

## Schenectady Historic District Commission

### Meeting Minutes June 23, 2022

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Yager called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

#### II. ROLL CALL

**PRESENT:** Patricia Yager, Chair; Richard Unger; Shaun Andriano; Joe Fava; Matt Smith, Senior Planner; Sylvia Jimison, Development Staff; Chris Marney, Assistant Corporation Counsel.

**ABSENT:** Dr. Dean Bennett; Zakhar Berkovich.

#### III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Commissioner Fava stated that he potentially had a conflict with the application for 14 N. Ferry St. After speaking with Mr. Marney, Commissioner Fava determined that he has no financial interest in the property and would not gain financially from the decision made regarding the application. Therefore, Commissioner Fava stated he would not be recusing himself from that discussion.

#### IV. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Fava, seconded by Commissioner Unger, to approve the Minutes of the May 26, 2022 meeting.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

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

Commissioner Yager stated that she received a written public comment regarding agenda item "A" and would read it into the record at that time.

#### VI. APPLICATIONS

##### A. Consideration for approval submitted by James Plowman to replace a section of driveway. The premises is located at 14 N. Ferry St. in the Stockade Historic District.

Jim Plowman appeared before the commission. He stated that he was proposing to modify the original application submission and no longer planned on replacing the brownstone slabs with concrete. He explained that he intended to reset the brownstone towards the front of the property and replace the broken brownstones towards the rear with full bluestone panels.

Commissioner Unger asked for clarification whether the bluestone panels would be the same size as the brownstone panels. Mr. Plowman stated “yes”.

Commissioner Yager read aloud a written comment from the Schenectady Heritage Foundation in favor of the revised plan to preserve the existing materials instead of replacing them.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Unger, seconded by Commissioner Andriano to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The brownstone panels from the front of the property to approximately 2/3rds of the way to the rear of the building will be reused and reset in place.
3. The remainder of the broken brownstone panels towards the rear of the property will be replaced with bluestone panels of the same general size as the existing brownstone.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The Commissioners cited Preservation Standards #2, #5, and #6 as the guidelines for their decision.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

### **B. Consideration for approval submitted by Victoria Long-Gula to paint the property. The premises is located at 1201 Stratford Rd. in the GE Realty Plot Historic District.**

Victoria Long-Gula appeared before the commission. She explained that she would like to repaint the property and explained which elements would be painted which color. She stated that she originally chose Hale Navy for the front door but has been rethinking her choice because she believes it may be too dark. Commissioner Yager stated that as long as other commissioners are okay with it, she is comfortable with the applicant receiving a staff approval for a lighter blue color.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Unger, seconded by Commissioner Fava to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.

2. The body of the house will be painted Ballet White from the Benjamin Moore Off-White collection.
3. The shutters will be painted Revere Pewter from the Benjamin Moore Historical Collection.
4. The columns, trim and window frames will be painted Simply White from the Benjamin Moore Off-White collection.
5. The front door will be painted Hale Navy from the Benjamin Moore Historical Collection, or other blue approved by city staff.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The Commissioners cited Preservation Standards #2 and #5 as the guidelines for their decision.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**C. Consideration for approval submitted by Franca DiCrescenzo to paint the property. The premises is located at 22 N. Church St. in the Stockade Historic District.**

The applicant failed to appear before the commission.

**RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Unger to table the application due to it being incomplete.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Consideration for approval submitted by Franca DiCrescenzo to paint the property. The premises is located at 101 Front St. in the Stockade Historic District.**

The applicant failed to appear before the commission.

**RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Unger to table the application due to it being incomplete.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

**E. Consideration for approval submitted by Jim Montgomery to install a new roof. The premises is located at 1207 Union St. in the Union Street Historic District.**

The applicant did not appear. Mr. Smith asked the commission if they felt comfortable approving the application without the applicant present seeing as the requested roofing is already installed on three sides of the building.

## **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Unger, seconded by Commissioner Fava to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The Commissioners cited Preservation Standards #2, #5, and #6 as the guideline for their decision.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

### **F. Consideration for approval submitted by Nancy B. Delain to paint the steps and install stair treads. The premises is located at 107 N. College St. in the Stockade Historic District.**

Nancy B. Delain appeared before the commission. She stated that she was not able to perfectly match the concrete on the new step that was approved at the prior meeting. She stated that she would like to paint both sets of front stairs black so they match, and also match the stair treads she is proposing to install. Commissioner Yager stated that she believes black paint will require a lot of maintenance and is likely to chip and deteriorate.

Commissioner Andriano stated that the green house with brown trim, light foundation, and black stairs will be very contrasting and not in character. He also explained that the black steps will be hard to see in the dark and could be hazardous. Commissioner Unger stated that he believes a few better options would be either to paint the steps a concrete grey color, or just leave them unpainted, since the treads will cover up most of the tread anyway.

Commissioner Andriano stated that there was no information provided about the proposed tread and doesn't believe the commission could approve them without having more detail. He suggested that the applicant return with more details at a later date. The applicant stated that she would like to return home to get the tread to show the commission.

Commissioner Yager stated that the commission will table the application briefly and consider other applications while the applicant retrieves the tread from her house.

Ms. Delain returned and stated that the proposed tread is temporary and not permanent and can be removed after the winter. The commission determined that they don't need to consider the treads since they are temporary. Ms. Delain stated that she would go with the commission's recommendation to leave the stairs unpainted. Since there would now be no permanent changes to the structure, the commission has no items to consider, and Ms. Delain decided to withdraw her application.

