

**CITY OF ST. CHARLES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2024**

**Members Present:** Rice, Smunt, Kessler, Pretz, Morin, Malay

**Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Rachel Hitzemann, Planner  
Russell Colby, Director of Community Development

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Malay called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Roll Call**

Ms. Hitzemann called roll with 6 members present. There was a quorum.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

**A motion was made by Mr. Kessler and seconded by Mr. Pretz with a unanimous voice vote to approve the agenda.**

**4. Presentation of minutes of the September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting**

**A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Ms. Morin with a unanimous voice vote to approve the Minutes of September 18, 2024. Ms. Rice abstained.**

**5. Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications**

**a. 210 Cedar Ave**

Mr. Lance Ramella, Owner, presented the COA to replace the damaged wood shake shingle roof with asphalt shingles.

Commission reviewed the color and style of shingle to be used on home.

**A motion was made by Mr. Kessler and seconded by Dr. Smunt with a unanimous voice vote to approve COA as presented.**

**b. 211-215 Cedar Ave.**

Ms. Malay explained she would like the applicant to explain what they are requesting in the COA, have the Commission ask any questions, open for public comment, then the Commission will vote.

Rev. David Aslesen, Pastor, Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, presented the COA for demolition of the building at 211-215 Cedar Ave. to construct parking lot. Rev. Aslesen began by referencing letter, application and pictures sent to the Historic Commission of the 211-215 Cedar Ave. property. He stated much of what we are requesting is similar to that of the request made in 2017. There are some things that the church has done with due diligence to meet the expectations of the Commission as best able. Other items are without from the congregation

really beyond our grasp and our financial ability to take on a continued burden for the two properties. The 211-215 property has had repeated incidences of vandalism, breaking in, and criminal activity, trespassing since 2018, with at least half a dozen within the last year and half. Criminal trespassing including the exchange of drugs and two persons that were arrested who were occupying the structure. In an upstairs bedroom there was a mattress that had been set on fire that the police were able to remove from an upstairs bedroom. The 211-215 house has been repeatedly broken into. Our hope is that this house would receive the permission of the Commission to be demolished. I think it was a similar decision in 2017. It's really not a safe house for any community member to be in. It's certainly not a safe house for me or my staff members to be in. There is no benefit to the congregation for keeping this house open. It has come to the point where it is uninhabitable, not useful for the congregation and uninsurable. The financial burden would be great for the church to take on to do any type of renovation, we really can't at this point. Our resources are really dedicated to the 307 Cedar Ave. property, which is a historic building built by Colonel Baker for the congregation, and our assets really need to be managing that property at this point. We have very limited funds to put towards any additional property at this point and there is no spirit towards putting any resources whatsoever into these two properties at this point. The congregation is currently spending \$25,000 annually on mortgage payments for these two buildings and the properties with \$4,300 per year going to property taxes. There is no benefit to the church for this expenditure. We cannot rent these buildings out. They cannot house the pastor, I would never live in these properties whatsoever. The renovation costs in 2017 were as submitted between \$175,000 to \$325,000, and again, there were no assets available in 2017. There are no funds available now to do renovation on these properties. Again, I would ask for your agreement with our application demolishing the 215-211 Cedar Ave. property.

Mr. Pretz stated he periodically attends the church but is not a member of the church. Mr. Pretz asked for clarification on ownership structure of the church itself and the property it's on, the membership is the Steward of the property and the big Methodist Church is the owner? The other properties are more membership-based, you are Stewards of that, and the church oversees what you're doing, but it's more your responsibility for those properties?

Rev. Aslesen responded that financially the Church is responsible for the entire property, both 307, 211-215 and 217. We are the Steward of those properties on behalf of what's known as the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, they allow us to continue to be a United Methodist church, but they do not supply us with any kind of funds for the management or upkeep of any of our properties. They are held in trust for our United Methodist denomination. The Church is responsible for every financial portion of all the properties owned by the church.

Mr. Kessler added in 2017 the church was approved by this Commission for demolition of this property. There are other circumstances tonight that could influence that. This property and others that you own could have been maintained, I know that it's expensive but every property owner in this town has to meet certain requirements and even societal expectations of how you want to take care of the properties, I just don't see that was done with this property.

