

## MINUTES

**TOWN OF NORMAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
UPTOWN STATION, 3<sup>rd</sup> FLOOR (Union Pacific Room)  
11 UPTOWN CIRCLE  
NORMAL, ILLINOIS**

**REGULAR MEETING  
February 9, 2016  
12:30 p.m.**

### **Members Present**

Kristen Allen, Nancy Armstrong, Kathy Burgess, Bruce Warloe, Bob Ward

### **Members Absent**

Laurie Christensen, Anne Matter

### **Others Present**

Mercy Davison, Town Planner; Mark and Eva Wyman, 807 N. School; Mike Kearns and George Nordine, Nordine's Remodeling; Dave Geshiwl, 703 N. School

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Warloe called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. noting that there was a quorum.

### **Minutes**

Ms. Burgess moved to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2016 meeting. Ms. Armstrong seconded. The motion carried 4-0. Ms. Allen arrived after the approval of the minutes.

### **CA-16-02-05: Front Porch Reconstruction, 807 N. School**

Mike Kearns of Nordine's explained the plan to reconstruct the entire porch, which was heavily damaged in a recent ice storm. Based on the damage, he does not think it can be repaired safely.

The front porch is original to the house and constructed primarily of wood. Wood elements include the floor, the porch ceiling and soffit (beadboard), the fascia board under the porch overhang, the railing and spindles, the slatted porch skirting, and the 3 rounded Corinthian columns. Decorative concrete block piers support the porch; however, they do not have proper footings. The porch roof is asphalt shingles, the front steps are concrete, and the railings on the steps are wrought iron.

In the storm, a large portion of a tree fell onto the north end of the porch roof, splitting the wood column and heavily damaging the concrete block piers. Mr. Kearns does not think this could be repaired in a manner that would be safe for his workers, and the insurance company has agreed to pay for the reconstruction of the entire porch.

Because the porch will be new construction, it will be built to meet current code in regard to frost-protected footings and railing heights. According to Mr. Kearns, none of the existing porch materials can be salvaged. In addition, the homeowners would like to use Azek products rather than wood due to the greatly reduced maintenance. Mr. Wyman stated that at his age it is difficult to continue repainting the wood every 2-3 years. Ms. Davison stated that Azek has been approved before because it can be custom turned/designed and painted. Ms. Burgess pointed out that previous Azek approvals have been for very minor amounts, such as the newel posts on the porch at 5 Broadway Place.

Mr. Kearns reviewed the proposed porch design, which would include the following:

1. Identical roof pitch and asphalt shingles
2. Fascia board of same dimensions
3. Skirting of same design (vertical slats)
4. Flooring to match existing, noting that the Azek flooring has a wood grain
5. Beadboard on ceiling to match existing
6. Railing to match the slat design but with a more decorative top piece
7. Replace existing concrete steps and wrought iron railing with Azek stairs and railings (historic stair design and railing to match that on porch)
8. Square columns to replace the existing solid wood Corinthian columns
9. Square piers to replace existing decorative masonry

Mr. Kearns brought in samples of Azek boards and railing pieces, and he said that he'd like to use Azek or Versatex. (The commissioners never discussed Versatex.) The commissioners generally agreed that the floorboards look like wood. Ms. Allen asked if it sounds like wood when someone walks on it. Ms. Davison said she thought it sounded like wood when she walked on an Azek porch on Grove Street in Bloomington.

Mr. Kearns showed how the top piece of the railing slides over the top of the slats, which completely conceals the nails. The beadboard is also assembled in a manner that hides the nails. Ms. Armstrong expressed strong concern with the shiny plastic appearance of the Azek railing and asked if Mr. Kearns could find a matte finish. He said he could ask Azek about this, but he also said that wear and tear will make the shine fade. The commissioners also discussed the proposed design of the top of the railing. The proposed design has a rounded top, whereas the style of the house and the existing porch are very plain. They said it would be more appropriate to find an Azek rail with a more squared, plain design.

Ms. Burgess noted that the new beadboard needs to match the existing width of the beadboard slats, as this is the type of detail that can look very inappropriate if done incorrectly.

Mr. Warloe asked for more detail on the footings and piers, noting that the proposal to use square piers will not be as historically appropriate as decorative block. Mr. Kearns stated his preference to utilize one 6" x 6" piece of Azek from the footing all the way to the porch ceiling for strength reasons. He would then clad the 6" x 6" piece with wider Azek boards. Mr. Warloe said the strength could be accomplished with a concrete footing/pier which would then be enclosed by decorative block and capped with a platform piece. The porch floor could sit on the platform, and then the porch columns could sit on that.

The commissioners discussed the column design at length. The existing columns are solid wood with a Corinthian design, tapered from top to bottom with a capital and base. The proposed new columns would be Azek pieces attached to the 6" x 6" support column in a square, Craftsman design. Mr. Kearns said that a drive through the neighborhood revealed that about half the porches have Craftsman columns and about half have Corinthian.

