

## MINUTES

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

### **RESCHEDULED MEETING**

**April 12, 2017**

**12:30 p.m.**

#### **Members Present**

Kristen Allen, Nancy Armstrong, Kathy Burgess, Laurie Christensen, Anne Matter, Chris Niebur, Bruce Warloe

#### **Members Absent**

None

#### **Others Present**

Mercy Davison, Town Planner; Taylor Long, Associate Planner; Nancy DeYoung, 304 W Virginia Ave; Max Huschens, 20 Broadway Pl; David Geshiwlm, 614 N School

#### **Call to Order**

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

#### **Minutes**

Ms. Christensen moved to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2017 regular meeting. Mr. Niebur seconded. The motion carried 6-0. Ms. Allen arrived after the vote.

#### **CA-17-04-09: Porch Reconstruction, 304 W. Virginia Ave.**

Mr. Long began by summarizing the application's scope and explained that it pertained solely to the proposed teardown and reconstruction of the porch's brick surround, wingwalls and four concrete steps. Ms. Matter invited the home's owner, Nancy DeYoung, to address the commission and offer any additional information. Ms. DeYoung reiterated that the wingwalls were falling apart and that the concrete steps and brick porch walls had begun to sink away from the porch.

Ms. Armstrong inquired as to whether Ms. DeYoung or her contractor had any concerns about matching new bricks with those already in place. Ms. DeYoung stated that she did have doubts about being able to seamlessly match the current bricks with any new ones that would be necessary in reconstructing the porch. To ensure that the most visible bricks on the porch did match, Ms. DeYoung stated that any re-usable bricks from the deconstructed wingwalls could be put in place on the porch walls/surround for visual continuity.

Ms. DeYoung also suggested that the new bricks could be painted to match the existing bricks' various shades of reds and browns, and added that the back of the home and current wingwalls had been painted in such a fashion. The commissioners informed Ms. DeYoung that a recent applicant in the Old North Normal Historic District had employed an area contractor for just such a project and had ended up with a very convincing brick pattern. Town staff agreed to forward Ms. DeYoung information regarding the recent application and contractor.

Finally, Ms. DeYoung stated that once the brick surround and wingwalls were torn down and reconstructed, the current white caps would be checked for any necessary repairs and put back in place.

Ms. Armstrong moved to approve the application for porch reconstruction with the following conditions:

1. That original bricks from other parts of the home and/or property be used in the reconstruction of the porch's brick surround and wingwalls whenever possible.
2. That new bricks match the porch's existing bricks in color and texture
3. That new bricks be painted to match the existing bricks, if necessary

Ms. Burgess seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

**CA-17-04-10: Sidewalk Step Reconstruction, 304 W. Virginia Ave.**

Mr. Long first summarized the commission's longstanding practice of not getting involved with the approval or denial of any kind of sidewalk or general flatwork construction or repair. With that policy in mind, Mr. Long explained that the only reason the application for the reconstruction of Ms. DeYoung's two small sidewalk steps was being submitted was because of Ms. DeYoung's interest in acquiring grant funding for the repairs. Mr. Long added that a fair argument could be made that the steps are architecturally significant to the property because of their situation between two curved, bull-nosed curbs. Lastly, Mr. Long made clear that the application dealt only with the reconstruction of the two steps and not the entire sidewalk or the uniquely-shaped curbs.

The commissioners agreed that the sidewalk steps were falling apart and in need of repairs, but again stated that this was not usually the type of exterior alteration requiring commission approval. Ms. Burgess also raised the question of whether the steps were a part of 304 W. Virginia's property or located within a Town-owned easement. Ms. Davison offered that the steps were most likely a part of Ms. DeYoung's property, but that the bull-nosed curb running the length of Ms. DeYoung's southern boundary was almost certainly Town property.

Ms. Burgess moved to approve the application for the reconstruction of Ms. DeYoung's two sidewalk steps, yet reiterated that the matter was only considered by the commission because of the related Bone Grant application. Ms. Armstrong seconded. The motion carried 7-0.

**BG-17-04-03: Porch and Sidewalk Step Reconstruction, 304 W. Virginia Ave.**

Ms. Matter introduced the grant application and explained that Ms. DeYoung was seeking funding for the reconstruction of her porch, porch steps, and the two small sidewalk steps just off the public sidewalk to the south.

Ms. Matter began the discussion by stating that she believed the reconstruction of the porch's brick walls to be restorative and, thus, eligible for funding, but that the repairing of the porch's concrete steps and those at the end of the sidewalk could more realistically be considered maintenance or a part of general upkeep. The commissioners agreed that the repair of all the porch's brickwork was an eligible project for grant funding. Ms. Armstrong suggested that the reconstruction of the porch's wingwalls, brick surround, and the porch's four concrete steps should all be considered eligible parts of a grant-funded restoration project. Ms. Armstrong did agree, though, that the commission should not issue grant funding for the reconstruction of Ms. DeYoung's sidewalk steps. Along with citing the commission's policy of noninvolvement with changes to flatwork at historic properties, the commissioners decided that grant funding could not be awarded for the work because the steps themselves were not architecturally significant. If the historic and unique bull-nosed curb was not owned by the Town and was being reconstructed along with the steps, the commission stated, then perhaps grant funding could be awarded for such work.

