

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

September 14, 2004

6:30 PM

Rockford City Hall, Conference Room B

MEMBERS PRESENT: Val Olafson; Laura Bachelder; Jeanne Ludeke; Frank St. Angel, Scott Sanders

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vickie Krueger, Alderman John Beck

STAFF: Ginny Gregory, Jackie Bernard

OTHERS: Shirley Waddell, applicant; Alison Ames, applicant; Sam Dave (Everett Diamond's son); Contractor for 909 N. Prospect Street; Vito Addotta (representing the developer for River Oaks).

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Val Olafson.

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made by Laura Bachelder to **APPROVE** the minutes of August 11, 2004 and August 31, 2004. The Motion was seconded by Frank St. Angel and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

► 602 Oak Street

Shirley Waddell was present to explain her proposed project. She needs to repair and replace the rear porch stringers, treads, and railing. She also wants to replace the upper porch landing and railing. She said that she had found some rotten wood along the side of the building and wants to have it repaired. Basically, she is going to repair and replace exactly as it is (she showed a picture).

Scott pointed out the wrought iron piece shown in the picture was to give height to meet code. Shirley was unaware of this, so Scott pointed it out in the picture and explained that there was a 1" x 1" square piece of black wrought iron and it was primarily for safety reasons. The existing top of the rail is 34" in height and that adds another 8" to bring it up to code. Scott suggested the owner meet with the contractor to clarify the exact use of this wrought iron piece.

A **MOTION** was made by Frank St. Angel to approve the application as written. The motion was seconded by Scott Sanders and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

► 319 South 2nd Street

Alison Ames was present and explained that they want to remove and replace the stairs from the second floor back porch. The stairs would match the existing ones but face in the opposite direction. She said

that it appears that the back of the house used to be an efficiency unit. They want to be able to access their fenced-in yard, especially since they have dogs. They will be replacing all of the rotten wood and the fence will line up from the corner as approved at the previous meeting. The fence will be 6' for the dogs and for privacy. The posts for the porch and the gate will be done at the same time so they will match. Scott suggested removing the small piece of concrete. Val wanted to make sure the railing on the porch would be the same level as the fence.

Frank St. Angel made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the application as written with the stipulation of replicating the skirting, railing and posts of the existing porch, and matching the top of the railing with the top of the fence. The motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

► **909 North Prospect Street**

Everett Diamond's son, Sam, was present along with the contractor to explain the proposed project which is to replace the old siding. They explained that the existing masonite siding has been on there for a long time and has deteriorated.

Ginny mentioned that she checked into the original building permits, and they show the house was built in 1954.

Scott felt the guidelines allows for siding replacement, but it should match the original in appearance, dimension and proportion as closely as possible, since siding was an original material on this house. Scott asked if they plan to alter the look in scale. The contractor said they would like to alter the scale. He said there was 12" masonite board on there now, which was popular back in the 1980s when it was installed, but it has started to lose its grip. They want to use the top of the line 46,000 gauge panel siding with a teflon edge to ensure no sagging. It has a strong shock absorbent panel with a Dutch lap look and carries a #6 hurricane locking system.

Scott asked if it resembled the original siding or had it been rehabbed? They said it was not original and had been rehabbed by Patterson Lumber back in the 1980s. The original siding is gone.

Val reminded everyone that we are not dealing with original siding. Scott commented that the Commission was anti- siding on houses built prior to 1950.

They will be putting up new shutters, which will look the same as the old ones. They will be polystyrene and do not need to be painted. Val cautioned that they should not change the profile.

Frank mentioned that in the past, we have approved vinyl siding on houses built after 1950. Ginny explained the logic on that was aluminum siding was available beginning approximately 1950, and theoretically, the house could have been built with aluminum siding, not vinyl.

Scott asked the size of the panel board and they responded by saying they are planning to use 4-inch cornerboards.

Frank St. Angel made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the application to replace the exterior siding with Dutch lap vinyl siding as submitted. The siding is to have a Dutch lap look with 4½-inch boards and with 4-inch cornerboards. The motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

► Section 106 Review (River Oaks – 2400 South Main Street)

Scott Sanders mentioned that he was unable to meet and take the tour of River Oaks, but he would still be interested in viewing it.

Val said it was a very interesting tour. In visually seeing this building and understanding what the Commission is asked to do, her opinion is that it would qualify for the National Register, not only under the style but the social significance as well. This home that was built by the Masons was not just in Rockford, but was something that was done nationally to take care of the widows of the Masons. So, there is a social significance to that for the original purpose of the building as it is. It's also significant because it is a Bradley and Bradley building, a very strong architectural firm in Rockford. Two of their other buildings, the Armory and Memorial Hall, are already on the National Register. Val said that she believes it would qualify for the National Register if it were proposed tonight.

