



## Schenectady Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes  
January 28, 2021

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Yager called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

*Due to the closure of City Hall because of the Covid-19 Virus, the meeting was conducted online via WebEx.*

### II. ROLL CALL

**PRESENT:** Patricia Yager, Chair; Ben Wiles, Vice Chair; Shaun Andriano; Dr. Dean Bennett; Frank Gilmore; Christopher Marney; Matt Smith, Senior Planner; Jennifer Mills, Secretary

### III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Commissioner Marney recused himself from the consideration of Application A, the proposal by Agnes C. Davis/Senga World LLC for 2 North Ferry Street.

### IV. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Marney, to approve the December 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes as submitted.

*Motion carried unanimously, with Commissioner Gilmore absent from the vote.*

### V. CALL FOR MEMBERS OF PUBLIC TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS

Suzanne Unger, President of the Stockade Neighborhood Association and resident of Union Street, expressed her concerns regarding the application for 2 North Ferry Street (Applications Item A). She stated that she and other members of the Stockade Association have been concerned about the property for many years, as the original historic materials of the building have slowly been removed and not properly replaced. She explained that properties such as this are a significant concern because when proper procedures are not followed and then the unapproved work is allowed to remain, the historic integrity of the district is diminished, and as this goes on property by property the negative impact on the district as a whole is very substantial.

### VI. APPLICATIONS

**A. Consideration for approval submitted by Agnes C. Davis/Senga World LLC for the installation of replacement windows, performed without a prior**

**Certificate of Approval. The premises are located at 2 North Ferry Street in the Stockade Historic District.**

Steven Cotch and Agnes Davis presented the application.

Mr. Cotch reviewed the application, in which the applicants claimed that they were instructed by a City Code Enforcement Officer that the windows needed to be replaced immediately. Ms. Davis reviewed the previous work she had done on the building in 2012, which had been done with the Commission's approval. After a lengthy discussion of the application by Mr. Cotch, Mr. Smith stated that even if the Code Enforcement Officer commented that the windows needed to be replaced this in no way gave the applicants permission to circumvent the normal building permit and HDC approval processes. The Commissioners agreed.

Mr. Cotch described the windows that were installed and stated that they are a composite material made partially from wood fiber. The Commissioners discussed the proportions of the windows and concluded that they are significantly different from the original windows. Commissioner Yager noted that Fibrex is not an accepted material in historic districts at this time. Ms. Davis stated that the house is not on the Historic Register. Commissioner Yager explained that it is a contributing structure in an historic district and thus is subject to the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Ms. Davis stated that the acceptable wood windows would be many times the cost of the single hung composite windows installed. Commissioner Yager explained that it is not within the Commission's purview to consider financial hardship, but there is an appeals process if the applicant feels that the cost of the accepted materials is not reasonable.

Commissioner Bennett stated that it is unfortunate that the applicants did not seek HDC approval before installing the windows because they would then have known the Commission's position on composite windows. Commissioner Yager stated that the Commission has approved wood or aluminum-clad wood windows in the past, but not composite windows. Commissioner Andriano stated that the single hung windows are not similar in appearance to the previous wood windows, as they have much less visible depth and have different proportions. Commissioner Gilmore agreed, stating that the Standards are very clear regarding the importance of windows as an historic feature. He noted that the installed windows are a very visible feature on the front façade of the building. Commissioner Wiles stated that he would recommend that the application be denied because the composite material is not one that can be approved. The Commissioners agreed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

See Agenda Item V.

## **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Wiles, seconded by Commissioner Gilmore, to deny the application to install replacement windows because the proposal fails to meet the following US Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation:

1. Standard #2 - The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
2. Standard #5 – Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be observed.
3. Standard #6 – Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

*Motion carried unanimously, with Commissioner Marney recusing himself from the vote.*

### **B. Consideration for approval submitted by Collie Roofing to install replacement siding. The premises are located at 1044 University Place in the Union Triangle Historic District.**

Alex Slagle of Collie Roofing presented the application.

Mr. Slagle briefly explained that the application is to install white vinyl siding on the house. Commissioner Yager read a short excerpt from the Union Triangle Historic District Certification Report which described 1044 University Place as a contributing structure. She noted that the siding on the house is an integral part of its historic significance and that a prominent design of this nature is usually highlighted by a polychromatic color scheme.

Commissioner Marney stated that the Commission has never approved vinyl siding in any historic district, and he believes that this is the case in all of the historic districts across the country. He explained that he agrees with Commissioner Yager that the wood siding is an important historic feature of this home. He added that it appears as if it can be repaired and noted that there is no evidence in the application proving that it must be replaced.

The applicant stated that about a quarter of the siding and woodwork on the house has substantially rotted. He added that many other houses in the neighborhood have vinyl or aluminum siding. Commissioner Yager stated that these siding were applied before the Union Triangle became an historic district and thus have been grandfathered in and can be replaced or repaired in kind. Commissioner Gilmore noted that the water damage can most likely be attributed to the missing trim pieces which can fairly easily be replicated and replaced in kind.

The Commissioners agreed that the siding is an important historic feature of the house and should be repaired. Mr. Slagle asked what the Commission would advise for the house. Commissioner Yager stated that the siding should be repaired and properly primed and painted. She noted that if the owners wish to change the color they will have to return to the Commission for approval of the new colors. Commissioner Wiles noted that in addition to the vinyl siding being unacceptable the proposed all-white color scheme would also not be appropriate.

Commissioner Marney noted that any siding that will be replaced in kind can be approved by staff. Commissioner Yager noted that there are spindles on the porch that appear to be upside down and should be corrected when repairs are being made.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Andriano, to deny the application to install replacement vinyl siding because the proposal fails to meet the following US Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation:

1. Standard #2 - The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
2. Standard #5 – Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be observed.
3. Standard #6 – Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

And with the following findings of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.

***Motion carried unanimously.***

## VII. MISCELLANEOUS

### A. Review of the potential nomination of the Fitzgerald Building to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The premises are located at 144 Clinton Street.

The Commissioners briefly discussed the application and indicated that they are in support of the nomination. They noted that the application was very thorough and well-prepared.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Gilmore, to direct staff to prepare a report that states that the Fitzgerald Building at 144 Clinton Street meets the criteria for being listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

### B. Discussion/motion regarding the recommendation to the mayor for a new commissioner to fill the current vacancy.

The Commissioners discussed Mr. Richard Unger's qualifications and agreed that with his experience and interest in both planning and historic preservation he would make an excellent candidate for consideration for the Commission. Commissioner Yager noted that Mr. Unger and his wife spearheaded the comprehensive plan for the Stockade and have been very active in many preservation efforts.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Andriano, to recommend to Mayor McCarthy that Mr. Unger be considered to fill the vacancy on the Historic District Commission.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

### C. Additional business

Commissioner Marney reported that he is continuing to work with staff on the development of HDC Guidelines. He noted that the State should soon be posting the amount of the available CLG grant funding, and that once it is determined how much funding will be available it will be clearer as to what the next steps in the process should be.

Commissioner Gilmore stated that there should be a review of the systems of communication between the various City entities that deal with historic properties, specifically the Historic District Commission and staff, the Building Department, and Code Enforcement.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Marney, seconded by Commissioner Wiles, to adjourn the meeting.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.