

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

July 20, 2005

6:00 PM

Rockford City Hall, Conference Room B

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeanne Ludeke, Laura Bachelder, Valerie Olafson, Frank St. Angel, Sally Faber, Scott Sanders

MEMBERS ABSENT: Alderman Doug Mark

STAFF: Elizabeth Kinsinger, Christine Sledge

OTHERS: Shannon Dingbaum – 326 S. 3rd. Street; Mr. and Mrs. Tom Gilkey – 721 Garfield Avenue; Gary Anderson – Gary W. Anderson & Associates, Inc.; Erica & Robert Holdmann; Leea Nelson, Executive Director - Erlander Museum Cultural Center; Dick & Mary Rolander – member of Swedish Historical Society; Janet Hill – resident of Haight Village & member of Swedish Society, Laura Gustafson, president of Haight Village

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 PM by Chairman Val Olafson.

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to approve the minutes of June 15, 2005. The motion was seconded by Sally Faber and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

◆ 326 South Third Street

The applicant, Mrs. Shannon Dingbaum, explained that she wanted to replace the front and two side porches of her home. She plans to replace and repair the porches. The two side porches need repair and were not going to be changed, just repaired back to originality. Valerie questioned if they were going to repair with the same detail? Mrs. Dingbaum said that she was going to restore as before and use wood. Also, Mrs. Dingbaum said that Ginny Gregory gave her permission to remove the wrap-around her porch because it never connected to the side porch. She said that actually there are three separate porches. So, instead of wrap-around she wants to take it back to the original front porch with two side porches as shown in the 1891 photo.

A **MOTION** was made by Frank St. Angel to **APPROVE** to repair and replace porch as submitted. The motion was seconded by Scott Sanders and **CARRIED** by a vote 6-0.

◆ **721 Garfield Avenue**

The applicants, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Gilkey, explained that they wanted to put a picket fence across the front of the lot and down one side along the driveway. There will be one gate on the side fence and one pair of gates on the front fence. The fence will be placed 2 feet from the front sidewalk and side driveway. Mr. Gilkey showed sample pictures of a plastic fence. He explained that they could not afford plastic and wanted to build the fence out of cedar similar to the fence in the sample pictures.

The actual sections of fence would be between posts, so the post would be oversized by putting $\frac{3}{4}$ around the post and dressing it up and putting the individual 8-foot sections in between the posts. The post would be a big part of the decorative part of the fence. Scott said that he was torn by it and said it does not strike him as the most appropriate fence for this house when looking at the fabric of this street. Scott asked the Gilkey's if they were interested in replicating the metal fencing? Mr. Gilkey said that the neighbor's fence is part chain link along the side and across the front is metal. Valerie reminded everyone that in the HPC guidelines (page 10) it states "Picket fences are not meant to serve as privacy fences, so new ones should be at least 50% open (space between the boards = the width of the boards). They should be made of wood and finished in a color in keeping with the house". So to match the house, Valerie asked what color were the Gilkeys painting the fence? Mr. Gilkey said that they were in the process of painting the house and the trim around the house, which is brick, an off-white cream color. So, they want to match the fence to the trim of the house, which is a cream color.

Mr. Gilkey explained that the pictures he provided do not show how the fence would actually be in size. The pictured fence is plastic, very narrow and actually smaller in size. Their fence will be 1 x 4 x 4 and a normal picket-top. Valerie said that the photo is very misleading. Mr. Gilkey said the photo was just to give everyone an idea of the scallop designed picket fence. Valerie said that the pickets would be far apart. Scott stated the HPC guidelines state that the space between the picket fence must equal the size of the picket fence (board). He also said that something spoke to pattern, the rhythm of the other houses, and he felt that this interrupted it some. Valerie asked if they investigated looking into wrought iron? Mr. Gilkey said they did and it was too expensive.

Scott said under HPC guidelines for Landscaping (pg. 11). He said that he would argue that fencing fits under landscaping although they are separate. He referred to the following:

- When locating new landscape features, keep their locations consistent with the location of similar elements in the district.
- When introducing the new landscape features, keep them consistent with similar elements in the historic district.

