

MINUTES

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

REGULAR MEETING

April 12, 2016

12:30 p.m.

Members Present

Kristen Allen, Kathy Burgess, Laurie Christensen, Anne Matter, Bruce Warloe

Members Absent

Nancy Armstrong, Bob Ward

Others Present

Mercy Davison, Town Planner; Karen McConnell, 700 N. School; Lisa Flanagan, 702 Normal

Call to Order

Ms. Matter called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m. noting that there was a quorum.

Minutes

Ms. Burgess moved to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2016 meeting. Ms. Christensen seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

CA-16-04-11: Paint Brick Foundation on Porch, 700 N. School

Ms. Davison noted that this is the first time she has seen a “painting of a previously unpainted surface” case in all of her 16 years with the commission.

Ms. McConnell explained the proposal to paint the front porch brick white to match the rest of the house foundation. This will help to mask previous repairs made to the brick. Ms. Matter noted that because the front porch is not original to the structure, this could have been approved via expedited process.

Mr. Warloe moved to approve the paint; Ms. Christensen seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

Ms. McConnell then asked for direction in the addition of a new fence to her corner lot. The commission explained the types of fence that would be permitted.

CA-16-04-13: Installation of Railings on Front Steps, 702 Normal

Ms. Flanagan explained that she would like to add a railing to her front steps for safety reasons, especially with her elderly mother coming to live at the house this summer. She showed the commission a potential wrought iron railing custom-made by McGraw. She noted that other houses on the street have similar railings.

Ms. Matter stated that railings have been approved many times even though they are not historically appropriate; she explained that safety is more important. However, Ms. Matter said, the commission tries to approve railings that best match the character of the house.

Ms. Burgess suggested that a wood railing may be more architecturally appropriate given the wood siding (house and wing walls) and wood stairs. She suggested that Ms. Flanagan look at a new set of railings recently installed at 903 Broadway. She also stated that because wrought iron railings have been approved in the past, she would also support wrought iron at this house; however, she recommended that any wrought iron be very plain, with no scrolls or twists. Ms. Matter agreed.

Ms. Flanagan said she would investigate wood railings and that they may be cheaper.

Ms. Allen moved to approve either wrought iron with no scroll or twists or a wood railing with a design similar to the house at 903 Broadway, with the final design approved by Ms. Matter or Mr. Warloe. Ms. Christensen seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

BG-16-04-03: Installation of Railings on Front Steps, 702 Normal

Ms. Flanagan withdrew the grant application, noting that she had failed to find any evidence that there were railings on the house originally. Thus, the project would not be restoration.

CA-16-04-12: Porch Restoration, 713 N. School

Ms. Davison explained that the homeowners both had work conflicts preventing them from attending. She then summarized their proposal to rebuild their front porch, while retaining the existing porch roof. The current porch does not have original railings, columns, piers, or front steps. Furthermore, the current railings meet current code minimum height (making them somewhat out-of-character with the house), the columns are metal posts clad in 2x4 lumber (and painted white), and the piers are the same metal posts but unclad.

According to Ms. Davison, the applicants are interested in rebuilding because most of the porch wood is rotting. They plan to replace it all with wood, and they are hoping for Bone Grant assistance. Ms. Davison had informed the owners that the grant only pertains to restoration. As a result, Ms. Davison told them, the commission may require that the new design be more historically appropriate rather than a reconstruction of the existing design. For example, the columns would need to be bigger and more distinctive, the piers would need to be clad in a material complimentary

to the house foundation, and the like. She told the owners she doubted the commission would give grant money to rebuild the railings at a code-compliant height because it is not architecturally appropriate (although it must meet code).

The commissioners discussed the proposal at length and ultimately tabled the item to permit Ms. Davison to run the following information by the homeowners:

1. The porch may be rebuilt in exactly the same fashion with the same materials as it would be like-with-like.
2. The two bids are quite different in detail and in quality of design, particularly the size of the joists and the manner of constructing the footings. Ms. Davison said that any design will have to meet the building code for both of those items. However, Mr. Warloe said the homeowner should be aware that the proposals are not the same level of quality.
3. The current columns are 5x5 in dimension. The proposal is for 6x6, and one proposal calls for caps and bases. The commissioners suggested that the columns be larger and more distinctive in design. They didn't believe 6x6 would be enough of a difference to warrant grant money.
4. The commissioners need more detail on the skirting. Although the bids suggest the new skirting would match existing, they want more detail on how the vertical slats are attached to the top and bottom piece. This is the type of detail that distinguishes between modern and historic.
5. The commissioners agreed that the floorboards need to be perpendicular to the house. One of the bids suggests boards parallel to the house, which is not historically appropriate.
6. The commissioners debated whether paying for new floorboards would be appropriate, given that it could be considered maintenance rather than restoration. Ms. Davison said the current floorboards have been 1/3 replaced by a previous owner, who replaced the section of floorboards most rotted due to being most exposed to the elements. (This is the 1/3 of floorboards closest to the front of the porch.) The commissioners said that given this information, it is more clearly restoration than maintenance.
7. The commissioners need more detail on the piers. One bid references "faux decorative" piers, which is unclear. They suggested that the piers match the house foundation.
8. The commissioners need more explanation on the bid stating the new stairs would match the width of the sidewalk, which varies in width.
9. Ms. Matter said she would consider grant funds for new railings if the design were more historically appropriate, even though it would be a code-compliant (and, therefore, not historically appropriate) height.
10. The commissioners understand that it is difficult and/or expensive to have renderings completed. As a result, they suggested that Ms. Davison take photos of appropriate porch elements found on nearby Foursquare porches and provide them to the homeowners.

Ms. Burgess moved to table.

BG-16-04-02: Porch Restoration, 713 N. School

This items was also tabled to permit time for additional information gathering.

CA-16-04-14: Replace Floorboards on Front Porch, 703 N. School

Ms. Davison explained that the owner wants to replace the existing, rotting wood floorboards with new, matching fir floorboards. Ms. Allen moved to approve, and Ms. Burgess seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

BG-16-04-04: Replace Floor Boards on Front Porch, 703 N. School

The owner is also requesting a Bone Grant for the new floorboards. Ms. Burgess and Ms. Allen said this seems like maintenance, which isn't eligible for grant funding. Ms. Matter said she would consider grant money for this. Ms. Davison said she believed grants had been given for floorboard replacement in the past but would have to check the records. The commissioners tabled the item to permit Ms. Davison to research the history of grants for floorboards.

Other Business

1. Ms. Davison told the commission that the Town-owned houses at 509 and 513 N. School had sales pending.
2. Ms. Davison said she would investigate the potential to have an IHPA-led workshop in Normal to discuss common issues in historic preservation, including the use of modern materials in place of modern wood (which tends to rot). Such a workshop could attract people from across central Illinois

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mercy Davison
Town Planner