

**VILLAGE OF HINSDALE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
Wednesday, August 2, 2023**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Village of Hinsdale Historic Preservation Commission was called to order by Commissioner Prisby in Memorial Hall of the Memorial Building, 19 E. Chicago Avenue, Hinsdale, IL on Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at 6:30 p.m., roll call was taken.

PRESENT: Commissioners Sarah Barclay, Frank Gonzalez, Jim Prisby and Chris Elder

ABSENT: Commissioners Shannon Weinberger, William Haarlow, Chairman John Bohnen

ALSO PRESENT: Bethany Salmon, Village Planner

Commissioner Prisby asked for a motion to appoint him as the Chairman Pro Tem for the meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Elder, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez to appoint Commissioner Jim Prisby Pro Tem Chairman for the August 2, 2023 Historic Preservation meeting. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Barclay, Gonzalez, Elder, and Pro Tem Chairman Prisby
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Commissioners Weinberger, Haarlow, and Chairman Bohnen

Public Meetings

a) Case HPC-10-2023 – 420 S. Park Avenue – Preservation Incentive Application for a Historically Significant Structures Property – Request for a Property Tax Rebate and Matching Grant – Exterior Improvements

Mimi Collins, the property owner, was present to address the Commission. Ms. Collins gave a brief overview of exterior projects completed since December of 2021. Gutter and fascia work is still in process and she hoped this work would be completed before the October Historical Society Event at the home.

Pro-tem Chairman Prisby stated he toured the home and Ms. Collins did a wonderful job on the interior and exterior renovations. Ms. Salmon clarified the request included the property tax rebate and matching grant funds. Documentation had been submitted for over \$200,000 of exterior work already completed that would have been eligible for the program it is had not already been completed.

Commissioner Elder stated that it is a beautiful home.

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby asked if anyone in the public would like to comment. No public comments were made.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked about the photos of the house, stated it was a beautiful home and that he did not have any issues with the request. Ms. Collins stated that there is still some work that needs to be done. Storm window installations and painting remains. Brief discussion followed about items that are and are not eligible for the program.

Ms. Salmon stated that this is the first application for a financial incentive. The HPC would vote on a recommendation to the Village Board and the Village Board would vote on the final approval.

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Elder, to recommend Case HPC-10-2023 – 420 S. Park Avenue – Preservation Incentive Application for a Historically Significant Structures Property – Request for a Property Tax Rebate and Matching Grant – Exterior Improvements for Board approval. The motion carried with a roll call vote of 4-0.

AYES: Commissioners Barclay, Gonzalez, Elder, and Pro Tem Chairman Prisby
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Commissioners Weinberger, Haarlow, and Chairman Bohnen

b) Case HPC-13-2023 – 515 S. Lincoln Street – Preservation Incentive Application for a Historically Significant Structures Property – Request for Alternative Bulk Zoning Regulations, Building Permit Fee Waiver, and Expedited Processing – Construction of a Rear and Side Addition on the Main House and a Side and Second-Story Addition on the Existing Detached Garage

Brad Stahl and Larysa Domino, the property owners, and Joel Rafferty, the project architect of Michael Abraham Architecture, were present to address the Commission. Mr. Stahl gave a brief overview of why the family loves the home and their desire to preserve the house, but also make it usable for the way a family lives today.

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby asked when the home was purchased. Ms. Domino replied the sale of the home was final in January, and work begin immediately with the design professional. The family will move into the house when renovations are complete. The request includes FAR and setback relief.

Discussion took place about the FAR of the existing structures on site and the Zoning Code regulations to determine the impact on bulk. It was determined that the proposed application would be at the maximum allowable FAR of 5177, about 435 square feet over the normal FAR.

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby explained the purpose of the incentive program is to make old homes livable and encourage owners to keep the house by using flexible Zoning Code regulations to widen the possibilities that can be done to renovate or add to a house without going through the Zoning Board of Appeals process. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby stated that he liked the design proposed but wondered if having four (4) cars of garage space is a necessity to preserve the house. Pro Tem Chairman asked if a mudroom instead of garage space be more appropriate for an incentive. He stated the discussion is worth having at this time because this is the first case for consideration and precedence would be set.

