City of Aurora

Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Minutes

Thursday
August 15, 2019
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following Preservation Commission members were present: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Jen Del Debbio, Amber Foster, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz, Al Signorelli and Mike Walker. Mike Lord was absent.

OTHERS PRESENT

The following staff members were present: Jill Morgan and Sue Jackson.

Others Present: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

19-0659 Approval of the Minutes for the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on July 11, 2019.

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

COA REPORT

19-0714 July Historic Certificate of Appropriateness Report

Mr. Hoffman said do you have any more details about the window replacement at 239 Lawndale? There were several entries. I wasn’t sure what they were doing.

Mrs. Morgan said for this one, most of it is going to be repair. There is one window they think is beyond repair and they are going to have it custom made. If there are any additional changes to that, they are going to contact staff for follow up changes. There was fire damage. They were trying to get in to get all their approvals so that they could start. If there is anything changing beyond that, they said they would come in for a separate COA.

There were no other questions on the COA report.
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This COA Report was discussed and filed.

AGENDA

18-1025 Certificate of Appropriateness to install new cement board or engineered wood siding over the original wood siding instead of restoring the original wood siding at 355 W. New York Street (Jessica Rosales - 18-1025 - AU21/2-18.216-COA/HP -JM - Ward 6)

Chairman Miller said I know this was discussed some time ago. I guess we never officially voted on this.

Mrs. Morgan said correct. We had tabled the item for them to come back with additional information. Since then, they had decided to go forward with restoring the wood siding, which is basically complete at this point. I just wanted to bring this forward so we can say it was discussed and filed.

This COA was discussed and filed.

19-0713 Certificate of Appropriateness to retain 1/1 aluminum clad wood windows on the enclosed porch in order to cure the existing violation of installing windows without a permit at 201 N. Locust Street

Mrs. Morgan said this one was cited back in 2018. The current owners say they purchased the property after the windows were changed out. The windows originally in 2018 were cited for material doesn’t comply with the guidelines as well as grill pattern. Originally you can see these windows here is what it was. From Google back in 2012 we know it was a 1/1 windows. The rest of the windows on the house are 1/1. They are all replacement, but with the style, staff felt that it would have been a 1/1 window, so we cited them for grill and material. Since that violation, the Commission has made the clarification about allowing the aluminum clad wood windows. Upon inspection, these are the windows, and when staff went to inspect them, they are actually wood, aluminum clad wood windows with kind of almost a snap on, not quite grill where it was just on the inside. You can see some of the photos of it from the outside. Then there are some pictures on the inside where you can see the wood. They have subsequently removed the grill because it was easy to come off. This is after removal, so you can see that the grills are gone, so now we were just dealing with material. So since aluminum clad wood is permitted per our clarifications, it does need to be approved by the Commission. Since we don’t know, or staff does not know what the ones that they replaced were, if they were replacement windows already or if they were original wood, I can’t really tell by the Google image. The porch is not original as is. It’s obviously been enclosed at some point. The trim around the enclosure is wood trim. Staff is just bringing this before the Commission and also to get feedback from the Commission. Since the aluminum clad wood is a new concept, there is not a whole lot of guidelines as to what is permitted and what’s not, or really any past cases to go on. The size of the windows, it does have that kind of 3-D depth that we want for the wood. The sash and the framing, I have the dimensions in the staff report, is close to when I’ve done some research of what would have been typical of that period as far as dimension. One thing I noticed is that I feel like the seams are a lot more visible in this aluminum clad wood window than I’ve seen in some other products, not necessarily in the historic districts, just some other ones like I’ve seen in other parts of the city. You can see the trim is still the wood. The actual window as well as like the whole kind of framing, the jamb and all that is the clad.
Mr. Signorelli said I guess it is neither here nor there but the window doesn’t look like it is the size of the original because it has that kind of an apron on the bottom that looks out of place. It looks too big.

