



Landmarks Commission

Cravath Lakefront room 2nd floor 312 West
Whitewater Str, Whitewater, WI, 53190 *In Person
and Virtual

Wednesday, June 04, 2025 - 6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Council Representative Orin O.Smith

Board Member Pat Blackmer

Board Member Kelsey Reilly

Board Member Jordan Reilly

ABSENT

Board Member Penelope Alwin

GUESTS

Mark and Kari Barber

STAFF

Llana Dostie Neighborhood Services Administrative Assistant

CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the Consent Agenda will be approved together unless any committee member requests that an item be removed for individual consideration.

1. Approval of May 7, 2025 Minutes.

Motion made by Council Representative O.Smith, Seconded by Board Member J. Reilly.

Voting Yea: Council Representative O.Smith, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member J. Reilly, Board Member K. Reilly

Motion approved.

HEARING OF CITIZEN COMMENTS

No formal Committee action will be taken during this meeting although issues raised may become a part of a future agenda. Participants are allotted a three minute speaking period. Specific items listed on the agenda may not be discussed at this time; however, citizens are invited to speak to those specific issues at the time the Committee discusses that particular item.

To make a comment during this period, or during any agenda item: On a computer or handheld device, locate the controls on your computer to raise your hand. You may need to move your mouse to see these controls. On a traditional telephone, dial *6 to unmute your phone and dial *9 to raise your hand.

None

ELECTION OF CO-CHAIR

Blackmer explained that Gloria did resigned due to health reasons. Asked if there were any nominations or if anyone was interested in the position.

Smith stated he would be interested in the Co-Chair position.

Motion to nominate Orin Smith as Co-Chair.

Motion made by Board Member Blackmer, Seconded by Board Member J. Reilly.

Voting Yea: Council Representative O.Smith, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member J. Reilly, Board Member K. Reilly

Motion approved.

CONSIDERATIONS / DISCUSSIONS / REPORTS

2. Discussion and possible approval of an amendment to location of the previously approved wheelchair ramp for Hamilton House.

Kari explained that our architect made another visit on May 28th and we started on the construction. Our contractor removed the back steps by the sun porch and unfortunately, after doing all the measurements it's more than 54 inches high which would require 4 switchbacks instead of 2.

They looked at other alternative locations. They went walking through Whitewater looking at all the houses that have wheel chair ramps. We saw two pretty common themes. They were either a concrete ramp with a rail or a wood ramp with fancy rails.

What they worked out with the architect is they would go along the side of the house. It will have to have a resting platform. They will go up the blue line along the side of the house up to a rest platform. Than up the yellow portion to where the pink line which is 5 foot landing from porch to meet the ramp where the railing will be removed. We may need to take the front porch and raise it three inches than it is flush with the threshold. Rather than having a ramp to the the platform. That is the design they are looking at. They would like approved tonight is one of two options:

Option one is with turned spindles that match the front porch and we like this option because it's more decorative and that's similar to the Sanger March House.

The second option would be more like the Bassett House where they just have green metal rails and that's a better option because you look through them and don't notice the handrails and you notice the historic house.

So what the architects have to do now is look at the drop-off from the ramp to the ground because you have to have spindles if you're more than 30 inches above ground level.

Rather than coming to visit you again next month, we thought we'd put both options on the table. if you approve both, then the architects have the flexibility to go either way.

Blackmer stated that we are not dealing with extending the front porch to meet the ramp on the left side.

Kari stated image the ramp coming up to a landing that is 5 foot. The porch is the same size, but next to the porch is the 5 foot landing because a wheelchair has to be able to turn. Wheelchairs need a 60 inch radius to go onto that porch.

Blackmer asked if it was attached.

Kari stated it had to be attached.

Blackmer stated that there were three other options that unfortunately or fortunately were given to you. Obviously, the one on the back is on your sun porch side.

Kari stated it doesn't work. Mark explained that that the sun porch would need to be raised 4 to 5 inches to get into the house.

Blackmer stated but what you are doing is you're compromising the front porch which is original and according to our ordinance we can't.

Kari asked how it is that the Bassett House and the Sanger March House have done the same thing.

Blackmer stated that the ramps existed when they were landmarked.

Mark stated that this is the only way in. We have spent hours and hours.

