

CITY OF HUNTINGTON WOODS
REGULAR MEETING OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

August 3 , 2022

7:30 p.m.

In Person Meeting – Huntington Woods Commission Room

Commissioner Chris Vogelheim called the Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m

PRESENT: Steve Behrmann, Jeffrey Abt, Chris Vogelheim, Robert Lebow, Jeff Jenks

ABSENT: Michael Burshtein, Mark Fink

City Staff Present: Zoning Administrator, Hank Berry.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Jeffrey Abt motioned for approval of the minutes as presented. Steve Behrmann seconded the motion.

Ayes: Steve Behrmann, Jeffrey Abt, Chris Vogelheim, Robert Lebow, Jeff Jenks

Nays: None

Absent: Burshtein, Fink

AGENDA ITEMS:

Matter of a Review for a window replacement by “Renewal By Anderson” for the Schmier Residence at 26888 York Rd.

Representative for the Schmier Family: They are looking to replace 19 windows, with a wood composite that has been approved here before. We are replacing the existing double hung, matching those with the color will actually be a dark bronze, with a sandstone finish. It is similar to the neighbor's house. All of these windows

have all been coiled over, white coil. We looked under one of the coils and it was all rotted inside. The front entry door, replacing that as well with the pro via signet, it's the top of the line pro via entry door system. It's as close as we could possibly get to the old door. The front living room windows on the lower level are stained glass - we are not touching those at all.

Berry: This is one of the finest examples of arts and crafts we have in the city. He has shown a lot of damage to the windows in different spots. I did want to point out the standards, which I'd like to go through. There is no use change on the property. It is still a single family home. The windows will definitely be visible from three sides on this home, so you have to take that into consideration. Whether or not the windows are salvageable, where they can be repaired instead of replaced, is a discussion you may want to have. Your determination will be if the windows have reached a point of deterioration in which they need to be replaced, and if this is a reasonable request considering the condition.

Jenks: The most important part of this would be the street facing facade, and the parts that people can see. I would hope that there's a mutton bar simulation. Ideally, it would be wood for wood. Other than that, the way that the windows open is not considered an issue as to what they were before, and what they will be. I like the idea that you're being able to improve the windows, which means that heat stays in and cold stays out, or vice versa. It's reasonable, the only thing that i'm hoping is that where those windows can be seen, that that simulation goes in there. My only question would be wood vs. composite but I think you meet the standards.

Berry: I just want to point out that they came in asking for a window replacement, and I'm not sure it matters that they are including the door but the door is fiberglass, it is not wood.

Abt: When it comes to the grills that you have that simulated divider between the two, the outside and inside. This is the full divided light grills. So you don't know the extent of the damage you found - you checked one window, or have all the windows been checked?

Renewal by Anderson Representative: You can see that when you open a lot of these windows from the interior, you can see the rotted wood inside.

Abt: Did you investigate having the windows restored?

Mr. Schmier: There are not many qualified people that can actually do it to be honest. It's incredibly labor intensive. It is also cost prohibitive. We are holding open our upstairs windows with books. With our 5-year-old grandson, it is very dangerous.

Abt: So you're surmising that all of the windows have similar damage at this point. How did you arrive at the dark bronze color for the exterior?

Schmeir: The original windows on the garage are that color.

Abt: The reason I ask is because I have looked high and low for examples of craftsman bungalow houses, and haven't been able to find one that has a dark window treatment. They were all white. The other question I had - run through the differences in dimensions between the current framing and the proposed framing again.

Renewal By Anderson Representative: Ours are at about 2 inches, and they currently sit at about 1.5 inches.

Abt: That answers my questions for now.

Lebow: Aside from this cursory investigation of restoring your windows, have you seriously considered restoring your windows?

Alana Schmier: That was our first plan.

Lebow: And you spoke to this company in Detroit and they told you it was this 4-5 month move in process and it was going to be prohibitively expensive - more than new windows?

Alana Schmier: More than the new windows, yes. But, more than that the existing wood around is completely rotten. Even if we opted for that, it would still be replaced with wood.