Chairman Miller said you mean the bottom sill?

Mr. Signorelli said yes.

Mrs. Morgan said the sill or the bottom of the window sash?

Mr. Signorelli said the piece of the wood that’s under the sill. It just looks way wide, like the window had originally been larger.

Mrs. Morgan said and all I have is a Google image of the violation.

Mr. Hoffman said I think the biggest difference between these is the new replacement one, since they are a pocket replacement, they add a lot of extra material between the frame and the actual sash. It looks probably about an extra inch and a half there, which is a typical problem with pocket replacements because they are filling in some of the space. It is adding another set of jambs on top of the original jambs. I think that’s the biggest visual difference. It adds a lot more bulk within the opening. There is the jamb that the new sashes slide in and then there’s an additional half inch outside of that, so probably at least an inch and a half of extra thickness, so the sashes themselves are three inches smaller, even though the actual thickness of the sash outside of the glass itself is the same.

Mrs. Morgan said so if they would replace it, they take the whole thing out, are there aluminum clad wood windows that would go into the opening without that frame?

Mr. Hoffman said any standard replacement is going to have the pre-assembled jambs with it. I think the thickness of those vary by manufacture and style, but that’s one of the big disadvantages to replacement windows versus restoring or rebuilding the original sash. You are going to have that extra thickness added.

Mrs. Del Debbio said is there a way that you could create an illusion by reworking the front of the sash? It looks like maybe you could do some decorative wood trim coming up over it more, what did you say, an inch and ¾ perhaps, maybe come over another ¾. That’s got to be wood, right, all around the window itself. It does look layered and thick and cumbersome.

Mr. Signorelli said it just looks wrong.

Mr. Hoffman said in the context of this that it is a non-original porch enclosure and compared to the windows on the rest of the house, I don’t feel like this is an architecturally significant character defining alteration. It is more just in general perspective as we look at window replacements. The thickness of that added jamb is just as important as the thickness of the sash itself.

Mr. Signorelli said we may have an issue with how they look, but with what Seth has said and the fact that we accept that the window is aluminum clad, we should probably just go ahead and okay the COA. That would be my opinion.

Mr. Hoffman said what is the date on the pre-violation photos?
Mrs. Morgan said 2012.

Mr. Hoffman said and the current owner purchased this in 2017?

Mrs. Morgan said 2017.

Mr. Hoffman said just from looking at that, it does appear to be there more than 2 years. You can see some weathering on that window sill.

Ms. Ludwig said it is not like the most architecturally significant element to that home.

Mr. Hoffman said the vinyl siding is more glaring.

Chairman Miller said are the rest of the windows in the home also vinyl?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. I asked if there were any original woods left. They said no. From my looking at the sides that I would see, I couldn’t see any that were original either.

Chairman Miller said so this aluminum clad window may be the nicest window in the house. It is hard for me to say what’s historically appropriate for a porch that may have never been enclosed to begin with.

Mrs. Morgan said from the Sanborn maps it does not appear like it was enclosed.

Mr. Hoffman said and it doesn’t appear to have a fluted column. It is hard to tell from the pictures here what the other replacement windows looked like in terms of thickness of these. Is this proportional to the dimensions of the other pocket jambs?

Mrs. Morgan said I feel like the other ones also had storms on them and I didn’t get that close to them to kind of see.

Mr. Hoffman said looking at the pictures from after removal of the grid, it looks similar. Honestly, the other ones don’t seem quite as bulky as this.

Mr. Munos said this looks like those windows were bigger and the windows they put in they had to fill in all the way around to make it fit.

Chairman Miller said yes, that is the appearance of it.

Mr. Munos said it gives it a look that it is just an aluminum frame.

Mr. Hoffman said so there may be an additional spacer beyond just the new jamb with the window.

Chairman Miller said that may be the case.

Mr. Munos said they just don’t match. This is a lot bigger and the window makes it look like they made it fit.

