

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
109 James Street
Geneva, Illinois, 60134

May 17, 2022

1. Call to Order

Preservation Planner called to order the May 17, 2022 meeting of the Geneva Historic Preservation Commission at 7:04 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present HPC: Commissioners Hartman, Jensen, Salomon, Stazin and Zinke

Absent: Chairman Zellmer, Commissioner McManus
Staff Present: Preservation Planner Michael Lambert

Others Present: Applicant Tom Wetmore; Applicant Blake Croson; Applicant Mike Henderson; Architect Sean Gallagher; Al Watts, Community Engagement Director for Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley

3. Election of Chairman *pro tem*

Motion by Commissioner Zinke to elect Commissioner Salomon as Chairman pro tem for the evening's proceedings. Second by Commissioner Hartman. Motion passed by a unanimous voice vote of 5-0.

4. Approval of April 19, 2022 Minutes

Minutes of April 19, 2022 – Motion by Commissioner Jensen to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Commissioner Stazin. Motion passed by a unanimous voice vote of 5-0.

3. Five Minute Field Guide

In keeping with the theme for the 2022 National Preservation Month ("People Saving Places"), Preservation Planner Michael Lambert provided a brief overview of two families that were preserving Geneva a century ago (Raftery and Sekulic) that led to the redevelopment of River Lane between 1922 and 1960.

4. Review of Conceptual Development Plans

A. 418 Ford Street (Case No. 2022-024). Applicant/Owner: Tom Wetmore with Wetmore Construction, Contractor. Application for Additions at a Contributing Property. Preservation Planner Lambert presented a brief overview of the request that includes a major addition that wraps around the rear of the historic house. A small portion of the proposed addition extends east of the present east wall of the house. The garage is being reconstructed at its current location on the north side of the house. Lambert noted that the project is a Tax Assessment Freeze project and that the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (IL-SHPO), in conjunction with Preservation Planner Lambert, has reviewed the submitted, conceptual drawings and made recommendations for revisions that aligned with the SOI Standards, resulting in the drawings now under review. The primary changes were the addition of a second floor window at the north wall of the east extension; lowering of the roof over the garage; and providing a smaller dormer at the garage. The dormer was a re-interpretation (not a replication) of the historic attic gable (restoration approved November

17, 2020). Mr. Wetmore was amenable to the requested changes. Commissioner Stazin asked for a site plan and questioned the overall massing and lot coverage if the additions were constructed as proposed. Additionally, Commissioner Stazin questioned how the scale of the proposed additions relate to the scale of the lot and the addition's impact on neighborhood character. Mr. Wetmore confirmed that he has completed all of the lot coverage calculations and the proposed addition meets local zoning requirements. Commissioner Zinke was satisfied that the project was acceptable because the IL-SHPO had approved the conceptual drawings because the IL-SHPO was essentially the Commission's "boss." Commissioner Stazin disagreed, stating that the Commission had both local review authority and responsibility. Preservation Planner noted that the Commission and the IL-SHPO utilize the SOI Standards, but those standards require interpretation on a case-by-case basis. Commissioner Stazin asked that aerial views or a site plan of subject properties be included in future HPC review information. Commissioner Hartman felt that the proposed addition was well-designed for the lot and neighborhood; Commissioner Jensen agreed, stating that the design seemed to consider the goals of the SOI Standards as well as local regulations. Commissioner Zinke appreciated Mr. Wetmore's nearly decade-long rehabilitation effort (beginning in April 2013) that is returning the home's historic character. Commissioners viewed the proposed additions favorably. Applicant Tom Wetmore appreciated the Commission's feedback and felt comfortable proceeding with the preparation of final permit documents.

B. 516 Franklin Street (Case No. 2022-025). Applicant/Owner Blake Croson with Architect Sean Gallagher. Application for the Construction of a Second Floor Addition at a Contributing Property. Preservation Planner Lambert noted that the Commission had approved plans for an addition in November 2020 but, due to material shortages, supply chain issues, and the increasing costs of construction, a new proposal was being presented for review and comment. Preservation Planner Lambert noted that the current proposal was a more simplified architectural solution that complemented the original architecture of the historic property. However, the modified plan resulted in a solution with a ridge approximately 2'-0" taller than the ridge of the historic house, which is only 19'6" above the first floor. Msrs. Blake Croson and Sean Gallagher approached the lectern and explained that Mr. Croson's height required a normal plate height at the second floor so that Mr. Croson could utilize the proposed spaces created by the addition. Mr. Gallagher explained that the revised proposal with a front-to-back gable resulted from the post-Covid marketplace conditions and, then, reviewed some of the existing conditions and construction details that led to design, presented for review. In conclusion, Mr. Gallagher identified several projects that he had designed and where each of those additions had a ridge approximately 2'-0" taller than the historic ridge had been approved by the Commission. Mr. Gallagher has set the roof structure as low as possible given structural limitations. Mr. Gallagher noted that the second floor addition is set on a non-historic addition to the original house. Mr. Croson noted that the project had been "put on pause" in November 2020 to evaluate changes in the marketplace; in the interim, construction costs increased so they had to look at alternate plans in an attempt to reduce costs of the project. Commissioner Hartman stated that the ridge was not much taller than the historic ridge and believed that the taller ridge would not be very noticeable from the street and that the architectural drawings somewhat emphasize the difference in ridge heights. Commissioner Hartman concluded that the difference was not significant in this particular case. Commissioner Stazin noted that the perspective drawing provided by Mr. Gallagher was appreciated because it gave a good impression of how the addition would be viewed. Chairman *pro tem* Salomon concurred and noted that the taller ridge would not be easily visible to someone walking down the street. Commissioner Jensen asked for clarification regarding the applicability of the SOI Standards and were the SOI Standards are being met. Preservation Planner Lambert clarified that, while the Commission and IL-SHPO reviewers both follow the SOI Standards in their review processes, each entity has its own autonomy and ability to interpret the SOI Standards, which established not as "black-and-white rules" but to provide a general framework for review of proposed changes to historic properties. The issue for the Commission to determine whether the

