

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
City of Geneva
109 James Street - City Council Chambers

August 16, 2022

Call to Order: Chairman Zellmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: Chairman Zellmer and Commissioners Jensen, Solomon, Stazin and Zinke

Absent: Commissioners Hartman and McManus

Staff Present: Preservation Planner Michael Lambert and Assistant Planner Matt Buesing

Others Present: Applicant Joe Stanton, Applicant Matthew McKnight, Applicant Matthew Mayer, Architect Sean Gallagher, Al Watts of Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Paula Quetsch of Planet Depos Court Reporting, and Recording Secretary Vanessa Quail

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes of the July 19, 2022 Meeting - Motion by Commissioner Jensen to approve the minutes as presented; and seconded by Commissioner Zinke. Roll Call:

AYE: Jensen, Zinke, Zellmer

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Salomon and Stazin

MOTION CARRIED 3-0

3. Five Minute Field Guide

Preservation Planner Lambert presented the topic of “regional connectivity,” differentiating the roles of preservationists and commissioners as advocates and legislators. He emphasized the importance of clarity in these roles, describing the commissioners as quasi-judicial legislators. He noted the enrichment opportunities made available through the Landmarks Illinois Suburban Preservation Alliance, specifically the upcoming on September 16th in Naperville. He asked for all those interested to contact him for more information.

4. Public Hearing of Case 2022-055

Address: **8 Stevens Street**

Applicant: **Joe Stanton on behalf of McConnaughay Partners, LLC**

Application: **Demolition of Three Vacant, Vernacular, Utilitarian Structures at Contributing Properties**

Chairman Zellmer read a conflict of interest statement, and there were no recusals by the commissioners.

Motion to open public hearing, made by Commissioner Zinke; and seconded by Commissioner Salomon. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote 5-0.

Chairman Zellmer read the procedures into the record, and administered the oath to all those who will testify.

Preservation Planner Lambert read the contents of the planning file, and noted that all notification requirements of the ordinance have been met. He summarized the Applicant's request to demolish three vacant, deteriorating structures located along Stevens Street, which are situated at the northeast corner of both the local Geneva Historic district and the North Geneva Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. He further provided a history of the property and the timeline of how the Geneva Bottling Works business evolved over time, and the related uses of each of the structures. He explained and displayed photographs of the current deteriorating conditions of the three buildings identified as A, B and C in the packet, for which the applicant is requesting demolition.

Chairman Zellmer invited the applicant to speak. Mr. Joe Stanton introduced himself as the authorized representative of McConnaughay Partners, LLC, and provided an overview of the Geneva Bottling Works site, which consists five buildings: the main building where the business was run along River Lane at 35,000 square feet, as well as four support buildings. Two of the four support buildings are the cinderblock structures, one of which housed the box trucks and maintenance functions; and the other was for bottling Jupiter Spring water, under which was an artesian well. The other two buildings are garages used for storage and landscaping material. He noted that the Bottling Works ceased bottling water in the late 1990's, and in 2000, it closed completely. Soon after the business closed, three buildings (identified for demotion in the application) were no longer used. Henceforth, the Geneva Bottling Works buildings have been vacant or have been used for general storage. The building on River Lane as well as the Hillquist building both are currently used for storage and the keeping of Bottling Works memorabilia. These structures are still used on a regular basis, are heated and have full utilities, which is not the case for the other three structures proposed for demolition. Since the three buildings were not being used, they were not maintained, and over time there was damage to the roof as well as the back of the building which cannot be seen from the street. Mr. Stanton indicated that although he was generally aware of the typical problems associated with unoccupied structures, the extent of the damage was not known until code enforcement violations had been issued by the city. He explained that he had the structure evaluated by an architect, further noting that the support structures were also damaged. He added that the garages are primarily old wood structures, would cost around \$120,000 to fix, and that the cinder block structure roof is caving in. He estimated the cost for repairs to be in excess of \$300,000 with no utilities; and that the foundations would have to be torn up in order to bring the structures up to code. He also recalled that the city has been on the property because of the utility easements and because the area is a developments site. Eventually sewer and water will need to be brought in to the area, when the site is developed.

Chairman Zellmer invited questions from the Commission, and reminded the Commissioners that the discussion should be focused on the three buildings in the application, and not on the future development of the site.

Commissioner Jensen asked about the maintenance of the property and noted there is a "For Sale" sign in front of the property. Mr. Stanton explained that they did not give up on the maintenance, and emphasized how quickly buildings can deteriorate when they remain unused. He noted that the entire square block of the property is for sale.