Chairman Miller said I see what Simon is pointing to on the papers here. In the window frame, you can see the window doesn’t quite line up with it. I appreciate the discussion on this. It helps to know what to look for. I kind of think along with Al there’s not a lot
we can do here. We’re probably just going to approve them. It did improve the appearance to get those false dividers removed. When I saw those windows with the false dividers in it, it did kind of jump out at me that that really should not be there. This might help us to note to look for it on the future aluminum clad replacements and how they would need to be installed and maybe using this as a what not to do. I found the discussion interesting. Any other technical observations for these windows?

MOTION OF APPROVAL OF THE COA WAS MADE BY: Al Signorelli
MOTION SECONDED BY: Seth Hoffman
AYES: Justyn Arnold, Fernando Castrejon, Jen Del Debbio, Amber Foster, Seth Hoffman, Kristin Ludwig, Dan Miller, Simon Munoz, Al Signorelli, Mike Walker
NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mr. Signorelli, seconded by Mr. Hoffman, that this COA be approved. The motion carried.

PENDING

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) Grants - Dan Miller, Chairman

Mr. Miller said the good news is I think grants will have a reason to meet soon.

Mrs. Morgan said I do have an update for the Grant Committee as well as the next September meeting. In order to meet all the deadlines that we wanted to hit and to be able to give people as long as absolutely possible to submit the application since it was a short period, we’re going to have to do a special Preservation Commission meeting in September. So instead of September 12th we need to meet on September 5th. If people have any issues with that let me know so I can see if we have a quorum. If we don’t, maybe we can try another date that week as opposed to the Thursday. For the Grant Committee, that group will need to meet September 3rd or 4th. I will send an email out on that. We will have to walk on their recommendations to the Preservation Commission since the agenda will already be posted. I apologize for everything being so quick, but in order to meet the next BZE meeting we have to have the meeting a week earlier so that way we can get everything through City Council and signed before the end of the year.

Mr. Hoffman said will that meeting on the 5th by in lieu of the regular one on the 12th?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. We’ll cancel the one on the 12th. Unless something comes up where someone needs us to meet because of a COA, the next meeting will be our typical October meeting.

Ms. Ludwig said I received two questions from people I know who received postcards about the grant. How do we go about proposing their questions if someone has grant questions. I can go back and tell them the answer, but is there a better process that you want questions to be routed a certain way?

Mr. Signorelli said well I can tell you what I did. I just gave my neighbor a copy of the eligibility rules.

Mrs. Morgan said if they are specific questions and you feel you can answer them, you
are more than welcome to do that, or you can just send them to me.

Ms. Ludwig said they are kind of general questions. One was specifically about is there a specific list of contractors that we prefer that people use or do we care as long as they are licensed with the city.

Mrs. Morgan said we do not have a list of contractors that are required to be used. Depending on the work, it will depend on if they actually need licenses. If they don’t need a building permit, we don’t require licenses just for the historic permits. If people really have trouble with contractors, I have a draft working list of contractors that have received historic approved HCOA’s in the past couple of years, not extensive and not complete.

Ms. Ludwig said it sounded more like he had some contractors and wasn’t sure if he could use them of if it had to come from a list.

Mrs. Morgan said he can use any contractor unless they need a license, and that’s only if they are usually doing the building permit stuff.

Ms. Ludwig said you know the house that’s on the corner of Downer and View, the one with the real cool garden on the corner, it’s like yellow and green and red and it’s got the huge turret. It was a Mayor’s home, but he died before it was completed.

Mr. Signorelli said the one that’s on May and Downer? Is that the one?

Ms. Ludwig said I think it is May and Downer. So she had gotten a grant before to work on the side porch. I guess there was a thing where the contractor was given the money but never did the work. So apparently she has front porch repair work, which I’ve seen. It is really like sagging, but then she also has wooden gutter repairs, and need for storm windows to be built. In general, when people are submitting for a particular type of project, is there a type of thing that we prefer to see one over the other, like a front porch versus gutters or do we really care?