Kari stated, well it is not the only way in. You could use a wheelchair lift, but in Wisconsin we have gone out to wheelchair lift vendors and they said they don't guarantee them in Wisconsin because of the real winters. Gloria had brought it to Blackmer for approval however, Gloria hadn't actually gotten a warranty on the lifts. So we went out and looked at wheelchair lifts and they were all rusty and gross. We don't want to do a lift and if we can't do a ramp then we can't do a wedding.

Mark stated that they were disappointed, they thought they could get in through the sun porch. When we asked the architect when he came out if we could put a ramp in the sun porch. The architect stated no, not without renovating the porch. The porch was built going downhill. So it would have to be raised to a high degree.

Kari stated that I think the decision is if we can't do the ramp then we can't do a wedding venue, which means you know who is going to buy the property instead of us is a fraternity and you know they are not going to protect the integrity of the historic house. I look at the Bassett House it's gorgeous. I look at the Sanger Marsh House, it's gorgeous. They're both well-preserved historic houses. And having a wheelchair ramp attached to their front porch is not taking away a lot.

Blackmer stated that your missing the point Kari. The wheelchair ramps were there when the houses were landmarked. Unfortunately, the way our ordinance reads or fortunately, I don't know, is that we can't. You're compromising the integrity of the house when it was landmarked.

Kari asked if we don't attach to the porch and it's sitting next to it they you don't care.

Blackmer stated that if it's not attached to to porch and sitting next to it, no. We can't expand the porch.

Kari stated I'm sorry, I didn't explain it well. The porch itself stays intact. The ramp and landing comes right up next to it. The only thing we would have to change is the railing that is there has to be moved so a wheelchair can turn and go into the house.

Mark stated you have a step up, step up and step up, we are going what they did at the Sanger Marsh house they added Kari cut him off.

Kari stated she (Blackmer) doesn't care because they did it before they were landmarked.

Mark stated we would have to add another step up to get into the house. It would just look like a third or forth step. It's going to look exactly like a step and you'll never know that we added a step. Over at the Sanger Marsh house they did some tricky things. They added a ramp and they stopped. They put a chair there and didn't finish the entire porch. It's really weird, I'm like why did they get away with that. They didn't finish it and they didn't put a rail up, just put a chair there. Well everything is going to be incredibly beautiful. There are hundreds of plants going in every where. We can't wait to get the house done.

Mark stated there's no way about it and you have to think about it with this context. You're going to have kids sitting in front playing beer pong. That's what's going to happen to this house. Your saying well don't touch the porch, but Pat that's what's going to happen. I mean there's no way for us to stay here, and we have spent a lot of money already trying to get in this house and we have to move a bathroom wall 8 inches. We are not getting any breaks on things. We understand how much you want to keep the integrity of the house. We bought this house with Gloria saying everything was approved and she wasn't even close. We'll take your decision but that doesn't allow us to be successful in what we think we could do with this house and the future use of the Hamilton House as a wedding venue for years to come. There is no other way the bed and breakfast industry is gone.

Blackmer stated if you put the ramp up and you're building exterior five feet out and you leave the spindles there and have it open. You understand make it a gate. And than go in and not attach the ramp. I mean it has to be sturdy, but it does not necessary have to be attached.

Kari what Mark is saying is you've got the front door and it has a step down of about four to five inches. So when the five foot ramp comes in, even the the front porch, you still have to get up four to five inches. It is one inch to eight inches on a threshold. So if it is four inches you have to have a 32 inch long ramp into the front door. If you go 32 inches long you're falling down the front steps. So the architect recommendation was take your front porch, so you've go three steps up and it make it like you have one more step up and then that takes it flat into the house. And they he would bring the ramp up even with that spot.

Blackmer stated as long as the architect can make it so that is is not attached and the porch is not extended.

Kari stated picture it as a block sitting on top of the porch. So the block is what the ramp will come up to and be even with. And now if you are saying I can't attached that block to

the the front porch I would be worried. I want to make it safe and secure. But as long as it's not attached to the porch you don't have an issue with it.

Blackmer if it's attached and not visible, it does not visibly change or compromise the exterior of the house. It would be ok. But the point is, you understand what I'm saying, you can't alter the exterior at this point.

Kari asked if an issue would be the rails being moved to the outer edge of the ramp. The architect is recommending taking the rails off. I have an idea of the rail swinging for the wheelchair ramp to come in, that sounds feasible to me.

Blackmer stated that if that could occur and this could just open to allow access.

Kari asked if this was not a possibility than would there be an issue taking off the rails.

