

Minutes

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Sept. 4, 2024

Board Meeting Room of Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St.



Present: Chair Will Senner and members G. Miller, Hannah Peele, Sara Riek and Bruce Spencer

Absent: Vice Chair Mathew Palmer and member Elizabeth Dicker

Staff: Planner Joseph Hoffheimer and Town Attorney Bob Hornik

1. Call to order, roll call, and confirmation of quorum

Chair Will Senner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum. Member Hannah Peele arrived after the vote on Item 4.

2. Commission's mission statement

Senner read the statement.

3. Agenda changes

There were no changes to the agenda.

Planner Joseph Hoffheimer mentioned that the mailed notices for Item 6A had a typo that listed the wrong meeting date. The property was correctly posted, and all other information in the mailed notices was correct. He said a letter was sent out with a correction, and that all information regarding the meeting was correct on the website.

4. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on Aug. 7, 2024.

Motion: Member G. Miller moved to approve the minutes from the regular meeting on Aug. 7, 2024, with corrections. Member Bruce Spencer seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Corrections: Edit typo on p. 4 of 12, Paragraph 6, final sentence. Sentence should read, "... garage that the contractor evaluated and said is in too much disrepair to be relocated."

5. Written decisions review and approval

Written decisions from regular meeting on Aug. 7, 2024.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the written decisions from the regular meeting on Aug. 7, 2024, with corrections. Spencer seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

Corrections: 227 W. Margaret Lane written decisions:

- Item 3a.: Change end of sentence to "... spacing within the lot, and the height of the new structure relative to other structures in the neighborhood."

- Item 3c.: Change to “The existing structure will be saved and relocated rather than demolished.”

6. New business

A. Certificate of Appropriateness Application: 303 W. Margaret Lane Front porch addition (PIN 9864855778)

Senner opened the public hearing and asked whether there were any conflicts of interest or bias among the commissioners. Peele disclosed that she has worked on another project for this client and architect related to this property. She affirmed that she could evaluate the application in an unbiased manner since she does not have a fixed opinion on the application and has no financial interest in the outcome of the hearing. Town Attorney Bob Hornik said that based on this testimony, in his opinion there is no conflict of interest involved. The other commissioners agreed that they were comfortable with Peele participating in the hearing.

All commissioners disclosed that they had visited the site in preparation for reviewing the application. No other conflicts of interest were disclosed.

Planner Joseph Hoffheimer was sworn in. David Cates was sworn in to speak on behalf of the application.

Hoffheimer introduced the application by presenting the staff report. He noted that the inventory information, application materials, and applicable design standards would be entered into the record as evidence. He provided the staff comments:

- The application cites the porch at 125 W. Queen St. as an example of a front porch extended across the front of a ranch house in the local historic district. Staff could not confirm if or when the porch at 125 W. Queen St. was added or extended.
- The Historic District Commission recently denied a front porch that would have extended the length of the character defining elevation at 114 W. Queen St. 114 W. Queen was built within a few years of 303 W. Margaret Lane, and the application for the porch at 114 W. Queen St. also cited 125 W. Queen St. as an example. After several meetings, the commission denied the proposed porch at 114 W. Queen St. because the seamless integration of the porch into the house would have falsely appeared to be original to the building and did not accurately portray the evolution of the structure over time. Note that the porch at 114 W. Queen St. would have been entirely new as opposed to an extension, and 114 W. Queen St. has a relatively unique style for the local historic district.

Cates said the reason for the porch extension is to allow the property owner to have more front porch area to enjoy the neighborhood.

The commissioners reviewed the first page of the application. They expressed appreciation for the comprehensive and thoughtfully compiled application materials.

Cates confirmed that the front elevation is the only elevation that will change.

Senner read from the design standards for Porches, Entrances, and Balconies to provide context and guidance for the discussion. The standards indicate that it is not appropriate to add a front porch unless it provides protection for historic features and does not obscure architectural features of the structure.

Cates said that if the house had been built with the proposed porch across the front elevation to start with, it would be almost indistinguishable from its current appearance. He said the porch is of the same style as the house and is a small change that will fit with the character of the house and the neighborhood. He added that the way the current porch terminates partially over a window is awkward, and the proposed change will make the house's appearance more harmonious than it currently is.