Ms. Domino acknowledged the point of necessity of four (4) car garage but added that there are many more dual income families and large families with young drivers than in the past.

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby explained he did not have a problem with the architecture of the proposed design of this application and that his concern was more with future abuses of the program. Mr. Stahl responded that limits of building coverage would prevent abuse because people will ultimately still want living space. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby stated that he believed this was the best argument to counter abuse and that the proposed application meets all the building coverage requirements, all of the accessory use requirements, and the rear yard coverage requirements.

Commissioner Barclay stated that garage space is a practical use and families would have to move out of a home when the kids begin to drive because overnight street parking is not permitted. Limited garage space is a problem.

Commissioner Elder stated that he sees the value of garage space and asked how much of the future cases are based aesthetics.

Commissioner Gonzalez added that it is more about convenience versus necessity, it is convenient to park a car inside a garage and it is not necessary for every child to have a car.

Commissioner Barclay responded that the problem is not who the car belongs to but where any cars, such as visiting grandparents, get parked with street parking restrictions. She added that the intent of the program is to provide solutions to modern families so the home is not demolished.

Commissioner Gonzalez posed the question about how large future garages allowable by this program will get before the Village Board deems the request irresponsible and not in keeping with the intended purpose. It was stated that it is not possible to predict all aspects of future requests.

Commissioner Barclay asked the Commission if they would feel differently about the request if the attached garage was designed as a mudroom. It was clarified that the largest of the garage space was part of the rear, detached garage. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby stated that he is not sure if he would feel differently but the discussion is a healthy one to have. It was added that a newly constructed home would not be eligible for zoning relief and it would be smaller.

Commissioner Barclay asked for clarification about the HPC actually setting precedence since case comes before the Commission for a recommendation. Ms. Salmon added that each case should be evaluated on an individual basis and sent to the Village Board for final review if financial incentives were included. Discussion followed about individual case evaluation versus precedence and the importance of the aesthetic factor.

Ms. Domino stated that great thought was put into the re-designed elements of the home to match the existing historic character. She explained that they considered what features they would like to see in a newly constructed home and then had Mr. Rafferty incorporate those features into the existing home to appear as if they had always been there.

Mr. Rafferty briefly discussed the interior changes to be made to the house to illustrate the updates made are not just about the four car garage. Mr. Rafferty added that clients who wish to take advantage of the incentive program come to him to create a design utilizing the existing space, how the property owner choses to use the space is up to them. A four (4) car garage is allowable as part of a newly constructed home project or part of an incentive project house.

Ms. Domino added that when an owner choses to buy a home on the approved list, they can take advantage of zoning relief but the trade-off may be they accept features that they would not necessarily want or choose. The most important feature of a historic house renovation that is part of the incentive program is the aesthetic of the changes to respect the character of home and blend in with the existing home, no matter if what is inside is classified as a "necessity".

Commissioner Barclay confirmed that the added space is approximately the size of a two (2) car garage. Ms. Domino added that there are other zoning limitations that keep owners reasonable and thoughtful with decisions related to relief, explaining that including the larger detached garage has a trade-off of a smaller patio space.

Commissioner Barclay stated that the program was designed for owners like those present tonight and to provide zoning relief for people who feel strongly about saving the house. It was added that the Commission rarely got the opportunity in the past to work with owners like this.

Commissioner Barclay stated concerns about the HPC setting precedence with debating the “necessity” of chosen features so early in the program, resulting in people not taking advantage of the program because of the level of difficulty and opting to tear the house down instead. She stated the importance of the Commission to be flexible and work with property owners in a responsible way. Commissioner Barclay stressed the value of having homeowners go through the process, have their efforts of planning a beautiful design be supported, and share positive feedback about their experience with others who might be considering participation.

Commissioner Elder stated he did not believe the family would walk away from the project if the four car garage could not be obtained or that it would hurt the value of the property, but supported the beautiful design of the project and would be happy if every design brought before the HPC for four-hundred square feet looked this beautiful.

Commissioner Gonzalez clarified questions he had about the plans to better understand the scope of work.