Dr. Smunt added, recently I met with you Pastor, and some fellow members of the congregation and we did get a tour of the properties in question here. There was a gentleman interested in purchase of both one or both parcels. Did he make you an offer to purchase the properties? Would you be willing to explain what was the result of the offer?

Rev. Aslesen replied there was an offer on the property. It was an offer on the 217 house, the trustees reviewed that as well as the Property Committee and deemed it way below fair market value for the property and the houses that are there.

Dr. Smunt added the buyer mentioned the offer would be on the value of the vacant lots since you were discussing demolition of the property, assuming the building was gone what is the land worth. Did he make an offer based upon that?

Rev. Aslesen did not know.

Ms. Rice stated she was not part of the Commission in 2017, my question would be related to the attempts to try to sell the property before approaching the idea of demolition.

Rev. Aslesen responded property has been available for sale since 2018 but only has had 1 offer which was just recently.

Ms. Rice questioned how was the property marketed? Rev. Aslesen replied there was a sign on Route 64 for several years. Ms. Rice asked if it was for the parking lot or houses. Rev. Aslesen responded it was for the house, with a number to a representative at the church. Ms. Rice added that might have been a bit confusing if someone was interested in the home but the sign was on the parking lot.

Ms. Morin asked if the home has been investigated by a structural engineer as far as the structural integrity of the house. Rev. Aslesen responded that was done in 2017.

Mr. Kessler added he believes the structural inspection was just for 217 Cedar Ave. Mr. Kessler continued, for clarification on the marketing of the homes, there were no signs in front of the buildings. Rev. Aslesen responded in his 1 ½ years with the church there was a sign placed on Route 64 near 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

Mr. Kessler asked if the homes were listed with any type of multiple listing service or commercial agents or anybody that could broaden the information? Rev. Aslesen responded there was a consulting firm that was handling any requests that would come through that phone number on the sign on Rt. 64.

Ms. Malay asked if it was listed on the MLS? Rev. Aslesen responded it was not.

Mr. Pretz asked a question directly related to building at 211-215 Cedar Ave., I'm trying to interpret what you said earlier concerning when you were giving your costs as it relates to the mortgage and taxes. You don't have a breakdown that I can really take a look at to see what those costs are as they relate to 211- 215. But is that motivation to take down that structure from a cost perspective to eliminate \$4,300 in taxes for that building and \$25,000 in mortgage? And is that \$25,000 per year or \$25,000 per month? Is that your motivation for taking down that building, which unfortunately you did not include any information on in your packet.

Rev. Aslesen responded that the financial burden is why we're coming before you at this time. So, to relieve the congregation that roughly has about 500 members to it, that's roughly about 180 families, with a total utility operational budget for the church building itself annually of about \$140,000. These properties, the \$25,000 that's utilized for mortgage payments, that's an

annual amount, the \$4,300 for property taxes, imagine a congregation that would want to do an increased amount of valuable mission and service in the community, has not received any additional income from the congregation itself. A congregation that has somewhat plateaued, very generous for what the bills are now, but is facing some financial hurdles coming up in the near future. This burden of these 2 houses will contribute to the congregation's demise. We are at a point of great seriousness in regard to how we are stewarding well our finances. Every dollar matters for this congregation. There's a heart for mission, there's a heart for taking care of our community, we are impaired by these two houses and the cost associated with the mortgage and property taxes, from doing our service within the community both for our church members and the community at large. So, we want to take this next step to say let's relieve ourselves of this. There is no value of these houses. It has been tried for several years to sell the properties. It has been tried to say could we think of alternative models for this of what could happen there. I can't imagine anything else, any idea coming from us, or our consulting firm. We've met what the Commission required of us in 2017 and 2018. It's now at the point where for the financial security of the congregation we need these properties gone. For the safety of our community and the residences because of the criminal activity that continues to happen here in the two buildings. It's not safe for the community. They're not attractive, they're not adding to the historical profile of St. Charles in any significant way in our opinion.

Ms. Malay asked what is the full intention of this property? What do you intend to put in its place?

Rev. Aslesen replied, we intend to increase the parking available for the public with these adjacent properties. We estimate the increase of parking would be roughly 20 to 25 spaces.

