

MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2017
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Members Present: Chairman Norris, Bobowiec, Gibson, Smunt, Pretz, Kessler, Malay

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager
Ellen Johnson, Planner

1. Call to order

Chairman Norris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll call

Ms. Johnson called roll with all seven members present. There was a quorum.

3. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

4. Presentation of minutes of the February 1, 2017 meeting

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes as presented.

5. COA: 514 Indiana St. (new house)

Zach Derrico, the petitioner, was present.

Ms. Johnson advised a COA was previously approved for a new house. The current proposal is for a revised second story on the rear elevation. It is no longer necessary to have a wide second story dormer on the rear. This was added to address a zoning issue. The issue has been resolved so they would like to revert back to the original design for the rear second story.

There were no objections to the plans.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA as presented.

6. Discussion Item: 218 Indiana St.

Laura Almasan was present.

Ms. Almasan said she is considering purchasing the property. Her plans include making this into a two-unit, side-by-side, duplex in a slightly more modern style than what is currently there. She would like to begin with a completely new structure. She provided a rendering of a new structure as an example of the architectural style she would like to pursue.

Dr. Smunt provided some background on the current style of the house. He supported the demolition of the building and the new two-unit option, but noted she will want to be sensitive to the existing architectural style of the neighborhood and incorporate some of those elements into the new design.

Commissioners stated agreement with Dr. Smunt. Some stated the rendering Ms. Almasan provided for the new structure is too modern in style for the neighborhood.

Mr. Bobowiec suggested using more natural siding such as cedar or cement board versus vinyl.

The Commissioners suggested Ms. Almasan return for further guidance when she has more definite plans for the structure.

7. Preliminary Review: 107-109 E. Main St. (George's)

Peter Suhr, Director of Public Works for the City of St. Charles, and Tom Tristano, from Prairie Forge Group, were present.

Mr. Suhr said the City purchased the property that is known as the former George's Sport Building in 2012. The intent was for it to be used for the possible future expansion of the Arcada Theatre. Mr. Suhr said the Public Works department manages the upkeep of all City facilities and this building falls under their responsibility. The City has monitored this building since 2012 and has done some safety modifications. However, the building has deteriorated to the point where it would require significant funds to renovate, watertight it, or demolish it. Mr. Suhr said the Prairie Forge Group was hired to study the possibility of properly making the building watertight and gutting it or demolishing it to get the site ready for development.

Chairman Norris asked what the City would like to have done with the building. Mr. Suhr said that would be a decision for City Council to make. Public Works is only interested in taking care of a deteriorating building, or getting it safe and ready for future development.

Mr. Tristano said Prairie Forge has been involved with this property for the past five years. He gave a presentation which included site conditions, building conditions, and options. The site contains an approximately 70 ft. x 50 ft. building known as the George's Sport Building, a courtyard, and an alleyway which contains a large amount of common utilities.

Mr. Tristano said one key element of the study they looked at was that this property would be the most significant asset to the Arcada theatre. They need space and utilities. Therefore, this was one conclusion they presented to City.

The findings/recommendations of the Watertight Option are as follows:

- Address/solve the water seepage issues
- Address/solve the structural deficiencies
- Replace the roof and roof insulation
- Remove the interior finishes – mold
- Replace the doors/windows/entries
- Repair brick walls and roof parapets
- Without a tenant or occupant there are no interior finishes or the ability to conform to a code compliant building or meet any MEP upgrades

The estimated cost of this option is \$1.10M.

The findings/recommendations of the Building Demolition Option are as follows:

- Address/solve the site water seepage issues
- Relocate the overhead utility/storm lines
- Address “Party Wall” influences:
 - Structural – walls, pockets, & future
 - Weatherproofing - below/above
 - Legal - “Party Wall” agreement
- Structural bracing - temporary & permanent
- Site access restrictions requires “Hand” demolition techniques
- Basement to be filled-in for an “open space”
- Add lighting, signage, and site furnishings

The estimated cost of this option is \$900K.

Mr. Tristano explained the reason this is so costly is due to site/access restrictions, drainage conditions, overhead utility lines, structural influences, party walls, and demolition methods.