**G. Consideration for approval submitted by Agri-Business Child Development to repair and replace multiple exterior stairs on the property. The premises is located at 847 Union St. in the Union Street Historic District.**

Jamar Anderson and Jim Thomas appeared before the commission. Mr. Anderson stated that his organization would like to address some of the critical safety issues with some of the building's steps and brought his contractor Jim Thomas to discuss the details.

Mr. Thomas started with discussion about the side stairs and explained that there is a basement window that is not original to the building and has a lintel that is compromised. He explained that he would like to brick over the portion where the window gets removed. He stated further that the shale steps are all tipped and water collects on them which freezes in the winter. Mr. Thomas explained that he would like to replace them with concrete. Commissioner Yager asked if he could reset the existing steps. Mr. Thomas stated that he couldn't because the layers of shale would all crumble when they are removed. Mr. Anderson stated that this set of steps is where there have been multiple employee falls.

Commissioner Yager asked if there are replacement bricks available to finish some of the work. Mr. Thomas stated that there are about two pallets of the original brick in the garage but doesn't know if there's enough brick to complete the job. Commissioner Yager stated that the most visible brick should be replaced with the additional original brick, and any replacement brick should be used in the least visible sections.

Mr. Thomas stated that on the rear stairs, he would like to remove the steps and finish the wall with reparging and bricks, and remake the railing.

Commissioner Andriano asked if there would be a nosing profile on the new steps. Mr. Thomas stated that he is not opposed to adding a nosing, but is awaiting a call back from codes department to answer whether he needs to add one to meet code.

Mr. Thomas stated that the front steps from the sidewalk are being proposed to be replaced with concrete, and leaving the side walls. Commissioner Yager asked if a railing would be required to be installed. Commissioner Andriano stated that building code doesn't address it because the stairs are outside of the building and it would be up to the jurisdiction.

Commissioner Unger stated that he doesn't have a big issue with the side and rear stairways, but his biggest concern are the front steps leading from the sidewalk up to the

building. He stated that he is having a hard time envisioning how it wouldn't change the character of the stairs if they are replaced with a single concrete pour. Commissioner Andriano stated that a lot of the appearance will be determined by the finish of the concrete and the process used. Mr. Thomas stated that replacing all of the steps and the sidewalls and resetting the limestone treads would be costly. He added that he is concerned if one of the limestone treads were to break during the process, he wouldn't be able to easily secure a replacement. He explained that he could come back with more information and details of proposals for the front steps after doing more research, if the commission could approve the other portions of the application.

## **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Unger, seconded by Commissioner Andriano to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The stairs on the rear north side of the building may be removed and walled up, with the railing being completed to the building for safety purposes.
3. The stairs on the east side may be removed and replaced with concrete steps that are in a sandstone color and the supply of original bricks in storage will be used to repair the damaged wall.
4. The cellar window on the east side of the building may be infilled with material consistent with that portion of the building.
5. Action will be deferred on the front steps leading from the sidewalk to allow the applicant to research replacement options that will best retain the historic character of the existing limestone treads.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The Commissioners cited Preservation Standards #2, #5, and #6 as the guideline for their decision.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

## **H. Consideration for approval submitted by Bill Del-Sette to modify the existing columns. The premises is located at 1332 Union St. in the Union Street Historic District.**

Jim Thomas appeared before the commission. He stated that there are six structural wooden columns on the front of the house that are severely deteriorated on the bottom. He stated that his plan is to take the columns off, put a 6x6 through the column and replace the deteriorated portion with a box between 12 and 18 inches off the ground similar to the photos that were provided. He explained just to purchase new wood fluted columns from Lowe's is \$22,104, not including any of the labor to install them.

Commissioner Fava asked Mr. Thomas if he had a preference for the height of the pedestal. Mr. Thomas stated that he thinks it makes sense to make it the same height as the low wall.

Commissioner Andriano asked if Mr. Thomas had plans to provide a tray or copper flashing to protect the base from moisture. Mr. Thomas stated that he could wrap a 2x10 with copper and build the base on top of it.

Commissioner Unger stated that he has no problem with the solution but he's having a hard time visualizing how the pedestal will be designed so as to not look so monolithic and appear as if it fits. Commissioner Andriano suggested not adding the inset panel because it would be too small, but did suggest adding some molding to close some of the gaps.

### **RESOLUTION**

Motion by Commissioner Andriano, seconded by Commissioner Unger to approve the application with the following conditions:

1. The project will be completed within one year.
2. The damaged base of the column will be removed and replaced with a base comprised of a pressure treated 2x member with a copper tray to enhance protection over time
3. The new plinth/base will be approximately 11" in height, as to correspond with the adjacent masonry knee wall. The base width shall be in proportion to the sketches submitted with the application, and shall contain no recessed panels.
4. A quarter round shall be placed around the torus of the column, as well as to the underside of the cap, and along the base bottom.
5. All of the column additions will be painted white to match the existing column.

And with the following finding of fact:

1. This is a Type II SEQRA.
2. The Commissioners cited Preservation Standards #2, #5, and #6 as the guideline for their decision.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

## **VII. Miscellaneous**

Mr. Smith stated that there has been a lot of confusion from the public regarding what the different historic preservation organizations do and read it into the record that the Historic District Commission is the only body that has the authority to review and approve applications for modifications to structures in the city's historic districts.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Motion by Commissioner Fava, seconded by Commissioner Unger, to adjourn the meeting.

*Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.