



City of Aurora

2nd Floor Council
Chambers
44 E. Downer Place
Aurora, IL 60505
www.aurora-il.org

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday

January 27, 2022

7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following Preservation Commission members were present: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Amber Foster, Matt Hanson, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz and Mike Walker. Al Signorelli called in and excused himself from the meeting.

OTHERS PRESENT

The following staff members were present: Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Jackson.

Others Present:

Yolanda Vargas (465 Pennsylvania Avenue), Joel Gramirez (215 S. Lincoln Avenue) and Brandon Preston (Freedom Forever).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

21-1042 Approval of the Minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on December 9, 2021.

A motion was made by Mr. Castrejon, seconded by Mr. Walker, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.

21-1043 Approval of the Minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on December 15, 2021.

A motion was made by Mr. Castrejon, seconded by Mr. Walker, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.

COA REPORT

22-0056 December 2021 Historic Certificate of Appropriateness Report

There were no questions on the COA report.

This COA Report was discussed and filed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

AGENDA

[21-0884](#)

Certificate of Appropriateness to allow three years to correct the violation of one vinyl window in the gable end at 465 Pennsylvania Avenue (Daniel & Raquel Vargas - 21-0884 / AU21/2-21.313-COA/HP - JM - Ward 6)

Mrs. Morgan said here is a picture. The owners are requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow an extended timeframe and some leniency to correct the inappropriate vinyl window on the front façade that was originally 2 smaller windows at 465 Pennsylvania Avenue. Here is an earlier photo showing the 2 smaller windows and then the current photo, a more correct photo, with the violation. In 2020, staff was informed the 2 windows on the front façade and gable end were replaced with 1 large sash vinyl window. Staff informed the owner that the window on the front façade will need to be restored to the 2 windows. The window will need to be replaced with the same dimensions of the original windows. The owner wants to know if there is any other alternative that would be less costly that the Commission would consider, as well as a timeframe. The 1 large window does not appear to be consistent of the period of the house and other surrounding houses when staff was kind of looking around. However, staff suggested that the owner come to the Commission and discuss the issue and see if there's any other alternatives, as well as a timeframe.

My name is Yolanda Vargas and the address is 465 Pennsylvania. My dad is the owner of this house. As you see, well he is a retired man. He has very low income for his retirement. The reason that he changed the window was because it was very old and his bills, like electricity, was going so high because that window it was just like not working anymore for the house. We decided to change the window. We didn't know that we were not supposed to get a different window, unfortunately. So now he really can't afford to remove the window again. I got 2 estimates from Home Depot for the window that you just sent me the letter and gave me like some kind of ideas about the window and it is like over \$3,000 for that window. My dad, I'll show you guys his paper from the Social Security. He gets \$3,000 a year. How is he going to pay for a window? The supervisor was telling me to apply for the grant and I was reading about this program, but I know that I have to submit all the paperwork and if you approve of it, or we got approved, he has to pay in front and then he is going to get reimbursed, but here it is again, he doesn't have the money. How can we do it? If the city provides the window, if the city helps with that, of course, he is going to let you change the window. He is not able to pay for that window and repairs and labor and everything.

Mrs. Ludwig said may I ask were the other windows replaced? Were all the windows replaced on the home on the side and the back?

Ms. Vargas said no, just that one. The other ones are all fine, but that one was very old. My brother, my dad, they were trying to fix it on the sides and tried to help. Like in the wintertime like put in like you know, some plastic to help to keep in the heat, but it wasn't working. There was like no way to keep that window anymore.

Mrs. Ludwig said and you didn't keep any of the, when it got removed, the molding, nothing got kept, right? You threw it all away?

Ms. Vargas said all of that was all old and not working any more.

Mr. Hoffman said how much did it cost to replace that window?

Ms. Vargas said that window, it was like \$800. We bought it at Home Depot also and it was about \$800. So now that we got the estimate, I was so surprised. I got 2 models the way you guys told us like a size and wood and all that kind of stuff and it is \$3,000. I have it here for you guys.

Mr. Hoffman said that seems unusually high just for one that would be compliant with the rules. There should be quite a bit cheaper options.

Mrs. Ludwig said maybe we can find some other vendors that we've used that are more...

Ms. Vargas said the point is, like my dad said, if the city provides the window, he is able to put it back, but otherwise, he cannot afford it. Maybe you say 3 years to change the window, but that means like he needs to be paying monthly payments. He only gets \$3,000 a year. I feel like it is impossible for him.

Chairman Miller said given the nature of the house, I had done something similar to what staff did, kind of looking around to see what that style of house might have on it and really all I could find was what Jill found was the 2 windows side by side, probably double hung, although I think what you have there were casements and they probably weren't the original windows either. They were old, but I don't think they went back to, would this home be around 1910 or something? I don't think they were that old, but houses of that style did seem to have the 2 side by side kind of narrow with the woodwork between them. That's what it will take to correct the violation. I don't think I'm going to complain about the 3 year timeframe. I don't know what everyone else thinks.

