

FLINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Draft Meeting Minutes
April 4th, 2024

Commissioners Present

Stephanie Wright, Chair
Kurt Neiswender, Vice-Chair
Michael Hurley
Beverly Davis
Cade Surface
Samantha Farah

Staff Present

Max Lester, Int. Zoning Coordinator
Tyler Bailey, Deputy Director of Business
Services
Dalton Castle, Planner I

Absent:

Megan McAdow

ROLL CALL:

Chairperson Wright called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. Roll was taken and a quorum was present.

The meeting was held in-person as well as via Zoom and phone conferencing as approved.

Megan McAdow, absent
Beverly Davis, present
Michael Hurley, present
Kurt Neiswender, present

Stephanie Wright, present
Samantha Farah, present
Cade Surface, present

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

Commissioner Surface made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Neiswender supported the motion.

M/S – Surface/Neiswender

Motion carried by voice vote.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Commissioner Farah made a motion to approve the officers elected in the emergency election held in December 2023, to continue to serve until April 2025. Commissioner Surface supported the motion.

M/S – Farah/Surface

Motion carried by voice vote.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND DISPOSAL:

Minutes of March 7th, 2024

Chairperson Wright asked if there were any corrections for the minutes of March 7th, 2024. No changes were requested.

Commissioner Davis made a motion to accept the minutes of March 7th, 2024 as written. Commissioner Surface supported the motion.

M/S – Davis/Surface
Motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Chairperson Wright opened the floor for public comment. No one spoke.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS/NOTICES TO PROCEED:

Applicant: Leslie Beemer
Property Owner: Leslie Beemer/Selah's Red Tent
Location: 807 East St. (PID # 41-18-206-016)
Scope of Work: Twenty-nine new vinyl windows to match existing windows.

Leslie Beemer presented her application. Ms. Beemer showed two options for windows she is considering. Ms. Beemer has not yet decided between them because she needs to receive a quote for the cost of each option.

Commissioner Farah asked what material the alternate option was made of. Ms. Beemer explained the alternate material is aluminium clad wood which would last longer; however, it would be more expensive than vinyl.

Commissioner Surface asked the applicant to explain more about the house and its age. Ms. Beemer explained it was constructed in 1890 and that she has been unable to find much more information in her research. She acquired the home in July 2023 and promptly repaired the fire damage at the back of the house.

Ms. Beemer clarified that the wood option is her first choice for the replacement windows but reiterated that is contingent on their affordability once she receives the quote.

Commissioner Farah asked Max if it would be appropriate to give them provisional approval to allow for either the vinyl or wood material, as the application only stated vinyl windows. Max expressed uncertainty on how to handle it and stated that the Planning Commission is known to give conditional approvals.

Chairperson Wright asked the Commission if there are any objections to the samples presented. Commissioner Neiswender stated that vinyl windows did not exist when this house was created and that he would vote against allowing them. Commissioner Neiswender noted that the renovations to homes in Carriage Town had used all wood windows.

Commissioner Hurley commented that the wood windows would be more appropriate than the vinyl windows.

Chairperson Wright recommended that they table this item to be returned to at a later date once the applicant has determined the exact material she intends to use. Ms. Beemer expressed concern that she would like to finish renovations by December 2024. Chairperson Wright assured her that this item will be on the May 2nd, 2024, Historic District Commission (HDC) agenda.

The item was tabled to be seen again at the May 2nd, 2024, HDC meeting.

Applicant: *Flint Children's Museum*
Property Owner: *Uptown Reinvestment Corporation*
Location: *601 S. Saginaw St. (PID # 40-12-437-007)*
Scope of Work: *Small entry vestibule addition to parking lot side of building. The remaining footprint of the building remains intact. Removal of EIFS façade, metal framing, and ribbon windows on first and second floors. Original brick and limestone sills, caps, and original openings for windows and storefront will be revealed and maintained.*

Moses Timlin, representative of Uptown Reinvestment Corporation, presented the application. He introduced Kimberly Roddy, the Executive Director of the Flint Children's Museum, and Ed Dean, an architect at FUNchitecture assisting with the project.

Mr. Dean explained the history of the building, noting that in 1990 metal paneling was put over the brick covering the original brick façade. Based on selective demolition, the brick under the paneling appears to be in great condition as well as much of the limestone. He explained at this point in time it appears the cornice at the top of the building had been removed but this cannot be confirmed with their limited selective demolitions.

