Minutes
Lansing Historic District Commission
Local History Room, Capital Area District Library
5:30-7:00 p.m. Monday, October 14, 2019
(Downtown Branch) Lower Level, 401 S. Capitol Avenue.
Lansing MI 48933

1. CALL TO ORDER – Ms. Nelson opened the meeting at 5:33 p.m.

A. Introductions and Roll Call:

Present: James Bell, Rob Gibb, Cassandra Nelson, Cynthia Redman, Carol Skillings, Curtis Sonnenberg, and Jaclyn Lillis-Warwick
Excused Absences: Heather Goupil
Staff Present: Bill Rieske
Also Present: Angela Bailey, from The Christman Company; and Dawn Connor, from Visual Entities

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – The agenda as amended was approved by unanimous consent.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. HDC-3-2019, 208 N. Capitol Ave., Sign on Christman Building (Mutual Building Historic District)
   • Public Hearing

   Mr. Rieske introduced the sign proposal. The proposed sign is approx. 84.5 SF, well within the limits according to the sign ordinance. It is proposed for near the top of the building without affecting any architectural features. The letters are approx. 47” tall, opaque, and backlit with ‘halo’ lighting.

   Ms. Connor said the measurements are approximate at this time because the letters will be anchored to the wall through the mortar joints, and those exact dimensions haven’t been determined as yet. The letters will be lightweight aluminum, with LED light diffusers behind each letter, with wiring inside the fasteners. The fasteners will be covered in silicone to protect them and the building from the elements.

   Ms. Bailey said that Christman’s record on preservation is a point of pride for the company, and the purpose of the sign is to make the corporate headquarters more visible without compromising the historical significance of the building.
No member of the public attended the meeting to speak on this matter.

- Commission Action
  It was moved by Ms. Skillings, seconded by Mr. Bell, to approve the proposed sign as presented. Mr. Gibb said he wanted to look at the plans first, and the motion was amended to: Preliminary approval at this meeting, final action at the next meeting (November 18). On a voice vote, the motion CARRIED unanimously (7-0).

The Commission based its decision on:
  - the relatively small footprint of the proposed sign;
  - the building’s distinctive features are being preserved;
  - the sign is differentiated from the original building and is compatible with its massing, size, scale, and architectural features;
  - the sign will be installed in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building would be unimpaired.

4. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – June 10, 2019 meeting. The June 10 minutes, as corrected, were approved by consensus.

5. UPDATES ON:
   - Cherry Hill Development - Mr. Rieske said he was not very familiar with the project. It is proposed for just outside of the Cherry Hill Historic District.
     (NOTE: The project can be summarized as follows: The development is proposed for the current site of 613 and 621 Cherry Street and 309-321 E. St. Joe. It consists of 52 units many of them efficiency apartments), with associated parking, on a 1.13 acre site fronting on St. Joe. It is zoned “DM-4” Multiple Family Residential District, which allows up to 87 units per acre and buildings of up to 100 feet in height, The proposed building is 3.4 stories (approx. 45’) in height, with a proposed setback of 15 feet (including the porches). It is the subject of a zoning variance of building setback and front yard parking for one car.)

   Ms. Skillings asked if a rendering was submitted with the site plan. Mr. Rieske said that there probably was, but he hasn’t had the chance to review it.

   - REO Town Intensive Level Survey – Mr. Rieske said there was little interest on the part of the REO Town Commercial Association to pursue a National Register district at this time.

   - Cooley Haze House – Ms. Nelson reported that title to this property has not transferred to Joe Vitale as yet.

   - Preservation Lansing – Ms. Nelson reported that Mr. Vitale has assumed leadership on a temporary basis due to the injuries to Dale Schrader. She reported that the Land Bank had sold two houses (one the Darius Moon), with the condition that they be renovated to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Lansing Eastern High School – Ms. Nelson said she went to a meeting hosted by Joan Nelson regarding the reuse of Eastern High School, which becomes Sparrow property in another year. Future meetings are anticipated.
- Cherry Hill Historic District, incl. Cherry Hill School. Mr. Rieske raised the possibility of another Planning Practicum class doing an inventory of the Cherry Hill Historic District, to provide more in-depth and up-to-date information. He cautioned that the current Study Committee report is substandard under today’s criteria, and the updated report could result in a recommendation to affirm or repeal the current local district. In the ensuing discussion, Commission members were supportive of the proposal.

A. Design Guidelines – Mr. Rieske reported that work on the guidelines is stalled again because the people working on the guidelines were diverted to other projects.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None.

7. COMMUNICATIONS – None.

8. STAFF AND COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS: Ms. Lillis-Warwick noted that Saturday, October 19, is Michigan Archaeology Day, and archaeologist Dean Anderson will be giving a presentation at the Michigan Historical Center.

Mr. Gibb questioned the legality of guidelines that are not codified in the Historic Districts Ordinance. In the ensuing discussion, the general consensus was that the guidelines, as currently conceived, will be based on the Secretary’s Standards, to clarify and apply the Secretary’s Standards in various situations, and will not be over-reach by the HDC.

9. PRESENTATIONS – None.

10. OTHER BUSINESS – None.

11. PENDING ITEMS – Continuing work on guidelines.

12. ADJOURNMENT was at 6:45 p.m.

Next Regular Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Monday, November 18, 2019, Local History Room, CADL