Ms. Malay asked, is there any intention of selling the property after the demolition and even if it becomes parking, will you be marketing this property for sale at all?

Rev. Aslesen replied, I would think we would want to keep it as a parking lot that we as a church would be able to work in partnership with the City of St. Charles the way we've done with other parking for the City. I don't think there is an intention to sell once the parking lot is established. There's another church that utilizes a part of our parking lot for their services. It's a great arrangement we have with them, it's a wonderful working relationship we have with the City of St. Charles for our current parking.

Dr. Smunt commented if these properties were to have demolition occur, you are saying by converting to a parking lot you will still continue to maintain ownership of the property. So therefore the mortgage is still due, you were saying the mortgage is a burden to you, the mortgage will continue to be a burden if you maintain ownership. How are you getting relief, maybe the tax. You're not removing the mortgage burden by demolishing these properties. You're still maintaining ownership of the land.

Rev. Aslesen responded the church will have to turn around and say, alright we have been relieved of the burden of these houses, we're ready to go with a parking lot, let's pull every penny we have out of reserves, let's do a capital campaign real quick for the final payment of the mortgage and just relieve ourselves of that obstacle to do ministry in our community. So the mortgage has been with the congregation since 1993, that's hundreds of thousands of dollars that we haven't been able to use for the ministry that we want to do in the community. Our capital funds are currently dedicated to the 307 building which is a cornerstone building in our

community. It's the church building built by Col. Baker. So again to be honest I put this toward our trustees and our finance committee to say where would those additional funds come from? We want to dedicate our funds to the 307 building because we think that is really where our heart is at.

Mr. Pretz added he brought a copy of the executive summary of the recent parking study the City commissioned. In there it is noted, in your letter you note, that you sent a letter to the City of your intentions of the north parking lot. The north parking lot your intention is to sell that lot, the benefits you are going to get back on a monetary standpoint, does that help you in any way, such as reducing that mortgage payment?

Rev. Aslesen said it will help us to manage some capital projects for the 307 building. Sale of that has been dedicated for an elevator for the 307 Cedar Ave. property. We are in desperate need of a new lift. Accessibility continues to be a burden to us in a building with so many stairs. To say that money is already spent, it's dedicated to a capital improvement project for the church building.

Ms. Rice followed up, wouldn't the property on Main Street be more valuable than the North lot? I would prefer if you could develop the Main Street lot and save the north lot for parking.

Mr. Peter Vargulich, Baker Church Member, said the church and committees have been marketing and looking to sell the Main Street parcel as a consolidated piece of property. The sale is intended to be bordered by all 3 streets, Cedar, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Main Street. That parcel in total is 30,000 square feet. We have had people approach us, we've had letters of intent. None of them have come to fruition. Our north parcel is under contract to be sold and the developer for that property is looking at options for what they want to propose and will come forward with that when they are ready.

Ms. Hitzemann clarified that per the plan submitted the trash enclosure will not be on Main Street, but in the southwest corner of the 211-215 Cedar Ave. property.

Ms. Malay opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Steve Gibson, member of Commission 2017 when they looked at these properties before. Some of the arguments being made here about demolishing this building are arguments that could be made of any building in St. Charles by the Owner of that building. I think when you ask the questions, what comes next, what's going to be on this property when it's done? How do you pay for that change? How do you build a parking lot, what's the cost of doing that? If it is important for the money to be raised for the church to do these things, where's the active marketing for this, where's the MLS listing for this, where is the listing on the street? In the course of 8 years could have had some people take a look at them, make some decisions about some kind of constructive reuse. Specifically with 215 we did approve it for demolition last time on basically the same premise that it was unusable and for safety. And in the 8 years that building wasn't knocked down, it wasn't marketed, and in 8 years it could have been put to some other use.

Al Watts, Preservation Partners of Fox Valley, I was just curious why when the building was approved for demolition in 2017, why was the building not demolished?

Ms. Malay asked if anyone would like to address the question of why the building wasn't demolished.

