

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
February 8, 2017**

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

A Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of the Village of Lake Bluff was called to order on February 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Village Hall Board Room.

The following members were present:

Present: Mary Francoeur
 Randolph Liebelt
 Janie Jerch
 Robert Hunter
 Cheri Richardson
 Janet Nelson, Chair

Absent: Paul Bergmann

Also Present: R. Drew Irvin, Village Administrator
 Michael Croak, Building Code Supervisor
 Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator

2. Consideration of the Minutes from the January 17, 2016 HPC Meeting

Member Richardson noted that on page 2, item 5, she asked if the owners knew the subject property was landmarked. Member Nelson noted that, in the subsequent paragraph, a word should be corrected to read “prominent.”

Member Richardson moved to approve the January 17, 2016 HPC Meeting Minutes with corrections. Member Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

3. Non-Agenda Items and Visitors

Chair Nelson stated that the Chairperson and Members of the HPC allocate fifteen (15) minutes at this time for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the HPC on any matter within its area of responsibility that is not listed on the agenda.

There were no requests to address the HPC.

4. Continued Advisory Review Conference for the Proposed Demolition of the Landmark Home Located at 512 Sunrise Avenue

Chair Nelson reopened the Advisory Review Conference for the Proposed Demolition of the Landmark Home located at 512 Sunrise Avenue. This property is the first time that the Commission has been asked to review demolition of a house that had already been landmarked prior to a

demolition request. Chair Nelson invited forward individuals who wished to address the Commission regarding the matter.

Lois Nicol, 224 East Center Avenue, came forward and stated that she opposed the demolition of this historic home. Ms. Nicol provided a letter to the Commission in advance of the meeting, and she read it verbatim for the record. She asked the Commission to continue advocating for the homeowner to reconsider this demolition.

Kate Briand, 610 Lincoln Avenue, came forward and stated that she opposed the demolition of the subject property. Ms. Briand moved to the area in 1971 and recalls walking by this home with her mother and family. She considers the block in question to be historic and she believes it should be landmarked. She provided an overview of her views on the Historic Preservation Ordinance and other ordinances and expressed her concerns with how they are applied, noting that the subject property owner would be allowed to demolish this building while the Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals recently denied a variance that would help accommodate a disabled child. Ms. Briand believes that, if you purchase a home in Lake Bluff, you agree that you value the things that make Lake Bluff different from other communities, and you agree to purchase property subject to certain restrictions. She concluded by arguing that property rights are not absolute, and that allowing this demolition may encourage the demolition of other homes in the community.

Member Hunter responded briefly to Ms. Briand about the character of the subject property. Chair Nelson also responded to Ms. Briand. The Village's current ordinance does not allow for the designation of historic districts. Chair Nelson believes that, without this ability, the Commission cannot stop certain demolitions. The Commission's only recourse is to appeal to the homeowner to landmark the property prior to a demolition. She generally discussed the character of the community, and how the Ordinance helps to preserve it.

Seeing no further members of the public come forward to speak, Chair Nelson closed the period for public comment.

Member Liebelt stated that he lives around the corner from the subject property. He believes it would be a travesty to demolish it.

Member Richardson stated that she raised children in the same neighborhood as the subject property. She believes that demolition is the last thing we want to occur in the community, and that the Ordinance needs to provide more authority to stop future demolitions. She argued for delaying this demolition as long as possible, and for the Commission submitting a request to the Village Board of Trustees to review the Ordinance.

Member Jerch believes that public outreach is the best course of action, as she considers the Village's Historic Preservation Ordinance to be among the weakest in the North Shore. The Village had previously tried to change the Ordinance, and it failed due to concerns in the community about infringing upon property rights.

Member Robert concurred with the thoughts of the previous speakers. The Ordinance is not strong enough to stop demolitions, and demolitions harm the unique character of Lake Bluff. No other

community on the North Shore has the same scale and accessibility at the lakefront. He noted that the Commission's meetings are usually poorly attended, but the public will have to get involved to stop future demolitions. No one he knows believes this demolition should proceed. He will not endorse this application for demolition.

Member Francoeur has lived in Lake Bluff for fifty years. She believes this demolition is heartbreaking, and she does not understand the need by the property owner for the additional room created by a demolition. She wants to deny the demolition, but the Ordinance does not give the Commission the power to do so. She asked for the applicant, Dan Horvat, to come forward and address the Commission.

Dan Horvat addressed the commission. The property owner he represents has directed him to prepare a landscape plan for the property. No plans are contemplated to expand the owner's house onto this adjacent lot. He would not be opposed to presenting the landscape plan to the Commission.

Member Liebelt asked if the property owner has come before the board. Chair Nelson stated that he has not, and that he is not required to under the Ordinance.

Chair Nelson asked if the owner has considered a covenant on the property that would restrict his ability to use the new lot to expand. Mr. Horvat stated that there had been discussions with Village Administrator Irvin, but they believed a covenant would be ineffective.

Chair Nelson intends to ask the Village Board of Trustees to implement new regulations that would stop property owners from expanding their homes onto adjacent lots. Mr. Horvat noted that, under the Village's current Zoning Regulations, this lot would become non-buildable after the house is demolished. He believes the only possible legal use of a lot such as this would be to combine it with an adjacent lot. He believes that these smaller lots should remain buildable if the practice of buying and combining adjacent lots is to be discouraged. Building Code Supervisor Croak stated that there was no practical way, without amending the code, to make that small lot buildable again. Only a variance by the Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals would allow it within the Village's existing regulations.

Chair Nelson does not want to call a vote tonight, but she wants to consider recommendations to the Village Board on these subjects. Chair Nelson reviewed the time limits established by the Ordinance, and noted that the Commission's regular meeting in March would be their last opportunity to consider this application.