Blackmer confirmed that removing the rails would be an issue.

Kari stated that we might be done.

Blackmer stated that we have to follow the ordinance and I've compromised, I mean we're compromising as much as we can.

Kari stated actually you're not at all. So if you guys want to save these historic homes you got to think about we're spending two hundred thousand dollars to save this house. If we walk away who else is going to do that. So you're going to feel good I didn't touch the front porch. You're going to have a fraternity because that's who we're going to sell to because nobody else wants to buy a house like this. The bed and breakfast business is going. So you guys really want to think about do you want to save historic houses here or don't you. and to say it's because I'm touching the front porch when the Bassett house has a ramp and the Sanger Marsh House has a ramp and they're gorgeous. You drive by them and they're beautiful. I think your making a big mistake.

Blackmer stated that we haven't voted. We still have to vote on this.

Kari stated but if you're saying it's an ordinance and I have to, how are you going to vote against it?

Blackmer stated we have the option to, we've recommend things. I've recommended things to you, if you can adhere to that recommendation there would be.

Kari cut in stated I can't agree to adhering to it until I talk to the architects.

Blackmer stated well maybe that's what you need to do initially is go back to the architect and see if there's a way we can help you. I just suggested that as long as it is not a truly visible alteration.

Kari stated it's truly visible, you will see there is a wheelchair ramp sitting next to the the front porch.

Blackmer stated that the wheelchair ramp is not within the purview of the ordinance. The wheelchair ramp can be put in. What you're doing is and I hate to use the word compromising, but you're compromising the integrity of the house. Unfortunately, but if you can modify that so that the railing still exists and the front porch still exists as is, with the step up, it's a possibility.

Kari stated if you want to move to approve it pending the railing can swing, which I think is feasible and the block, the only thing I'm worried about is the block needs to be stable. I don't want someone stepping on that block and having it slide. But that would mean I would probably have to put a screw into the porch to hold it in place. As long as we can secure it to the existing front porch, that is feasible.

Blackmer stated that could be feasible.

Kari stated I don't think that's unfeasible, if we can do it with the block and rails moving, the real question is can the wheelchair ramp platform be secure without attaching it to the house. I told him we don't want the hand rails attached to the house, we want the handrails to be self-contained within the ramp and that's what the architect is doing.

Blackmer stated that she would suggest they go back the architect and discuss this.

Kari stated that they will, however so we'd like not have to come back again next month if he says yes to the rails on a hinge and the box design. If you are okay with that and he's okay with it then we don't have to come back next month that's okay with us.

Blackmer stated that we can't approve it until he gives the recommendation that he can do that.

Kari stated that we came last month and we hadn't had the architect do the drawings yet.

Blackmer stated yeah but what you came with last month for was for something we were more than willing to do. I'm not being ornery, it's a matter of protocol, unfortunately I'm the bearer of you know whatever has to be said as chairman. If you came back or you don't have to come back and you can send us something that says that the architect is able to provide what is necessary in order for us to enable you to do it and approve any requests that you have made.

Kari stated I completely understand there's another way that says someone makes a motion that they approve that with the rail and the block in place not attached to the porch you have the approval and we have to build it that way, and if we can't then we come back. I think it's three times. I'm just trying to save another meeting that's all and save your time as well.

Blackmer stated that we will take that into consideration and we will discuss and will get back to you within the next day.

Kari stated that she is just waiting to see if anyone else would like to make a motion on what we needed to do. So we know when we leave what to tell the architect.

Smith stated that if I can finish my wording I can find a motion.

Blackmer stated actually Orin, I think this needs to go into discussion between the landmarks commission.

Kari wanted to clarify that the block step can be on the front porch and it can be secured to the front porch.

Blackmer stated it can be secured as long as the front porch itself is not altered, other than that.

J. Reilly asked so then would the block be the same color as the front steps.

Blackmer stated that they would have to be the same color. It would be you would look at it and think it was always there.

Blackmer stated ok we will be in contact. Thank you for coming.

Smith stated I see where they are coming from we consistently say that ADA comes before integrity. Not before integrity, but before other decisions are made. So we have to consider that. The motion I have, I think covers your requirements while still giving them something to talk to the architect about.

J. Reilly asked for a repeat on the part about the railings.

Blackmer stated that they are altering the front porch, they are putting a step up and we have to include that. As long as the integrity is not compromised, in other words, when we look at the house and the facade of the house as long as the integrity is not compromised, it would be okay. And I think noticeably, you may not agree, but noticeably, if they put the step up, it would probably look like it's always been there.