Scott questioned if there was anything like this in the Garfield district? Mr. Gilkey replied that there are really few fences in the neighborhood. Valerie asked if they thought about doing a hedging. Scott felt that the white picket fence would be an interruption of the flow of green lawns. Mr. Gilkey stated that if you drove down Garfield you find yards that looked like prairies. He stated that you would see absolutely everything conceivable. Frank suggested bringing in brick pillars at the corners to tie in to the character of the house.

A **MOTION** was made by Frank St. Angel to **APPROVE** application as submitted with spacing requirements being met to equal picket width (4 inches). The motion was seconded by Jeanne Ludeke and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-1 with Scott Sanders voting no.

◆ **109 North Main**

Gary Anderson, representing the applicant, explained the proposed balcony. On the north side of the building there is a public parking lot that the City of Rockford owns. The owner is going to have his office downstairs and a loft unit upstairs, so it would be a residential unit downtown. They would like to add a balcony out on the north side of the building, so that the middle window would end up becoming a french-door down to the floor opening to a steel balcony and railing that would be suspended off the structure. Gary explained that the railing detail was trying to pick up the detail of the circular window, a prominent feature in the front of the building, and make that part of the railing design. One of the nice things about that looking out there from the building is the view to Memorial Hall, Rockford Public Library and the Morrissey Building. There is also a slight view out to the river from that position. The width of the project is pretty much determined by the steel columns, so the beams that are inside would be tied to the steel plates to the steel beams, so that the roof can act as a diaphragm in resisting any on the loads of the balcony.

Scott asked that since people would see this from a three-quarter view if they were in the mall. The front ends with a corner circle and then the sides have it is another semi-circle. He wondered if there was a possibility on the side in completing the circle. Gary said that yes, they could definitely do that. Frank asked if the glass in the doors was going to be similar in design to the windows. Gary said that the glass would be similar, with no grills as shown. Valerie asked if the awning from the middle was going to be removed and Gary said no.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **APPROVE** to application as submitted with specification that glass in the doors be similar to the design of windows (no grills). The motion was seconded by Sally Faber and **CARRIED** by a vote 6-0.

Gary then asked the Commission for a brief discussion regarding the possibilities of adding a roof top structure. He said that they have been discussing about adding anything up on the roof in the future. Gary felt there been some inappropriate additions to rooftops in the downtown area in the past. He wanted HPC thoughts on the topic. He explained sample drawings/layouts of the rooftop. He said that they wanted to do a semi-circular cap that would go down into the living room quarter. Valerie said that it should be small, inconspicuous, and away from the edge of the building, especially from the west-side (front), so that it would not look like a continuing three-story building.

No motion was required because he was only asking for input.

◆ **Erlander Museum Cultural Center**

Gary Anderson explained that the Erlander Museum wanted to have some discussion about the site proposed at Grove and South 3rd Street in Haight Village for the proposed Swedish-American Cultural Center. He further stated that things are currently in a fundraising mode for the museum and they are just looking at raising money so that the site can be built. There has been discussion about purchasing additional adjacent properties on Grove Street and on South 3rd Street. There have been previous discussions with the HPC Board about the possibilities of purchasing those properties and making them part of the project. Leah Nelson, Executive Director, Erlander Museum explained the Cultural Center they wanted to build. Gary said the design of the building was to have a center that was of a Swedish descent where John Erlander came from over in Sweden. The residential feel and style of the house was certainly from his particular area where he lived, and more less tells the story of John Erlander coming over to this country. The Cultural Center would be a place of classrooms, exhibit halls, storage, library, etc.