Chairman Zellmer asked if the Bottling Works was one or two stories, and Mr. Stanton said that the main structure is two solid stories with concrete pillars and floors. He noted that the other building which would remain (identified as building "C") is a single story on a slab.

There were no further questions from the Commission; and Chairman Zellmer opened comments to the public.

Mr. Al Watts, Community Engagement Director for Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, located at 8 Indiana Street in St Charles, explained that his organization educates the community about the value of historic preservation and they operate four local historic sites. He noted that Commissioner Jensen raised good points regarding concern over the condition of the buildings because the structures have been vacant for two decades. He encouraged the city to look at this as an opportunity to prevent the site from falling into disrepair, and to evaluate all of the historic structures so that they can be aware of the condition.

Having noted there were no further public comments in person or online, Chairman Zellmer invited Mr. Stanton to make final comments; and Mr. Stanton emphasized that if the buildings were not demolished, they would need to be rebuilt at great expense. He said that the site had not been ignored and that various development opportunities had been explored over time. He acknowledged the comments of the commissioners and added that the disrepair was not intentional; but the result of buildings that had been unused for many years.

Motion to close public hearing, made by Commissioner Salomon; and seconded by Commissioner Jensen. Roll Call:

AYE: Jensen, Salomon, Stazin, Zinke, Zellmer

NAY: None

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

The Commission proceeded to debate the merits of the application for demotion of three buildings, identified as A, B and C in the application. He led the discussion for each structure according to the following standards:

1. *Are one or more of the buildings historically significant?* The Commissioners agreed that the structures are not.
2. *If any of the structures is deemed historically significant, is preservation possible and reasonable?* The Commissioners agreed there is no real significance of the current structures.
3. *If any of the structure is deemed historically significant but not suitable for preservation, should one or more of the structures be memorialized through physical documentation?* The Commissioners agreed that the structures could not be preserved, given the condition. Preservation Planner Lambert indicated that there are photographs which are kept by Historic Preservation. Commissioner Zinke asked if there could be some kind of plaque that could be placed at the Geneva Bottling Works site, and Preservation Planner Lambert indicated that such recommendation could be considered in conjunction with a redevelopment phase, which would ultimately come back to the Commission for review.

Motion to approve the demolition of the buildings referenced as A, B and C, in the subject application, and commonly addressed as 8 Stevens Street, and specifically located at 327 N. First Street, and 302 N. River Lane, made by Commissioner Stazin. Seconded by Commissioner Salomon.

AYE: Jensen, Salomon, Stazin, Zinke, Zellmer

NAY: None

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Chairman Zellmer called a five-minute recess at 8:00 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

5. Review of Conceptual Development Plans for Case 2022-056 (Certificate of Appropriateness)

Address: **414 South River Lane**

Applicant: **Matthew McKnight, owner; and Sean Gallagher, architect of Gallagher Associates**

Application: **Rehabilitation of a Porch at a Contributing Property**

Preservation Planner Lambert read from the planning file, and summarized that the applicant is seeking to demolish the portions of the existing residence, including the one-story wing with the kitchen and the two-car garage. The house was built in 1955 and is a simple Cape Cod style, typical of its era. The applicant has provided four renderings for conceptual review and comment by the Historic Preservation Commission. He stated that concepts are assembled together so as to compare the concepts, and highlighted historic parts that will be retained. Applicant is putting a period-appropriate door in all of these schemes; and a ventilator in the existing garage is being repurposed because ventilators were common on garages in this period. He invited the applicant and architect to speak.

Mr. Matt McKnight, owner, introduced himself and explained that he has lived in this house for the past three years while he rented and subsequently bought the property. He said he wanted to expand and improve the property; but encountered a problem with the garage structure which is slanting. He thanked Preservation Planner Lambert for all of his help with the application process.

Commissioner Salomon asked about the "before and after" dimensions of the house. Mr. Gallagher explained that the allowable area for the lot size according to code is 3,550 square feet; and the addition would bring the total to 3,195 square feet. He said the property would only come forward four feet farther from the current location of the garage. He said that the plans add some space in the front entrance, because the way the door swings, it is narrow and is only about 4 feet to the stairs. He also noted the plans would include replacing the kitchen; and explained any windows that will be removed, will be repurposed for the addition.