Mr. Curt Barrett, Resident and Member of church, said the two parking lots both provide parking for the parishioners, as well as the public. There is a parking problem. The lots on Main Street are heavily used and easy to see. We got the offer on the northern lot which will give a financial benefit to the church, which has very limited means. Discussion on paying down the mortgages on the houses when the Northern lot is sold. If we give up the northern lot there's more pressure on where our parishioners park. That's why the southern lot becomes more vital. Adding in 20 spots of additional parking addresses our needs as we lose 42 or so spots from the northern lot. To speak a little bit, I've been a long time member of the Rotary Club and a lot of different non-profit entities understand how central the Baker Methodist Church is to the support network for people in need in St. Charles. It is amazing the things the church is able to do to contribute to the safety network in the St. Charles community. While I do understand you have a mission to advocate for historic properties, what the houses there offer to this community pales in comparison to what this active church next door provides to the community. I had a chance to look a little further at the preservation ordinance. There is a precedent looking at Camp Kane location where the Jones Law Office was relocated to because that was a structure that was important enough to the City. I think you'd find it very amenable of the church selling the structure for \$1 if the City wants to get involved with keeping that part of the history in the town. While I do understand the advocacy rule you have, I also see that the City Council has to look at what is best overall.

Mr. Pretz referenced the executive summary of the parking recommendation survey which stated St. Charles has adequate parking supply for current demand. In here it says, you may not have your first choice to park, of the three parking garages only the 5 story parking garage at 79% is under practical capacity, 89% standard during the peak periods of occupancy, including this garage, there are 11 off site public parking facilities that are under capacity during the highest parking period. This means that overall there are a significant number, 209 available parking spaces during the peak period. Pastor David said there is about 500 attendees, 108 families. The highest peak, church only, not weddings, not public events, of those 108 family units how many vehicles are driven to the church, how many vehicles are parked on the street, how many vehicles are parked in the south lot, how many vehicles parked in the north lot? The need for extra spaces may not necessarily be a true number.

Mr. Kessler asked why wasn't 211-215 building demolished if the need was so great? The north lot, the thought of removing a good lot and building on it and tearing down buildings for another parking lot, one of which is historic, is insulting.

Ms. Rice added if this is about financial burden, it's not free to demo a house and repave a lot. I feel you've already spent the proceeds from the north lot on the elevator and maybe some other projects. It was approved before, it's going to cost money to demo it. Where is this money going to come from.

Ms. Morin added there is part of the ordinance that considers financial hardship, but it was not part of the package presented today.

Ms. Malay again questioned why this property was not put on the MLS and the 211-215 house was given approval for demo in 2017 yet nothing was done. Those are my two biggest

concerns. We did give you approval on this and nothing happened. A detailed plan was not presented which is a concern.

**A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Ms. Rice to approve the demolition of the 211 – 215 Cedar Avenue.**

**Roll was called**

**Ayes: Rice, Smunt, Kessler, Morin, Malay**

**Nays:**

**Absent:**

**Abstained: Pretz**

**Motion carried: 5-0**

**c. 217 Cedar Ave.**

Mr. Peter Vargulich, member of Baker Church, presented COA for demolition of 217 Cedar Ave. Mr. Vargulich stated I think that the narrative we provided pretty well outlines where we are from a viewpoint of why we're requesting this demolition. The parking lot is our thought on what to do with the property, both parcels. I understand there is a lot of interest, not only from the Commission itself, but also Preservation Partners and others. I think that when the church bought the property in 1993 we had no idea that this was a structure that had so much historical significance as viewed by many people outside our congregation. Potentially would have made a different decision with respect to purchasing the property. I think our request is based on a number of factors with respect to our interpretation and how we have tried to use the property. I think we detailed in our letter that after purchasing we did a number of renovations so that both properties were available for people who could not meet market rents in St. Charles and we subsidized that process. We felt it was a fair community need and we not only subsidized those rents financially, we had a ministry that supported those people that rented there well beyond normal sorts of services, being that we're not Lazarus House, we're not Hessed House, we are not those organizations, but we felt that we wanted to help as much as we could. The maintenance on the homes became challenging and cost prohibitive from the standpoint of keeping them in a condition that we could allow people to still live there and rent from us. And so we made the decision in 2018 or 2017 to discontinue that effort. We helped those families that were there at the time to relocate and then we closed those buildings. We looked at other opportunities to renovate them and turn them into some sort of a commercial venture, an outreach of some other kind. For us, the church, it was cost prohibitive because it took us into whole different code requirements because it wasn't being rented as a home anymore. It was way beyond hundreds of thousands of dollars to make them compliant from ADA, fire, life safety, all of those things. Which are fair things to expect when you're using them in a different way. It wasn't that we were saying it was all ridiculous, the cost to do so was prohibitive for us. At that point, that's where we stopped doing that, we closed the houses and made our first request to demo them. At that time, we had proposed for the property in total to become green space. That was our end use of the property at that time. It didn't mean it was the only use and didn't mean it wouldn't potentially change. But at the time that is what we were choosing to do. We weren't in an aggressive process or an active process of marketing the properties at that time. It was something being contemplated but it was not an active event for our congregation. You asked