Mrs. Morgan said I just personally have been telling people to fill out and submit for any project. Sometimes they might have to have several small ones to get up to that minimum of $5,000. There are projects that I think would rank higher in the Commission’s view. For instance repairing the historic fabric as opposed to adding new material like gutters. Repairing the fabric I think the Commission would rank higher.

Ms. Ludwig said so maybe like a porch might come over a gutter.

Mr. Hoffman said and that’s the purpose of the scoring criteria. It essentially speaks to those.

Chairman Miller said I don’t have the scoring criteria approved in front of us. Did that also include anything about streetscape or just the impact on the neighborhood?

Mrs. Morgan said I think there was a streetscape comment on it.

Chairman Miller said so on that point probably like a front porch restoration would score high because is it very visible.

Ms. Ludwig said and it needs it.
Chairman Miller said a question on that house. Does this grant program, I was thinking it only applied to locally recognized historic districts and local landmarks.

Mrs. Morgan said I think that one is a landmark.

Ms. Ludwig said I think she is a landmark and that’s why she was allowed to do it in the past.

Mrs. Morgan said and then if you are in the Near Eastside, basically the only one that really applies to, if you are in the Near Eastside you are not local landmark. You could agree to become locally landmarked as long as the Commission would agree that they would approve that as a local landmark. That approval of the landmark has to go through before we release any funds, but they can apply for it and be eligible for grants.

Chairman Miller said but that would apply to anything outside of the local landmarks?

Mrs. Morgan said that would basically just apply to the Near Eastside historic district. It is for the National Register ones. The other ones really don’t have any residential properties like LaSalle Street or Stolp Island, so it is really mostly Near Eastside that that applies to.

Chairman Miller said wouldn’t the homes in the Near Eastside district be included already?

Mrs. Morgan said no because they are National Register. They are National Register. They are not a local regulated historic district. So when they become landmarked then they would be agreeing to those local regulations.

Chairman Miller said so the Near Eastside isn’t a locally recognized…

Mrs. Morgan said not locally regulated, no. Several of them are local landmarks and regulated, but the district as a whole is not one of our locally regulated districts.

Chairman Miller said do we have a list of who all serves on the Grant Committee? I’m sorry I just don’t have that in front of me, maybe we do.

Mrs. Morgan said yourself. There is a realtor, Linda.

Chairman Miller said it is it Linda Pilmer?

Mr. Signorelli said we don’t know if she is still involved or not.

Mrs. Morgan said I don’t. I believe Jim Schweizer said once he stepped down from the Commission said he would like to be on the Grant Committee. Scott Pettit I believe. Then there is another Commission member. I can get the list and e-mail it out.

Mrs. Del Debbio said so just to kind of clarify, if you have a landlord meeting and landlords who own a historic home on the Eastside want to apply, they would then have to be on a national historic register in order to get the grant?

Mrs. Morgan said no. So the Near Eastside, any of our local historic districts can get a grant, so Near Eastside, Tanner, Palace, Riddle, any of those as long as it is
owner-occupied and two units or less unless it was built as multi-family are eligible outright for grants. It is the Near Eastside, it is a National Register, not locally regulated district. If you get the grant money you have to agree then to preserve the building with the historic requirements.

Chairman Miller said when you are saying Near Eastside National District, do you mean Near Westside?

Mrs. Morgan said I’m sorry, yes. It is the Near Westside.

Chairman Miller said so just to clarify, the Near Eastside historic district is a locally recognized district. Residents of the district do qualify for this program.

Mrs. Del Debbio said the East Aurora School District just bought the Nursing Training Center, I guess you say, at Copley. Some people have been asking me in the district, they are going to eliminate the street between Bardwell and the old hospital. Is that a concern to the historic district at all or is there anything that would ever come up about eliminating a street?

