

FLINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
May 2nd, 2024

Commissioners Present

Stephanie Wright, Chair
Kurt Neiswender, Vice-Chair
Beverly Davis
Cade Surface
Megan McAdow
Samantha Farah

Staff Present

Max Lester, Int. Zoning Coordinator
Brian Acheff, Zoning Coordinator
Dalton Castle, Planner I

Absent:

Michael Hurley

ROLL CALL:

In the absence of Chairperson Wright, Vice-Chair Neiswender assumed the role of Chair.

Commissioner Neiswender called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Roll was taken, and a quorum was present.

The meeting was held in-person as well as via Zoom.

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

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

Max noted that an email was sent to the Commissioners with slight edits to the description of the 807 East St. Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Commissioner Farah requested that a discussion be held under New Business regarding driveways and emergency demolitions.

Commissioner Surface made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Farah supported the motion.

M/S – Surface/Farah

Motion carried by voice vote.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND DISPOSAL:

Minutes for the meeting of April 4th, 2024, were presented.

Commissioner Farah made a motion to accept the minutes of April 4th, 2024, as presented. Commissioner Surface supported the motion.

M/S – Farah/Surface

Motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Commissioner Neiswender 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: *7 windows in front to be replaced with Pella wood windows. 3 windows on side to be replaced with Pella pine, clad windows. 8 windows on opposite side to be replaced with pine, clad windows. 11 windows not visible from right-of way to be replaced with Pella wood reserve windows. White, black, tan, cream coloring.*

Leslie Beemer presented her application. She explained that she is offering her services as a dula out of her residence and that she was not aware the building was historic until she had already purchased it. She explained the funding issues she has ran into while trying to maintain the wooden windows as opposed to replacing them with wood and aluminium clad wood Pella windows.

Commissioner Neiswender noted that the Commission has approved the proposed product, or a similar product, before.

Commissioner Surface said he sympathized with the applicants struggles with financing and the lack of disclosure of the building’s historic status.

Commissioner Farah asked if any of the windows were able to be fixed as opposed to being replaced. Ms. Beemer explained that a portion of them were.

Commissioner Surface asked if any of the existing windows were the originals or if all the original windows had already been replaced. Ms. Beemer explained that based on the lack of vinyl on a couple of them it would seem some are the originals.

Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve the application as presented. Commissioner Surface supported the motion.

Roll Call:

Megan McAdow, yes	Stephanie Wright, absent
Beverly Davis, yes	Samantha Farah, yes
Michael Hurley, absent	Cade Surface, yes
Kurt Neiswender, yes	

M/S – Davis/Surface
5 – yes 0 – no 0 – abstain
Motion carried.

Chairperson Wright arrived at 5:53 p.m. and reassumed her role as Chair.

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 to remain 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 storefronts will be revealed and maintained.*

Moses Timlin, Shannon White, and Ed Dean presented their application. Mr. Timlin explained that since they had last appeared before the Historic District Commission (HDC) they had received conditional approval from the Planning Commission pending HDC approval.

Mr. Dean explained they had been able to perform more selective demolitions to get a better idea of the existing building under the metal paneling. He discussed their restoration plan for the building, noting that aside from needing repainting, the walls are in otherwise good condition.

Ms. White explained they had altered the previously proposed wood-look on the front façade facing N Saginaw St. with a brick look which is more similar to the historic façade. She said they are considering having a kid friendly mural painted over the brick.

Mr. Dean provided renderings of sample signage design for the upper floor tenants which has not been finalized. He then explained how they had attempted to get a view of the cornice via their selective demolition and concluded that what most likely has happened is that the "bump out" portions of the cornice had been removed. Their plan is to put metal caps on the cornice where the bump outs had been and restore the remainder of the existing limestone.

Commissioner Surface thanked the applicants for the additional information since their previous presentation. He asked if the provided rendering which shows the bump outs restored is accurate to the proposed design. Ms. White clarified that the provided rendering was optimistic, at this time it is not reflective of their proposal in regard to the cornice based on their most recent inspections.

Commissioner Neiswender asked what the coloring of the brick would be, as the renderings appear to show it as mostly reddish brown. Ms. White explained that the Northeast façade as well as the alley section have gray brick which they intend to prep for a mural. Commissioner Neiswender clarified that the coloring of the brick is not so much the concern as maintaining the historic brick of the time period.

Commissioner Davis spoke favorably towards the applicant and expressed her appreciation for the applicant's intent to restore the building.

Commissioner Surface asked if the wood paneling along the West façade would be replaced with brick. Mr. Dean explained that the wood paneling appears to have been completely removed. Ms. White added that the lower windows along the façade would be removed or potentially raised, and the windows appeared to have been later in the building's life span.