an earlier question, why didn't we demo. The 217 and the COA at the time allowed us to actually demo the garage and I think the back deck of 217. I think if I remember correctly the COA did. It became, weirdly enough at the time, cost prohibitive because the numbers didn't change that much in demoing the whole thing at one time, it's still going to cost us money to come back and do 217 if in fact that could ever happen, and so the decision was not to spend money and do it part way because we would prefer to spend the money one time and gain the efficiencies of demoing both structures and properties at the same time. I would offer one thought as a footnote to all the architectural reports that were produced in 1994. When those reports say that the structure is not historically significant it should be foot noted that it doesn't include all aspects of historical significance. I think that candidly it's a bit misleading to find out that really all you meant was the building is not historically significant. Or in the case of a different report for a different property, it is. Because our report says neither is contributing.

Mr. Kessler questioned about the person who was interested in purchasing the property with an interest in restoring it, I'm hearing now that it was not a value that you would accept. But I also heard the Pastor mention the property has no value. That doesn't really align with the fact that somebody was there with an offer, I don't know if counter offered or not. It seemed like that's some value there. Taking that further there is value in lots in downtown St. Charles. Sometime they are infill lots, sometimes a house burned down, sometimes a demolition. Those lots can be used as a guide to the value of the empty land would be. Based on what you're saying that should roughly be the value of the property. If you had a person that was there and ready to make a deal for a value that was similar or close to that amount and plus would like to restore the building, I think that would be positive for both parties.

Ms. Rice asked for clarification if there was an engineer that went out and looked at the house? And what was the conclusion? Ms. Malay advised it was a home restoration expert. The conclusion was it was restorable.

Gloria Kohlert Geske, previous homeowner, my family owned the house for 80 years and sold to the church. When my family initially bought it 80 years ago it was just a shell, but it was quarry stone so it's a solid structure. My great uncle Fred Rasmussen was a Danish craftsman and my great grandfather built the rooms. The house stayed in the family and was passed down to my Aunt Edith Kohler, who was also very involved with the community. She was the secretary to Doc Langum and she was very involved with his campaign for election. She passed away at 73 and eventually it passed down to me, along with 211-215 Cedar Ave. which was also built by Fred Rasmussen and Fredrick Kohlert. When my husband and I moved in we totally updated bringing the house up to 1990 standards. It was beautiful inside and out when we owned it. We put the house up for sale in 1993 on Easter weekend and that Monday the Baker Church made an offer which I actually declined because I knew they would make a parking lot out of it. The Baker Church came back and said they have no plans on making it into a parking lot. We realize and appreciate the historical value of this house; we will be using it for our ministry or a parsonage so we accepted the offer. It was structurally a great house when we owned it. I have no argument with the 211-215 Cedar Ave. being demolished but this is a historic house.

Mr. Steve Gibson, I would like to address the idea of whether this house is historic when it's