Mrs. Morgan said I don’t know if you guys have comments on it. It doesn’t have to come before the Commission since it is not in one of our historic districts. But if anyone had any comments you could express them.

Mr. Signorelli said I don’t know if it is helpful to you, but we are in a discussion now where there is a house where the owners have expressed interest in attaining some loan money and they are not locally landmarked and they are not in the National District, right Jill? The one on View.

Mrs. Morgan said they are in the National Register.

Mr. Signorelli said well that makes them eligible then, right?

Mrs. Morgan said they have to be a local landmark. They have to agree to the local landmarking, which they are open to.

Mr. Signorelli said anyway, that’s a discussion that we are going to have to locally landmark them so they can take advantage of the grant.

Mr. Hoffman said so if they are in the National District it is a pretty simple process to become locally landmarked in order to be eligible? Is it easier than if they are not in any recognized district?

Mrs. Morgan said if they are not in any recognized district, they are not eligible for a grant. That’s how is it is written. Even if they want to become a local landmark, we did limit it to it has to be a National Register. I think again the thought was to try to gear it towards the ones who have been kind of doing efforts as well as recognizing that the National Registers it would be nice to try to incorporate more of them into landmarking.

Mr. Signorelli said and I think keeping in mind too, certainly in the case of this house, I can’t remember the exact address, but there are three houses on View across the street from the high rise condos and they are all significant architecturally and this particular one is the one at the end with the stone porch, so it is already significant. I suspect that all three of those houses, one of them I already know, were built by wealthy important Aurorans, so there’s that background.
Ms. Ludwig said one of them I think was the Lancaster’s house, one of those three, I believe. They were a really significant family.

Mr. Signorelli said so that is being discussed. There is one more thing I’d like to interject, which I didn’t talk about before, I mentioned it briefly, again, this is having to do with landmarking, the WPA art in the old Todd School. There are several pieces, probably the most located in one spot of WPA art in town and we want to discuss landmarking the art. There is a precedent. I have a National Register nomination for some art, which I will share with you when the time comes.

Chairman Miller said I heard some questions on the grants. One is when would work need to be completed. I said it wouldn’t be until next year because this round is starting too late this year and we can’t require that it be done.

Mrs. Morgan said we won’t probably get the actual agreements or anything finished and signed until October so you are looking at spring work. I haven’t set the exact date, but I’m probably doing a mid-summer cutoff for work being finalized just so we don’t have a complete overlapping with the 2020 grants.

Chairman Miller said the grant is a reimbursement program.

Mrs. Morgan said it is.

Chairman Miller said so that money would be paid to the homeowner when they have like invoices?

Mrs. Morgan said correct. The contractors will have to sign a waiver saying that they have been paid. The contract is between the homeowner and the contractor. The city doesn’t want to get in the middle of that. You are free to choose any contractor as long as their cost estimates don’t come in beyond what we are funding unless the homeowner wants to fund that. They have to pay the contractor and the contractor has to sign a waiver that they have been paid.

Chairman Miller said so the homeowner is front-funding and then we reimburse them. So there is really no way for the contractor to not get paid.

Mrs. Morgan said right and I think we’ve had it in the past where the city reimbursed the homeowners. The contractor comes to the city and says I was never paid. This was a grant project. We want to avoid that.

Chairman Miller said will you actually check the properties to see that the work was actually done?

Mrs. Morgan said yes. In order to get paid, we have to have an inspection. All the forms have to be completed and returned. Staff inspects it and then if the inspection goes fine we will submit a request to Revenue and Collections to issue a check.

Chairman Miller said then the Grants Committee meeting will need to be scheduled and then need to be advertised.

Mrs. Morgan said yes.

Chairman Miller said that sub-committee meeting might attract some attention too.
B) Near Eastside Historic District - Jennifer Baird-del Debbio, Chairperson

Has not met.

C) Riddle Highlands Historic District - Fernando Castrejon, Chairperson

Has not met.