Commissioner Neiswender made a motion to approve the application. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Surface expressed concern with the uncertainty of what will be done with the cornice. He stated that he feels uncomfortable voting on the application without having a hard plan. Ms. White asked that if they were able to say for certain that the bump outs had been removed and that their plan is to put metal caps over them and restore the remainder of the limestone would that be acceptable.

Chairperson Wright asked if it would be appropriate to have the applicant return once the project is further along and certain portions of their proposal are certain.

Commissioner Neiswender stated that there is evidence that the bump outs of the cornice existed and that it may be possible to recast them. Ms. White said that would cause issues with the budget, which she says they are already in excess of. She went on to say that the issue of this case rests on whether or not the HDC wants to see the building restored to the best status Uptown Reinvestment Corporation is capable of and stated that the building is not on any historic registry.

Commissioner Surface said that the bump outs on the cornice are well documented and are a key feature of the silhouette of the building and believes that they should be weighed in the decision. He reiterated that he respects the work the applicant has done.

Chairperson Wright discussed the possibility of amending the previous motion to request updates regarding the windows and the limestone cornice.

Commissioner Surface stated that he believes the HDC should approve or disapprove the application as presented and he believes budget constraints should not be a factor in this case in regard to the cornice. He added that Communities First had recently been required by the HDC to restore the damaged cornice of the Patterson building.

Moses commented that in the case of the Patterson building the cornice was damaged whereas with the proposal for the Children's Museum the bump outs on the cornice were removed years prior by a previous owner. Commissioner Neiswender said that in the eyes of the HDC the two situations are effectively the same.

Ms. White expressed concern that the HDC will not approve the application as presented and would rather not see the building restored. She said that Uptown Reinvestment Corporation stands to lose their grant money for the project if not approved by the HDC. She said the HDC can take it or leave it in reference to the proposed restoration.

Chairperson Wright stated that the HDC is currently discussing the possibility of amending the motion such that the applicants may move forward with the project while recognizing the concerns of the Commissioners.

Commissioner Neiswender clarified that the building is on the agenda because the building is within the Carriage Town Historic District. He distinguished between a property being within a historic district and a building having a separate historic designation.

Moses clarified that they are presenting two clear options with the cornice depending on what state it is in, adding that in the event there is more to preserve than they are expecting their intent is to present to the HDC on their plans to restore it.

Commissioner Neiswender amended his previous motion to approve the application to add the condition that applicants return to the HDC for approval of the cornice prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy. Commissioner Davis agreed to the amendment.

Ms. White said that due to the Planning Commission giving the project conditional approval based on HDC approval, if the HDC were to disapprove the application then the project would be “dead in the water.”

Commissioner Farah commented that she does not believe the ultimatum presented by Ms. White is a fair assessment of the situation.

Roll Call:

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

Stephanie Wright, yes
Samantha Farah, yes
Cade Surface, yes

*M/S – Neiswender/Davis
6 – yes 0 – no 0 – abstain
Motion carried.*

Mr. Timlin thanked the HDC for their time as well as Ms. White for attending on her birthday.

Applicant: Kurt Neiswender, AIA
Property Owner: Communities First, Inc.
Location: 655 S. Saginaw St. (PID # 41-18-117-011)
Scope of Work: Replacement of all exterior windows, not including first floor storefront at this time. Saginaw and Third St. facing windows to be fire rated metal windows to replace existing fire rated windows. Black finish.

Commissioner Neiswender presented the application. He announced that he would be recusing himself for the duration of this item.

Commissioner McAdow asked if the windows will all be acquired from the same vendor. Commissioner Neiswender explained that the non-fire rated windows will be custom-made by a different vendor than the fire rated windows.

Commissioner Surface said that accurate pictures of what is to be done should be provided by all applicants.

Commissioner Neiswender said that the new windows would be painted black to match the ground floor store front.

Commissioner Farah made a motion to approve the application as presented. Chairperson Wright supported the motion.

Roll Call:

Megan McAdow, yes
Beverly Davis, yes
Michael Hurley, absent
Kurt Neiswender, abstain

Stephanie Wright, yes
Samantha Farah, yes
Cade Surface, yes

M/S – Farah/Wright
5 – yes 0 – no 1 – abstain
Motion carried.

Commissioner Surface stated his confusion with financial hardship as a criteria for approval and would like more clarity as to how and when it should be weighed in an application. He also noted that he does not appreciate being pressured to approve an application. Commissioner McAdow echoed Commissioner Surface's sentiment.

OLD BUSINESS:

No old business was discussed at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

Driveways and Emergency Demolitions

Commissioner Surface and Commissioner Farah expressed concern that in the future the HDC will be properly informed of any easements on properties.

Commissioner Surface expressed concern with applicants not providing enough information to the HDC. Commissioner Neiswender suggested adding a checklist to the existing application.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S – Surface/Wright

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Unanimously carried.