

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Brunner called to order the Planning and Zoning & Historic Commission (“PZHC”) special meeting on Monday, July 24, 2023, at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Brunner, Feck, Krueger, Reyes-Brahar, Scarpelli, and Steneck, were all present. Quorum was met.

Commissioner Myers was absent.

Also present: Assistant to the Village Administrator (“ATVA”) Franco Bottalico and Building Inspector Chris Ranieri.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Colin Haggerty thanked the Commission for coming out since it was a special meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Certificate of Appropriateness for Proposed Façade Changes: 309 Meier St.

Chair Brunner laid out the Discussion items for the meeting: The addition of an overhead garage door, exterior ramp, new façade treatment, new signage, and opening of outdoor seating area. He stated that no Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued at this meeting.

Applicant, Colin Hegarty, presented the proposal for his newly acquired property at 309 Meier St. The goal of the project is to reduce the costs while trying to get a final product. Since the property is in a historic district, the applicant wanted to get advice on how to proceed for a new Mexican cantina restaurant. A brief and general overview of the proposed façade changes was included in the application. The applicant believed there would be some pushback and/or comments on some of the changes, so he wanted to present to the Commission in a special meeting.

The applicant believed these façade changes make the building stand out more as well and would make it more inviting, which he believed was needed. The applicant also proposed changing the front step to make it more accessible for wheelchairs and to make it safer overall since it is currently crooked.

Commissioner Steneck asked if the applicant owns and operates the *Maple & Hash* in both Pingree Grove and West Dundee. Conversation ensued about the applicant’s prior businesses.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar asked what type of music would be played in the outdoor area. Would it be live music, loud music, or dance music?

The applicant doesn’t think there is an intention to incorporate live music and he does not intend to stay open past midnight. Conversation Ensued.

1. Overhead Garage Door – Fire Department stated in a letter the proposed garage door appears to impact several egresses within the property since it is an existing exit right now that is being replaced.

There would have to be some changes for safety if this project moves forward. In other words, there needs to be a certain number of exits in the building and a garage door doesn't count as an exit door even though it would be replacing a current exit door. A new exit door would need to be created somewhere else. Applicant is willing to add another exit door if needed.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar asked if the garage would be insulated?

Yes, it's clear with black trim and a clear glass door.

Commissioner Scarpelli if it is like the door on Black & Gray?

Yes, it would be like Black & Gray's and would be 100% clear (just like a window). There could be tint added depending on the sun coming in, but the applicant hasn't investigated that currently.

Chair Brunner commented on the fact that the bar would be right on the other side of the garage door, so when the garage door is closed, people would still be able to see inside as they walk by. Overall, Chair Brunner believes the garage door fits with the large doors and large spaces that have been on the property in the past and fits with the general look.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar commented on the potential need for a different color since trends only last 15 or so years. She suggested something a little more neutral. Commissioner Reyes-Brahar is also not sure how the wood lentic overhead works for the sign because there are no other wood lentils introduced in the façade other than the trellis. Are the two double doors going to be underneath the signage? Are those going to be kept? Conversation ensued.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar also understood the applicant's issues with the crooked step in the entry way, but Commissioner Reyes-Brahar commented that is also one of the beautiful features of maintaining something historic. Commissioner Reyes-Brahar suggested finding another way to comply for ADA like a secondary side door in the back. Conversation ensued.

Chair Brunner commented that there is already a secondary door on the property on the right. A conversation ensued about preserving the history of the building.

The Commission is in unanimous support of the garage door as long as it meets FD guidelines and heavily considers new color options.

2. The Accessibility ramp - Chris Ranieri, Building Inspector, commented that the proposed ramp is not long enough to be ADA compatible (Applicants were allowed 1 inch of rise for every foot). The applicant currently has around 19.5 inches from the sidewalk to their threshold. The applicant would need almost 19 feet of run on the ramp, and that could impact the location of the overhead door. Right now, the applicant only had 16 feet proposed. Chris Ranieri also mentioned that the code does not require applicants to make a building ADA compliant if it already exists as long as they aren't making improvements to the elements in question. If they are making improvements, then they would need to bring them up to code. Conversation ensued.

Another discussion of entries and exits ensued between Chris Ranieri, Commissioner Scarpelli, Chair Brunner, and the applicant followed by another conversation of the ramp location.

The applicant said that he would be able to change the level of the ramp, but he cannot extend the ramp further because then he would have to get rid of the existing exit door. He can try to extend the ramp in the other direction, but that could destroy the façade. The steps are currently very high, so the applicant would want to prioritize accessibility. Another conversation of the ramp location ensued.

The applicant asked if expectations are allowed if the ADA requirements would deteriorate the grade. Chris Ranieri stated that it either must be compliant since it is a new improvement, or it can't be put in. The applicant said he would investigate it further.