D) Public Awareness - Mike Walker, Chariman

Has not met.

E) Landmarks - Al Signorelli, Chariman

Mr. Signorelli said we have not met, but there will be a meeting coming up soon. There are some issues we need to discuss. One of things that I’m waiting for is I’ve spoken to a member of the Big Woods School Foundation about local landmarking it. They are interested. They had a board meeting just a couple of days ago and they were supposed to get back to me and let me know what the board decision was. Also there was talk going back and forth about whether or not the Chestnut Street cobblestone was or was not landmarked. Jill determined with research that it is, in fact, already landmarked. That was one of the things we wanted to discuss. Also we need to talk about some possible more members to add to the Landmark Committee. Also I want to point out that it is sort of the responsibility of all of the Commissioners to be involved in some way or another in one or more of the subcommittees.

Ms. Ludwig said I’m not on a committee at all, so I’d be happy to participate if you need more people.

Mr. Signorelli said we are not going to be meeting all that often.

Ms. Ludwig said that would be an interesting one for me.

F) FoxWalk Design Review - Fernando Castrejon, Chairperson

There will be a meeting next week.

G) Tanner/Palace Historic District Committee - Justyn Arnold, Chairperson

Has not met.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Del Debbio said is there any more news about the Masonic Temple?

Mrs. Morgan said I have not heard anything. I saw it in the newspaper. That’s the most I’ve heard of it.

Mrs. Del Debbio said would there be anything of any value still left in it? You mentioned artwork at Todd School. Would there be any kind of interest saving
anything historic maybe on the inside?

Mr. Signorelli said there was. I haven’t been in it in years. I know at some point, I saw people walking out with light fixtures and wall sconces and so at this point in time I don’t know what’s left really. There was also some interesting furniture that was original to the lodge.

Mrs. Del Debbio said well they had a sale years ago and most of it was sold.

Ms. Ludwig said we don’t get involved with any kind of historical records do we?

Mrs. Morgan said no, just structures. Usually any type of records I typically will refer people to the Historical Society.

Ms. Ludwig said there are just some records stuck in one of the buildings here in the Water Street Mall that I’ve been trying to tell the city for years to get them out of there and put them someplace safe, but they still haven’t been moved.

Mrs. Morgan said if they are city records then we would keep them. Other records, I prefer not to be a repository for records.

Ms. Ludwig said I don’t mean as a repository. I mean as far as getting them a better safe place to go.

Mr. Signorelli said that would be the Historical Society.

Ms. Ludwig said the Historical Society has not been allowed to touch these. These are like early original maps and early deeds and really, really early stuff. Unfortunately it is on the third floor of 12 S. Broadway, I think, but they are just sitting there and everybody has kind of forgotten they are even there. I keep telling the city to move them over. It is literally just boxes and boxes and boxes just piled up of stuff. I’m always concerned that the city is someday going to go oh clean out that floor and it is going to go in the dumpster when there is like hand written wills in there and literally maps showing the original cable cars going through.

Mr. Castrejon said call John Jaros.

Mr. Signorelli said let’s all call him and spark some interest. I don’t know where he’ll find room to put them, but we’ll bug him until he does.

Mrs. Morgan said I don’t know if the issues is someone from the city going through it to determine that it not something that we are legally to keep before we release it.

Mr. Signorelli said well if the city could, in fact, release it, obviously the Historic Society is the place where that should be.

Mr. Signorelli said I have another question Jill. What is going on with the boarded up garage openings in the old Pocus Building? Do you know anything about that?

Mrs. Morgan said I think they are doing work on the building. It is board up because they are completely rehabbing the first floor.

Mr. Signorelli said why hasn’t that come before us?
Mrs. Morgan said it is not a local landmark. It’s not even in the FoxWalk. It is just outside the FoxWalk.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Signorelli, seconded by Mr. Castrejon, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

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