

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
August 10, 2023
506 Main Street
North Little Rock, AR
5:30 P.M.**

Commission Members Present:

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

Others Present:

**Sandra Taylor Smith, Director
Kelli Peters, Staff
Tim Dowty**

Commission Members Absent:

Susan Markman

Commission Chairman Tom Marr called the meeting of the North Little Rock Historic District Commission to order on August 10, 2023 at 5:30 P.M., and quorum was established. Commissioner Susan Markman had an excused absence.

CORRECTION AND ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. Marr asked if Commissioners had read the minutes of the May 11, 2023 Historic District Commission meeting. Debra Roberts moved to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2023 HDC meeting as written. Mason Toms seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0 in roll call vote.

New Business:

A. 717 Main St. – Install new aluminum awning over front door & windows

Tim Dowty was in attendance to represent the applicant. Sandra Smith presented to the Commissioners some wide angle Google street view photos of the block. Tom Marr asked about the existing support over the front door and Mr. Dowty, the architect on the project, said that they may be able to encapsulate it. He further explained that the main purpose of the awnings was to shield the door and windows from the summer sun. Mr. Marr then presented a 1954 photo of the building that showed the original aluminum awning which was only over the front door. He added that the application proposes a larger awning which will span the front door and the double windows. Ms. Smith pointed out that the Koehler Building next door has the awning just over the door, and the Custom XM building on

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the corner has a long metal awning – original to the building – that is very similar to what’s being proposed for this building.

Mr. Marr asked for more detail about how the awning will be mounted to the brick wall. Mr. Dowty said that they would use 4 drilled epoxy anchors with stainless bolts so that they would weather and not discolor as time goes on. Mr. Marr stressed that they always ask applicants to come up with mounting hardware that can go through the mortar joints and not through the historic brick so that, should the awning need to be removed later, it wouldn’t leave damage to the brick. If the awning comes with pre-drilled holes, he might want to make sure the measurements align with the mortar joints on the building beforehand.

Mr. Marr asked for public comment. There were none so the Commission discussed the sign that is indicated on the drawing that was presented with the application.

Ms. Smith pointed out that the application doesn’t call for a sign but the drawing does include a sign. Mr. Dowty said he wasn’t sure if the applicant wanted the sign over the door or wanted it centered over the storefront. Ms. Smith asked what the sign material would be. Mr. Dowty said that it would probably be a painted metal sign, mounted in the mortar joints. Mr. Marr said that he noticed that the dimensions are included which are 6’ wide by 2’ 4” tall. Mr. Dowty said that that size would fit in the area over the door. Ms. Smith pointed out that the size of the letters have to be 15” or under. Mr. Hart added that those guidelines also apply to any signage letters on the window. They all agreed that people on the sidewalk would not see the sign over the door. Mr. Hart asked Ms. Smith if the City allows two signs. Ms. Smith answered that the City typically does not approve that but since one of them will be in the window, she thinks it would be okay. Mr. Hart pointed out that other businesses also have additional signage in the window. Kelli Peters said that the sign over the door would be helpful to the driving public, and the sign on the window would be helpful to pedestrians.

Mr. Hart asked if they would be approving the sign tonight or if they would wait. They discussed that, but since the size was indicated on the drawing, they decided that they could go ahead and approve it. Mr. Dowty said that if the sign changes, he would bring the new proposal to the Commission at a future meeting for review. Ms. Smith suggested that they could go ahead and approve the sign unless there’s a change to it.

Mr. Marr clarified that the aluminum awning would be made of clear, anodized aluminum. Mr. Hart added that any tinting of the windows would not be allowed. Ms. Smith said that Skinny J’s wanted to tint their windows; they weren’t allowed to so they put in curtains.

Mr. Marr asked for any more comments or questions. There were none so he asked for a motion to approve or deny the application. Debra Roberts made a motion to approve the

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application with the provision that if there is any change to the signage, the applicant will come back for review. Mason Toms seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0 in a roll call vote.

Staff Report/Comments/Discussion:

Sandra Smith gave an update on the windows at 185 Melrose Circle, reporting that they were supposed to have been delivered sometime in late July, and that she would check on the status.

