Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Legislative Chamber

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Members: Joan Fogarty – Chair, Scott Dobbe – Vice Chair, Carrie Meyer, Regan Pence, Kathryn Aultz, Jaime Suarez, Brian Magee and Curt Witzenburg.

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Members Present: Joan Fogarty, Chair
Kathryn Aultz
Carrie Meyer
Regan Pence
Curt Witzenburg

Members Not Present: Scott Dobbe – Vice-Chair
Brian Magee
Jaime Suarez

Others Present: Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager
Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department
Clinette Ingram, Recording Secretary

Ms. Fogarty, called the meeting to order at 1:33 pm and introduced the Commission members and staff. She explained the procedures for hearing the cases. There were five members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE the January 10, 2018 minutes. Mr. Pence seconded the motion.

AYES: Aultz, Pence, Witzenburg, Fogarty

ABSTAIN: Meyer

MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-1
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on February 14, 2018, Blake Uhing appeared before the Commission. Jed Moulton appeared on behalf of the Planning Department.

Mr. Uhing stated that he wanted to replace several of the existing windows with double-hung, vinyl windows. He also proposed adding a new driveway on the left side of the property. He intended to keep the windows that added to the historical character of the home. He stated that the new windows would help with functionality, sustainability, energy consumption and would improve the overall appearance of the home. He showed pictures of other properties in Bemis Park with windows that were similar to what he was proposing. The single-lane driveway would be 10’ wide and would run from the street to the back of the home. He indicated that the driveway would make it possible for future homeowners to add another lane to the driveway and build a garage to the rear of the home if they chose to do so. He also showed pictures of other homes in that area with off-street parking similar to what was being requested.

Ms. Meyer noted that wood and aluminum windows were preferable to vinyl from a historic standpoint. She inquired as to why the applicant chose a vinyl window. Mr. Uhing responded that white vinyl windows were more of the standard for single-family homes and were more affordable than wood windows. He added that the restored wooden windows would have interior storm windows installed if necessary.

Mary Minturn (3416 Hawthorne Avenue) appeared in opposition to the request. She stated that she was appearing on behalf of several property owners in the landmark district. She submitted a petition (Exhibit 2) in opposition from members of the district. She suggested that a petition from the Bemis Park Neighborhood Association (BPNA) be disregarded since she believed that it did not accurately reflect the opinion of all of the members in the district. She added that it only represented a small number of property owners in that neighborhood. Ms. Minturn stated that shortly after the home was purchased, the owners were advised that the home is in a historic district. She stated that property owners in the district supported the Planning Department’s recommendation that the windows be repaired. With regards to the proposed driveway, she stated that property owners were opposed to any activity that could negatively affect the existing sycamore trees. Also submitted were estimates for the cost of constructing a retaining wall and parking spaces at the rear of the property. She explained that any driveways in the area were put in before 1983 which was before the area was designated a landmark district. She added that if the driveway request was granted, it should parallel to the home and accompanied by a garage to the rear of the property. Ms. Minturn also expressed concern that commission members were not allowed access into the home during the site visit that was conducted on February 7, 2018.

Joan Garvey (3509 Hawthorne Avenue) appeared before the commission. She supported Ms. Minturn’s statements. She submitted historic pictures showing the existing sycamore (Exhibit 2) trees and explained the reasons why the existing driveways in the district were in place. She agreed that any driveway from the street should be located directly adjacent to the home so that if a garage was built, it
would be situated behind the home and would not be visible from the street.

Mr. Uhing submitted letters of support from neighbors in the area. He stated that there were some misconceptions about his plans for the home. He indicated that the BPNA held separate votes for the proposed windows and driveway and that both passed in his favor. He explained that commission members were not let into the home for safety/liability reasons.

Mr. Moulton stated that the Landmarks Commission was given the authority to decide what is and is not supportive of the preservation of the historical character of the district

Ms. Fogarty discussed the importance of the area to Omaha’s history. She mentioned that there were other issues with the home besides the windows and proposed driveway that needed to be addressed as the home was being restored.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to DENY the request. Mr. Pence seconded the motion.

AYES: Aultz, Meyer, Pence, Witzenburg, Fogartgy

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on February 14, 2018, Samir Patel (2861 Spring Rose Circle, Coralville, Iowa) appeared before the Commission. Jed Moulton appeared on behalf of the Planning Department.

Mr. Patel recalled that the case had been laid over from the January 10, 2018 meeting. He explained that the overall design of the hotel had not changed. He presented a rendering of the hotel showing how it would appear in the context of the Old Market. He highlighted the following changes that had been made to the design: the windows had been recessed further into the façade of the building; black metal was added to the storefront and guestroom windows; a stone base was added to the building; the stone banding was removed from the first and second floor rooms; and a Moxy blade sign was added to the corner of the structure. He also brought a sample of the brick that would be used.

In response to Mr. Pence, Mr. Moulton stated that the banding around the top two floors of the building were similar to an existing building to the south. He added that the Planning Department believed that the banding would be a distinguishing characteristic of the building.

Mr. Moulton discussed the applicant’s plan to use neon signage on the building. He stated that in this particular case the use of neon would be an exception, but would be appropriate if the signage was done in a traditional way. He recommended that the proposed blade sign at the corner be situated between the 2nd and 3rd levels of the hotel. He added that the applicant would continue to work with staff on the design. He noted that the use on neon product signs would still be prohibited in the Old Market.

Mr. Patel responded that the preference was to have the sign installed higher on the building so that it could be seen from a distance.

Mr. Fogarty noted that the Planning Department recommended approval of the sign with the following conditions: 1) The applicant must continue to work with City staff to find a sign proposal that meets the intent of the Old Market guidelines; and 2) Material samples and/or specifications of all exterior materials must be provided to City staff prior to the building permit application.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE subject to the following conditions: 1) The applicant must continue to work with City staff to find a sign proposal that meets the intent of the Old Market guidelines; and 2) Material samples and/or specifications of all exterior materials must be provided to City staff prior to the building permit application. Ms. Meyer seconded the motion.

AYES: Aultz, Meyer, Pence, Witzenburg, Fogarty

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.
DISCUSSION:

There was a brief discussion about CLG training. Ms. Fogarty stated that the Spanish Rite Cathedral had extended an invitation to the commission to take a tour of the building. Dates and times of the tour would be decided at a later time.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was the consensus of the Board to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:22 p.m.