Scott wanted to know her feeling for the condition and the potential for adapting for re-use. Val stated there was a lot of potential for adaptive re-use. The only significant damage is where the addition is. The southern arm is actually an addition and where that meets the original structure, there is some water damage, but that is the only place where there is significant damage.

Frank proceeded to show the original drawings from 1922. There were several comments made while the Commission viewed the original drawings.

Ginny distributed copies of a letter she had recently received from Scandroli Construction. She had asked them for a breakdown of the estimated 10 million dollar cost for rehab and this is what she had received from them.

Vito said that this amount is very difficult to break down, unless he were to get an engineer to pinpoint everything. Scandroli went through the building, and based on the codes, along with demolition costs and bringing everything up to code, including sprinkler systems that are required, this was the best estimate of what they figure the square foot cost would be. There is a lot involved. The size of the basement is a little over 39,000 sq. ft.

Val reminded everyone that the Commission's purpose is to protect architectural significance and comment on its viability for the National Register. It is not an economic committee. If we put buildings in the National Register purely for their economic value, we would have nothing left.

Vito said their standpoint was they are looking at the preservation of the neighborhood, and from a cost standpoint, they have to look is what economically is going to work.

Val thought that with the 20% tax credits that could be used with its being on the National Register, it would be a great way to help the neighborhood and keep the building. She said the State is only asking the Commission's opinion as to whether or not this building is viable for the National Register.

Ginny explained that the reason the Commission is being asked to look at this now is because the intention is to use federal funds for the demolition. That begins the Section 106 Review which occurs anytime there is any federal involvement. She read from the letter from IHPA: "we cannot adequately review this proposed project until the following additional documentation has been submitted to our

agency." She also said that the last thing requested in the letter was comments of the Rockford Preservation Commission regarding demolition.

Frank clarified the amount being asked for federal funding was only for the demolition, which was approximately \$90,000.

Vito responded that it was around \$89,000 for the demolition and \$22,000 to do the fill. They are also looking at trying to preserve as many of the trees as possible, based on the site plan.

Frank questioned if the Commission were to say it qualifies for the National Register, would that mean they could not get funds from another sources and continue to demolish the building? Ginny responded that it would not necessarily mean they couldn't receive federal funds. Scott said it would have to be listed to be ineligible for federal funds. Ginny said even if it is listed, the way the regs work, the primary impact is that it would take a lot longer. Generally, when you have an adverse effect or impact on historic property, you work out a memorandum of agreement to mitigate that adverse effect. There area several ways to do this. Ginny gave some examples and reminded everyone that this was the process that was taken for the Limestones back in the 1980s.

Vito reiterated that he has been working over 3 years on this project. He has fought to save it. He said that between the Catholic Diocese and the Franciscan Fathers, the local people, and the City of Chicago, he has done everything he could to try to save this building. Everyone he showed the property to felt the same way, until they walked around the back and saw the design. Once they put their architect's pencil to it, the cost was astronomical. Every consideration has been taken with this. Because of the river, the park, and because south Rockford needs something, and this is the main corridor to downtown, they finally resolved that they can offer something that would be a credit to the community. He said he is involved in St. Anthony Church and he has spent a lot of money on it. That was one of his projects to preserve that neighborhood especially since he comes from there, and that is his roots.

Frank commented on what his opinion was after viewing the building. He said the front has the most detail, but when going around to the back, that was somewhat different. There have been some modifications to it. He feels it has more presence from the front. As far as the inside, with enough money and the right people involved, he thinks it could be developed into a real project. It is also hard to not see the other side in saying nothing may happen with this property, but he realizes that is not the Commission's place to say that. We can only state that it does or does not have merit and/or possibilities. He thought the inside of the building was depressing.

Val reminded everyone of Paragon and the plan that was to demolish it. There were holes all the way from the ceiling to the basement, but now it is a successful restaurant. We have to keep in mind that anything is possible.

Laura's opinion was she thought it would be in worse shape than what it was. She did, however, point out the many areas that had severe water damage.

Scott said he sees the value of both proposals. But, to weigh our opinion on this building for the National Register, and seeing the value of what could be there in place of that, doesn't mean that he sees this as less significant. He thinks it does have potential, it would be difficult for him, as a member of the Commission, to respond that it doesn't.

