintels and shutters, wood board and batten siding, and stucco. He stated that double casement windows are proposed on the north and south elevations and single casement windows with shutters are proposed on the west elevation. He stated that landscape screening is planned along the west and south property lines incorporating arborvitae and ornamental trees. He stated that letters in support of the project were submitted to the Commission by several neighbors. He noted that the existing home is over the allowable square footage and the garage and dormer additions will increase the overage by about three percent. He reiterated that the original structure was not built for use as a single family home and therefore there are elements of the structure that are not residential in scale. He noted that the silo is 363 square feet of non-practical, non-traditional space. He stated that because of the character of the structure, only 18 square feet of the available 400 square feet of design elements is used. He noted that the proposed dormer is only 15 inches about the point at which second floor space is factored into the square footage calculation. He presented images of the existing structure and the surrounding homes. He stated that the trees in the front yard screen the home from views from the street. He stated that a patio and plunge pool are proposed in the rear yard and a walkway extends from the rear yard, around the south side of the home, to the driveway. He stated that the shed on the west side of the home will be removed. He stated that the garage addition and improvements proposed in the rear yard will be screened with landscaping around the perimeter of the property. He

explained that the existing roof line will be extended over the garage and is stepped down on the west side in the location of the master closet expansion. He noted that a utility easement that runs along the west property line. He noted that the existing garage has a double door on the south elevation which will remain. He stated that a single garage door will be installed in the addition. He explained that the proposed addition improves the functionality of the house for the owners and respects the character of the original architecture.

Ms. Baehr explained that the Meadowood Dairy Farm Historic District consists of seven different properties. She stated that the structures in the District were built in the 1920's. She stated that the petitioner's home is setback about 135 feet from the street, farther back than other homes on Hathaway Circle. She stated that the owners bought the property last year and are proposing improvements to make the house more functional. She reviewed that the existing attached two car garage is undersized. She stated that a third bay is proposed on the west side of the house, aligning with the north and south walls of the existing garage. She stated that the master bedroom and closet are located above the existing garage and noted that as part of this project, the master closet will be expanded above the garage addition. She stated that the proposed addition requires a building scale variance because the house today exceeds the allowable square footage for the property by six percent. She stated that with the proposed addition of a garage bay and expanded master closet, the house will be 9.6 percent over the allowable square footage. She reviewed that the garage addition is proposed at the rear of the house, out of view from the street. She added that the garage addition is small compared to the overall home. She stated that findings in support of a building scale variance are detailed in the staff report. She stated that enhancements are planned in the rear yard including landscaping, a new patio, outdoor kitchen and a plunge pool as reflected on the landscape plan in the Commission's packet. She noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals recently recommended approval of a rear yard setback variance for the proposed garage addition. She stated that findings in support of the design aspects of the project are offered in the staff report along with a recommendation of approval and several conditions.

Commissioner Levitsky asked how much of the original barn structure remains today. He asked if the detailing and exterior materials of the addition will match the remaining original portions of the structure. He asked for clarification on the storage space that is proposed and the size of the garage addition. He observed that the house to the west appears to be close to the property line.

Mr. Breseman stated that most of the front of the house is the original barn structure. He stated that the shed dormer on the rear of the home may be a later addition. He stated that the garage and mudroom were later additions to the structure. He confirmed the architectural elements and materials on the addition will replicate those on the original structure to the extent possible. He explained that the existing garage has a concrete slab foundation and full masonry walls on three sides and excavation is planned to create a basement below the garage. He stated that the house does not have a basement. He stated that the basement will be below grade

and does not factor into the square footage. He said that the expanded garage will accommodate three cars but space for maneuvering would be limited. He stated that the owners plan to park two cars in the garage to allow space for getting into and out of the vehicles. He stated that the neighboring home to the west is slightly set back from the shared property line and the proposed addition is approximately eight feet from the shared property line. He explained that the over dig for the addition can be accommodated fully on the petitioners' property. He stated that several neighbors submitted letters in support of the petition including the neighbor to the west.

Commissioner Hanson asked for clarification on a letter included in the Commission's packet.