related being contributing or non-contributing. This non-contributing from the aspect of the architectural. But then the other side of this thing, this house has lived for 180 years and has stood for at least 8 years with nothing in it, no heating, no air conditioning, no power of any kind. When we went into the house in 2017 it was in great shape. We found the stairs going to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to be level. The history of this house and all of the different contacts that it links to, whether it's Edith Kohlert, secretary for Mayor Langum, or Mayor Rockwell. Or it's her brother Henry Kohlert who raced in the Indy 500 and helped found the DuPage Airport with Colonel Baker. But then going back to William Barry himself, the first president of the Kane County Bar Association. One of the first judges in Kane County. His kids died when he was an older man, he married twice, his second wife died a week before he died. When he died he had no one left, the house went to a guy who was a boarder at the time. Today when I go looking for him I find stories all over, I can find him being a campaign manager for General Farnsworth through six campaigns, working with the gangs called the Regulators and the Bogotti gangs. He knew Abraham Lincoln. Saying all of that the thing that gets to my heart is when I look today, I can't find a photo of the man, a drawing of the man, so what exists today is that house that sits at 217. In the finest way it's the last remnant of that man and all the things he did in this town. I think there are a million things that can be done with this house, but the one thing we can't redo, bring back, is knocking this house down and turning it to gravel and waiting for this parking lot be built. When I take people on a tour of the City, here's where Judge Barry's house was, it's a lot more fun to tell them that is Judge Barry's house in the present. I urge you not to approve demolition.

Al Watts, Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, the role of Historic Preservation is to maintain the continuity of culture and heritage, it's about finding solutions to future needs while maintaining connection to the past as much as possible. Local ordinances help guide us through that. As Community Engagement Officer, to compare the ordinance for historic preservation to the application that has been submitted to demolishing 217 Cedar Ave. When we look at that we don't believe it meets the criteria for demolition for 3 reasons, the buildings historic significance, no demonstration in application that shows there is a significant public safety concern, and there does not appear to be an immediate need to demolish. When it comes to historic significance, in the ordinance it says if demolition would seriously impair historically, give due consideration for historical features. If there is historic value with the property you should give it some consideration. As discussed 211-215 Cedar Ave. did not have that, which is why you fairly agreed to have demolished. Not contributing architecturally, the historic value doesn't have to be architecture. In your resolution denying the COA in 2017, you found that the building should be reclassified as Contributing. It can be historic and that's enough of value to give it due consideration. The second thing on the health and safety risk, there doesn't appear to be a health or safety risk from this building. While applicant has noted the home is uninsurable, that is not the same thing as posing a health and safety risk. Absence of a structural engineering report, that home is not a safety risk. Finally, the demolition is premature. The applicant has been clear that they want to demolish the properties to make up for the parking they are going to lose across the street. However, that lot still is going to need to go through a permit process and could take months. There are plenty of other properties around the community that a lot of work has gone into and never happens. Ultimately our fear is these can get demolished and that parking lot is not there. The application does not include, as required by ordinance, a plan for the use of the property being vacated by the proposed demolition or relocation. They do have a drawing but

that drawing doesn't say anything about the practicality of building that parking lot there. Are they going to be able to have 20 more parking spaces there. That is why we feel the application doesn't match with the ordinance. When a historic building is demolished, it is lost forever and it takes a little piece of historic character of the City when it goes. There may come a day when demolition is necessary for this property. However, until then our organization is committed to collaborate with the applicant to find a suitable solution to meet their needs.

Mr. John Stockman, St. Charles Resident, lives immediately north of the north parking lot. I can attest to what Mr. Pretz said earlier that lot is woefully under used. I'd be surprised if I see it full 8 or 10 times a year. Usually for a City event, parades, fireworks in Pottawattamie Park, etc. It's rarely filled by the church. Everything that we've talked about individually this evening is really of a piece. Everything is interrelated, the churches' requirements, the parking requirements, the historic value of Barry House. I would love to see Barry House preserved. It occurred to me the north lot, which I understand the Pastor said was under contract. The possibility of subdividing that property and converting it to some combination of parking, to satisfy whatever requirements the church feels it needs by virtue of the loss of Barry House and another portion of the property which in total is about ½ a full city block, the remainder of that could be sold for redevelopment. I do not see the equation of the value of an entire ½ block of city property with a single elevator. It seems to me there would be considerable amount of excess, that would accrue to the church for their benefit. I don't know if the City, the Historical Commission or the church could intervene in that contract somehow with the status of the contract is.

