

NORTH LITTLE ROCK HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

**506 Main Street
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72114
Telephone (501) 371-0755**

**MINUTES
NORTH LITTLE ROCK HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
March 14, 2024
506 Main Street
North Little Rock, AR
5:30 P.M.**

Commission Members Present:

**Tom Marr
Charlie Hart
Susan Markman
Debra Roberts
Mason Toms**

Others Present:

**Sandra Taylor Smith, Director
Kelli Peters, Staff
Caleb Davenport
Ken Davenport
Bob Markman**

Commission Chairman Tom Marr called the meeting of the North Little Rock Historic District Commission to order on March 14, 2024 at 5:30 P.M., and quorum was established.

CORRECTION AND ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. Marr asked if Commissioners had read the minutes of the November 9, 2023 Historic District Commission meeting. Mason Toms moved to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2023 HDC meeting as written. Debra Roberts seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0 in roll call vote (Charlie Hart recused himself).

New Business:

A. 623 Orange Street – Construct a new single-car, detached garage with attached, covered patio

Ken Davenport, the contractor on the project, explained the project to the Commission. They have already cleared the placement of the garage with the City and they have already poured the slab for the garage & patio. The new garage will mimic the house, be in the same location at a previously-existing garage, and will fit in with the neighborhood. Sandra Smith pointed out that it is in the same location and will have the same appearance as the previous garage, but with the addition of a covered patio. Tom Marr clarified that the building will have no windows; Mr. Davenport answered yes. Mr. Marr then asked for clarification on the siding which says that it would be wood siding. Mr. Davenport clarified that it would be Hardie board siding which will mimic the wood siding on the house.

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Mr. Marr asked if the proposed shingles will match the house; Charlie Hart answered yes.

Mr. Marr asked for public comment. There were no public comments so Mr. Marr added that they have allowed for Hardie board siding on ancillary structures so this is not unusual for the District. He then complimented the applicant for submitting such a good application with thorough supporting documentation. Mr. Marr then asked if the garage door would be metal or wood; Mr. Hart answered that it will be a carriage-style, metal door. Mr. Moore then asked for any additional comments or questions from the Commission. There were none so he asked for a motion to approve or deny the application. Susan Markman made a motion to approve the storage building as submitted on the application. Debra Roberts seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0 in a roll call vote (Charlie Hart recused himself, being the applicant).

Staff Report/Comments/Discussion:

Sandra Smith told the Commission that the Mayor called her in February about the condition of the Faucette Building at 400 Main Street, and he wanted Code to condemn it. The safety officer wants to close E. 4th Street because they're sure that the building is going to start crumbling. The fire marshal and an engineer and they broke into the building, without the owner's knowledge or consent, to inspect it. Apparently, you can do that if you see some imminent danger. The owner was not happy. Ms. Smith stated that she went to a meeting with the city attorney, three guys from the fire department including the fire chief and the fire marshal, the code director, the safety department, and the chief of staff because the Mayor wants this dealt with now. The code director understands the historic district, and helped Ms. Smith avoid demolition of the eyebrow house on Melrose Circle, and she saw that they were being reasonable about demolishing the Inda House on W. 7th Street. Ms. Smith took her files to the meeting and the rest of them were amazed that she had kept such thorough records. They can't condemn it because that would ultimately lead to demolition. The city attorney made that clear. They have now gone in again with another structural engineer, and they are still waiting for his report. She believes they will end up taking him to court. The owner called her and was very unhappy about the situation, and said that he has to fix the roof first. The interior has a lot of mildew. Mason Toms asked if the homeless woman was still living on the back side of the building. The group affirmed that she was. There are a few people who really want to buy the building but he won't budge. Tom Marr said that there isn't much we can do as a commission except for make him do some minimum maintenance on the exterior such as repairing windows. He added that it's not the only building downtown that has a crack in the brick so if we go after him on this, we would have to go after the owners of other buildings with the same damage. There are open windows and doors on the building. Mr. Marr asked if there are any historic photos of the building. Ms. Smith told him that we do have historic photos. The building originally faced Poplar Street, and basically had two front facades. Debra Roberts asked Ms. Smith to notify them if it goes to court. Charlie

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Hart asked if they agree that it should go to court; Mr. Marr said that he doesn't really think they have a choice. The only other choice is condemnation but there's no way to halt a condemnation without a reason unless he fixes it. Our commission has the authority to declare a "demolition by neglect." Ms. Smith said that he is in violation of that and she has shared that with the city attorney. Ms. Smith said that she wanted them to see her records on the Cook Building, when Gary Clayton was taken to Randy Morley's court, since these cases are so similar. Debra Roberts asked if the structural engineers had a proposal of how to fix the problems so that it would be safe. Ms. Smith stated that that was never discussed. They took photos but there was never anything written about what they thought should be done. The City decided to hire a structural engineer to assess it. Mr. Hart asked if they determined whether or not the building is safe. Ms. Smith said that not much came of the meeting but the Mayor doesn't want E. 4th Street to be closed. One good selling point for the building is the Dogtown mural. She added that she was the only person in the room who really wanted to save the building. She assured the commission members that she would keep them posted on the developments. She said that the code director knows that we will stick to our guns to save the building. Mr. Hart said they want the building to be bought and used. Mr. Marr added that he may fix it and let it sit vacant for the next 30 years. Ms. Smith added that he may not have the resources to fix it, and it's pretty bad. His equipment is still sitting in the building. When they broke in they broke the door.

Ms. Smith then told the commission about a townhouse project being proposed by Allen Engstrom for the lot on W. 4th Street west of the First Presbyterian Church building. He has bought the church building and is proposing some townhouses to the west of it. This is not an application but he is trying to see if he is going in the right direction. The parking lot will be behind the buildings. Ms. Smith says that she thinks they're on the right path. Susan Markman and Charlie Hart both said that the drawing reminds them of the new house that was built at W. 5th Street & Broadway. Mason Toms added that the 3-story section should not be on the corner. Tom Marr said that he thinks the height order should be flipped. Mr. Marr clarified that the parking lot would be for the church building and that the townhouse garages would be accessed from the alley that separates them from the parking lot. There is talk that they plan to use part of the building as a church on Sundays, and the classroom space will become a daycare, and the fellowship hall would become a restaurant. Ms. Smith told them that she was just collecting feedback on the proposed project.

Ms. Smith added that Allen Engstrom also wants to replace the current front doors of the church building to multi-pane glass doors. (The current doors are non-original, metal doors.) They want to change the doors because that interior space is so dark. The original doors were multi-pane wooden doors so these mimic the same pattern, but with glass.

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After Tom Marr determined that there was no further business to discuss, Debra Roberts made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Susan Markman, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:03 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Taylor Smith, Director