

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Geneva Public Works Building
1800 South Street - Conference Room
Geneva, Illinois 60134

February 18, 2014, 7:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Roy called the February 18, 2014 meeting of the Geneva Historic Preservation Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed:

2. Roll Call

Present HPC: Chairman Roy, Commissioners Andersson, Hiller, Ploppert, Schock-Soderberg, Zinke

Staff Present: Preservation Planner Michael Lambert

Others Present: Clyde and Sharon Jones, 521 Franklin St.; Resident Jim Bishop; Colin Campbell, 18 S. 6th St.; Adam Gibbons, 33W777 Hill Rd.; Ald. Mike Bruno; Carolyn Jerjee with Preservation Partners; Linda Steele, 527 Campbell St.; Susan Sarkauskas with Daily Herald; Recording Secretary Celeste Weilandt

3. Approval of the December 17, 2013 Minutes

The December 17, 2013 minutes were approved on motion by Commissioner Ploppert, seconded by Hiller. Motion carried by voice vote of 6-0.

4. HPC Review of Building Permit Applications - None.

5. Concept Review

A. Campbell Street between Fifth and Sixth Street (Case No. 2014-002) Proposed Infill Residence (Avondale Custom Homes, Maurice McNally/Dave Myszka) - Preservation Planner Lambert reviewed the proposal before the commissioners, explaining the proposed in-fill house would be for Lot 4, facing Campbell Street. A review of the home's materials (stone and cedar shake shingle); site plan; proposed elevations; and floor plans followed. Mr. Lambert did state, however, the proposed volume for the proposal exceeded what the zoning ordinance allowed and the petitioner would have to address how that would be remedied.

Mr. Dave Myszka, with Avondale Custom Homes, and on behalf of the petitioner, reviewed the elevations and materials in more detail stating that he did reduce some of the volume overage by reducing some of the roof pitches and would forward that information to Mr. Lambert. The floor plans were not changed. In addition, Mr. Myszka explained how the massing was reduced by having a smaller mass in the front elevation and increasing it to the rear. An 8 ft. front porch would be included. The structure's height was 32 feet and with the pitch reduced, would be 28 or 29 feet in height. As compared to the Merritt King house, the King house was 36.5 feet from the finished floor to the top. He clarified he was trying to have the proposed homes in proportion to the neighborhood homes.

Overall, Andersson had positive comments about the proposed home but had concerns about the position of the garage being at the front of the house, creating a “snout” house with its design cutting off the house to the rest of the neighborhood. She referenced how the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines specifically address this issue and it offered suggestions on how to design homes for the historic district. Mr. Myszka explained that the design was created on the basis of his client wanting a large backyard area. Other commissioner comments included that the narrow lot presented a challenge and it was not the right design for the historic district. Mr. Myszka offered to look at the design again. Questions followed on whether this home would set the setbacks of the other three homes and how would the corner lot affect the front yards and side setback for the corner lot, wherein Mr. Lambert explained the corner lot would have Campbell Street as the legal front yard. The corner lot would require a 20 ft. setback from Campbell and a 20 ft. setback off of Sixth Street. Per a question about lot coverage calculations, Mr. Lambert confirmed the rear patio was under the maximum lot coverage calculation.

Other than the garage issue, many commissioners liked the home’s appearance and materials. Asked what Andersson’s recommendations would be for the proposal, she stated the garage could be placed to the side and reduce the width of the home or add an alley and have all the garages in the rear. With having a front-loaded garage or side load garage, Mr. Lambert also confirmed there were “givebacks” and noted that the longer the driveway, less floor area was available to work with, according to the Geneva Zoning Compatibility Worksheet. Rejecting the proposed residence solely on the “snout-nosed” garage design (a guideline recommendation and not part of the Code requirements) was not the purview of this commission. However, according to Section 10-6-6, Item D of the City of Geneva Zoning Code - Historic Preservation, Mr. Lambert pointed out that if the petitioner chose to pursue this concept, the zoning board would likely support the proposal and forward it to City Council which must uphold the city’s zoning ordinance.

