

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

December 11, 2012 – 6:00PM – City Hall Conference Room B

Present: Alderman Doug Mark, Becky Lichty, Janna Bailey, Scott Sanders, Mark McInnis

Absent: Vickie Kruger, David Hagney

Staff: Thaddeus Mack, Planner & Building Plans Examiner

Other: Interested Parties

Meeting was called to order at 601PM by Janna Bailey

Approval of Minutes

A **Motion** was made by **Scott Sanders** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the November 20, 2012 meeting as presented. The **Motion** was **SECONDED** by **Mark McInnis** and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

Unfinished Business

Certificate of Appropriateness for 509 Indian Terrace – Deck Replacement

Laid over for one month (Owner not present and additional materials not submitted)

New Business

Certificate of Appropriateness for 939 N. 2nd St. – Parking Lot in conjunction with Change of Use

Applicant, Kurt Johnson presented the project, and indicated in previous communication for special events and a bed and breakfast for this property.

Applicant indicated their desire is to create a bed and breakfast and include small scale events. After the auction, it is clear that traffic and parking is a concern. The applicant has no intention of recreating this. They are seeking to have 5 bedrooms for B&B. To assist in revenue, they would host also business meetings in the house, small receptions, wine tastings, etc. and have no intention of changing the exterior of the building, or buildings on site. Any major landscaping to obstruct the view would be considered and likely done. Parking lot request seemed to be necessity as a result of the event planning. The site plan is only a proposal. The applicant not looking to disrupt the harmony of the neighborhood.

(Floor opened for public hearing and participation)

Chuck Prorok, resident of 1515 Greenmount. Mr. Prorok stated he does not speak for all neighbors, but only speaking to the parking lot issues before commission, and that some neighbors believe that the parking lot would not be appropriate. A 24 space parking lot does not seem to be in character with the neighborhood. Other issues not relevant to the HPC will be discussed at the ZBA.

Applicant would like to add 24 parking spaces resulting from his business plan and what capacities would be likely at the property. He stated this number is not set in stone, and he would be willing to work with alternative parking solutions in that space. The applicant stated he would prefer to massage the parking number and configuration in order to accommodate use of property as bed and breakfast.

Marcia Larson, resident of 823 Ridgewood. Mrs. Larson stated the neighbors have expressed traffic and concern for parking in the street. If need for parking exists, and use is there, then off-street and screened would be preferred and meet the HPC guidelines. HPC guidelines also indicate this should be in the rear yard, however the lot and building location would not permit this location. Parking in front of their residence is similar, but not at the same scale and does not believe this to be inappropriate. Mrs. Larson stated that lawns, gardens and trees are specified as historic district amenities. Mrs. Larson concluded she does not believe the parking would be visible from the street.

Barb Worden, resident of 912 Ridgewood. Mrs. Worden stated she specifically objected to the request because of this being a historic district and R1 zoning. Based on previous experience, she does not believe a mixed use venue in historic area would permit further development of mixed use in this neighborhood. Mrs. Worden thinks the HPC has put the home owners under strict controls on what can be done, and believes this to be outside the controls of what should be permitted here. Mrs. Worden believes the uniqueness of the neighborhood has to be maintained and a property similar to this works for this use, but not in a Historic District.

Marcia Larson stated a Bed & Breakfast might not require the 24 parking spaces.

The applicant stated he would not want to survive just off the rooms for bed & breakfast but also for special events and uses. The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is excited for this project and others are on board as well. Lodging facilities of this type and scale are limited in Rockford. The applicant additionally stated the precedent of bed & breakfasts in historic districts are well founded and usually in historic neighborhoods. The applicant does not believe there to be a diminishing effect to the overall property. Perhaps parking lot to be reduced to a smaller scope to fit in better, but believes there are other precedents to this, citing the La Paloma Gardens.

Barb Worden stated La Paloma Gardens is a nightmare.

The applicant stated there is sufficient data to show profitability in 2-3 years on this project and believes this is a project this community needs and has seen similar successful examples in Europe and elsewhere. Events would be added to provide the ability to host executives and have alternative places for meetings and places to stay in Rockford that are not hotels. The applicant recognizes the house is Historically Significant to Rockford and wishes to honor keeping the historic nature of the property. Intent is not to have a tent and loud music for weddings at this property and this would be kept quiet.

Barb Worden stated the objection to this is the other events, not the bed and breakfast.

The applicant shared his background for knowing the business and what is needed to succeed in this venture. A restaurant and catering to be done separate (dining to be done on site, food preparation and catering done elsewhere).

Barb Worden stated there is also concern on the property if the business does succeed on the property.

The applicant believes a precedent has been setup elsewhere with success in the country and negotiation on the size and scope of this work. The applicant does not think that the house would be likely purchased by a single family user.

Janna Bailey directed the conversation back to HPC scope and not the ZBA scope.

Scott Sanders believes that there should perhaps be further information and investigation in traffic studies and if alternatives to blacktop parking surfaces could be reviewed on this.

