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MEETING MINUTES
BELOIT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Tuesday, April 21, 2015, 7:00 PM
The Forum, 100 State Street

1. Roll Call

Chairperson Blazer called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.
Commissioners Blazer, Johnson, Joyce, Truesdale, and Kaye were present.
Commissioners Vollmer, Haynes, and Vater were absent.

2. Minutes of the February 17, 2015 Meeting

Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the Minutes. Commissioner Joyce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

3. Public Comments:

Rick McGrath (1747 Sherwood Drive SW) commented on the Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed demolition of 422 Bluff and 310 Euclid. He stated that he believes the house at 422 Bluff is too far gone. However, he believes that there might be a way to save the house on Euclid. He understands that it is not currently habitable, but suggested perhaps finding a way to turn the house so that it faces Bluff, which he knows can be quite pricey. Mr. McGrath stated that he did not understand the rush to demolish the house as once it is gone, there are no options. He suggested that it be boarded up and mothballed until more research has been done on how to save the house. Mr. McGrath referenced the April 16th edition of the Janesville Gazette, stating that the City of Janesville was able to move a historic home across the street so, it is a possible, although expensive, task. He asked the commission to wait and consider different options for the house at 310 Euclid, mentioning that once it is torn down, there will be an empty, vacant lot. Mr. McGrath also noted that if someone does purchase the land in the future, the house that would be built on that lot would not be keeping with the times.

4. Dennis Keeney – Certificate of Appropriateness

COA-2015-04 Review and consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace windows in the residential structure located at 817 Bluff Street.

Director of Planning & Building Services Drew Pennington read the staff report and recommendations. He also provided pictures of the windows to be replaced.

Mr. Keeney was present at the meeting. He stated that removing the aluminum storm windows should be more appropriate. He also continued to explain the issues he had experienced in the past with squirrels chewing the wood windows.

Commissioner Johnson inquired as to whether or not the applicant had researched repairing the windows instead of replacing them. Mr. Keeney explained that the windows had sustained too

much damage and were not repairable. He also explained that the house originally had stucco wood siding which provided bees with a place to live. Mr. Keeney stated that the wood windows would be more expensive than the vinyl.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the applicant has considered how the house will look with the new windows. Mr. Keeney stated that the windows will look the same, that the only difference would be that the aluminum would not be there. The vinyl that would be replacing the aluminum is also designed to look like wood and to match the surrounding wood.

Commissioner Kaye asked whether there are other windows that will also need to be replaced. Mr. Keeney explained that due to lack of funds, he can only afford to do a few at a time. He also mentioned that the contractor had mentioned the possibility of being able to save a few of the windows upstairs.

Chairperson Blazer asked for clarification on the “like-style” condition in the staff report. He asked if the condition required the upper sash to have the four pane pattern.

Mr. Pennington stated that it would be ideal to have the four pane pattern; however, the applicant is not proposing that same style. Mr. Keeney added that the four pane pattern appeared to have been added after the fact to give the windows an older appearance.

Commissioner Joyce made a motion to approve the COA as recommended in the staff report. Commissioner Kaye seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

5. Richard LaGrant – Certificate of Appropriateness

COA-2015-07 Review and consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness to close two window openings and to replace windows in the residential structure located at 249 Roosevelt Avenue.

Mr. Pennington read the staff report and recommendation. He also provided additional pictures of the property.

Commissioner Joyce asked for clarification on which windows the applicant wanted to replace in his home. Mr. Pennington and other Commission members explained to Commissioner Joyce which windows were being replaced.

Commissioner Johnson stated that she was glad to see the house being returned to a single family home and that it will be a real asset to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Truesdale inquired into the cost of the house. It was unknown at the time.

Commissioner Blazer mentioned that during his site visit, he noticed a window in the front of the house with an arch over it in the gables. He stated that from the inside, it really is not an arched window. However, the applicant assured Mr. Blazer that the window would look the same.

Commissioner Joyce made a motion to approve the COA as recommended in the staff report. Commissioner Kaye seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

6. Julie Christensen, Community Development Director – Certificate of Appropriateness

COA-2015-09 Review and consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the structures located at 422 Bluff Street.

Mr. Pennington read the staff report and recommendation.

Ms. Christensen explained the bidding process. She stated that it was necessary to open the bid process twice as the first time there were no bids. The second time, they only obtained two bids. She also explained how the move would be paid for, partially out of HOME funds and CDBG funds, as well.

Ms. Christensen also explained that there was not anything that could be changed to scale back the price of remodeling the home at 310 Euclid. She agreed with Mr. McGrath, stating that the house at 422 Bluff is no longer structurally sound due to neglect from the homeowner. The limestone structure is compromised at 422 Bluff, however; that is not the case for 310 Euclid. The issue with 310 Euclid is funding.

Ms. Christensen expounded on the approval process for this Certificate of Appropriateness. She stated that this motion will still be going to City Council for a final decision as the lot is City property but the City Manager wanted the Landmarks Commission to be in agreement with the decision. She also addressed a past inquiry as to why excess HOME funds could not be used in future years. According to the regulations, there is a limit on the amount of loans they will allot for each individual property.