Mr. Tristano said the only benefit of the watertight option would be to preserve a building and keep a downtown façade. The second option opens up the site for future use and is less expensive. It allows for nearly immediate use of the site once the building is torn down. Mr. Tristano noted the second option also provides short term improvements to the site with maximum flexibility for future development.

Chairman Norris asked if the Commissioners had any thoughts on fixing the existing elevation.

Mr. Bobowiec said if they left a shell someone could go in and begin a renovation.

Ms. Malay said the City has preservation ordinances in place and should be setting an example of preservation; especially in such a predominant location. She also felt the renovations being proposed were positive and would give someone a clean slate to begin future renovation.

Mr. Gibson agreed with Ms. Malay and also noted the building is part of what forms the vista of Main Street and not having it there would be significant.

Mr. Pretz was fine with all the repairs needed and said by keeping the shell the City would be setting an example of “heritage” as noted in the mission statement. He also felt the costs of each option were probably a bit closer together than stated and keeping the building shell may actually be the less expensive option.

Dr. Smunt was in favor of stabilizing the building and keeping it until a future use presents itself. He said the reason the City purchased the building was for the potential expansion of the Arcada Theatre. He felt that was still a valid reason to keep it. He also noted the building had a lot of history and was part of the whole look of Main Street.

Mr. Kessler said he preferred to preserve the façade and fix the shell in an effort to keep the streetscape intact.

Chairman Norris asked for feedback on keeping the front elevation up, but removing the back of the building.

Mr. Kessler said he would hate to see the back space empty, especially in the downtown area next to the Arcada.

Dr. Smunt said he does not support demolition unless he knows what is going to take its place. He does not think this is a good place for a plaza and questions how much it would be used in this location.

Mr. Pretz said both options are basically \$1M. If only the front façade is left, the City will have a difficult time selling what’s left to a prospective buyer because the buyer will face increased costs to finish the build-out.

Mr. Gibson felt a gutted building would have more value than a vacant lot. He said they were already limited in authentic historic storefront space and to lose this structure would be a poor choice. However, on the other hand, he said the building would be more sellable if they gutted the whole thing and left the middle open except for what’s needed for support purposes. This would allow the next buyer to have a blank slate that they could build out to their liking.

Ms. Malay said keeping just the front façade is worthless. She said she would prefer to see the whole building stay. She felt a gutted building would be more enticing to a future buyer.

Mr. Bobowiec preferred the gutted shell. He suggested the City needs to have a plan before they spend any money on either option. He would hate to see it sit for several more years without anything being done with it.

The Commissioners discussed their responsibility in this matter as it relates to the historic preservation ordinance.

Dr. Smunt said he hoped the City would keep the building. He also noted if there were any unique architectural elements inside the building, he would like them salvaged.

Mr. Bobowiec asked if the City set a timeline for when they would give up on having the Arcada utilize the space. Mr. Tristano said there may be some interest from the theatre, but the City would need to say they can't wait forever.

Mr. Bobowiec suggested an alternative option which includes only putting another \$250K-\$300K into the structure to fix the roof and remediate the mold, and then put it up for sale. He felt they might be able to get a buyer who would like to do the renovation, but didn't think they would ever recoup \$1M if it's a gutted shell.

8. Additional Business and Observations from Commissioners or Staff

Dr. Smunt reminded the group of the Preservation Partners event on February 25th. Dr. Smunt, Chairman Norris, and Mr. Pretz will be attending.

Mr. Bobowiec asked if there was any update on fixing the flashing at 408 Walnut St. Mr. Colby stated the new owners were made aware of what needs to be corrected and were given an extension to do the work.

Mr. Pretz mentioned he has been in contact with two separate homeowners who are interested in landmarking their homes.

Ms. Malay asked when the Pottawattamie Tour will take place. Mr. Colby said it will be in April or May. Mr. Gibson noted the History Museum's Trolley Tour will be held on April 22nd.

9. Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, March 1, 2017 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.

10. Public Comment

11. Adjournment

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With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.