Mr. Castrejon said Jill, have you guys budgeted what the grant situation might be like next year?

Mrs. Morgan said for 2022 we have \$100,000.

Mrs. Ludwig said and possibly this isn't, with different quotes, \$3,000 seems really crazy, right? We are all in agreement it's probably not that much. Do they have anything in this situation, is there kind of exception for someone having to pay up front in full?

Mrs. Morgan said not for the grant. That's just how the preservation grant is set up. We could possibly reach out to like the Neighborhood Project. They don't necessarily always do historic windows. They are doing one now in Riddle, so maybe that's something I could reach out to them and see if it is something they would be able to do. I don't know, since the window functions, under their prerogative if they would change it just because it is a violation, but I could reach out to them and see.

Chairman Miller said I don't know what other homeowners have done to front fund because I suspect some of them don't have the cash either. I don't know what financial details people, or we don't collect their financial details, so we don't

necessarily know.

Mrs. Morgan said we don't. I do know of one homeowner putting stuff on credit cards and looked into taking out a cash advance for the grants. He also didn't necessarily have it to fund it up front.

Mrs. Ludwig said do they have the option to, I mean we're not going to rush and make them go do this right now, do we have the option to go and explore what options we have?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. I can have them keep extending it and say that they are working with the Commission, that we are trying to look into other alternatives and see if we can find something a little more cost friendly and reach out to the Neighborhood Project and see if there are any other options that the Commission can think of that we can look into. We can just keep extending it as long as they are working with us on it.

Mr. Hanson said in a possible discussion with the Neighborhood Project, I think it is a great idea, number one. Number two, in asking them to consider taking this project on, the window currently as installed is essentially brand new and has utility to it. That may be a consideration for them to take it on in saying yes, we'll do this, but we'll take that window as kind of a barter system.

Mrs. Ludwig said that's a great idea.

Mr. Hanson said and I also think encouraging people to use predatory lenders like cash advance places for code compliance is a bad idea.

Mrs. Ludwig said it sounds like we are definitely sympatric with this situation.

Ms. Vargas said I agree if they can come up with a window, they can take that window. That wouldn't be a problem for us. It is brand new. We just changed it recently. We got the letter then, so it is brand new.

Mr. Hanson said they could possibly defray the cost of the overall project if we found someone to take it on.

Mr. Munoz said can you get a local carpenter that can maybe make the frame and make it similar to the other windows that they had?

Mrs. Ludwig said to make a frame over it?

Mr. Munoz said no, make the frames to what was there.

Mrs. Morgan said so you are thinking instead of buying a built one that maybe a carpenter could even configure something cheaper?

Ms. Vargas said that would be very expensive with a carpenter wouldn't it?

Mrs. Morgan said I'm thinking it might end up being more expensive.

Ms. Vargas said I was asking around with some carpenters and they told me that that would be like a very custom window. That would be expensive and they gave me an idea. Why don't you go to Home Depot? So they came from Home Depot. They took the measurements and everything and well yes, that's what they told me that a

carpenter would be more expensive than Home Depot. But you guys can explore that too.

Mrs. Ludwig said I don't seem to be worried about Home Depot's capability to get it right.

Mr. Hoffman said there's not enough information in these quotes to determine what they are offering. It looks like they might be trying to provide like a combined unit. The original windows were 2 separate windows with a dividing frame, so these you might be able to...

Ms. Vargas said I wasn't able to show the person the original window because I don't have a photo. I was trying right now with you showing it to take a picture because I don't have it.

Mrs. Morgan said it's from Google. A street view.

Ms. Vargas said I did show this guy from Home Depot the letter you guys sent me, so he took it from there to get me the estimate.

Mr. Hoffman said okay. I think that might be why those were so high because he was trying to specify a single window that would go in that opening to give this type of appearance, so he would have either joined together with a mullion or grills or something to do this, but it looks like the original, and if you compare it to the other houses, that would actually be a good example. You could also show him the example photos that Jill had of other houses in the neighborhood houses. Were you there when he took the old ones out? I suspect you had to demolish dividing casing between 2 separate windows, so that would need to be put back. Actually you would be getting 2 separate, small, custom size, but just about anything you order will be, but they are very standard just double hung. You wouldn't even have to have double hung. You could do just a single hung and that would be a little cheaper.

Ms. Ludwig said so maybe we can work on advising some other options that might be cheaper than what they are suggesting.

Ms. Vargas said yes probably. As I said, I didn't have a picture to provide the person, so I just showed the letter and got to this idea that the city is asking me, so he give me an estimate from there.

Mr. Hoffman said the guy who gave you the window quote won't be able to put or provide the actual wood framing that goes between that. It is relatively simple carpentry that either you yourself would need to build or to have it done. Essentially to recreate what was taken out. It is relatively simple. It's just standard lumber.

Mrs. Morgan said would it probably be something where you go with a carpenter who would do the work and then do the insulation of the windows, as opposed to like having the Home Depot or something install it. Like buy the windows and then have the carpenter build that middle part and then install the 2 sashes.

