

Minutes
West Lafayette Historic Preservation Commission
Morton Community Center
222 N. Chauncey Avenue
West Lafayette, IN 47906
October 11, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President Chris Kulesza, who presided.

Present: Erin Britton, Peter Bunder, Kelly Busch, Susan Curtis, Shelley Lowenberg-DeBoer, Linda Martin, Arnold Sweet, Kurt Wahl*, Erik Carlson**

Absent: Colby Bartlett

Approval of Minutes

Approval of September 12, 2016 Town Hall Meeting Minutes

President Kulesza stated that since this was not an official commission meeting, the present/absent portion of the minutes should be removed. Without objection, the minutes were approved unanimously with the present/absent removed from the minutes.

Approval of September 19, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Sweet stated that there was a misspelling in the second paragraph of the September 19 meeting minutes. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously with the correction of the misspelled word in the first paragraph.

Approval of October 4, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Bunder stated that the minutes were swell. Without objection, the minutes from the October 4 sub-committee meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

468 Littleton Street

Carlson gave the staff report for the 468 Littleton Street COA. Carlson stated that the home owners wish to repair their front porch by re-pouring the concrete top slab, temporarily removing the railing so the concrete can be repaired, and the lower portion of the porch, which is brick, will remain the same. The COA was approved unanimously by the sub-committee. The

stair steps will also remain the same. Commissioner Martin asked if this would be considered to be maintenance. Wahl said this would be more of a maintenance issue due to the scope of work. If there were more changes to the porch, this would not be considered maintenance. President Kulesza entertained a motion to approve this COA as maintenance. Commissioner Busch moved to approve this COA as maintenance, Commissioner Martin seconded. The COA for 468 Littleton Street was approved unanimously 8-0.

300 Park Lane

Carlson gave the staff report for 300 Park Lane, stating that this COA is a partial renovation, part addition, and part maintenance. Wahl spoke about each portion of the project. He continued to explain that the sub-committee voted and approved the three sections of the COA separately. The first portion would be replacing the steel windows. The first floor windows have been replaced by aluminum windows in the past. The steel windows are in need of repair and have many issues in general. Wahl stated that the COA applicant will be replacing the existing windows with one that has a similar style and material as the current aluminum windows. He recommended approving these window replacements.

Wahl continued with the second story addition. He stated that the ability to see this from the right-of-way is somewhat of a debate. There will be a two-story addition with a garage below. The garage doors will be replaced and the horizontal siding material will match another addition on the house that occurred several years ago.

The third section of the COA was a 6 foot fence that will be placed along Dehart Street for privacy. Wahl stated that there is some vegetation that will have to be removed, but he does not see any issues with adding this fence.

Commissioner Bunder stated that the sub-committee approved each portion of the COA 2-0. He thanked Barry Rubin and Christy for the thorough application that was provided. Carlson stated that if this application was too thorough, let him know so he can work with developers so they do not provide too much materials and keep the process as streamline as possible.

Rubin from 300 Park Lane spoke about the project. He stated that this home should be treated with a historical reference when adding the addition and this can be reflected in the addition and materials used for the window replacements. Commissioner Busch asked about the garage door replacements. Carlson stated that the garage door cannot be seen from the right-of-way. Christy showed a similar example of what the garage door would look like. Rubin stated that the current garage door is not original to the property. President asked if the commission would want to vote on all the sections of the COA at one time. No one had an objection. Commissioner Lowenburg-DeBoer moved to approve the COA. Commissioner Busch seconded. The COA was approved unanimously 8-0.

Happy Hollow Discussion

Commissioner Sweet stated that the United States Department of the Interior in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology named the Happy Hollow neighborhood as a national historic neighborhood. It is also registered as a historical place in 2015. Sweet stated that he would like to see the Commission see Happy Hollow has a historic neighborhood and recognize it as a historical district as there are several significant homes that should be protected, such as several Smith houses. He continued to state his fear of commercial companies tearing down historic homes to build more modern two-story homes. He named recent examples that raised his concerns.

Carlson asked if there are 56 homes in the neighborhood, where 54 are contributing homes and 2 that are non-contributing. Commissioner Sweet said yes. Commissioner Sweet said that he has gone house to house informing the neighborhood that were now in a historical recognized neighborhood with no negative responses. Commissioner Martin asked what a Smith house is. Commissioner Sweet spoke about the history of the neighborhood, explaining that Happy Hollow was once owned by Purdue University at one time and land was divided into plots. An architect by the name of Smith, came from Illinois and designed several houses. Commissioner Busch asked if there was a map of this neighborhood. There was not one provided.