Chair Nelson moved to continue the Advisory Review Conference for the proposed demolition of the landmark home located at 512 Sunrise Avenue to the March 8th HPC meeting. Member Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Member Hunter remarked generally about his experience as an architect, and his belief that most of the town and Sunrise Avenue is part of the public realm.

5. Significant Demolition Review for 239 East Washington Avenue

Chair Nelson introduced the agenda item and invited the property owner forward. Ms. Suzanne Wetterling of 239 East Washington Avenue came forward and presented her demolition request. The

subject property was built in 1961, and has no architectural significance. She is remodeling and adding a second story on top of the existing foundation and framing so as not to disturb the property. She presented drawings illustrating her proposed changes to the building.

Member Liebelt stated that he had no objections. Member Jerch stated that she had no objections, and that she believed it would be one of the nicer projects recently considered in this area. Member Hunter stated that he liked the project and had no objections.

Following Chair Nelson's summary of the possible decisions before the HPC, Member Francoeur moved to terminate the demolition review of 239 East Washington Avenue. Member Liebelt seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

6. Significant Demolition Review for 701 Park Place

Chair Nelson introduced the agenda item and invited the applicant forward. Victoria Lidstrom of Leggy Bird Design, representing the property owner, came forward and presented her demolition request. The subject property was built in 1912 by the artist William Penhallow Henderson. The owner wishes to avoid demolishing the structure completely by pursuing an interior remodel and limited additions in order to create a more contemporary residential floor plan. As proposed, the project will require approvals from the HPC, the PCZBA, and the Village Board of Trustees. She circulated framed original pastels of the building painted by the original builder and resident.

Chair Nelson noted that the late Mr. Henderson's wife was a well-known writer. The Village had previously reviewed this property as part of an architectural survey, and found that it was non-contributing to the historic nature of the area due to the many changes it had experienced over the years. She encouraged the owner to pursue designating the property as a landmark after renovations.

Member Liebelt asked how the garage foundation would work as it is impermissible under the Building Code to attach the garage's existing floating slab. Ms. Lidstrom stated that the entire basement would be excavated deeper to underpin the foundation. Member Liebelt noted to Ms. Lidstrom that veins of groundwater are common at basement depth in the area of the subject property.

Member Richardson stated that she had previously toured this home as part of a Vilet Center activity. She thanked the owner for rehabilitating it. She inquired as to the status of the variance necessary to complete the project. Ms. Lidstrom responded that there were some outstanding questions by the PCZBA that required them to continue their hearing, but she believed the PCZBA viewed the variance request favorably.

Member Jerch said she was delighted that someone stepped forward to work on this house. She believes it will be a great improvement in the neighborhood.

Member Hunter believes this is a very unique house. He would prefer the windows remain as they are, but he knows that is not feasible. He asked about the changes proposed at the front entry to the building. Ms. Lidstrom said they were adding a two foot deep stoop cover above the entryway. From the audience, Ms. Kate Briand noted there was a similar type of cover in use on a home on Evanston.

Member Hunter asked if the house had ever been painted yellow. Ms. Lidstrom was unsure.

Chair Nelson began to summarize the possible actions the board can take in regard to this item. Chair Nelson was interrupted by a request to allow a member of the public to speak.

Frank Klepitsch, local architect, came forward to address the Commission. He argued that the house's floor plan is a component of its historic nature, as it was designed to keep the house cool before the advent of air conditioning. The long narrow rooms encouraged airflow, and the deep overhangs over the windows shielded them from sun exposure. The additions proposed would eliminate the site's current narrow massing. He asked the board to consider all the old architecture which would be removed, including all the windows and doors. He liked that the owner was saving the structure, but he was unsure what items would actually be preserved at the end of their project. He continued into other concerns about the project, including stormwater drainage issues endemic to this area and zoning non-conformities.

Following Chair Nelson's summary of the possible decisions before the HPC, Member Richardson moved to terminate the demolition review of 701 Park Place. Member Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

7. Discussion Regarding Historic Preservation Regulations & Historic Districts

Chair Nelson introduced the item. She believes the HPC should request that the Village Board of Trustees consider ordinance amendments addressing the future of small lots in the Village, the establishment of a historic district, and other potential subjects. She asked the committee for their thoughts.

Member Nelson suggested the key would be to call historic districts something else, such as the definition of historic neighborhoods. Member Richardson believes that the review time for demolitions should be extended, and that the HPC overall needs more powers to discourage demolition. Member Francoeur believes the process of becoming a historic district should be opened up to each neighborhood.

Member Hunter asked if there was still a draft ordinance in circulation. Lois Nicol came forward to say that a survey of neighboring community ordinances had previously been performed by Village Staff. A discussion ensued about the provisions that would be necessary to protect historic buildings and the value to the community of doing so.

Kate Briand came forward to address the commission. She asked the HPC what the community's objections were to expanding the Ordinance the last time it was considered. Chair Nelson responded that there was concern about limiting what someone could do to their own home. There was some interpretation, and a need for education still exists. Ms. Briand stated that she believes the residential real estate market in 2007 may have influenced the discussion. Now, as people are on more solid financial footing, there may be a risk of more proposals for demolitions forthcoming as they expand their homes. She also commented on the definition of a "buildable lot" as it has changed over centuries, as well as how other communities in the nation prosper from preservation. Ms. Briand and the Commission briefly discussed the legal status of historic preservation in Illinois.

Chair Nelson asked that the discussion continue at the next meeting. Member Hunter requested Staff prepare background information from the Commission's archives for review.

8. Chairperson's Report

Chair Nelson had no report.

9. Staff Report

There was no staff report.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business to consider and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Glen Cole
Assistant to the Village Administrator