Commissioners Hiller and Ploppert reiterated that the lot was difficult and had restrictions, and there had to be some form of give and take. Dialog then followed on what other designs could be expected for the other three lots. Mr. Lambert interjected also reminded the commissioners that the narrowness of the lot was chosen by the developer when he purchased the property, noting there were three lots that were platted and the lots were not a burden placed upon them. Dialog followed regarding other 60 ft. lots in the area that had detached garages or one-car garages, or an alley.

Chairman Roy opened up the meeting to public comment:

Mr. Colin Campbell, 18 S. 6th Street, asked if the house could be moved 20 feet north, set the garage in rear and use the current driveway as a common driveway for all of the houses to be built on Sixth Street, i.e., dedicating an alley. Mr. Myszka indicated he would look into the suggestion. The honey locust tree was also a concern.

Ms. Sharon Jones, 521 Franklin Street, discussed the direction of the sun which was a positive for this home’s backyard; the fact that garages were a part of life in 2014; the historic district offered a variety of homes; and that the proposed house would reflect a time period when it was built and be unique to the historic district.

Resident, Ms. Linda Steele, inquired as to when construction would begin (March or April) and the positioning of the homes to the proposed home. Mr. Myszka responded that each home’s design would be coming before this commission and he would like to provide a streetscape drawing as each home comes on board. Ms. Steele felt the area would be very busy.

It was pointed out by Andersson that the homes behind Egg Harbor were a good example of homes on narrow lots with the garages placed in rear with an alley.

6. Secretary's Report (Staff Update)

HPC Building Permit Review Matrix Affirmation - Mr. Lambert had no permit activity to report this month. However, he asked for input regarding the matrix so it could be formalized. The matrix has been helpful to him. Commissioners were supportive of the matrix.

Mill Race Inn Investigation Staff Report -- HPC Review & Comment - Mr. Lambert thanked Commissioners Zinke and Hiller, the Geneva History Center, and Mr. Colin Campbell for their input into the report. The report concluded that a portion of the Mill Race building dates back to 1846 as a manufacturing building which was Anne Forsythe's original Mill Race Inn. Mr. Lambert stated he did not speak to the prospective purchaser today and he does not know the status of the purchase currently. The commission appreciated all of the research done on the report and the information was very helpful to a developer. Lambert noted that an outstanding issue is that the extent of floodway/floodplain was still unknown at this point. Asked if the walls were independent of the remainder of the building, Lambert, from what he saw, said it could stand on its own but he did not know how the roof structure held the tops of the walls.

Commissioner Hiller expressed concern about the following: the developer's plans were unknown at this time; there has been community interest in landmarking the building; and the city wants development of the property to move forward. He believed it was appropriate to let the developer do his/her due diligence first. Commissioner Zinke noted that the site was Opportunity Site No. 6 within the Downtown Station Area Master Plan and the city wanted the site to be developed into a banquet facility with restaurant use. She believed the city would probably support the preservation of part of the building and hoped that the city would work with the developer and offer some financial incentives to the developer. Planner Lambert explained that part of the building could be landmarked and not necessarily the entire building. He stated that the issue was for the commissioners to determine what parts of the building were most significant to the community. He felt the significant period was between years 1846 and 1935 and to base any landmarking proposals on that information. Lambert stated he would contact the prospective purchaser, discussing with him what the commission discussed tonight.

Tying into the discussion Mr. Colin Campbell raised dialog about the housing study that the city was conducting, one of which issues was affordable housing. He suggested the commission consider the idea that if the area of Bennett Street and Route 38, and east up the hill, was turned into affordable housing units, he envisioned that the red brick building could become a convenience store while the Mill Race property could be developed as shops for that housing.