Ms. Malay added, let me note back in 2021 through last year, we painstakingly reviewed the entire survey that was the original 1994 survey that was done, it helped justify in forming the Commission. The Commission was formed over the loss of a historic building that was demolished due to disrepair. We are sensitive to the idea losing any more historic resources we have regardless of the condition of those homes. Please understand this is where we are coming from. We have gone ahead and reclassified 217 Cedar Ave. as a Contributing structure. Now we do see we need to consider that in some of these classifications. There had been a comment earlier about it's not landmarked and it never was landmarked. The reason why the Commission chose not to landmark it was because it does have the same protections as a landmark is given because it sits within our district. We felt that it would be showing the peaceful hand by allowing it to be protected with that versus going in and landmarking against the owners will. We have done that in the past on properties that were not within the district. And fortunately, we have been lucky enough to have those owners agree to go ahead with it. We had that opportunity to do so but we felt since the protection was there we would prefer to try to work out a good resolution to it versus force it.

Mr. Kessler commented losing a historic resource to have another parking lot built and then building a parking lot on this one I feel is unacceptable. The church has said they don't consider the property to have any value, I understand the context that is given, but the fact is there is still a potential buyer who could be negotiated with, is interested in restoring the building and I think that should be pursued.

Ms. Morin said there is not value for the church but that does not mean there's not value to

the community, to potential families and noted through previous COA that efforts to sell are not what they could have been as far as public listing. As a person who recently bought a house I went to MLS, I wouldn't know otherwise what was available. I wasn't part of the Commission in 2017, I went back and read the meeting minutes and I feel there hasn't been much change from then and to now. Our responsibility here is to represent the historic district and the value of all the properties. I feel that proposing this as a parking lot instead of a green space is taking a step back.

Mr. Pretz said in reference to conducting an onsite survey, none was provided by Baker Methodist other than pointing out some things verbally. It would have been nice to see some sort of survey being done by a reputable resource. In the absence of that I do have the onsite survey was taken in 2017/2018. I would like to read. The Judge Berry House at 217 Cedar Street is a classic Greek revival home built in 1846- we will correct that, it's 1844- the semi-circular niche in the north gable probably contained a wooden fan, the house is built in limestone laid in courses and is in wonderful condition. If the stucco were removed and tuckpointed it would look similar to the stone the house to the west, which is now a landmarked home. The basement walls are plumb and smooth, and show no sign of spalling, cracking or water damage. The center support beam is a hand-hewn oak 8 x 10 that needs a post placed at the center. The white pine floor joists are notched into the beam and set directly into the stone wall on the other end. Floor joists are in good condition. The original floor is visible from the basement is 1 x 10 white pine. The first floor has ¾" hard maple floors probably laid around 1900. Floor is level and smooth and attractively finished with no signs of instability. The stair case is original and complete except for 2 missing balusters. The upstairs floors are also maple but 3/8<sup>th</sup> inch thick, well finished and very sound. Attic shows a center beam 6 ½' x 8" hand-hewn oak with oak 3" x 6" ceiling joists notched in. They are spaced 16" on center with insulation between. Rafters also oak and measure 3" x 4 1/2" on 32" centers. The original pine piqued sheeting is in place. The boards were gapped originally because the original roof was wood shingles, the roof is now asphalt shingles over plywood. All the framing is in good condition and shows no sign of leaking or powder post beetle, the stone of the gable end shows the chimneys were built integral with the stone walls, the ¾ inch 4 x 8 insulation board has been applied directly to the interior walls. Goes on to say I've been a restoration carpenter in the Fox Valley area for over 40 years. The Barry House is a remarkable condition, restoration would require only cosmetic work and nothing of structural nature.

Ms. Malay followed up that several of the commission members were on the tour.

Mr. Kessler also added he was in the house about 6 weeks ago with Dr. Smunt and I didn't see any significant change since 2017.

Ms. Rice added I don't see an immediate need for demolition. And I don't see an immediate need for parking with the north lot still there.

Dr. Smunt added I feel that when it comes to marketing that property for sale, the church did not due their due diligence by not having the house listed on the MLS listing with a commercial realtor. And having a potential buyer making an offer on what they consider a worthless property. I feel I'm getting mixed signals from them when it comes to talking

money about the sale of the property. I will support the preservation of the structure.