Mr. Hoffman said yes. Someone with enough knowledge of building that and then installing the windows will need to take the measurements and make a sketch for what the actual size of the 2 windows needs to be. Let me look at the old picture. I think the casing between them appears to be the same width as the side. Sometimes it is narrower, like some of these examples, but like this one here, it is the same width, so

it is probably about 4 inches. Sometimes the window would be paired with just a real narrow adjoining strip. That would also be an acceptable option.

Mrs. Ludwig said so Jill, are we allowed to then, without it being a huge rush, are we allowed to help kind of write something up kind of like what we did with the sign and we suggested some fonts that helped them. Is that something that we are allowed to maybe draft some kind of an outline on what we would suggest that they ask when they go out?

Mrs. Morgan said yes, definitely. As much information and help that you guys can provide, I think the owners and everybody would be happy to...

Mr. Hoffman said I can make up a quick sketch.

Chairman Miller said what Seth was describing is I think what needs to happen.

Mr. Hanson said can that be put together with the Google Earth photo and the examples from the surrounding neighborhood homes for the Petitioner as well in case they happen to kind of shop their options themselves? She was taking pictures of our pictures.

Mrs. Morgan said yes. We can send them some of the contractor's we've worked with. I don't know how special, the carpenters we know who specialize in windows, I don't think you technically need...

Mr. Hoffman said a competent handyman can do this kind of work.

Mrs. Morgan said so if anyone has like suggestions of those for them.

Mrs. Ludwig said so what we were saying what we could do for you is to take a little time and draft up, because we've got a really good expert here, to draft up a sketch for you and some suggesting of which contractor and to brainstorm a little on the least expensive way to get it done and bring it back into compliance and then for Jill to take that to the Neighborhood Project and see what we can do.

Ms. Vargas said that sounds good. Again, he doesn't have enough money, as I told you, to do that, but otherwise we can work with you guys to fix the windows the way the city wants it.

Mrs. Ludwig said and then call us. Don't touch the house again. Call us. We are here for you.

Ms. Vargas said thank God the house is in pretty good shape, the whole house, except that window. It was very, very bad. But the house is still in good condition.

Mrs. Morgan said we'll get this information together and be in touch. E-mail is good for you?

Ms. Vargas said yes.

Mrs. Morgan said I'll probably contact you by e-mail and then I'll go back to the inspector and ask her to extend it because we are still working with you to figure something out.

Mrs. Vargas said thank you.

[22-0012](#)

Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the current garage and build a new garage at 451 Spruce Street (Roxana Ochoa- 22-0012 - AU21/2-22.008-COA/HP- Ward 6)

Mrs. Morgan said 451 Spruce told me they didn't think they could make it, but I just wanted to go ahead and put them on the agenda just in case something changed. They are planning on being here in February.

22-0053

Certificate of Appropriateness to install solar panels on the roof being partially visible from the street at 215 S Lincoln Avenue (Joel Gramirez- 22-0053 - AU27/1-22.016-COA/HP - Ward 2)

Mrs. Morgan said this is an 1890's Queen Anne style home. In general, the applicant is proposing to install 9 solar panels on the back portion of the roofline of behind the cross gables, but still partially visible from the street. The home has a front gable roof with cross gable wings extending on both the elevations. The applicant originally submitted a permit to install solar panels on the roofline on the back as well as the front of the house in front of the cross gables, but staff informed them that that would not meet that minimally visible requirement that we update last year and requested that they resubmit a proposal with the solar panels just behind the cross gables. Staff felt that this proposal meets that minimally visible requirement.

Mr. Gramirez said I wanted to ask something. You just mentioned that last year you did a change of allowing some things?

Mrs. Morgan said we made it more lenient. Before that you couldn't have them at all if they were visible. They could only be invasively on the rear and side, so we allowed more leniency, but still being minimally visible.

Mr. Gramirez said as you probably saw the picture there, this house is something that I got into 9 years ago when I came here to Aurora, not knowing it was within the historical district until later on. I found out by my neighbors. But this house is a 2 story plus the attic, which is like 30 feet high. When you mentioned something about visible from the street, people who drive by there, if that's who we are worrying about, they don't pay attention to what's up on the houses. They just drive by on the street. You might look at the front of the house, the entrance of the house, maybe the first floor of the house to see the windows and doors, but I never go out looking at the house like this and see what is up there. This is why I don't understand why this cannot be allowed because the area where they first suggested to install them, I don't think they are that visible because they are way high, 30 feet high or more. So that's why I wanted to come and ask about this. As you know, this house is just like the person that left, they have a lot of old windows. That house, when I came in 2013, I remodeled the entire inside, wiring, insulation, plumbing because it was a house in big need of remodeling. For all that, I got permission from the city. Then when I wanted to do some of the windows, I was told no you cannot because it is within the area that you cannot change any of those windows and those windows are old. This house, I was telling Brandon here, that these windows are about 2½ or 3 feet wide by 6 feet tall and the bigger the window, as you know in this kind of weather we are having right now, the air comes in. I tried to do as much as the other lady was saying, you know, protect it from the inside, but the wind when it blows hard you can always feel it. And what does that mean? More gas for the furnace, more electricity that we spend and so the bigger the house, the more taxes that we pay also. We cannot do any more to this home. Although we want to make them look better than what they look like with new windows,