Mr. Warloe said that the key question is whether or not the new porch will look like the original porch. Ms. Davison noted that it is not typical for applicants to have a full drawing of a project, as that could be difficult to obtain from a contractor. However, that also leaves open the possibility that the contractor's idea of "looking the same" is not in accordance with the commission's opinion of same. Mr. Warloe said that based on the application materials, the new porch will not look the same in that the columns and piers will be significantly different.

Mr. Warloe also asked about the railing height. Mr. Kearns said that the current 24" railing height could not be rebuilt per code, as the current building code requires a railing height of 36". Ms. Davison said that the Town Inspections Department had already determined that a historically appropriate height could be accomplished. She further noted that a historically appropriate height is very important to the overall appearance of this porch. Ms. Allen agreed.

Mr. Warloe asked about the height of the railing going down the stairs. Mr. Kearns said the stair railing would match the style of the rail on the porch. All commissioners agreed that for safety reasons the new stair railing should meet the required code height. Furthermore, the existing wrought iron railing is the minimum code height. They discussed how the railing attachment to the column could be designed to be close to the same height as the porch railing height.

Mr. Warloe asked about the current siding on the house. Mr. Nordine said it is primarily wood siding with some vinyl near the roof, and the soffits are aluminum clad.

Ms. Burgess and Mr. Warloe asked if the insurance company reimbursement will cover the cost of Azek or fiberglass columns. Mr. Kearns said no, the insurance company will only cover a simpler square design. Furthermore, the insurance company's overall reimbursement is based on an all-wood porch. The Wymans are paying all of the extra cost of the more-expensive Azek. He said a fiberglass column in the Corinthian style is the only realistic replacement for the current wood columns, as there is no rounded column in Azek.

The Wymans are also paying the complete cost for the new front steps, as the existing concrete steps were not damaged in the ice storm (and are therefore not covered by insurance). Ms. Burgess asked if the Azek can be one monolithic piece for the risers, and Mr. Kearns said yes. The treads will look like wood boards.

Mr. Warloe said the two major issues are that the proposed new porch is a major redesign and that the new porch will be made of new materials. Ms. Burgess noted that Azek has been approved before but never in this amount. She asked if it is truly necessary to use this much Azek. Mr. Kearns said the Wymans want to minimize maintenance in their retirement years.

Ms. Burgess said her two big design issues are the rail height and the piers without the masonry. Mr. Kearns said a masonry enclosure could be built around the 6" x 6" support beam, but he is concerned it will be difficult to align with the column above.

Mr. Warloe asked if the commission would like to hold the item over to the March meeting in order for Mr. Kearns to return with additional detail.

Ms. Allen said her primary concerns pertain to the design rather than the materials, specifically the height of the porch railing, the shape of the columns, and the design of the piers. In other words, she said she supports the use of Azek as long as the ultimate design matches existing. Mr. Warloe agreed with the design comment but does not like the use of Azek.

Ms. Armstrong moved to approve the porch reconstruction with the following conditions, seconded by Mr. Ward:

When a building permit is filed with a drawing of the porch project, the following details must be verified by Town staff:

1. Beadboard width must match existing
2. Railing height on the porch must be the same as current, but the stair railing must meet the code minimum height
3. Utilize rounded fiberglass columns that match existing
4. Surround the piers in decorative block to match existing
5. Utilize monolithic risers on front steps
6. Ensure fascia board is the same dimension as existing
7. Front steps must have an overhang
8. Utilize the simpler, more squared version of the Azek railing design

The motion carried 5-0.

The Wymans then brought up the concept of replacing their existing wood front door, which is original to the house. The door has a large glass area, and Ms. Wyman would like more privacy. Mr. Kearns had shown her a new fiberglass front door with a large window area completely covered in stained glass. The commissioners explained that a wood door cannot be replaced with fiberglass, and they noted that the proposed door replacement, although attractive, is a Prairie style that would not be architecturally appropriate for their Foursquare home. They suggested that the Wymans continue to work with Town staff on this proposal.

#### **CA-16-02-06: Front Porch Masonry Repair, 703 N. School**

Owner David Geshiwlm explained that the masonry skirting under his front porch is badly deteriorated and needs to be replaced. He plans to utilize identical decorative masonry block in the same design.

Mr. Warloe asked if any work would be done on the porch wood, as the wood also appears to be in poor condition. Mr. Geshiwlm said wood repair will be done later. He believes the masonry work can be done without impacting the wood. Mr. Warloe asked if he would be doing all three sides of the porch, and Mr. Geshiwlm said yes. He will have to remove the shrubbery along the front. He may have to do limited tuck pointing on the masonry piers.

**BG-16-02-01: Front Porch Masonry Repair, 703 N. School**

Mr. Geshiwlm said that he has only been able to obtain one bid thus far, and he plans to keep asking around. The commission agreed to carry this item over to the March meeting. The encouraged Mr. Geshiwlm to include all costs, including labor and materials.

**Other Business**

No further business was discussed.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mercy Davison  
Town Planner