Lebow: So whatever you do, it was going to need to be replaced. In my experience, I have never seen a window that could not be restored. Window restoration in Detroit is readily available by a number of companies. Window restoration is so big because the cost of comparing two new windows is a fraction of the cost of restoration. You save a tremendous amount of money by restoring windows. Wood is still the gold standard of all windows. You don't get a better window than a wooden window. I've looked at your house in person, I have looked at all of the photographs that you submitted and what you have are windows that are almost 100 years old, that haven't been cared for. You have broken glazing which is easily repaired. You have broken cords, which are easily repaired. These are jobs that many homeowners do themselves. When you have rotting wood frames, you want to call an expert to do that. So I understand that this is a process that may be beyond your scope because you've never done it before. When you involve people who have done it before, it's an easy operation. It is something that is very commonly done. The pattern of the windows may be the same but the scale and the size are off and that's a dramatic difference. You're reducing the glazed area by a lot of inches. That is not going to read as an old window, or as an original window. It's going to read as a brand new window. I also read that your locks are broken. Locks are no reason to replace a window. These are very repairable things. The rotting wood can be excised, which it will be in any case, and replaced which is even more of a reason to stick with what you have. Windows that have lasted for 100 years, and with proper care will last another 100 years. I really don't like the size differences at all. Mr. Schmier - you said something about original windows in the garage?

Mr. Schmier: I believe they are, but not of the same quality as the ones in the house.

Lebow: Just last week I was talking to a company working in Huntington Woods, they're called Artisan Restoration. They restore windows, that's all they do. They told me they have worked on windows as old as 1818, that were fully restored.

Typically, they work on 1920s, 30s, and 40s wood windows that you find in these first ring suburbs, and in Detroit. You can tell where I'm going with this, I'm not supporting your project.

Schmier: Would that mean adding back the aluminum storms?

Lebow: No, originally it was wooden storms. It's a lot to consider, I know. I have nothing further at this time.

Berhmann: Are these windows aluminum clad?

Renewal By Anderson Representative: No they are vinyl siding.

Behrmann: What do you do with the rest of the windows that aren't being replaced? I'm just curious why they're not also being proposed to replace the windows on the sides of the fireplace. Why would those be kept?

Schmier: Because of the way that they open. They are not in such a state of disrepair probably because they've never opened and closed as often, so they will all have the same color ultimately.

Behrmann: What would you be doing to those? Do you need to remove aluminum siding from those two as well and repaint them?

Schmier: They do not have storms on them.

Behrmann: Is the eventual intent to make all the exterior portions of the windows this sandstone color? Including the three in the front?

Schmier: yes. When I peeled back some of the siding, it is the same color that is under the siding that I would like to eventually restore back to what it previously was.

Behrmann: Is there any other intent to, right now, as I look at the house everything is white including the window frames, is the intention to keep that

white and have the frames the sandstone color? Or is this kind of like an overall project?

Schmier: We are planning to remove all of the aluminum siding.

Behrmann: Where are the screens on the proposed windows?

Renewal By Anderson Representative: On the outside.

Behrmann: You didn't bring us a sample of what you're proposing? I'm curious about this fibrex and what it looks like, what it feels like. I've never seen it and I just feel like that is something that you would have wanted to bring in. Regarding the front door, is the front door restorable or is that warped terribly or is it not usable for some reason?

Schmier: If you look at the inside panels, they're all cracked, many of them are loose. The entire door would need stripping and I don't know how weather tight it is because we haven't been there yet with the weather. The deadbolt locks, but the other lock does not work. It does not line up anymore. Most of the wood on the inside of the door trim is deteriorated.

Behrmann: I'm just not familiar with particular products. I do have to tell you that I am a little bit on the fence about this but I'm finding that I don't really have enough information to be able to really have a good concept of exactly what the products are. It seems like they're relatively easily accessible.

Vogelheim: I think the biggest struggle that I have is knowing that in historic windows, sightlines really become the biggest issue. Looking at the details, that's the thing that's confusing me is when for example, I'm looking at the plan detail and you've got a 3 inch dimension there but an inch and 5/32 of that is the side rails. Is that visible when you install it?

Renewal By Anderson Representative: Because it is going to be covered with aluminum on the outside, I didn't measure it.