but I was told no. Then I wanted to install the same exact window that you have in there and I was told just like the lady before, you have to look for somebody that can make the exact window and then put in new windows. Out of curiosity one day, I went and talked to a guy and he says we can probably get you windows like that for about \$6,000 each. \$6,000 for each window and I was thinking whoa, who can afford to pay that kind of money for a window like that. There are other windows that can do the job, a better job, less expensive, but because of this requirement that I'm sorry that I wasn't aware of that existed on this house when I got in there. Now they cannot do anything and because of that when they offered me these solar panels to get better service for electricity and spend less every month, I got excited and said okay let's do it. But when they contacted the city, they said you know the city is not allowing this because they say that the panels are going to be visible from the street. That's when I started thinking. Wait a minute, the house is too high. How can this be visible from the street? Besides, the proposal that they show me, because they came in person, they showed me exactly where those panels were going to be installed and most of them are going to be toward the back. Again, people drive through the street looking at the front of the street, so they are not going to be looking at the house. If you fly over the house, sure you will see the panels up there. I just wanted to mention that because maybe we can reconsider something. You would not only be doing me a favor, but you would be doing a favor to probably other homeowners in that area that might want to do the same later in hopes that we can get our house better insulated, better protected and better service with the materials that we use now. Hopefully someday you can consider allowing us putting new windows without having to go to the excess of having to do this same thing, which we will probably never do because we don't have the money to do it. I don't think any of you live in that area. If you do, you probably know what I'm talking about. But I'm sure that you have better houses with better windows and not exactly the type of windows that are required in that area. Please consider that.

Mrs. Ludwig said most of use live in a historic home.

Mr. Gramirez said okay, so maybe you can understand what I'm talking about here. That area I love because I'm so close to the downtown. I walk to my work because it is just down the street from there. When we are told no you cannot do this, you cannot do that, that house, my opinion is instead of looking better, it is looking older and older and older, which means that can only cause problems later on, worse problems than keeping the historical district looking nice. Thank you and I hope I haven't offended anybody, but that's what I needed to say and now Brandon can probably give you more information since he is the one that is with the company that wants to do the panels for me.

I'm Brandon Preston from 215 S. Lincoln Avenue. I work for the company that installs the solar panels. I'm here just on behalf of the company and the homeowner here. We were looking through the plans. Originally, we had 5 panels on the one side in the front and then 7 panels on the other side in the front. Going back down to what is up there now greatly reduced what offsets his electrical bill from what we were doing, so we were just going to try and come here and see if there was any sort of leniency or anything that we could do, how you guys handle it. It was 21 panels originally and then his offset was cut in half if not more by just the lone 9 panels on the back of the roof.

Chairman Miller said the plan as you currently have submitted it, I think looks good. I would think it meets the guideline of being minimally visible behind the cross gables.

Mr. Hoffman said is the space, especially on that north, larger dormer on the back side

of that, could you put a couple of panels there?

Mr. Preston said not within code rules, no, like building code.

Mr. Hoffman said it is 3 foot setbacks?

Mr. Preston said it is.

Mr. Hoffman said that apply along the ridge of that jerkinhead dormer there?

Mr. Preston said so it doesn't as long as there are no panels on the adjacent roofline, there is not one required. If there are panels on the adjacent roofline, it is 18 inches on both sides.

Mr. Hoffman said you looked at putting a couple of panels on a diagonal running up that roof?

Mr. Preston said that gets super tricky with the way that the rafters and everything run. The way that we tie in our system to the rafters, it would not sit right.

Mr. Hoffman said the racks are pretty adjustable. You might have some racks sticking out. I think that's the only remaining space here that would meet the standard.

Mrs. Ludwig said what percentage offset?

Mr. Preston said this right now? 23%.

Mr. Hoffman said is there a garage?

Mr. Preston said there is, but it is buried in trees. It faces north and south, so you could only use the one plane to actually get production.

Mr. Hanson said some other considerations, I think it is not only appropriate, but it is acceptable. There is foliage in the front of your home. I'm actually a neighbor of yours because I work for the railroad and directly across from your home is a parking lot and the railroad. I don't see the people that are parking in that parking lot every day will have an issue with what they could partially see through the trees at the back of your home, nor will the railroaders. I think we leave a big enough carbon footprint as railroaders to see someone supporting sustainable energy as a good plan. Considering what's on that street there and what's across from you as your across the street neighbors, I don't have a problem with it at all.

Mrs. Ludwig said but I think there is also an equitable guideline we did just relax to allow anything and minimally visible was, part of it with the historic district, I mean we're here to preserve its historical features and this is in a historical district.

Chairman Miller said I think the plan as submitted would meets the guidelines.

Mrs. Ludwig said I think the plan as submitted meets the guidelines.