proposed addition is as subordinate as practical given all of the design parameters, including the SOI Standards, on a case-by-case basis, in combination with the goals of the locally-adopted *Design Guidelines for Historic Properties*. Lambert noted that each project has slightly different issues to be considered as part of the Commission's review process. Commissioners viewed the proposed addition favorably and felt that it met the intent of the SOI Standards and *Design Guidelines for Historic Properties* as applied to this project. Applicant Croson and Architect Gallagher appreciated the Commission's feedback and felt comfortable proceeding with the preparation of final permit documents.

5. Review of Building Permit Applications (Certificates of Appropriateness)

A. 136 S. Fifth Street (Case No. 2022-004). Applicant/Owner: Mike and Liz Henderson, Owners, along with David Bus of ACBI Architects and Tom Wetmore with Wetmore Construction, Contractor. Application for Exterior Rehabilitation of a Significant Property. Preservation Planner Lambert provided a brief history of the property and the 1917 remodeling design by architects Ben E. Holden and Frank B. Gray. The Geneva house is the second, known commission of Frank B. Gray, who was born at St. Charles, Illinois, after Gray left the employment of Chicago architectural firms. His first commission was the design of the Island Park Field House in 1916. Gray had a long and distinguished career in the Fox River Valley including the design and construction of his own home on Batavia Avenue in 1928. Preservation Planner identified those areas of the Fifth Street house and garage that are visible from the public right-of-way and, therefore, subject to HPC review. Lambert reviewed elements that had been a concern of Commissioners when the project was reviewed in 2015 as well as new elements that were being proposed with the current proposal. Lambert noted that the Geneva Building Division had not inspected the house (which has sat vacant for 6 years) and has not completed a review of the submitted architectural plans. In particular, Lambert noted that the historic balustrade at the north wing was not proposed for reconstruction; a new egress window was required at the second floor of the west elevation; a historic window at the second floor of the west elevation was to be relocated; and a window (installed at the rear of the house in 2015 and, therefore, did not require Commission approval) was proposed for relocation to the first floor of the west elevation. The window to be relocated from the rear of the house to the west elevation does not meet the design requirements, outlined in the adopted Geneva Window Policy.

Mr. Henderson made a brief introduction regarding how he and his wife chose to rehabilitate this property. Mr. Wetmore indicated his interest in participating in the rehabilitation of this house that has sat vacant for 5 years or more.

Preservation Planner highlighted the parts of the house that were visible from the public right-of-way and noted that, when the property was reviewed in 2015, the Commission had determined that a majority of the exterior of the house was visible and subject to review.

Commissioner Zinke suggested beginning with the west elevation and the proposed placement of the windows. Mr. Wetmore confirmed that the 2015 window, proposed for relocation at the west elevation, has interior grilles and incorporates a pattern of lites not found on the historic house. Mr. Wetmore felt that the relocated window was an improvement over the existing, non-historic, vinyl patio door that currently exists at that location.

Commissioner Zinke understood that the egress window at the second floor was a matter of code compliance and not subject to Commission review. Preservation Planner Lambert clarified that the need for such a window was code-related; however, the design and location of the window was subject to Commission review. Commissioner Zinke inquired about the relocation of the egress window to the north to be more consistent with the 1917 plans but wasn't certain that it was a

significant issue. Mr. Wetmore expressed that the goal was not to crowd the window to the wall (at the northwest corner of the Master Bedroom). Preservation Planner Lambert asked whether the exposed wall framing indicated the historic location of a window that may have been covered over in 1917. Mr. Wetmore indicated that an existing opening existed but could not confirm its location. Mr. Wetmore noted that the new window would meet the window standards defined in the Geneva Window Policy Commissioner Stazin sought a question of the objective of this discussion to which Preservation Planner Lambert noted that the Commission is charged to preserve authentic architectural character (in this case designed by an architect). Preservation Planner Lambert noted that—when this project was reviewed in 2015—the Commission thoroughly discussed the details of every visible portion of the house. Preservation Planner Lambert was seeking to clarify the Commission’s concerns from 2015 to 2022.