Ms. Malay agreed with what the Commission is saying at this point. I feel very strongly that it is our mission to protect our historic resources. This home, even though it is underrecognized, has a huge historic significance. It has connections to Colonel Farnsworth, to Abraham Lincoln. Judge Barry was a very important person to this community. I do feel that I understand it is a financial hardship for you to maintain it, but I also feel like it has gotten into the condition it is because it hasn't been maintained. We know that the other house has definitely gotten worse in the last 6 years because of the lack of maintenance. I cannot approve a demolition basically by neglect.

Mr. Pretz asked the Commission, we are talking about the house, is it still open if they want to take down the garage? In your eyes? I'm not sure taking the addition off or taking off the front knee wall is cost prohibitive.

Dr. Smunt responded I think before we do anything I would like to see the entire parcel preserved as is. There is no other alternative plan other than they want to make it a parking lot. I haven't seen anything, I haven't seen any evidence that this is moving forward. Perhaps that garage could remain as a storage unit regardless of how a parking lot is configured around the property. I would rather wait and see what comes forward from alternative options. We can always approve a demolition permit on the garage only, but we don't have to do it today.

Ms. Malay added we saw a factory building that had some significance get saved because the fact that they worked with some of the local organizations to find a buyer. But if it hasn't been listed on the MLS, means it also hasn't been marketed to a lot of different avenues that you can market historic properties. If it hasn't been given that opportunity. I can't say we have tried every effort to preserve that building and have it be a win-win for both parties. I think that's another issue that we need to recognize. If financial issues are the biggest aspect, then I think you need to work with these organizations and possibly list with MLS to see if we can't find a suitable purchaser for the property. Who knows maybe you can find a buyer to buy both of them. I do think we need to try and have more active marketing for the sale of that property. If that is what your biggest concern is, the financial burden.

**A motion was made by Mr. Kessler to recommend denial of the COA for demolition of 217 Cedar Ave for various reasons discussed during the meeting, based on Chapter 17.32 "Historic Preservation", and based on not seeing any change in the information from 2017, utilizing the 2017 denial recommendation findings.**

**Motion was seconded by Dr. Smunt.**

Findings incorporated by reference from Historic Commission Resolution 09-2017:

1. Significance of a Site, Structure or Building

FINDING:

The building is classified as “Non-Contributing” in the 1994 Architectural Survey of the Central Historic District. The building is identified as the Barry House on the St. Charles Public Library Local Historic Buildings Listing. Historic information on the building was not available when the 1994 survey was conducted. Evidence presented during the review of the Certificate Appropriateness suggests that the building could be re-classified as “Contributing”. The following supporting exhibits are attached: Exhibit “A”- Photo of the original appearance of the structure; Exhibit “B”- Photo of the house after a remodeling in the 1940s; Exhibit “C”- 1898 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the footprint of the house and addition; Exhibit “D”- Descriptive Statement of the Judge William D. Barry house supporting designation of the building as a Historic Landmark on the basis of historical significance.

2. General Architectural and Aesthetic Guidelines

FINDING:

Demolition of the building would remove an example of Greek Revival Architecture that meets the General Architectural and Aesthetic Guidelines listed in Items 2a through 2h.

3. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

FINDING:

Removal of the structure would not meet Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, Items 3a, 3b and 3e. The photo attached as Exhibit “A” shows the original characteristics and architectural features of the building.

- 3a. Demolition of the building would constitute a significant change, rather than a minimal change, that would eliminate the defining characteristics of the building.
- 3b. Demolition of the building would eliminate the distinguishing original qualities and historic character of the building.
- 3e. Demolition of the building would eliminate distinctive features that characterize the building.

4. Code Conflicts

FINDING:

Not applicable

**Roll was called on the motion.**

**Ayes: Rice, Smunt, Kessler, Morin, Malay**

**Nays:**

**Absent:**

**Abstained: Pretz**

**Motion carried: 5-0**

**6. Grant Applications**

None.

**7. Landmark Applications**

None

**8. Preliminary Reviews-** Open forum for questions or presentation of preliminary concepts to the Commission for feedback

None.

**9. Other Commission Business**

Rachel Hitzemann announced the new City website. Presenting new interactive landmark and Historic District map where you can open up historic codes and historically significant properties.

**10. Public Comment**

Mr. Al Watts advised of events that will be coming up with the Preservation Partners of Fox Valley.

**11. Additional Business and Observations from Commissioners or Staff**

None.

**12. Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.**

**13. Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.