Todd Cagnoni stated relating to the HPC Regulations and Guidelines, referred items requiring a COA to come to HPC and obtain a COA prior to the ZBA meeting. If a COA is required, the applicant must come to HPC first. Relating to land use, the HPC can only weigh in and comment, but does not have authority to reject. As the issue is debated and moving forward, the use may be discussed, or could be deferred at this time. More substantial conversations should be had regarding the parking lot.

Scott Sanders asked would the commission make a recommendation contingent on the approval of the ZBA.

Mark McInnis read the relevant guidelines for parking lot and driveway areas. Mark stated he does not believe sufficient information is present for lighting, landscaping, signage.

Todd Cagnoni reiterated the zoning ordinance states any project requiring a COA must first obtain one prior to going to the ZBA.

Janna Bailey asked what the fewest number of parking spaces that would be acceptable?

The applicant stated one parking spot per room as a baseline, and then above that would be for other events

Scott Sanders stated he does not believe the HPC is in a position to approve or deny this evening and should have more information presented. Mr. Sanders stated he would lean against the use, but does not reject it and would like to know more information on the project. Mr. Sanders would like to see more detailed development plan on this, and landscaping changes. The property is tucked away and would not be impacted by the parking lot or the use would not be disrupted.

Mark McInnis asked how many people attended the auction.

The applicant stated the streets were full, and likely had 300 people, if not more. The proposed use will be much less than the number of people at the auction.

Alderman Mark suggested there be a neighborhood meeting to discuss and get more information, and further stated the only reason there's a parking lot is there's a change in use for events. If it were removed, this wouldn't be before the commission. Alderman Mark encouraged a discussion with the residents to increase understanding and support. Alderman Mark asked what is the timeframe on this and could it be laid over?

The applicant stated there is a timeline and laying over would not make the project easier.

Todd Cagnoni stated if the consensus is there's not sufficient information to act on the COA, could ask for more information and lay it over. If providing an opinion to be included in the ZBA is desired, this could be done.

Scott Sanders stated he would like something on behalf of the commission sent to ZBA stating the HPC is not against it, but maybe have concerns and would like more study?

Alderman Mark stated he was not sure the Commission would want to say we support it or don't support it, but maybe just request more information before a COA could be issued.

Audrey Engelbrecht, resident of 1214 Brown Hills Rd. asked what impact does the lighting have and how long can these be on?

Mark McInnis read aloud guidelines for exterior lighting from the HPC Design Guidelines and further stated there needs to be a balance between safety and appropriate lighting on the site and for the neighbors and stated that more information is necessary.

The applicant stated that the parking lot and lighting would be properly screened to not impact the neighbors

Mark McInnis asked to see this reflected on the plans for the project.

Scott Sanders stated the way the parking lot is situated (as presented), the City of Rockford Zoning Ordinance would not apply because of the 50' setback. However, the design guidelines would require plantings around the parking lot and believes some more landscaping may be appropriate to soften this.

The applicant asked what the benchmarks for lighting in this situation are.

Scott Sanders stated the ordinance would have this.

Scott Sanders asked if there is any signage anticipated for the property.

The applicant stated they do not want a big sign, but something discrete for the property. The applicant additionally asked for guidance from commission on what's tasteful and further stated the internet would likely be the most widely used method for directing visitors.

A **MOTION** was made by **Scott Sanders** to **LAY OVER** and *request additional information, specifically graphic information on signage, lighting, proposed landscaping*. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by **Becky Lichty** and **CARRIED** by a vote of **5-0**.

The HPC Members stated that they are not necessarily against this, but would like more information before formally voting to approve or deny the application. HPC Members additionally indicated that this is not something that has come up before, but this is unique to this site and application.

Audrey Engelbrecht says that a precedent was previously established 12 years ago with long sidewalk going out to a parking lot not installed as this was stricken down by the HPC.

Scott Sanders stated this may not have been the action of the HPC.

Barb Worden asked if this would be in the minutes from then.

Scott Sanders stated the HPC would look into this. *(Post meeting note: Letter sent to the owner on Sept. 10, 1991 stating work being done without a COA and any parking lot in R-1 district would require a Special Use Permit to be issued. There is no indication an application was received to proceed further and no vote or action was taken by the HPC)*

Approval of HPC Annual Meeting Schedule

HPC Secretary presented the commission with the proposed monthly schedule for the Historic Preservation Commission meetings and asked for input or concerns on the dates.

A **Motion** was made by **Scott Sanders** to **APPROVE** the HPC Annual Meeting Schedule for 2013 as presented. The **Motion** was **Seconded** by **Becky Lichty** and **Carried** by a vote of **4-0** *(Ald Mark stepped out)*.

Communication and Staff report

HPC Secretary presented the CLG evaluation which took place on 11/21/12 and the findings and possible grants available for updating surveys.

HPC Secretary let the Commission know that tonight was the last night for Mark McInnis and David Hagney with the Commission as they both had served 2 consecutive terms which expire 12/31/12. These two members have served the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission well and we hope they would be willing to serve again.

Adjournment

With no other business a **MOTION** was made by **Scott Sanders** to adjourn. The **Motion** was seconded by **Doug Mark** and **CARRIED** by a vote of **5-0**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05P.M.

Submitted by Thaddeus Mack