Ms. Baehr clarified that the letter was submitted by the owner of 1166 Inverlieth Road which is located south of the 550 Hathaway Circle property.

Mr. Ginter added that both the neighbors to the south and west submitted letters in support of the project.

Commissioner Gibson observed that there the proposed addition is close to the west property line. She asked the petitioner to address Standard 10 and noted that a prior owner of the property obtained a building scale variance for a previous addition. She stated that the previous variance allowed a 6.2 percent overage in 2007. She stated that the project currently proposed adds 3 percent to the current overage. She acknowledged that the silo is essentially unusable space. She noted that there is a large amount of impervious surface proposed due to the long driveway and patio. She asked for clarification on the size of the patio. She asked whether exterior materials to match those on the existing structure are available.

Mr. Breseman noted that previous owners of the home expressed a desire to expand the master bedroom suite by never proceeded with that project, only with the addition of the mudroom. He stated that the existing structure is inadequate for today's family. He confirmed that the silo adds significant square footage and is an historic element but does not offer functional space. He noted that proposed dormer to allow expansion of the master bedroom closet is counted in the second floor square footage only because it rises 15 inches about the line at which second floor space is factored into the calculation and as a result, adds approximately 80 square feet to the home. He stated that the dormer does not visually add the appearance of mass to the house. He confirmed that the new patio is larger than the existing patio and will be pervious. He stated that although there is long lead time on materials, appropriate materials are available.

Chairman Grinnell asked about the rationale for proposing a metal clad garage door as opposed to a wood garage door.

Mr. Breseman stated the existing garage door is metal clad.

Mr. Ginter stated that the existing door will be replaced to match the new door. He said the doors will be either metal clad or wood.

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

Commissioner Gibson stated that the plan appears workable despite the tightness on the west side of the property. She stated that in her opinion, of the applicable standards are met. She expressed support for a building scale variance because the addition is subordinate to the main house and the surrounding homes. She commended the petitioner on the symmetrical design and fenestration. She stated that the proposed addition appears to solve the problems with the home.

Commissioner Levitsky agreed with Commissioner Gibson and commended the project. He stated that he finds that Standards 1, 5, 13 and 14 are met. He stated that he is pleased the no trees will be removed.

Commissioner Hanson agreed that all the applicable standards are met. He explained that the design is very deferential to the house and to other surrounding properties. He stated that it appears that there has been a lot of thought that has gone into this project.

Chairman Grinnell stated that in her opinion, the project is a very sensitive solution to a series of problems that were created by converting what once was a barn structure into a residence. She complimented the owners and architect for proposing a solution that allows a home of this character to be updated without a lot of disruption, either to the neighborhood or to the overall look of the property. She stated that if the silo was removed, the home would comply with the allowable square footage. She noted however that the silo is a defining feature of the home. She invited a motion.

Commissioner Gibson made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow a single bay to be added to the garage, expansion of the master closet and a building scale variance. 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 and direction, or as a result of further design development, plans clearly detailing the areas of change must be submitted at the time of submission for permit, *along with* the plans originally presented to the Commission, 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. 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.
3. Details of exterior lighting shall be submitted with the plans submitted for permit. Cut sheets for all light fixtures shall be provided and all fixtures, except those illuminated by natural gas at low light levels, shall direct light down and the source of the light shall be fully shielded from view. All exterior lights shall be set on automatic timers to go off no later than 11 p.m. except for security motion detector lights.
4. 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. Parking on the street shall be limited and the street must always remain passable.

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

Commissioner Petit rejoined the Commission.

4. Preliminary review and input on proposed signage for Ragdale, at 1260 N. Green Bay Road.

Property Owner: City of Lake Forest

Project Representative: Roland Kulla, Ragdale

Chairman Grinnell asked the Commission for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest.

Commissioner Hanson stated that he has a business relationship with Ragdale and recused himself from participating in the deliberations on the petition.