Vogelheim: The other thing we're concerned about is the distance from glass to faces and things which is tough to ascertain when we don't have enough detail on the existing, the mutton bars. I'm very comfortable when you put the shadow bar and the mutton bar on either side. I'm struggling a little bit because I understand that there is going to be a little dimensional difference but the more you try to replicate it, the better it is, the more acceptable it is, to me anyway. I do believe that when you add the aluminum sashes, it really does change the sightlines of the storms, which is too bad. I will concur with Robert, that when a storm plus a single pane window, yes you will get some very close R-values. But that is not true if you remove the storm so I just wanted to clarify that. I'm concerned about the actual profiles, some of those dimensional things, and maybe if there had been some installation details. Understanding how the existing was installed, it may actually make me very comfortable with this.

Chris Vogelheim opened the meeting to public participation.

Mary Paquette Abt, 26881 York Rd: I was curious about a bronze window, I didn't understand how they were going to look and I was curious.

Schmier: It's unfortunate that we don't have a sample but it is a bronze frame with the sandstone color complementing it.

Mary Abt: It's in some respects capturing a more historical coloration. That's all that I was interested in. The rest of my questions were answered.

The meeting was then closed for public participation.

Jeffrey Abt: Some of the photographs show detailing around the outside of the exterior of the windows and one of them shows a pretty stepped profile. I gather that you're not going to do that when you install the new windows. You won't be putting in that kind of profile or something resembling that. In your proposal you're not going to replicate that?

Renewal By Anderson Representative: No, we were just going to go with the aluminum trim on the outside.

Abt: Basically, you'd be redoing what was done before. Are you certain that the front door is the original front door design?

Schmier: I have a feeling it is not. It doesn't seem thick enough to be the original 1920 plank.

Abt: And you probably could replace it with something that would be just as good that would be more of a craftsman style. On the lintels I noticed all around the house, if we were judging by photographs correctly, the lintels are covered with aluminum also.

Renewal By Anderson Representative: Most of them are broken. He does have a mason that is going to come out and do work as well.

Abt: I'm talking about the lintels over the windows.

Schmier: I would love to see them be original again.

Lebow: Hank, do we have the original blueprints for this house?

Berry: We may

Lebow: Can we check that out?

Berry: If you would like to do that, the chair would need to call a 15-20 minute recess for me to look for them.

Schmier: We were told the blueprints were destroyed in the flood.

Lebow: Jeffrey asked mostly all of the questions that I wanted to ask, but I have a slightly different perspective. The front door you pay your money on that is not an original door. The door that you are proposing to replace it with is not a craftsman door in any way, shape or form. It's a colonial door, and it is the wrong period and style for the house. The reason the windows were black or white is black cuts the glare. To obtain an original arts and crafts entry door, and I don't know if this is a

good thing or a bad thing, but the mass destruction of houses in Detroit has provided a motherlode of architectural material for new projects. Architectural warehouse in Detroit on Warren is jammed full of doors and windows and you could most likely find an appropriately sized original arts and crafts door to go into your house.

Chris Vogelheim called for a recess while Hank Berry went to look for the blueprints for the residence in question.

After the recess, Chris Vogelheim closed the meeting to public comment and applicant comment to begin discussion amongst the board.

Berry: For the record, the plans were in a bottom file and were lost during the 2014 flood.

Lebow: I will make a motion that the application be denied on the basis that we do not have sufficient information to make an appropriate decision. We should be seeing a sample of the window and the materials, and more information on the direct installation and what that final appearance will look like. The door is not appropriate for the house. It is a colonial style door, not a craftsman style.

Berry: Mr. Chairman, did we incorporate into the motion what standards are being referenced?

Lebow: Number 2, removal of distinctive materials which would be the window framing. Number 5, distinctive materials finish features, finishes and construction techniques. Number 6, deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. I think that's it.

Vogelheim: Is there anyone else who will support that motion? Is there a second to that motion? It looks at this time that that motion fails.

Abt: We've discussed in the past the process for tabling proposals to kind of keep them in suspension, and you had one observation about the commission that if Robert's Rules of Order took precedence, I could move that the proposal be tabled

so that we have time to collect information, you have time to think about your alternatives, we could have another meeting to discuss it. According to Robert's Rules of Order, that would be a non-debatable motion. It would be a motion that you either vote it up, or vote it down. This is for the Schmier's information, we had another proposal come up where it was advantageous to suspend the conversation for a while and collect more information, and in that case the idea was that the applicant requested it be tabled.