After the decision to exclude the costs of repairing the sidewalk steps from those related to restoring the home's porch was made, Mr. Warloe drew the commission's attention to the applicant's two required estimates and noted that costs had not been appropriately separated to allow for an exact amount to be authorized for the grant at that time. Town staff agreed to follow-up with the applicant and obtain a revised second estimate that appropriately separated eligible costs from those associated with sidewalk repair.

The commissioners also resolved to cover half the costs of any painting of the porch's brickwork since such work would help blend new and old bricks and aid in the general restoration effort.

Ms. Allen moved to approve a grant in an amount not to exceed half the costs of repairing the porch's brick surround, wingwalls, and four concrete steps, but not those related to repairing the two, small sidewalk steps. Ms. Armstrong seconded. The motion carried 7-0.

**CA-17-04-11: Fence Installation, 20 Broadway Pl.**

Ms. Matter briefly summarized the application for the installation of a wooden fence in the backyard at 20 Broadway Pl and invited the home's owner, Max Huschens, to provide the commissioners with more detail. Mr. Huschens explained that the 6-foot-tall privacy fence would run the full perimeter of his backyard and feature a gate beside the attached garage on the north side of his home. Using photos and renderings displayed by Town staff, Mr. Huschens showed the commissioners the proximity of his home to the Constitution Trail, how the wooden fence would be designed, and where exactly the gate would be located (see attached).

Ms. Allen moved to approve the application for the installation of a backyard fence at 20 Broadway Place. Ms. Christensen seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

**CA-17-04-12: Porch Restoration, 614 N. School St.**

Ms. Matter reacquainted the commissioners with Mr. Geshiwlm and his porch restoration project at 614 N School St. Ms. Matter then summarized that at the commission's previous meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup> Mr. Geshiwlm had been granted approval to begin the work of uncovering his Italianate home's long-enclosed front porch and restoring it to its 1870s appearance. At that time, Mr. Geshiwlm was also informed that he would need to seek the commission's approval for any other significant changes to the porch's current appearance. Ms. Matter then invited Mr. Geshiwlm to explain his application to shorten the outward extent of the current porch by approximately 4 to 5 feet.

Mr. Geshiwlm explained that during one of two past remodels of the porch, the property's previous owners had extended the western front porch out toward N School St and past its original 1870s depth. At the time of the porch's extension, a full masonry foundation and set of steps were also constructed. Mr. Geshiwlm determined that the porch's depth had been altered in the past by removing the non-historic ceiling in the enclosed porch's interior and exposing a point where modern building materials met the roof's original, wood framing (see attached images).

In restoring the porch to its original depth and structural design, Mr. Geshiwlm explained that the following would occur:

1. After removing all modern materials – effectively opening the enclosed porch – the porch's roof, floor, and foundation would be cut back 4 to 5 feet toward the main house. The outward extent of the porch would then be in line with the original wood framing that was hidden in the enclosed porch's ceiling.
2. The full foundation which runs the perimeter of the porch would be removed and replaced with brick or brick-veneered piers that would be placed beneath the porch roof's 4 restored, wooden support columns. Appropriate wooden porch skirting would then be placed between the piers. This proposed pier-and-column support system is a staple of Italianate porches.
3. Finally, the porch's current steps would be removed and replaced with wooden steps appropriate to the home's restored aesthetic.

The commissioners and Mr. Geshiwlm agreed that this was indeed the type of significant alteration that required review and approval independent from that given to CA-17-03-07.

Noting the rough appearance of the porch's current concrete and brick steps, Ms. Davison asked Mr. Geshiwlm to confirm that the steps were not original to the home. Mr. Geshiwlm verified that the porch steps were not original to the home's 1870s construction and added that Mr. Warloe had pointed out the steps' disrepair at the commission's previous meeting. On the topic of the steps' reconstruction, Ms. Burgess also raised the question of whether Mr. Geshiwlm would have to install a railing for the steps to meet building code standards. Town staff and Mr. Geshiwlm explained that even with the reconstruction, the steps would not rise high enough from the ground to require a railing's installation.

In answering a question posed by Ms. Burgess, Mr. Geshiwlm stated that the porch's reduced depth would certainly impact the ability of future occupants to have large gatherings or outdoor furniture situated on the porch. Mr. Geshiwlm did express a little bit of regret for the loss of space, but reiterated his desire to restore the porch and entire home to its original appearance as best as possible. The commissioners again expressed appreciation for the thoughtful restoration being undertaken by Mr. Geshiwlm.