Cates said the character defining elements of the front elevation are the scrollwork on the metal columns. He said the proposed project will continue the black metal scroll columns, which will enhance and not obscure that feature. He said another character defining feature of the house is the horizontality of the low, shallow roof, which will be continued with the extension of the porch.

There was discussion of plans for sourcing the scrollwork columns.

Jan Gittelman, the property owner, was sworn in. Gittelman indicated the scrollwork columns along the side of the house and said those could be moved to the front of the house to keep the columns on the front elevation consistent, and the ones on the side could be replaced with something similar if an exact match cannot be sourced. Cates added that the scrollwork is fairly simple, not ornate.

Member Sara Riek pointed out that because the front elevation is so flat, the proposed project will change almost nothing to the eye. She said that in her opinion the fact that the project is an extension of what is already there makes it a different scenario than the addition of a brand new porch that would make a greater visual change to the front. Senner agreed, saying the visual impact of extending the existing porch has minimal impact on the front facade and the character defining elements of the front facade, in contrast to other porch additions which are more significant and more pronounced in terms of changing the character defining elevation.

There was discussion of differentiating the new elements from the original. Miller acknowledged that typically new features should be differentiated from the original, but that because this is an extension of an existing porch, it seems less congruous to show the differentiation.

Spencer said that on the one hand, the design standards seem to indicate against the proposed change because a full porch was not originally built. However, he said, it appears that a full porch is very consistent with the original design of the house and that having a full porch would not hurt the historic nature of the house, particularly its character defining elements, or the character of the historic district. He said that in some ways the project seems to be a completion of what is already there. Peele agreed that the proposed design is not incongruous with the rest of the district. She added that extending an existing porch is different than adding an entirely new one.

There was discussion of drainage and how the project might change the drainage of the site to protect historic elements of the house.

Cates said there is no documentation that he can find for why the existing porch terminates in the location that it does.

Senner said that the style and vintage of this house lead to a particular consideration for this proposal. He said if the style and vintage were different, it would require different considerations.

Cates said he believes the current siting of the porch to be an idiosyncratic quirk, not an architecturally relevant, character defining component of the home. There was speculation of whether the porch was

original to the house. It was generally agreed that it was original, and there was no evidence to the contrary.

Spencer referenced the design standards for porches and said that he believed the proposed project is consistent with them. He said the original porch is being preserved, but extended; it is not being removed. He mentioned that the proposed change does not compromise the architectural integrity of the structure since it is an extension instead of an addition. He said that he did not believe the change to create a false sense of history or to compromise the historical fabric of the property. Peele restated the importance of this project being an extension instead of a new addition. Senner added that this extension has very little, if any, impact on the front facade of the house.

There was discussion of roofing and replacement of shingles that this project might require. Cates said shingles will be an appropriate material for this porch since there will be a water barrier underneath. He said any new shingles will match the existing ones.

Senner summarized the commissioners' discussion: There was no concern about the proposed project being incongruous with the district. Since this is an existing front porch that is proposed to be extended, it will have very little, if any, impact on the character defining components of the elevation. The new proposed full front porch is compatible with the home, given its vintage and the district overall.

Spencer added that the porch is fairly shallow, which is an advantage in minimizing the visual impact. Senner agreed and added that the project maintains compatibility with the existing home while not changing or obscuring the front elevation.

Senner closed the public hearing.

It was noted that the commissioners reviewed all elevations and had no concerns about incongruity given that no work was proposed on any elevation except for the front elevation.

Motion: Miller moved to find as fact that the 303 W. Margaret Lane application is not incongruous with the overall character of the Historic District and complies with all relevant standards of evaluation based on the commission's discussion of the application and the standards of evaluation in Section 3.12.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance because the plans are consistent with the Historic District Design Standards: Porches, Entrances, and Balconies. Riek seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the application as submitted. Spencer seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

7. Historic Preservation Awards

Hoffheimer said that only two submissions had been received so far for the Historic Preservation Awards, both for public art. He said he would put together a list of candidates at the next meeting, with a plan to announce the awards around the new year.

8. Officer election process

Hoffheimer said that officer elections will take place in October. He added that officers have no term limits.

9. General Updates

There were no general updates.

10. Adjournment

Senner adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m. without a vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph Hoffheimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" and last name "Hoffheimer" clearly distinguishable.

Joseph Hoffheimer
Planner
Staff support to the Historic District Commission

Approved: November 6, 2024