Ms. Smith next reported that Mr. Coleman, the owner of the house at 311 W. 7th Street, has been fined \$10,000, and the house has since been condemned by the City. The house has been trashed, it's unsafe, and has no redeeming qualities left even though it's on the 1913 Sanborn map. The City will attach a lien to the property so that if the owner ever sells the property, the City can recover the cost of demolition. She reported that because of all the problems getting the owner to comply with regulations by repairing and maintaining the property, the house is now in very poor condition and has become unsafe. Also, there is nothing left of it to tell us what the house may have looked like originally, so she has allowed the City to condemn the property. She pointed out that this is the first time she has allowed a property in the District to be condemned but she really had no other options. She then added that Mr. Coleman still has it listed for sale for \$110,000, and that the court will dismiss the fine because of the condemnation. Debra Roberts asked that if the house is torn down, and there's a lien, if he would still own the lot, and if he have to reimburse the City. Ms. Smith answered yes, but if he sells it, there will still be a \$10,000 lien, and that he could just sit on the lot and not do anything, which might be better than what's there now. She pointed out that they've never been through a demolition before so this is new to them, and they have fought it and fought it, but there's just no other recourse on this house, and there's nothing left to save.

Tom Marr asked about another house on Willow Street which had a similar situation, which had a lot of crime. Ms. Smith pointed out that the house was not in the District at the time. She also reminded them that the neighborhood held a big bonfire to celebrate the house's demise after it was demolished. Mr. Marr pointed out that that house was in equally deplorable condition and you couldn't tell what it looked like originally, at the time.

Charlie Hart said that the house at 311 W. 7th Street was originally a smaller house, as shown on the Sanborn map. Mason Toms & Kelli Peters both think it originally looked like the reverse of the Hendershott House at 220 W. 7th Street, except that the house at 311 W. 7th Street had a one-story porch rather than a two-story porch. Mr. Hart pointed out that they've stopped them from condemning other houses in the past. Ms. Smith stated that they have successfully fought the demolition of two historic houses but this is the first time the City has condemned a property in the Argenta Historic District.

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Ms. Smith reported that she has received several calls from a particular investor regarding the Faucette Building at 400 Main Street, which has some serious cracks in the rear wall. She is getting pressure to issue a violation for Demolition by Neglect because they can't get the owner to respond to them and they think this might motivate him to respond. She said that it's a pretty bad crack. Mason Toms pointed out that this could become a public safety hazard, too. She stated that there is also a big crack in the wall of the Argenta Drug Company building at 324 Main Street. Tom Marr added that there are some bricks falling off the parapet above Crush Wine Bar.

Ms. Smith then reported that she has gotten a call about the Manees House, at 216 W. 4th Street, from the new owner who wants to install gutters to protect their new landscaping. The Manees House has an easement on it so this must also be approved by the easement coordinator at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Tom Marr reported that the Church of Christ building at 200 W. 6th Street has cracks in the walls, there's still a hole in the roof, and it's really going downhill. He suggested issuing a Demolition by Neglect violation letter for it, as well. Ms. Smith added that it was designed by John Parks Almand. She said she thinks there is some interest in the building. Mr. Marr said that there was a flurry of activity a couple of years ago, then it stopped.

Ms. Smith reported that the house at 417 W. 4th Street is still boarded up, and the owner keeps telling her that he loves the house, but he never comes here. There are people getting in the house so she tells him this regularly. She said she needs to keep it on her radar.

Ms. Smith reported that the First Presbyterian Church is for sale, and she has heard that Allen Engstrom has entered into a contract to buy it. She reported that the easement has been removed. Mr. Engstrom has assured Tom Marr that he does not plan any changes to the exterior.

Charlie Hart reported that he saw two people measuring the front porch of the house at 304 W. 7th Street recently, and that someone's been mowing there; he's not sure what's going on, though.

Ms. Smith reported that a tree fell on the house at 229 Melrose Circle recently, knocking the electrical box off the wall. Because of that, the house has no power. The owner's insurance company wants to replace the damaged metal siding with the same, which is no longer available. Ms. Smith met with the siding contractor recently, who asked her about replacing it with vinyl siding, and replacing the windows with vinyl windows. She told him that vinyl siding & windows would not be allowed. The owner's son has suggested that they replace the metal siding with brick. Mr. Marr suggested that they could just repair the damaged metal siding. Ms. Smith then reported that she has an application for this project

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for next month's HDC meeting. Ms. Peters reported that there have been no previous COAs issued on this house so they may be trying to get more "bang for their buck."

After determining there was no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:03 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Taylor Smith, Director