Mr. Kulla introduced the petition on behalf of the Ragdale organization. He stated that he has been associated with Ragdale for over twenty years, as an artist, a Board member and for the last year, as project manager for improvements underway on the campus. He stated that currently, the Ragdale Campus, and the entrances to the campus, are difficult to identify from the street. He stated that a streetscape identification sign is proposed to address the problem. He noted that currently, there is a small sign on a tree by the south driveway entrance, but there is not a sign identifying the entrance at the barn house. He stated that with the recent addition of the Hart property to the campus, there is now a third driveway to the campus. He stated that the proposed sign is intended to direct artists to the barn house which will be equipped with a video camera connected to the office. He noted that the various parking areas will be assigned for use by artists, employees or visitors. He stated that overall campus improvements are intended to increase the accessibility of the campus to those with mobility limitations and ultimately, limited directional

signage will be added. He stated that it is important to get people to the right entrance. He stated that existing signs along Green Bay Road were considered including the signs at the Onwentsia Club and at Lake Forest Country Day School. He explained that originally, a larger sign was proposed, like the sign at St. Mary's Church and the City signs however, after understanding that the sign could not be in the right of way along Green Bay Road, the size of the sign was reduced. He stated that currently, the sign is proposed near the entrance to the barn house, close to the building and is 30 inches wide by 40 inches tall. He noted that the sign will have chamfered cutouts at the corners like the sign at the Country Day School. He stated that the post will be the same color as the trim on the barn house, a yellow/green color and the sign will be white with a dark color for the lettering and trimming the edges. He stated that the sign will be attached to a horizontal arm by chains and will be illuminated by low voltage lighting on the ground. He stated that the vertical wood post will be eight and half feet tall. He said that the lettering will be in the Baskerville font which is used on other Ragdale materials. He stated that the sign will have the 1260 address number at the top, the date of the original Ragdale, 1897, at the bottom. He said that "Ragdale", in capital letters, will be hand painted in the center of the sign. He noted that a blue shadow may be added to the lettering.

Ms. Czerniak noted that just before the end of the year, the City, through a generous donation from the Hart/Lansing family and a donor to the Ragdale Foundation, acquired the property at 1272 N. Green Bay Road making it possible to reassemble the original Ragdale property. She stated that in the coming months, the Ragdale will likely present a plan for restoration of the garden and hardscape improvements to the Commission for consideration. She stated that a more immediate need for signage was identified by Ragdale, and the current petition is intended to partially address that need by adding a streetscape identification sign. She stated that with the recently completed dance and composer's studio and the integration of the Hart property, it is timely to step back and look at the site comprehensively and assure that, going forward, the important historic and natural elements and character of Ragdale is preserved. She stated that Mr. Kulla has developed various concepts for an identification sign for Ragdale which are presented to the Commission for discussion and input. She stated that no formal action is requested from the Commission at this meeting.

Commissioner Petit observed that the height of the post at eight and half feet is almost as tall as a street signpost and appears out of proportion in relation to the low profile barn house. She noted that the entry posts at the 1230 N. Green Bay Road entrance are about six feet tall and the sign for the private road north of Ragdale is six and half feet tall. She questioned whether a white sign next to a buff colored post will give the appearance that the post is dirty. She suggested that painting the post and sign a consistent color may be more appropriate. She asked if the two existing horse head address signs at each of the curb cuts in front of 1260 N. Green Bay Road will remain and suggested that those elements could identify which curb cut should be used to enter and exit. She cautioned however about installing too many signs in the small area in front of the barn house.

Mr. Kulla stated that in determining the appropriate height of the post, other signs along Green Bay Road were measured. He added that many of the posts are taller than proposed for the Ragdale sign. He stated that initially, a taller post was proposed with the idea of locating the sign immediately adjacent to Green Bay Road. He stated that when the sign concept changed to locating the sign close to the barn house, the height of the post was reduced. He noted that an image in the Commission's packet shows the post in relation to a six foot tall person. He stated that a mockup of the sign was installed adjacent to the barn house to show the scale in relation to the surroundings. He stated that the sign is intended to hang at eye level. He stated that short term parking in front of the barn house could block views of the sign if it is lowered. He stated that consideration can be given to using the horse head posts to provide direction to visitors.