Commissioner Stazin asked if there is a roof plan, noting there are four different concepts presented and it was unclear about the pitch of the roof. Mr. Gallagher explained that the roof line needs head height and the plans would have to pull the roof line forward; but that even though the dormer character would be a little bit different, the addition of shutters would be authentic. Mr. Gallagher thanked Preservation Planner Lambert for his help in refining the design for the pitch of the roof, and said that the collaboration helped with the plan for drainage.

Mr. McKnight said that he personally favors Elevation A, and added that the main reason behind the plans is to increase functionality. He added that upon opening the front door of the house, the stairs are immediately presented. He said that the door is centered, but the stairs are not; and that the chimney is not in the center of the house. Preservation Planner Lambert indicated that such features are not uncommon for a house built in that era.

Commissioner Zinke asked about the space behind the garage; and Mr. Gallagher clarified that the area would include a mud room, dog wash and pantry; and that there are two entries from both the garage and back of the house. Commissioner Zinke also stated that she favored the roof line in Concept C because the space between the original house and garage has a window with less of an impact, and because the roofline would be simpler. Mr. Gallagher stated that he could explore the idea of a smaller dormer; but would have to consider light and ventilation.

Mr. Gallagher summarized the discussion to ensure he collected the Commission's input accurately. He confirmed that the general tendency seems to favor Elevation A, and noted the following considerations: a reduction in the size of the dormer; vertical siding on the north addition that wraps, so that it is consistent; and keeping the size of the front entrance. The Commission expressed their appreciation for the applicant's consideration.

6. Review of Building Permit Applications for Case 2022-060 (Certificate of Appropriateness)

Address: **218 Peyton Street**

Applicant: **Matthew and Shannon Mayer, Owners; Sean Gallagher, architect of Gallagher Associates**

Application: **Addition to the Rear of the Existing Residence at a Contributing Property**

Historic Preservation Planner Lambert formally introduced Matt Buesing, Assistant Planner who recently joined city staff, and invited him to present the above-referenced permit review case.

Assistant Planner Buesing read from the planning file, and showed the existing conditions and different elevations, noting the property moved to this address in April 1997. He explained that the applicant is seeking to demolish the existing, detached two-car garage and to construct a new two-story addition with an attached two-car garage to the rear of the residence.

Commissioner Zinke asked how much of the garage would one be able to see from the street; and Assistant Planner Buesing said that it would be about the same.

Chairman Zellmer invited the owner, Mr. Matthew Mayer, to speak. Mr. Mayer explained that this is the second time he is appearing before the commission; and that since then, the plan is generally the same; but that there has been progress on the exterior plan. He noted that he engaged State Historic Preservation for their initial approval which was obtained for phase one, as the home was deemed historic. For the review, he said they will sustain the existing home. He added that it is all aluminum siding; but there is original siding underneath which they plan to restore and repaint. Mr. Mayer also mentioned that he will be applying for the tax assessment freeze. He submitted the first phase of that process which was approved; but there are more steps to the process.

At Preservation Planner Lambert's request, Mr. Gallagher explained that the current windows are replacements, that they do not close well, and that they will be replaced so that they fit properly.

He said the historic trim that will be used around the windows will not diminish the size of the opening of the windows. He added that this district is unique because it is mixed high density and residential, so the rules are much more liberal. Mr. Gallagher also noted that the property in the mixed high density residential district, and the rules are much more liberal. He said that this house could be another 1400 square feet bigger, since the rules that govern the lot are lot coverage and height.

Motion to approve the plans as presented for 218 Peyton Street, made by Commissioner Stazin. Seconded by Commissioner Jensen. Roll Call:

AYE: Jensen, Salomon, Stazin, Zinke, Zellmer

NAY: None

MOTION CARRIED 5-0

4. Secretary's Report (Staff Updates)

Preservation Planner Lambert announced that the next meeting will be on September 20th, and there are already two items on the agenda, with more expected.

He reminded the Commission that the election of a vice-chairperson was postponed from the last meeting because two who proposed it were not present. The Commissioners agreed to move it to September.

5. New Business - There was no new business from the Commissioners.

Mr. Al Watts from Preservation Partners of Fox Valley spoke about bringing historic preservation education to the community, and specifically to learn about state and federal tax incentives. He explained that the nonprofit he represents cannot pay for all of the education; but he wanted to make known two resources (1) PlaceEconomics, Donovan Rypkema's study of economic impact of historic preservation districts and property values, which can be found on their web site; and The National Alliance of Preservation which holds workshops for best practices.

6. Adjournment

At 9:25 p.m., Commissioner Stazin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Salomon. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote 5-0.