Chairman Miller said behind the cross gables, it is an architectural feature, which is, I think, what our guidelines have requested.

Mr. Hoffman said anything else that was added or adjusted that's behind those dormers would meet that standard, so if you were going go to reconfigure some things and try to get fancy there, I think any of that would meet what our standards are.

Mr. Preston said okay, so nothing in the front then?

Mr. Hoffman said yes. It is a steep pitch. Even in the pictures here, you see the roof is pretty prominent.

Chairman Miller said it is a prominent feature.

Mr. Hoffman said it kind of defines the style of the house. It is a really nice house. This is one when I saw it come up on the agenda, it was like I recognize this one. I live in the district over to the west side here, but I like the houses on Lincoln Avenue, and I recognize this one.

Chairman Miller said it is actually a very attractive house.

Mr. Gramirez said it is and, like I said, I wish I could make it better by installing new windows that look newer and preserve the essence of the historical home. The year it was built, to me, that says a lot. It is a very well built house. I walk into the attic and I see the real 2 by 4's, not like the ones we get at the store now. The way they look, whoever built it, knew what they were doing and I'm sure all those houses are the same. It is just that I wish I could change to nice windows. I don't want to put in just crappy windows, but nice windows that can provide better view and better protection from the weather inside or outside even in the summer when it's hot. Of course, we've got to run the air conditioning. Right now I really have to fight to keep them closed the best that I can because of that. I love that house and I've been there since 2013, almost 8, 8½ years, but when things like this happen, I just wonder maybe I should just sell it and move on. I came to Aurora and that's where I came to be. All the work that I did inside I did part of it myself. I contracted the work that I had to contract out, but the more I see of it, this is my house. I half built it because all the remodel of the first and second floor I did that myself. But thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Hoffman said I would just mention if you are not aware that storm windows, if you look at the guidelines, replacing or installing front storm windows is compliant. In most cases, the original can be restored to perform very similarly to modern windows. Just because they're old, you're not stuck with the poor performance.

Chairman Miller said I have all original windows in my home as well.

Mr. Gramirez said and I thought about that, maybe replacing the glass, you know, all the panels, all the glass because some of the frames are very good looking, very nice sturdy wood. If I could just replace to a thicker panel of glass in all of them, I would do that. The thing is that you probably know too, you go and buy a little piece of glass and it's like \$20 or \$30, so to replace a big panel like that is going to be like \$100 or more, plus someone to install it.

Mr. Hoffman said and you don't get much benefit from just going to a new plate of pane. The real savings in your heating loss is weather stripping and restoring the frame and the joints and stuff like that.

Chairman Miller said weather stripping between the sashes.

Mr. Hoffman said air infiltration blowing through is the majority of it.

Chairman Miller said and then also storm windows.

Mr. Hoffman said combined with storm windows they will perform very well.

Chairman Miller said I've also had to, in this case I did the work myself after I purchased the house, on the part there was glazing falling off, I went around and did the work myself and I replaced it because I don't want air getting around the glass where it should be sealed against the sash frame.

Mr. Gramirez said I've done that to many of them. The ones that don't seem to last very long are the ones facing to the south because when the sun is in summer, it dries really fast and then it starts cracking.

Mr. Hoffman said do you paint over the glazing putty after you've installed it?

Mr. Gramirez said not from the outside, no because I believe all but one has the storm window, which is old and it is made of aluminum, but it is also in bad shape. I will look into your suggestion. First fix the window, the glass, and then maybe look into new storm windows and hopefully that can help and make it look better too.

Mr. Hoffman said if you are having issues with your glazing putty failing, it needs to be painted to actually seal it and protect it and you only have to paint a 16th of an inch onto the glass to seal it in. It is kind of like wood. It needs to be protected. If you look online, and I think Jill might have some resources on window maintenance and restoration. It has kind of become a lost art as modern windows are just replaced and the old ones are thrown out, but the old stuff, like you say, it is built to last a lot longer and it needs some maintenance, but it will last longer.

Mr. Gramirez said you were talking to the lady about getting a carpenter to do the window. I was thinking just like people have lost the art of writing. We don't have many carpenters doing the work anymore and if there is one, he is going to charge a leg and an arm because he is going to do it slowly, very careful, and it is going to take him a long time to do some small piece, so of course, he has to charge for his time.

Mrs. Morgan said do we have a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriate as is?

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Matt Hanson

MOTION SECONDED BY: Simon Munoz

AYES: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Amber Foster, Matt Hanson, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz, Mike Walker

NAYS: None

Chairman Miller said thank you for bringing a proposal like this. It is a very nice proposal that meets our guidelines and on a lovely house. If the homeowner wants to get together and talk about home maintenance tips on windows, we are available to do that because we all have experience maintaining our own windows.

A motion was made by Mr. Hanson, seconded by Mr. Munoz, that this agenda item be approved. The motion carried.