Val said that there were two members of the State Historic Preservation Office with them when they viewed the building, so they saw the building as well. They will be making their own comments.

Val still stands by her opinion that, if so desired, this could be placed on the National Register because of the architecture, style and social significance as an Eastern Star Home. They were built across the country and there are very few left.

Vito distributed a drawing that he had received from the engineers out of Chicago. He explained that it shows townhomes that are all market value. Several of the Community Development staff had recently been in Chicago to look at this development. They are trying to satisfy the desire of the City of Rockford to maintain the view of the river. The road runs along the front of the units, which are 6-unit townhouses. The units are a combination of brick and vinyl. There is a wrought iron fence along South Main Street with the brick pylons and landscaping. There are courtyards in the front, and the side units would have a view of the river, as well. This is not a subsidized development or a project development.

Jeanne felt there were several properties on South Main Street that could be demolished and they would not be missed. Vito said the State is demolishing everything from 15th Avenue north to Miller Engineering. This area will be similar to Chicago's Lake Shore Drive and he referenced the drawings as he explained. The bike bath will continue from downtown and go all along this area.

More discussion followed.

Vito said they are developing 30 acres along the river and this project is only the first phase and he continued to explain further, indicating that they would eventually take in the trailer parks nearby.

Jeanne Ludeke said her personal opinion is that with the Eastern Star history, architecturally, it has the potential for being renovated.

Frank also felt it has the potential for being renovated. Scott said he would have no problem acknowledging all research that has gone into this and the exorbitance of the projected cost. Val said we could also acknowledge the fact that a 20% tax credit could greatly enhance the project.

A **MOTION** was made by Jeanne Ludeke to write a **LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION** to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency acknowledging that the River Oaks property on South Main Street has potential to be listed on the National Register because it is architecturally and socially significant, and because of the involvement of Bradley and Bradley in the original design. The motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

Ginny said she would draft a letter and email to everyone before she sends it to Springfield. She will also send a copy of the final letter to Vito as well.

VIOLATIONS

► 326 South 3rd Street

Ginny reminded everyone that this is the property the Commission is taking to court due to lack of maintenance. When the owner came to Code Hearing [for Building Code violations], she told the owner if she put the house up for sale, we would hold off on taking her to court. It is up for sale and Ginny has received a letter from the realtor, but the asking price is \$125,000. The realtor said they are going to do an auction or bid process, and if she doesn't get what she is asking, they will go from there to a standard sale process. Ginny said she the owner moving out, but she is apparently selling items on Ebay, so she might be stripping the inside. If that is the case, it would definitely reduce the value. Ginny spoke with Attorney Giliberti and their thoughts were to let it progress for another month to see what happens.

Ginny, along with the Legal Department, will keep track of this and update the Commission. Consensus was that this is the right approach to take at this point.

Jeanne asked if there was any place in the country where historic preservation groups had made steps toward preserving architectural components on the inside of houses. Ginny responded and said some Commissions do, but usually in large cities, such as Chicago, New York City, and only in places like the Coronado Theatre or the Palmer House. This happens very rarely.

► **1656 Ethel Avenue**

Ginny reminded everyone that this is the house where the previous owner had asked to replace a concrete front stoop with wood steps and take out the railing. The Commission denied him, but he did the work anyway. Ginny has communicated with the new owner and apparently this is not the only thing that he was not made aware of when he purchased the home. He is in the process of working with his realtor and attorney. Ginny told him she didn't think the Commission would force the issue this year. Basically, he needs to replace the concrete stoop and it might be difficult to get this done this year, so she thought of giving him until next spring. Commission members agreed that this would be all right.

STAFF REPORT

Hardiplank

Ginny said this was brought up at the last meeting and she wondered if anyone would like to discuss it. She provided everyone with a printout of comments on the topic on the National Trust's On-Line Forum. She pointed out that these comments run the full gamut from "this is the greatest stuff in the world and I use it on my own house too" to "don't ever use it." She did not think the Commission had ever approved using it previously for residing an existing house. Val said she remembered its being approved on a house from the 1950s, but only for the addition, since the house was brick.

Jeanne said the house on 3rd Street on the corner of Oak and 3rd is up for sale now. Ginny will drive by the house and take a look.

Section 106 Review Process

Ginny distributed a document which explains the Section 106 Process.

Ginny reminded everyone that the meeting next month will be on October 5th. This is a week earlier than normal, due to the following Monday's being a holiday. Ginny will be unable to be at this meeting, but Elizabeth Kinsinger will attend in her place.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Bernard
Senior Clerk