A conversation ensued about the measurements listed in the application. Chair Brunner clarified that the Commission is not against a ramp but would prefer putting a ramp someplace else, so it does not impact the front.

A conversation ensued about updating the steps.

The Commission acknowledged that the current proposal related to the ramp wouldn't work in its current form. The Commission also recognized the need for better accessibility. Applicant restated his concerns about making sure accessibility is clearly seen as opposed to just hidden in the back where the patrons must find it. A conversation of handrails and window opaqueness ensued.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar brought up the ramp again and suggested the applicant find a way to bring in the ramp inside. Commissioner Reyes-Brahar remembered a coat closet in the building that could be converted as such. The applicant said he would be willing to talk to his architect about it but thought that would be too expensive.

ATVA Bottalico asked the applicant if removing the garage all together would significantly impact the operations of business? The applicant doesn't believe it would, but it would just be a beautiful patio view.

Commission Steneck asked what the difference would be if moving the landing over to the north impact of the property. Applicant came over to review the floor plan with the Commission. The applicant welcomed the feedback and would further review moving the landing to get more room for the ramp. The applicant would review these options with the Commission at the next meeting.

3. Façade Treatment / Materials – the main vision here, per the applicant, is to upgrade the façade to make it stand out more. The applicant wanted to get some feedback on what the Historic Commission would approve so he can proceed with more detailed drawings, so he wouldn't have to keep going back and forth to the Commission. The applicant proposed a brick siding that looks like natural brick. No color has been chosen yet, because he wanted to make sure the brick material was approved first. It would be a speckle finish in the front once given approval. A discussion ensued about the brick material and chemicals used.

The Commission stressed the importance of using natural materials in a historical district. It was mentioned that the current proposal goes against the brick guidelines being used in the district. Commissioner Reyes-Brahar expressed concern with the materials being proposed.

The applicant elaborated on why he was trying to make the building stand out from what it has been in the past so people know it is not just the same restaurant. He was looking to build a recurring customer base.

A conversation ensued on past building ownership and the fact that it had been the same look/feel for 70 years. The conversation then went back to other ideas on exterior building materials.

Chair Brunner referenced all the other buildings in the district that have committed to maintaining exteriors that are all in keeping with historical district guidelines. A conversation ensued about how other buildings/houses currently use this material.

The applicant clarified that the material would only be used on the front exterior, not in the back or on the sides. He just wanted to use it on the front, so it is more noticeable from the current brown. A conversation ensued about different types of exterior finishings. Commissioner Scarpelli would not be in favor of a dry bit/smooth finish. The Applicant was going to send the Commission photos of different types that are currently being used at his other buildings.

A conversation ensued about stone materials specifically and if they fit within East Dundee's current look. A color palette should be included for the next meeting.

4. Signage - Building Inspector Chris Ranieri had indirectly asked the Commission to provide guidance on signage for the applicant as it pertained to the building codes. The current size of the sign being proposed is too big. The letters within the sign are currently "channel" letters that would include LED lights inside the sign. The fonts currently being proposed did not fit within current Historical guidelines. Commissioner Scarpelli would be more in favor of traditional Mexican grill fonts (since this is a Mexican grill).

A conversation ensued about the "Tequila Val's" jalapeno logo/mascot and potential issues that it may present. Modifications were discussed. The size of the sign was also discussed. If approved, this sign would be the largest in the historical district.

Another conversation ensued about the commission's ability of approving/rejecting signage. The applicant has other options for signage that have already been discussed with the Village Administrator and would present them at the next meeting.

5. Open Area Outdoor Seating - Commission thought this was a great idea with the veranda. Chair Brunner asked if there would be a solid wall on the opposite side, so you wouldn't see the employee parking. The applicant confirmed there would be a solid wall there.

A discussion on the type of fencing ensued.

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ATVA Bottalico commented on an amendment to the Historic District Ordinance that was passed in January 2022 that allowed the Village Administrator or Village President to recommend changes to the design and size of the sign.

Commissioner Reyes-Brahar asked if there would be any exterior lighting on the patio. The applicant does plan on simple, string lights for the outside patio. Conversation ensued.

ATVA Bottalico asked for a sample of the facade materials discussed earlier. The applicant planned to bring a sample to the next meeting but cautioned that samples don't always do justice to the final look. An agreement was still reached on the applicant bringing in a sample.

Next meeting was scheduled for August 14th, 2023.

Commissioner Scarpelli questioned if it is appropriate that the Historic Commission issues certificates of appropriateness. The Commission isn't the final say and appeals are possible, but Commissioner Scarpelli wondered if the Village Board is a better body to handle those certificates.

Chair Brunner clarified that applicants can always appeal, all the way up to the Village Board, so he believed that system is already established. He liked that the powers are separated between the Commission and the Village Board. Conversation ensued between these two viewpoints.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn the PZHC meeting at 7:21 pm by Feck/Krueger.
Motion is carried by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Caleb Haydock, Management Intern