Leah further explained that they wanted expansion capability. She explained in detail the drawings. She also mentioned that marketing is affected by the address perhaps. New construction is an issue. With tourism traffic coming into the district, it is imperative to do things the best way possible. They would like to be able to get the buses off the street if possible. They do not want to destroy the neighborhood feel of the whole place. Scott questioned if HPC was weighing in the proposed facility or the proposed demolition of two properties or both. Leah said the proposed demolition only. Gary said they wanted to know whether the demolition is appropriate or not before they formally request it. Scott stated that demolition is certainly not allowed except under extreme circumstances that condemnation be allowed by the city. Scott said that he was strongly against demolition because it is simply not allowed. Valerie said you could not buy into economic hardship. She said you cannot buy a building stating you cannot afford to keep it because that is buying into economic hardship and it is not a valid case. She stated that Haight Village is listed as a local registered property as a neighborhood of homes and Erlander is a very valuable piece of that neighborhood. Scott referred to the HPC Demo Guidelines (pg. 15) as follows:

Demolition is not permitted within historic districts or on landmark sites unless one of the following conditions exist:

- The demolition request is for an inappropriate addition, a non-significant portion of a building, or a non-significant accessory building or buildings, which are significant as determined by the RHPC.
- The demolition request is for a noncontributing building and the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district.
- The building official of the City of Rockford certifies that demolition is required by the public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.
- A Certificate of Economic Hardship allowing the demolition is obtained.

Scott said that he loved the idea that the Erlander proposal would fill a vacant lot but does not support the demolition of two homes. Valerie said that if the properties were demolished they would be creating a parking lot. Leah said that was incorrect, that they were not really adding additional parking. Valerie said that they have to conform to the neighborhood and that the neighborhood can not conform to the project. Jeanne Ludeke, HPC Board member and representative of Haight Village said that she did not support the demolition.

Dick Rolander, member of Swedish Historical Society, said that one of the houses on Grove Street is a subsidized housing unit. He said that there was a three-family unit in a one-family house and there was at one time 26 people living in that home. Scott replied that would be a zoning violation. Valerie said that if we demolished every historic building because it was not being used for what it should be used for, we would barely have any buildings left. So, we cannot use that as a valid excuse, especially in our historic districts.

Janet Hill, resident of Haight Village and member of the Swedish Historical Society, said it is indeed a difficult situation. She asked if the Swedish Historical Society bought it fixed it up and used it as classrooms and a library, would that be acceptable? The address is 515 Grove Street. Scott said that certainly that if the demolition was not the purpose and if the purchase is a feasible option.

Laura Gustafson, president of Haight Village, said she opposed the demolition of the property. Whatever the use of the building at the present time or the use of the building and no matter what goes on inside the structure there is traffic going and people. For the record she would oppose demolition.

Barbara Fell, neighbor, said that neither house has any historic significance, and felt there were severe problems with the house on South 3rd Street, the house that the museum would like to acquire. She said that something must be changed. She did not know if it called for a demolition or not, but that something needed to be done. Parking along South 3rd Street is very difficult and she suggested making a community driveway because there are no alleys. Ms. Fell said that there was a 50-foot lot but that there was not sufficient room for parking. Janet Hill said that the 50-foot lot is indeed a very narrow driveway so it doesn't show that the next house down has a double lot and they have the option of parallel parking. Lori Gustafson said that there is plenty of parking available along both sides of Grove Street.

Mary Rolander wanted to know if there were any objections to the culture center being on the property of the owner. No objections were made to that, just an objection to the demolition of property. She also wanted to know if permission was needed for approval of what they wanted. Valerie said that any addition to the structure has to come before HPC.

◆ **Barber Colman Building Survey**

This item was tabled until next meeting. Scott said at the last HPC meeting that a survey had been done. Valerie said that HPC members could email Ginny with any comments regarding the survey.

417 South 2nd Street – Elizabeth Kinsinger said that the applicant put a new fence up without a permit, and he was notified to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The applicant did not come into the office until July 19th, which was too late to add to the agenda. Elizabeth wanted to bring this to HPC attention that the applicant has submitted an application and that the fence is already up. She just wanted to make everyone aware of it and that the Certificate of Appropriateness will be added to next month's agenda.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Sledge
Senior Clerk