DISCUSSION

[22-0048](#)

The Preservation Commission is providing comments on the National Register Nomination of the Mary A. Todd School located at 100 Oak Avenue (Illinois Historic Preservation Agency- 22-0048/AU22/1-22.013-HP-JM - Ward 6)

Mrs. Morgan said as you are aware, the City of Aurora is a certified local government through the State due to our Preservation Ordinance and the Preservation Commission. As such, the Historic Preservation Agency is required to get, or reach out and request, comments by the Preservation Commission on all National Register nominations. So they are bringing forward 2 to us today. The Mary Todd School, which was constructed for the Aurora Public Schools in 1934 with an addition in 1965. The school, and attached gymnasium, was designed by Norman Ephraim Brydges. The later addition by Robert F. Mall. The building is in the Classical Revival style clad in brick with a limestone trim and features a primary entrance set in the Classical Revival style. Here are some historic photos of it, what it originally looked like at one point before demolition and new construction. The current historic building, the historic photo of it. Another historic photo. Here it is as it looks today. So you can see the Classical Revival entrance with a limestone surround and pilasters, the gabled pediment and a full entablature. The interior features large classrooms, open central corridor with metal lockers, plaster ceilings above the dropped ceiling, there is the original plaster ceiling, built-in wood cabinetry and original wood doors. As you are aware, this recently came up. Also as part of it, actually after construction, 7 murals designed by Anne Michalov and 2 statues designed by Mary Anderson are in the building. Architect Norman Brydges designed the school using a modern school layout and finishes to achieve the ideals of the late Progressive Era school reforms. In the late 1890's or early 1900's, education underwent a transformation that focused on learning by doing and providing a more diverse curriculum. The new ideology required a new physical school building that could accommodate a variety of studies and a rich environment. So the Todd School encompasses this progressive era value of learning through experience rather than just traditional memorization, and by incorporating, they have optimal natural light, large playground, bathrooms, showers, specialized classrooms, modern kitchen, auditorium, and gymnasium. The Classical Revival style is one of several Revival styles used during the Progressive Reform era. The Todd School retains a very good integrity with few alterations, just replacement windows and doors, and easily communicates its significance under Criterion C as an example of an early 20th century late Progressive Era school. This is just for the National Register nomination, but to kind of fill you in, as most of you are probably aware of, this building is currently being rehabbed through Historic Tax Credits, hence bringing the National Register nomination forward. It is going to be a workforce housing. It is workforce housing in the original school and then that later addition, the 1960's addition, will be the VNA is what they are looking at. All the exterior is basically being retained as is. The interior, many of the original features are being retained, the lockers and the cabinetry. The gymnasium is being retained.

Chairman Miller said does this involve retaining all of the WPA art that's in the building?

Mrs. Morgan said the WPA art is going to be removed. The city is working on the removal and then eventual restoration of them. That's an ongoing process and probably won't be something that will be done, like it will probably be piecemeal done as far as the restoration. The city and developer and the State Preservation Office all thought that removal and keeping it in the public realm was important.

Mr. Hoffman said I love the little historic context of that first picture of the old building. Someone had written a note "Dear friend Alice, this building burnt down today. Everything is alright. I mean the kids." Perhaps it was just a partial. It's not real relevant for the nomination for this building here, it looks like the same building there in circa 1910, so perhaps it was just a partial fire that took out the steeple or something there.

Chairman Miller said I take it the owner is supporting the nomination?

Mrs. Morgan said the city owns it. The School District gave it to the city in order to have redevelopment.

Chairman Miller said and it is believed that the placing on the National Register and making it eligible for Historic Preservation Tax Credits would make it a more attractive target for a developer?

Mrs. Morgan said yes, by being able to get those tax credits. That was a significant part of it. Originally, they didn't want to pursue tax credits, but they weren't able to make the finances work without them.

Chairman Miller said are there additional financial incentives the developer can get for doing workforce housing?

Mrs. Morgan said yes, they are also doing low income tax credits.

Chairman Miller said okay, that's for of low income type thing?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. Then the city is providing some home and CDBG funding, or it might just be home. I can't remember. I think it's both.

Mr. Hanson said is there anything above and beyond the current tax credits that you are talking about that would be available or a possibility either for the city or for this group regarding the removal and restoration of the WPA art and have we pursued a place to house or to promote these pieces of art that will become either roaming or temporary or permanent display?

Mrs. Morgan said so as far as the tax credits, we had originally thought maybe that would be a possibility to help some of the finances, but in order for this to pass the Section 106 requirement and the tax credits requirements, they wanted to not include it. The State Preservation Office said they are not including it in the scope because basically the city is removing it prior to this project happening. For them to help fund it, they would probably require it to stay in the building if they were doing any funding of it, so it couldn't be included in the project. We are still working on a place to store them and eventual display.

Mr. Hoffman said with the addition of the VNA, would that be a public venue?

Mrs. Morgan said we thought about that, possibly seeing if we could hang them back in the VNA, so it is kind of close.

Mr. Hoffman said is that option open in the future?

Mrs. Morgan said we think so. We've also been working with an organization, I can't think of the organization, but there's a federal organization that also is involved with

murals because they were part of the WPA program and are federally funded. It sounds from the discussion with them that open to the public is not necessarily a public institution, so I think there might be some flexibility there.