Preservation Planner Lambert also reiterated that the window proposed to be relocated was not reviewed in 2015 because of its location and does not meet the Geneva Window Policy. Commissioner Zinke commented that the east and south facades are significant but felt that the north elevation was not easily viewed, and the west elevation was easily viewed but, perhaps, its historic character was not as significant. Commissioner Zinke questioned the other Commissioners whether anyone was concerned with the proposed relocation of windows at the west elevation. Commissioners Hartman and Stazin did not have any concerns about the proposed relocations. Commissioner Stazin felt that—without knowledge of where the original windows had been located prior to 1917—the discussion was moot; the elevation isn’t hurt or benefitted by the proposal. Commissioner Zinke stated that she is pleased with the west elevation as submitted.

Commissioner Stazin questioned fellow commissioners about the lack of uniformity between the relocated 2015 window and the uniform character of the historic windows; he would like to see more consistency in the style of windows although the relocated 2015 window may not be noticeable to anyone walking by as opposed to how it is viewed in architectural elevation. Commissioner Jensen expressed a desire to have consistency of window details at the west elevation. Commissioner Jensen questioned the Applicants if a new window that more closely matched the historic windows could be installed. The Applicants responded that—due to the increasing costs of construction and a substantial budget shortfall—a new window was not financially feasible and, if the 2015 window could not be relocated, the existing vinyl patio door would remain. Mr. Henderson noted that the rehabilitation project is significantly over budget at this point, and they are trying to eliminate additional costs wherever possible.

After some discussion, the Commissioners agreed that the relocated window—located at the rear of the west elevation—was better than the existing, vinyl patio door. Furthermore, Commissioners reasoned that the window could be replaced in the future with a more appropriate window. Commissioners were not deeply concerned about the proposed location of the egress window or the relocation of a historic window at the second floor of the west elevation.

Commissioners concurred that the north wing was barely visible beyond the historic chimney and, therefore, was not subject to Commission review.

Commissioner Hartman questioned the texture of the proposed siding for the north wing. Mr. Wetmore identified the use of LP Smartside and noted that their “smooth” siding has a slight texture but is a very close match to the historic siding.

In regard to the proposed work at the north wing, the Commissioners concurred that the proposed work was not highly visible from Fifth Street and, therefore, not of concern to the Commission. Because of the concerns raised by the Commission in 2015, Preservation Planner Lambert asked for clarification from the Commission regarding the replacement of the historic balustrade at the

north wing. Commissioner Stazin questioned whether “anything that was being done during the proposed renovation would preclude the future installation of a balustrade at the roofline” that would match the historic balustrade. Mr. Wetmore replied, “No and a balustrade could be installed in the future.”

After Commissioner Jensen sought clarification, the Applicant noted that they had recently applied for certification of their project under the Tax Assessment Freeze program. However, Part 2 had not been filed as of the meeting, so no comments had been received from the IL-SHPO.

Preservation Planner Lambert sought direction from the Commission regarding the basement windows that had been replaced with glass block by the previous owner and without a permit. Mr. Lambert asked if 3-lite windows should be required if the Building Commissioner determined that the glass block windows needed to be replaced; Lambert noted that vinyl or metal windows had been approved for basement windows because those windows are in close proximity to or below finished grade. The Commissioners were not concerned with reversing the windows installed by a previous owner unless required by the Building Commissioner.

Commissioners had no concerns with any work at the detached garage, which was constructed outside of the Period of Significance for the Central Geneva Historic District (1835-1966), as listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Although the garage had been constructed prior to 1986 (the local consideration for potential significance), the Commission was unanimous in its determination that the garage was not valuable for architectural study nor was the garage associated with any significant person or historic event.

The Commissioners were complimentary regarding the preservation of the historic east and south elevations, which are scheduled to receive only minor repairs in small areas and no major re-working.

Motion by Commissioner Stazin to approve the plans for 136 S. Fifth Street as presented. Second by Commissioner Zinke. Roll call:

Aye: Hartman, Jensen, Salomon, Stazin, Zinke
Nay: None

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5-0

6. Secretary’s Report (Staff Updates)

None.

7. New Business

A. From the Commission: Commissioner Jensen announced that she had been invited by the Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley to participate in a planning committee for the historic Amasa White House, a Kane County historic landmark. Commissioner Jensen welcomed any information or insight about the property.

B. From the Public: None.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Historic Preservation Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m. on motion by Commissioner Stazin. Second by Commissioner Jensen. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote of 5-0.