Commissioner Joyce asked why 310 Euclid could not stay where it is presently located if the house at 422 Bluff were torn down. Ms. Christensen explained that there would still be a hole in the Bluff Street District and that the house is very close to the neighbor's property.

Commissioner Kaye inquired into the cost of repairing 310 Euclid. Ms. Christensen explained that if the house were to remain in place, it would need to be rebid. She also mentioned that the bid that was submitted included the price of a garage. Ms. Christensen suggested that, if the house were to remain on site, the City look into installing a picket fence so that it would be more fitting with the area. In this way, a future homeowner would be less likely to install an inappropriate fence.

Commissioner Kaye asked Ms. Christensen about a brick house located across the street from the house at 310 Euclid. Mrs. Christensen stated that that particular house was owned by a private citizen and not the City. Although, she did add that the City was working with the homeowner to donate it to the City. The house itself is in very good structural condition and should be able to be rehabilitated.

Commissioner Kaye followed up asking if there were a different house that might be less expensive to replace 422 Bluff and 310 Euclid (if it were torn down). Ms. Christensen stated that anything is possible but both the houses would need to be demolished in order for that to be in compliance with zoning.

Commissioner Johnson wanted to clarify that, according to the Historical Society in Madison, once a historical house is moved from its original location, it is no longer considered an historical home.

Commissioner Johnson asked Ms. Christensen if selling the property to a private citizen had been considered. Ms. Christensen explained that previous attempts at selling to a citizen have not been encouraging. She referenced 326 St. Lawrence (a house in considerably better condition than 310 Euclid) as an example. She stated that there were no offers for 326 St. Lawrence, and given the condition of 310 Euclid, it is unlikely anyone would want to do the work. Commissioner

Johnson explained that a private citizen would not be required to meet all of the regulations imposed by HOME funds like the City would be.

Commissioner Blazer wondered whether or not it would be possible to offer the house to be moved across the street to a city owned lot. Ms. Christensen explained that the house would have to be advertised through a public process, however; it would be better to leave it on the same lot instead of trying to move to a different lot.

Commissioner Joyce inquired as to how the Commission could save the house located at 310 Euclid and approve the demolition of 422 Bluff. Mr. Pennington explained that it is possible to amend the Certificate of Appropriateness to reflect that condition.

Commissioner Johnson stated she believes that the Commission's first and foremost responsibility is preservation. She stated that she thinks the City should board up both of the houses and not make a hasty decision regarding demolishing them.

Mr. Blazer explained that, per zoning regulations, both houses cannot be on the property. Ms. Christensen confirmed this and also further expounded on the major, multiple issues of 422 Bluff; concluding that it is not salvageable like 310 Euclid.

Commissioner Truesdale suggested that the Commission separate how to deal with each of the houses individually. Ms. Christensen suggested dividing the two houses on the Certificate of Appropriateness to be brought before council.

Commissioner Joyce made a motion to approve the COA, subject to the conditions recommended in the staff report and an explicit modification (condition) stating that only 422 Bluff Street may be demolished, and that 310 Euclid Avenue may not be demolished at this time. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

7. Report on Staff-Approved Certificates of Appropriateness & Activities Since Last Meeting

Mr. Pennington announced approval of the following:
Roof replacement and storm window repair at 720 Bluff Street;
Driveway replacement and gutter repair at 709 Harrison Avenue;
Roof replacement at 916 Bluff Street; and
A backyard chicken coop at 843 Bluff Street.

Mr. Pennington inquired into whether or not the Commission wanted to review the chicken coop applications for historic properties. The Commissioners agreed that chicken coops are eligible for staff approval.

Mr. Pennington also announced that a new Planner has been hired, and will be starting on April 29, 2015.

8. Committee Reports

A. Education & Outreach Committee

The committee had nothing to report. Commissioner Johnson asked Mr. Pennington if there were any new home owners in the district. Mr. Pennington was not aware of any new home owners at the time of the meeting.

B. Grant Writing Committee

Commissioner Joyce explained that the Landmark Commission had received the grant from the State to do a Historic Survey of the City of Beloit. Beloit College will be providing an intern to assist. Commissioner Joyce explained that the intern would be exceptionally helpful with regards to working with GIS maps and researching history of the sites.

C. Site Visit Committee

Commissioner Truesdale informed that the committee had visited the four properties on the agenda.

Commissioner Johnson mentioned that she had been informed the Bartlett house would not be having student field trips due to the lack of funding from school districts.

Commissioner Truesdale asked if the Commission still maintained any authority or oversight over the chapel in the Oakwood cemetery. He explained that there was graffiti on both the brick and the wood. He also inquired into the house on the corner of the Willowbrook and Manchester. He asked whether or not the City would be demolishing it or if the survey would be inclusive of that house. He mentioned that there was a broken window. Mr. Pennington explained that the survey would be inclusive, that the house had been potentially flagged as historic, and that the house is actually in the public right of way.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.