Commissioner Gibson stated support for the shingle style sign and Baskerville font. She noted that the address and year as proposed on the sign could be confusing and questioned whether "established" should be added to the year 1897. She agreed with Commissioner Petit's comments about the height of the sign and suggested consideration of reducing the post to six and half or seven feet tall. She asked for the dimensions of the cross bar from where the sign will hang. She noted that other shingle signs in the community have an iron brace to prevent the crossbar from sagging. She asked for clarification on the size of the sign. She agreed with Commissioner Petit's comments about the proposed colors of the post and sign.

Mr. Kulla agreed that "established" or "est." could be added before the year 1897. He noted that the Onwentsia Club sign also has an established date. He stated that the intention is that the wording on the sign is direct and minimal. He stated that the crossbar is five and half inches and explained that he is working with a master carpenter from the Illinois Institute of Technology who recently restored the crossways sign in the meadow. He added that if the crossbar is not strong enough, bracing will be added. He stated that the sign is proposed at 30 inches by 34 inches, reduced from earlier concepts.

Commissioner Levitsky agreed with the need to clarify that 1897 is a date, not an address. He stated that the date should be subordinate to the address number, or the word established should be added before the date. He expressed support for the proposed font and colors. He asked for clarification on the height of the sign.

Mr. Kulla explained that as currently proposed, the vertical post is eight and half feet tall and the sign hangs from a crossbar which is seven feet above the ground. He added that the center of the sign is placed at average eye level.

Chairman Grinnell stated that Ragdale has needed signage for a very long time. She added that the only signage is the lantern at the 1230 N. Green Bay Road entrance which has "Ragdale" in cut out lettering. She acknowledged that the proposed sign takes inspiration from signs at the Country Day School and the

Onwentsia Club but noted that at both of those, the front door is obvious which is not the case with Ragdale. She stated that visitors are not meant to enter the Ragdale House, but most people are drawn to the house, not to the barn house. She encouraged the petitioner to look at the signage at Lake Forest College which happens across the campus. She suggested that a similar approach might be helpful at Ragdale to direct people across the campus. She encouraged consideration of a cohesive signage plan for the overall campus.

Mr. Kulla agreed to consider developing an overall signage plan for the Commission's consideration. He acknowledged that currently, the various buildings are not identified in any way adding that there are some inconsistent signs across the campus. He stated that some signage will be needed at the recently acquired Hart house. He stated that perhaps the garden restoration plan and a campus signage plan can be brought back to the Commission together.

Chairman Grinnell observed that the sign as proposed does not utilize the Ragdale pennant with the backward letter "R" which is a very distinct element of the Ragdale name. She suggested that consideration of a horizontal, rather than a vertical sign, might be worthwhile.

Mr. Kulla stated that the pennant was incorporated into one of the early designs however, as the size of the sign was made reduced, the pennant was eliminated to simplify the sign. He suggested that the address could remain at the top of the sign and the 1897 could be replaced with the pennant. He agreed to give some further thought to options including a horizontal, rather than a vertical sign. He added that painting the sign the post red, the color of the barn could also be helpful.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Grinnell invited public testimony. Hearing none she invited final comments from the Commission and staff.

Ms. Czerniak suggested that in addition to Lake Forest College, Elawa Farm also offers a good example of campus-wide signage.

Commissioner Gibson commented that Lake Forest College has monument signs that may not be appropriate for the for the scale and character of Ragdale. She stated support for the shingle sign and noted that the First Presbyterian Church has shingle signs throughout its campus.

Commissioner Petit suggested that as Ragdale continues to work on plans for restoration of the garden, concurrently developing a master plan for signage is a good idea. She stated that it is confusing with different address signs for different parts of the Ragdale campus.

Commissioner Levitsky agreed that a master signage plan would be helpful. He stated support for the sign as proposed.

Chairman Grinnell stated that even though the petitioner has someone ready to build the sign, it is important the sign be the right sign. She noted that many ideas were offered and asked Mr. Kulla to give the suggestions consideration. She stated that the petition was presented for information and at this time, no motion is needed. She thanked the petitioner for the work to date.

OTHER ITEMS

5. 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.

6. Additional information from staff.

No additional information was presented by staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Baehr
Planner