Ms. Roddy explained that the building and location are exactly what the Flint Children's Museum was looking for in a new location as it increases their building space and parking capacity while remaining central in Flint and in proximity to schools for class field trips.

Chairperson Wright asked what programs or displays would be added to the additional space the new building allots. Ms. Roddy explained they would have expanded assembly rooms for birthdays and class field trips as well as new interactive exhibits.

Commissioner Davis commented that she appreciated them uncovering the historic façade of the building and that the new side they intend to add to the back would blend well with the neighboring buildings.

Commissioner Surface asked if they intend to replace or restore the cornice shown in the older photographs of the building. Mr. Dean explained that at this time they are unsure of what remains of the cornice under the paneling, however their intent is to restore existing limestone or replace it with something similar.

Commissioner Surface asked where the primary entrance of the building would be. Mr. Dean explained the primary entrance would be at the back of the building. Commissioner Farah asked the reasoning behind putting the entrance in the back. Mr. Dean explained it would be more convenient as the parking lot is in the back and it would also be safer as they have space for a designated bus unloading zone. He also explained that the front area of the building is larger with two stories and that space is better used for large exhibits while entering through the back allows them to control foot traffic through the building easier.

Commissioner Surface asked about the rear wing of the building along Saginaw St. Mr. Dean explained that side originally had metal siding some of which is still visible if you look up from inside the building. Commissioner Surface asked the thought process behind material selections for that section of the building. Mr. Dean explained that section would likely need to come off with the rest of the metal paneling and they intend to replace it with a similar hard material that is softer in appearance.

Commissioner Neiswender commented that the proposed window system appears to be aluminum when the original was likely to be steel. Mr. Dean reiterated it would be very difficult to determine exact materials until they are able to entirely remove the metal paneling. Commissioner Neiswender asked when that would happen and if they needed to approve it now or could wait until a more thorough investigation is done.

Mr. Timlin expressed confusion and asked if their application did not properly outline the changes to be made at the property. Commissioner Neiswender stated that the applicants have said they will “try to replicate the patterns as best as possible” and then stated there exists evidence as to what the building and windows looked like.

Commissioner Neiswender said there is not a lot of detail in terms of the signage and lighting which makes him hesitant to approve the application.

Commissioner Hurley asked if they are holding up the development by not giving the project preliminary approval. Max said that the Planning Commission will not be concerned about aspects such as the windows and potentially not even the signage. Commissioner Hurley asked if they are in the process of applying for building permits. Mr. Dean explained they are not at that stage yet. Max said they could potentially receive conditional approval from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Davis said the applicant could return for a separate approval for lights and signage.

Commissioner Surface acknowledged that when repurposing a historic building, changes need to be made to accommodate the new use while noting that it is the job of an architect to make the historic exterior work with interior design for the new use. He then added that it seems to be a missed opportunity to not also restore the cornice.

Mr. Timlin noted the significant cost implications and challenges in fully researching the existing materials. Commissioner Surface said he is sympathetic to that, then stated that those costs are part of the burden for the privilege of investing in a building in the Historic District. Commissioner Hurley noted they are not required to recreate something that is gone. Mr. Timlin reiterated that the cornice has likely been entirely removed.

Chairperson Wright asked if the intent is to table the application or to alter the scope to something they are more comfortable approving at this time. Commissioner Farah commented that she would prefer to have more information on specific materials and the state of the building under the metal paneling.

Mr. Timlin expressed concern that they need to provide a list of materials to the Planning Commission and that they may receive approval there but then not be approved by the Historic District Commission. He asked for more clarity on what additional details the HDC would like to see to ensure that when they return, they have all the proper information. Commissioner Hurley said information on the windows would be an easy addition to the application, the rest is largely unknowns as the building has been fully investigated. Commissioner Surface said he would like to have more clarity on the thought process behind design decisions.

Commissioner Davis added that she does not want the applicant to feel discouraged and that she is excited about the project.

Mr. Timlin expressed concern over HDC approval being a requirement on the City of Flint site plan review checklist. Max explained the Planning Commission could include it as a condition of approval.

Commissioner Hurley added that dimensions of any new additions to the building should be included in the application.

The item was tabled to be seen again at the May 2nd, 2024, HDC meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

No old business was discussed at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

No new business was discussed at this time.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S – Wright/Surface

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Unanimously carried.