Mrs. Ludwig said I think people were going to get in touch with SciTech at some point too. They have a lot of space.

Mrs. Morgan said yes, that was also a thought. I think we also talked about the universities. Again, if you don't necessarily have to be a public institution.

Chairman Miller said so the resistance of leaving them in place would be because they are being converted into private apartments probably with restricted access to the front door.

Mrs. Morgan said yes.

Mrs. Ludwig said I don't know if you were here Matt, we saw that presentation about all of them. They are in a multitude of different places, so it's maybe ultimately they don't end up all back together if there's no place to house them.

Mrs. Morgan said they are large murals. I don't think they will be probably be housed in one place.

Mrs. Ludwig said the Aurora murals are more than welcome at my house.

Mr. Hanson said I've got dibs on the statues.

Mrs. Morgan said so we do want to ask if the Commission supports this nomination and staff can relay that to the Preservation Agency.

MOTION OF SUPPORT WAS MADE BY: Kristin Ludwig

MOTION SECONDED BY: Amber Foster

AYES: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Amber Foster, Matt Hanson, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz, Mike Walker

NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mrs. Ludwig, seconded by Mrs. Foster, that this agenda item be approved and filed. The motion carried.

[22-0049](#)

The Preservation Commission is providing comments on the National Register Nomination of the Lincoln School at 641 S Lake Street (Illinois Historic Preservation Agency- 22-0049 / AU28/1-22.014-HP -JM - Ward 4)

Mrs. Morgan said this is for the National Register nomination for the Lincoln School. It is located at 631 S. Lake Street. It was constructed in 1891 by the Aurora West Division Board of Education. There was a gymnasium addition in 1926 and an auditorium and classroom addition in 1928. The original block was designed and built by local stonemason and carpenter Clark Brown Colwell. The school was originally called the South Lake Street School and renamed Abraham Lincoln School with the 1920's remodel. The building is clad in brick with a stone foundation. You can kind of see here. The top is the front facing Lake Street. So this is the façade facing Lake Street and then this one as well. This is kind of a close up of the entrance, the sides, and then you can see the rear. The building is clad in red brick with a stone foundation. It is characterized by Prairie style elements, including decorative stone

blocks, geometric stone entrance surrounds, and deep eaves with wood brackets. The interior retains many of the original features, including the central corridor lined with lockers, historic wood entrance doors, wood flooring, wood window trim and some terrazzo edging and flooring. The school represents the history of education in Aurora showing the need of the school system to expand beginning in the early 1900's due to the rapidly growing population needed to serve the range of industries that were coming into Aurora. Following the destruction of the South Branch School due to arson, the South Lake Street School was established 2 blocks from the South Branch School. The design of the building was typical of the time, this is the original 1891 portion, containing 4 classrooms per floor bisected by a central corridor. It originally had a 7 story bell tower. Here is the original school and you can see the original bell tower. It was later removed. If you look at this, this is the original 1891 portion and then there is the addition to the left and the addition to the right. In 1891 the school became overcrowded due to the growth of manufacturing and immigrant population. So then by 1926 they added the gymnasium to serve students with athletic facilities that was popular for education reforms in the 1920's. With the 1928 addition also came a complete interior remodeling of the old original 1891 portion to retrofit into more of a modern school system, specifically the Platoon School. The Platoon School method began in the early 1900's and spread throughout the 1930's. It believed that children should be taught through interaction and included supplementing classroom study with interactive work in specialized classrooms and physical education. William S. Wirt founded the first Platoon School that was designed where each class, or platoon, would remain in a base room with one teacher for part of the day learning the standard subjects and would spend the rest in smaller groups shifting among special classrooms. The West Aurora School Board even went out and took a look at one of Wirt's original schools when they were considering retrofitting this school. The method was particularly attractive because it also allowed an increase in efficiency and capacity without really enlarging the school by too much. As a newly designated Platoon School, the school was renamed the Abraham Lincoln School. The Platoon method began to fade after Wirt's death and by the 1940's was replaced with the one teacher per classroom method of most elementary organization. So the Lincoln School retains much integrity that portrays its significance as one of Aurora's oldest schools and a good example of retrofitting existing buildings to the Platoon school model. This also is part of a Historic Tax Credit project. It is being turned into workforce housing as well. The developers are also building a new building on this site to supplement the workforce housing. They are combining the new building, this building and Todd School in order to have enough units to make it financially feasible to use the Income Tax Credits and the Preservation Tax Credits.

Mr. Hoffman said is the new building on the site going to be joined with this one?

Mrs. Morgan said no. It is a separate building closer to Woodlawn.

Mr. Hoffman said I read about just the general plan itself, but I didn't see any actual configuration and was just curious. There is quite a bit of space on this property.

Mrs. Morgan said there is. The building is slightly shorter than a historic building. It has kind of a hipped roof, simple ornamentation. I know staff and the developers went back and forth a little bit on trying to get some additional ornamentation, but some disagreements with what the Secretary of Interior Standards would actually allow. We got some changes. I should have brought it to show you. I can maybe send it in an email if you are interested in seeing that.