Smith asked if the commission wanted him to read his rephrase. If changes do not compromise the integrity of the house, maintain the original railings and do not alter the facade of the front porch.

Blackmer stated but they are altering the facade of the front porch because they are putting the step up.

Motion to approve this wheelchair ramp pending proof of architectural review of the possibility of changes; if changes do not affect the integrity of the house, maintain original railings, and do not alter the facade of the front porch, and the step must appear to match the original steps.

Blackmer stated let me backtrack. We have given them three options for ADA accessibility, three times. I mean, I know personally that Gloria shared with them about the lift. That lift was going to be on the other side of the house. If you look at it, there is a porch on the east side of the house and that lift was to be stored there and there would have been nothing except for that swinging railing that would compromise the exterior of the house. We bent over backwards for the screened in porch or whatever, the porch on the back of the house to allow them handicap accessibility. I guess basically I didn't like to be threatened that's the landmarks commission and I thought that was a bit too very very. I want to help them but we have to follow the ordinance so read it again.

J. Reilley stated so just to be clear, making the railing be able to swing does not qualify as changing it.

Blackmer stated no, because it will still be in place.

Smith stated that we are just allowing a temporary movement.

Blackmer stated that I think we somehow need to put in about the step up but I don't know how you're going to do that.

J. Reilly stated before we second or move forward or anything I feel good about it as long as the railing goes back to it's original place and they if the step looks like it matches the original steps are there I thought that would be ok.

K. Reilly asked if they stated whether the ramp was going to be cement or wooden? Because they stated that two houses had different options but I don't know if they said.

Smith pointed to the plan that stated ramp will be made of wood leaving existing concrete sidewalk below. I edited the motion to add the steps.

Blackmer stated that with their reference to the Sanger Marsh house and the Bassett house, both of those houses had existing ramps when they were landmarked. So that argument was presented more for an emotional fact than actually for what we are doing.

K. Reilly stated she agreement but they might not have known.

Blackmer stated that she thinks they did know. I had given them landmarks brochures.

Blackmer requested that Smith read the motion one more time.

Motion to approve this ramp, pending proof of architectural review, possibility of changes. If changes do not compromise the integrity of the house, do maintain original railings, do not alter the facade of the front porch, and the step must appear to match the original steps.

Motion made by Council Representative O.Smith, Seconded by Board Member Reilly.

Voting Yea: Council Representative O.Smith, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly, Board Member Reilly

The motion has been unanimously passed.

Blackmer stated that she would contact the Barber's and let them know. I would like to take that motion home with me tonight so that I can give them a call.

3. Discussion and approval to update second signer on the Whitewater Community Foundation Account.

Motion to add Orin Smith as second signer.

Motion made by Board Member J. Reilly, Seconded by Board Member Reilly.

Voting Yea: Council Representative O.Smith, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member K. Reilly, Board Member J. Reilly

Motion approved.

4. Update on Starin Park Water Tower.

Blackmer stated that McEnroy was contacted regarding the Starin Park Water Tower. They recommended that we contact a mason instead of working with their company.

They recommended that we contact Cornerstone.

Brad was going to meet with Kyle and see what they would come up with.

The interior of the tank will be inspected free of charge.

5. Update on the Landmarking of Premier Bank. **(J. Reilly)**

Jordan reached out to the Joel the VP Premier. They have respectfully declined to be landmarked.

6. Update on the historical gardens that were found next to Effigy Mounds. **(Alwin)**
This matter was tabled due to Board Member Alwin being absent.
7. Update on landmarking the Masonic Lodge. **(K. Reilly)**
Kelsey provided an update on the Masonic Lodge. It was not brought to all the members. They are making changes within the organization and asked we come back after those changes have been made.
8. Update on locating a new location for the bookcases from the White Memorial Library. **(Smith)**
Smith stated that all 5 bookcase are different sizes. They may be heading to the Anderson library.
Blackmer stated that another option may be the Walworth County Historical Society.
9. Update on America 250. **(Smith)**
Wants to have first meeting after this July 4th.
10. Closed Session Memo from City Clerk.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Hamilton House

Historical Gardens

Bookcase update

America 250

Starin Water Park

NEXT MEETING DATE JULY 2, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 6:44 p.m.