Berry: There's more to it than Robert's Rules of Order. According to Public Act 169, the applicant has to ask for the table and they also have to agree to waive their 60 day time frame in order for it to be heard. If they don't do that, then you should vote it up or down. There's also a form to sign saying that they voluntarily waive their 60 day time frame in order to get this table to the next meeting. If that works for them, then that's fine. If it doesn't, then you should vote it up or down. The other option they have too is they could withdraw their application, and bring it back in that way that also would not require a vote.

Vogelheim: We are just trying to find some ways so that you don't have to pay another application fee and we can fill in some of the details that we feel would be necessary. It is up to you if you are amenable to some of those choices and if so, we'd like to hear from you now.

Renewal By Anderson Representative: It sounds like there's a lot of talk about the entry door being fiberglass and like I previously stated, I don't have a sample of that. We carry one line of windows, they're all in the fibrex composite material. The colors have been picked out, would you be willing to table a motion to improve the windows or to make a motion to approve the windows but table the entry door?

Berry: They could split it up but again, if they split it up and you table the entry door that means that you're going to take that and then you're going to ask them to approve the windows which has been fairly well discussed with not enough information. So tabling the door, I'm not exactly sure how that helps you but you're certainly welcome to ask for that because you're entitled to.

Schmier: The reason we picked that door was because it looks exactly like the door that is there.

A. Schmier: In terms of the door, we would be willing to look at a more authentic design. In terms of the windows, I'm not quite clear about what information you want. Is it that you need to see the window? Is that the main issue here? What is it exactly that you still need to know about the windows we're proposing?

Abt: It would be helpful to see the window in person, both the profile and the grill because the grill on these craftsman houses is very distinctive, very deep actually. It's a little hard to tell from the drawing. I suspect the drawing doesn't represent it very well.

Vogelheim: I think some site-specific details, better detail on how the existing window is set within that rough opening, as well as what's proposed would help me, and I think that would also help some others. That coupled with the sample, I think would provide use an opportunity to make a judgment.

Abt: It would also be good to know if there's an alternative when installing the windows to just covering over the edge of the windows with aluminum because you're in a sense replicating what was done that's a historical deviation from the original look of the house. It would be good to know if there's an alternative.

A Schmier: So you're basically saying that you don't have enough information to make a decision, correct? So, what would you do, just not make a decision?

Berry: They would vote it down, they won't not make a decision.

Vogelheim: I'm looking for a motion, or for more discussion.

Behrmann: I'm just going to reiterate my point that the homeowner thinks their beautiful windows, unfortunately we have not had the option to examine them and look at them in the same detail and i'm still uncomfortable without having a

product here to look at. I can understand some of your concerns. I would hate to vote down a project only because it wasn't an opportunity to look at something.

Jenks: One thing that Hank said is that right now you may not meet the threshold to get a tax deduction. You might make some modifications which actually end up costing you less because of the tax advantage.

Vogelheim: Any more discussion or I'm looking for a motion.

Berry: Someone is going to have to make a motion one way or another. The applicant has asked for a decision tonight.

Lebow: I will resubmit my original motion to deny based on failure to meet Standards 2, 5 and 6.

Alana Schmier: I withdraw our application.

Berry: I want to be respectful of people's time and the time that it is now in terms of pushing the administrative approvals to the next regular meeting if that is something the board would be interested in.

Abt: If you're okay with letting it go another month, that is fine by me.

Jeffrey Abt motioned to table the last agenda item pertaining to administrative approvals until the next regular meeting of the Historic District Committee. The motion was seconded by Steve Behrmann.

Ayes: Steve Behrmann, Jeffrey Abt, Chris Vogelheim, Robert Lebow, Jeff Jenks, Michael Burshtein

Nays: None

Absent: Fink

The motion carried.

Chris Vogelheim opened and closed the meeting to public participation as their was none.

ADJOURNMENT:

Moved by Jeffrey Abt and seconded by Michael Burshtein to adjourn the meeting of the Historic District Commission

Ayes: Jeff Jenks, Michael Burshtein Jeffrey Abt, Chris Vogelheim, Robert Lebow, Steve Behrmann

Nays: None

Absent: Mark Fink

The Motion Carried, meeting adjourned at 9:24 pm.

Submitted

Amy Berry - Recorder