Commissioner Barclay stated that the detached garage is not visible from the street and the Commission’s focus is to evaluate what can be seen from the street. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby added that it would be visible from Sixth Street. Commissioner Barclay responded that the original detached garage and shed is currently seen from that perspective so a structure, old or new, would be seen no matter what.

It was stated that the storage space off the second floor master bedroom was counted as square footage because of the eight (8) foot ceilings. Mr. Rafferty stated the Michael Abraham is currently working on more projects for the incentive program and each property is unique and each homeowner has a variety of ideas of how they want to utilize the relief and what is a “necessity” for them.

Commissioner Gonzalez stated that his philosophy in the past was to accept changes in the home that were not visible from the street to make it livable and save the home. This case is an example of just that. He said he appreciated the design effort but he’s struggling with this application.

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby stated that since two (2) of four (4) Commissioners are on the fence, in an ideal world, he would like to see the application tabled for a month to be discussed when all members were present in discussion despite the fact it would hold up the project.

Commissioner Barclay acknowledged that tabling the item would cost the owners a great deal of money in addition to time and felt approving the meticulously planned project with relatively small amount of square footage would be a great example of the benefits the program can bring to the owners, residents and Hinsdale. Although Commissioner Barclay acknowledged the benefit of having a discussion when all members are present and stated she respected Pro Tem Chairman Prisby’s position, she felt this project is exactly what the Commission has been asking for and to not approve it would be sending mixed messages.

Commissioner Gonzalez agreed with the statement that this project is what the program was designed for. Commissioner Barclay re-stated that future applications will be evaluated individually so the next case with a similar increase in square footage may not be approved. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby acknowledged the financial costs of delaying the project.

Commissioner Elder asked what the process would be if the vote was not unanimous. Ms. Salmon reported it would be a denial to recommend the case to the board without a strong reason to appeal to the Village Board. Closing thoughts were requested.

Ms. Domino restated their love for the house, the work that went into designing the proposed changes that kept a level of respect for the requested relief, and that she would really appreciate the support of the Commission. Mr. Stahl reminded the Commission that they designed the project to meet their requirements. Pro Tem Chairman Prisby stated he understood how difficult the process of making the Zoning regulations work with a design in this town can be. It was agreed that the corner lot brought additional challenges. Mr. Rafferty added that the storage area can be eliminated reducing the square footage increase to approximately two hundred (200).

Pro Tem Chairman Prisby thanked the applicant for all of the great information. Ms. Salmon reminded the Commission they have final authority for approval and the application did not need to go to the Board.

Commissioner Elder made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez, to approve Case HPC-13-2023 – 515 S. Lincoln Street – Preservation Incentive Application for a Historically Significant Structures Property – Request for Alternative Bulk Zoning Regulations, Building Permit Fee Waiver, and Expedited Processing – Construction of a Rear and Side Addition on the Main House and a Side and Second-Story Addition on the Existing Detached Garage. The motion carried with a roll call vote of 4-0.

AYES:	Commissioners Barclay, Gonzalez, Elder, and Pro Tem Chairman Prisby
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	Commissioners Weinberger, Haarlow, and Chairman Bohnen

Pro-tem Chairman Prisby said it was not his intention to hold up this owner's project but feels meaningful discussion needs to take place among Commission members about the program and the potential for abuse.

Mr. Rafferty pointed out one of the benefits of the program is the initial contact with the Village Planner before owners come to a design professional or the Commission resulting in an early understanding of the benefits and limitations can be discussed. Commissioner Gonzalez suggested that future applicants connect with Commissioners before the project is applied for resulting in a clear understanding of all perspectives and perhaps a smoother process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were shared.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

a) Amendments to Title 14 – Status Update

No updates were shared.

b) Robbins Park Historic Gateway Signs

Ms. Salmon reminded the Commission that the sign contractor Parvin-Clauss has been hired to help with the design of the signs and a couple options are anticipated to be brought forward for discussion very soon.

c) Sixth Street Improvement Project

No updates were shared.

Adjournment

Commissioner Elder made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Barclay, to adjourn the regularly meeting of the Village of Hinsdale Historic Preservation Commission meeting of August 2, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m. after a unanimous voice vote of 4-0.

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer Spires, Community Development Office