Preservation Month Discussion - Mr. Lambert reminded commissioners that Preservation Month is in May and it is the bi-annual preservation awards year. Commissioners Zinke and Hiller would be reviewing the permits (Soderberg steps away) and were come up with a list of potential candidates. Lambert said he would like Ploppert and Soderberg to be hosts for the day. (Soderberg returns; Ploppert steps away) Commissioners Andersson, Zinke, and Hiller would be part of the preservation awards group (Andersson steps away; Ploppert returns). Asked if the commissioners wanted certain jurors to participate, Zinke suggested to invite Doug Karre, former HPC planner; Lambert suggested Ms. Amy Munro from Elgin (Andersson returns); and Shock-Soderberg suggested the preservation planner from Blue Island. Lambert walked through the activities planned for the month. Commissioners discussed that it would be nice for this

commission to coordinate its events with the Geneva History Museum and Preservation Partners. Hiller volunteered to be the point-person for the coordination; Zinke would be a backup.

Geneva Broadcast Network Programming - Mr. Lambert advised that City Administrator McKittrick has challenged every department to make a larger presence in the community through the Geneva Broadcast Network and Lambert recommended that the HPC do a series of informative programs on preservation. Lambert referenced his handout explaining how he envisioned the series and presented a short slide presentation, noting the program would consist of two segments with a main topic of approximately 30 minutes and a "field guide" segment about five minutes long. (Schock-Soderberg leaves meeting at 8:30 pm) Commissioner dialog followed that Lambert could possibly get the script going and incorporating one of the presentations into Preservation Month, if possible, but Andersson pointed out that staff resources were very limited. Asked how many programs he needed to complete, Lambert indicated there was no timeframe, but he preferred to see the segment entitled "Keeping Preservation Relevant: The Geneva Story" completed first and to involve the high school students and bring preservation to another generation. Zinke mentioned she had been in contact with Ms. Mary Keyser at Geneva High School, and she would have Ms. Keyser contact Mr. Lambert on this topic.

526 S. Fourth Street Update - Only one bid was made on the property; the bidder's proposal was to demolish it. City Admin. McKittrick has suggested that the bid be accepted by the City Council.

Window Policy Update (re: 402 Franklin St.) - Lambert indicated that the Warners, who are rehabilitating the property at 402 Franklin Street and are pursuing a Tax Assessment Freeze, expressed some confusion regarding the window approvals given by the commission. The Warners consulted with IHPA regarding the tax assessment freeze review and proceeded to follow the requirements of the National Park Service which allowed all clad windows in his building. Lambert referenced his handout and noted what the owner's perspective was on this matter, what the commission's direction was, and what the resolution was. Lambert suggested inserting new language into the city's Window Policy, keeping the intent of historic wood windows where there are wood windows, but identifying additional circumstances where clad windows may be acceptable. (The Park Service allowed clad windows when all historic windows are non-existent.) Commissioners were asked to provide their comments after reading the handout and discuss it in the future. Lambert shared where the confusion came in between the HPC policy and state / federal policy.

Historic District Survey Update - Lambert's request for an intern to assist with survey field work was denied by the city due to the budget. Commissioners Andersson and Ploppert volunteered to assist Lambert in the field. He will have a schedule in the future of the blocks to be photographed.

Ordinance Review Update - Lambert asked the commissioners to review the historic preservation ordinance and determine its weaknesses and strong points. From his notes, he has identified that the city has no provision for demolition requirements, no process for de-landmarking, and the process for which staff reviews the projects for review has been modified since the ordinance was last updated. Lambert discussed reasons for considering inclusion and/or updates of these items.

6. New Business

A. From the Commission - Zinke asked about the status of the 2008 Historic Preservation Plan, believing not much has happened with regard to its goals and objectives, wherein

Mr. Lambert discussed the three goals he was assigned (the survey, the ordinance and visibility) to date and recalled that about one-third of the goals in the 2008 plan were accomplished. However, Andersson reminded the commissioners that at the time the plan was created a full-time historic planner existed.

B. From the Public - None.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. on motion by Ploppert, seconded by Andersson. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.