Lastly, Mr. Geshiwlm stated his intention to seek Bone Grant funding for the construction of the restored porch's proposed brick or brick-veneered piers. Mr. Geshiwlm elaborated that he was only seeking approval for such a change to the foundation now, and that he would apply for grant funding once he had the commission's approval and received more input from experienced contractors. The commissioners encouraged Mr. Geshiwlm to return and apply for grant funds whenever he was ready to proceed.

Ms. Armstrong moved to approve the application to restore the front western porch at 614 N. School Street to its original, smaller dimensions. Ms. Burgess seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

**CA-17-04-13: Porch Step Reconstruction, 1202 S. Fell Ave.**

Mr. Long began by explaining that the applicants, Christie and Quentin Rabideau, had attempted to attend the meeting prior to its rescheduling, but were not present for the day's meeting.

Ms. Matter introduced the application for 1202 S Fell's porch step reconstruction and explained that the applicants would like to rebuild the porch steps because of their current and progressing state of disrepair. Mr. Long informed the commissioners that the homeowners had first brought their porch restoration plans to Town staff in the fall of 2016, but had decided to wait until spring or summer of 2017 to file any formal application. The commissioners voiced no objections to the proposed reconstruction, but stated that the porch steps should be constructed with treated, durable wood and be painted to match the rest of the porch area.

Ms. Burgess brought up the idea of conditioning future Bone Grant application approvals upon the use of certain appropriate, durable woods in the construction of porches, steps, etc. Ms. Burgess opined that the commission would not necessarily have to require the use of certain types of wood if a person was simply seeking approval for such work, but that the commission could require that more select wood be used if grant funding was awarded for the project. The commissioners resolved to keep such a consideration in mind in the future.

Ms. Burgess moved to approve the application to reconstruct the porch's front steps on the condition that they be painted for added weather protection and to match the rest of the porch. Mr. Warloe seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

**CA-17-04-14: Porch Railing Construction, 1202 S. Fell Ave.**

The commissioners reviewed the application and its attached renderings of possible railing designs. Unsure as to which of the renderings the applicant favored, commissioners Armstrong, Niebur, and Warloe began reading through the applicant's material listing and the cost estimates submitted with the related grant application. After ascertaining which rendering most closely aligned with the submitted material and cost sheets, the commissioners concluded that posts would likely be placed at the top and bottom of the steps on either side of the porch opening.

Most commissioners expressed a preference for no top, wooden posts being installed beside the porch's large and original wooden and brick columns (see attached). If built to the commission's understanding, the new wooden posts would be of much smaller dimensions than the porch's two existing columns and would appear out-of-place. Additionally, to meeting building and safety standards, the two upper posts would rise much higher than the existing wooden railing that surrounds the 1872 home's large porch.

Instead, the commissioners suggested the following:

1. That the two upper posts not be installed at the top of the stairs and beside the existing columns.
2. That the railings instead run from posts mounted on the top of the bottom step up and into the faces of the exiting brick and wood columns. The porch's steps should be resized, if necessary, to enable this preferred construction.
3. That the dimensions of the posts be made to more appropriately match the sizing of the existing columns.

Ms. Davison stated that any proposed railing construction would have to be built with building and safety standards in mind. Town staff resolved to contact the applicants and set-up a time for the chair and Mr. Long to meet Mr. Rabideau and discuss the proposed and preferred designs in person.

Ms. Allen moved to approve the application for the construction of porch stair railings at 1202 S. Fell Avenue provided Town staff, the chair, and the applicant agreed upon a design that addressed the concerns of the commission and met residential building code standards. Ms. Christensen seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

**BG-17-04-04: Porch Railing Construction, 1202 S. Fell Ave.**

Ms. Matter introduced the application and allowed all the commissioners time to read through the grant proposal and its attached estimates. After a period of careful review, the commissioners decided that the reconstruction of the Rabideau's porch steps was an eligible, restorative effort. However, the commission did not agree to award grant funding for the installation of the applicant's porch railings because no documentation had been found showing that porch step railings ever existed at 1202 S. Fell. The commissioners did state, though, that if any photos, plans, or comparable homes with original railings were identified in the future, the Rabideaus or any subsequent owners were welcome to apply for grant funding.

Ms. Allen moved to approve a grant in an amount not to exceed half the costs of reconstructing the porch's steps, but not those related to the construction of porch stair railings. The commission restated that grant funds could certainly be awarded for the railings' construction if evidence was subsequently found showing their previous installation. Ms. Armstrong seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

### **Other Business**

1. Mr. Long informed the commissioners that the Town and City of Bloomington were awarded a grant from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to host a CAMP (Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program) workshop. Due to the delayed announcement, however, the previously proposed date for hosting the workshop (May 20<sup>th</sup>) was abandoned due to the lack of time necessary to plan the event. Mr. Long requested that the commissioners check their availability for the daylong event possibly taking place on a Saturday in late August.

### **Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Taylor Long".

Taylor Long  
Associate Planner