President Kulesza talked about the rules of a neighborhood becoming a historic district under the current ordinance. He explained that there would be a sub-committee who would have to vote for the neighborhood to be considered a historic district, followed by a public hearing. Once that has been done, the full Commission would have to vote on the same item and hold a public hearing. Once that would occur, the neighborhood would have to be presented to city council for approval. Carlson stated that has some concerns with moving forward now with this. He feels that there is still work to be done to better the function of the Commission currently and fears adding a neighborhood would jeopardize the progress the Commission has been making. Carlson spoke about a recent failed attempt at creating a historic district over in Lafayette. He continued with what he wants to accomplish before the Commission acts on creating Happy Hollow as a historic district. Commissioner Bunder spoke about the failed attempt in Lafayette and the history behind the tension and the ultimate decision by Lafayette's city council. Commissioner Bunder asked who is on the Outreach sub-committee on creating new neighborhoods as historic districts. Kulesza stated that it is Commissioners Sweet, Curtis, and Britton.

Commissioner Busch spoke about the history of New Chauncey becoming a historic district. She continued by stating that the Commission is still perfecting its COA process and should hold off on creating new districts until the current process is smoother and focus on neighborhood outreach. Commissioner Britton spoke about the growing threat of commercial building, mentioning Iron Gate Homes as an example, building in surrounding neighborhoods which is alarming to her. Commissioner Busch stated that many of those homes that are being built are in non-historic neighborhoods. She also spoke that many of these rising issues should be dealt with Zoning, not this Commission. Commissioner Bunder spoke about the benefits of designating Happy Hollow as a historic district, such as houses being protected from demolition. He continued to say that there is no harm that this topic be addressed in the Outreach sub-committee.

Kulesza stated that he does not see an issue that this goes into a sub-committee, but there needs to be better community outreach first. He also stated that he shares similar concerns that Carlson stated earlier. Commissioner Curtis stated that Carlson's concerns are well-founded and there is still concerns present within the community. Carlson spoke about ideas of updating the website to better communicate and educate potential builders and the community.

Commissioner Curtis asked about the charge for the sub-committee. Kulesza stated that public outreach and analyzing other neighborhoods as a historic district would be the focus. Commissioner Sweet spoke about a resident of Happy Hollow who is willing to go door to door. Commissioner Britton explained that if signatures were collected, that would show community support. Wahl spoke what would be needed by the sub-committee to analyze and vote on a neighborhood to become a historic district and holding a public hearing. Commissioner Martin stated that homeowners need to understand what it means for a neighborhood should become a historic district. President Kulesza reiterated that comment that there should be full public support before moving forward.

Update from Wahl and Staff

Carlson spoke about a house on Maple and the homeowner wanting to change her garage door and fence on her property. Issues appeared with the permitting for a fence and there was a need to obtain a variance from Zoning, so he could not sign off on the COA. He continued to talk about fixing with the cumbersome process.

Commissioner Curtis spoke about preserving the one-room schoolhouse at the corner of US 231 and Cumberland Avenue. She spoke about land being donated nearby the current schoolhouse, so the building can be moved and be preserved as a park. Curtis spoke about the schoolhouse being presented to the Commission a few years ago and the idea was to move the schoolhouse to the Celery Bog, but that would have costed almost \$300,000.00. Wahl spoke about the current fundraising underway to move the schoolhouse to the donated land, just east of the building's current location. Carlson talked about the Department of Development's role to help raise funds to create this new 13.9 acre park. Commissioner Busch asked how the community was being informed. Commission Britton spoke about using social media. Kulesza spoke about reaching out to Purdue faculty. Commissioner Martin asked if the school districts know about this project. Commissioner Curtis suggested the city newsletter. Wahl spoke about working with an architect and now has a design has been formed for the building.

Public Comment

Fred Richter from 406 Littleton Street approached the Commission. He spoke about 424 Littleton and the interest to purchase the property from the current owners. He asked if the house is conforming or non-conforming, if it can be condemnable. He spoke about the poor condition of the house, the fact its been empty for several year, and is in deteriorating condition. He continued to explain his intensions for the property and asked what he is allowed to do.

Commissioner Curtis stated that if you want to change the interior, the Commission does not deal with the interior. Commissioner Busch asked if he wanted to level the house. Richter stated that he wishes to turn that lot into a parking lot and greenspace. He also stated that he would be willing to remodel, but wanted to look into what was possible. Commission Britton spoke about the history of the property and homeowner. Richter spoke about parking issues with his current property and the variance he has required. Kulesza stated that if the Commission does not have a formal plan in front of them, it is extremely difficult to give comments on what he can and cannot do. Commissioner Martin stated that there should be someone on the Commission that is designated on whether properties are contributing or non-contributing. Richter asked what contributing and non-contributing means. Kulesza explained what those terms meant. Carlson presented the book which lists contributing houses in New Chauncey. The book listed that the house is non-contributing. Commissioner Curtis stating that the Commission should still take a look at the house before commenting.

Kulesza stated that the next Commission meeting will be on November 8 and if there was an interest to move the next Commission meeting to the following week. Commissioner Busch suggested November 10. The Commissioner Busch moved to hold the next Commission meeting to November 10. Commissioner Curtis seconded. The motion to move the meeting to November 10 was approved unanimously.

The Commission adjourned at 7:22 pm.

Kelly Busch, Secretary