Chairman Miller said that would be interesting.

Mr. Hanson said who is the owner, who is the builder, and should this not be taken under consideration for the National Registry? What would the builder do instead?

Mrs. Morgan said so the owner is the city. Again, it was given to the city by the School District. It probably would sit vacant if it wasn't being reused, or at least vacant for a long time. Schools are difficult to reuse.

Mr. Hoffman said this one's been empty for 20 years or something.

Mrs. Morgan said yes. The Todd School hasn't been and it was recently, but this one's been vacant, I think, yes for probably about 20 years. Since there is no protection on it, it would probably end up being demolished in my opinion.

Mr. Hanson said and then a developer would have more freedom to develop what they want to build?

Mrs. Morgan said it has to be rezoned to allow this. I think it is zoned currently single family. If it wasn't for the reuse of the historic building, I don't think city staff would initially support putting a whole brand new apartment complex on the site.

Mr. Hanson said agreed.

Mrs. Ludwig said are there plans to save some of the interior, like the tile?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. Because of the tax credits, all of that has to be approved by the State Preservation Agency, so a lot of those interior elements would be preserved, even some of the interior partition walls apparently have to be preserved as well. I don't think anyone quite even realizes that we're going to have to come through another variance process because of their square footage now. They are going to have a small little studio in order to meet the Preservation Agency's requirements on not removing interior partition walls.

Mr. Hoffman said schools are made with very large hallways for big crowds of people and apartments don't need that hallway.

Mrs. Morgan said yes, those large hallways are going to be kept. Most of the lockers are going to be kept. They keep a lot of the door entrances where they have to close and they usually try to take the reuse it and if it is a historic door you would reuse it in another portion of the building or sometimes they just wall it up, I think, and just keep the doors as kind of an element.

Mr. Hanson said I apologize if it is in the packet. My thing timed out. Who is currently the builder and developer?

Mrs. Morgan said the developer, it is a combination of different organizations. Michael Poulakidas, he did the Copley, he is involved with the project. There is an organization that, actually it is a Native American organization that does low income housing. They are involved in the project. I think there is another entity. I'm blanking. They have a name as a group, and I can't think of what it is. I can get that to you if you are interested.

Chairman Miller said it was interesting as I read through these, I thought you did a good job, or whoever prepared it, did a good job of representing the history of the

buildings. At least the west side of Aurora has lost a lot of its old school buildings.

Mrs. Morgan said even just real recently we lost the Nancy Hill School when I was here and then right before I came you lost the High School.

Chairman Miller said yes, the original West High and Greenman was also torn down.

Mr. Hoffman said I guess West High, I guess from some of my time in Aurora, but from what I've heard that was one where there was an attempt to redevelop it and it just didn't...

Chairman Miller said there were attempts. The last attempt, I think, fell on the real estate market crash at the beginning of 2008. Someone had purchased that with the intent to redevelop. At least just my opinion, it was an inexperienced developer. He had never done a project like that before. Then there was the real estate market crash and the building just never recovered from it. It was vandalized and even the owner vandalized it actually. At least the west side of the city has lost most of its historic school buildings. It would be these two and Freeman, which the West Aurora District is still using. That was interesting.

Mrs. Ludwig said I like in these packets that they have the opportunity to protect inside and out too.

Mrs. Morgan said that's nice of the Tax Credits.

Chairman Miller said the location of corridors, I know, was also an issue with the St. Charles Hospital. They wanted to rip it out. I know the developer really would have liked to make the hallways narrower and allow the apartments to be larger, but hospitals, like schools, have these wide corridors.

Mrs. Morgan said that's a big character defining feature. The gymnasiums have to be kept. They can't be broken up. I think originally in Todd School they were going to break it up into multiple areas like a computer lab and things like that.

MOTION OF SUPPORT WAS MADE BY: Fernando Castrejon

MOTION SECONDED BY: Simon Munoz

AYES: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Amber Foster, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz, Mike Walker

NAYS: Matt Hanson

A motion was made by Mr. Castrejon, seconded by Mr. Munoz, that this agenda item be approved and filed. The motion carried.

PENDING

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) Grants

No Report.

B) Near Eastside Historic District

No Report.

C) Riddle Highlands Historic District

No Report.

D) Public Awareness

No Report.

E) Landmarks

No Report.

F) FoxWalk Design Review

No Report.

G) Tanner/Palace Historic District Committee

No Report.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Morgan said I am working on the 2022 grant call for nominations. Hopefully in the next week I'm hoping to get something out on that.

Mr. Hanson said do we know the funding level of the overall program for the year?

Mrs. Morgan said \$100,000.

Mrs. Morgan said I am finishing up. A lot of the current ones came in in December/January, so I should be closing out most of those. We still have the one window that we extended until December due to the difficulty of getting the window contractors. I think a lot of other ones should be done next month.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Castrejon, seconded by Mrs. Ludwig, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

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