

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING

City Council Chambers

February 18, 2014

CALL TO ORDER – ITEM 1:

A regular meeting of the Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) was held at the above place at the hour of 5:18 p.m.

ROLL CALL – ITEM 2:

Commissioners Present: President LJ Gunderson, Vice President Michelle Dieffenbach, Commissioners Jack Osterberg, Paul Caruana, Mac Burns, and Kevin McHone.

Commissioners Excused: Thomas Stanley

Staff and Others Present: City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard, Planner Rosemary Johnson, and Consultant John Goodenberger.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS – ITEM 3(a):

In accordance with Sections 1.110 and 1.115 of the Astoria Development code, the Historic Landmarks Commission needs to elect officers for 2014. The 2013 officers were President LJ Gunderson, Vice President Michelle Dieffenbach, and Secretary Sherri Williams.

Commissioner Caruana moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission re-elect Sherri Williams as Secretary, LJ Gunderson as President and Michelle Dieffenbach as Vice President of the Historic Landmarks Commission for 2014; seconded by Commissioner Burns. Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – ITEM 4(a):

President Gunderson asked if there were any changes to the December 17, 2013 meeting minutes. There were none.

Vice President Dieffenbach moved to approve the minutes of December 17, 2013 as noted; seconded by Commissioner Burns. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

President Gunderson explained the procedures governing the conduct of public hearings to the audience and advised that the substantive review criteria were listed in the Staff report.

ITEM 5(a):

EX 13-09 Exterior Alteration EX 13-09 by Karl F. Johnson to add a second story deck with a steel spiral staircase on the rear (east) elevation of an existing single-family dwelling. This application is a revised design of the previous application for EX 13-06 at 674 17th Street in the R-3, High Density Residential, zone.

President Gunderson asked if anyone objected to the jurisdiction of the HLC to hear this matter at this time. There were no objections. President Gunderson asked if any member of the HLC had a conflict of interest, or any ex parte contacts to declare.

Commissioner Osterberg declared, as he did during the public hearing for EX 13-06, that in 2013, the Applicant's neighbor, Mellissa Yowell, had begun to speak with him about the project. He immediately stopped the conversation and told Ms. Yowell he could not speak with her about this project and the issues would need to be addressed during a public hearing. Although this was a different application, he believed it was important to note.

President Gunderson requested a presentation of the Staff report.

Planner Johnson presented the Staff report. She noted Melissa Yowell had submitted a letter, which was distributed at the dais, stating she preferred the higher wall option because it reduced visibility of the spiral staircase. She also distributed copies of a statement from a structural engineer stating the structure has been built in compliance with Building Codes. When the Applicant applies for a building permit, he will submit the structural plans that show the structure was built to engineered standards. The HLC will need to determine which wall height meets the Code, and then she would edit the Findings and Conditions accordingly. She clarified that she would be changing Condition 2 to state, "The window on the west elevation is not required if it is determined by the building official that the approved structural plans will not accommodate the window." Staff recommended approval with the conditions listed in the Staff report.

Planner Johnson read Ms. Yowell's letter into the record.

President Gunderson opened public testimony for the hearing and asked for the applicant's presentation.

Karl Johnson, 674 17th Street, Astoria, said he has lived in his home for 36 years. He had told Planner Johnson that Ms. Yowell wanted a higher wall on the south side, so he believed the project was getting close to making everyone happy, including himself. The project has been challenging, like reverse engineering. He thanked the HLC for their consideration.

President Gunderson called for any presentations by persons in favor of, impartial to, or against the application. Seeing none, she closed the public testimony portion of the hearing and called for closing remarks of Staff. There being none, she called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

President Gunderson believed this application was a huge improvement. The changes were more in keeping with the Queen Anne style architecture. She hoped the window would remain on the west side. She appreciated that the Applicant worked with the City, the HLC and John Goodenberger to move the process along. The changes have been nice and she believed it was something the HLC could work with.

Commissioner McHone said he did not have a problem with either proposed high wall height, but believed the property owner should decide which height would be best.

Mr. Johnson suggested splitting the difference.

Commissioner Caruana confirmed that the second floor deck had already been approved and the HLC is only reviewing the partial wall and spiral staircase. Planner Johnson confirmed the photos of the completed structure in the Staff report were photo simulations; the project has not been yet completed.

Commissioner McHone did not believe the staircase looked bad, and while he liked the shorter wall better, he did not have a preference on the wall height.

Commissioner Osterberg believed a lower height of 36 to 42 inches would be more appropriate because the mass of the structure would be reduced. Mass is an important issue. He acknowledged Ms. Yowell's letter in support of the higher wall blocking the view of the staircase, noting he did not see the issue the same way. However, Ms. Yowell is the neighbor. While his opinion was that the lower height was best, he could support the higher wall if the HLC supported Ms. Yowell.

Commissioner Burns said he liked the shorter wall in the photographs, but supported the taller wall since the homeowner and neighbor preferred it.

President Gunderson agreed, adding she believed compromises had been made by everyone.

Mr. Johnson stated he would compromise by building the wall about six feet tall, adding he just did not want it shortened to 36 inches.

Planner Johnson suggested the HLC proceed with the 36- to 42-inch or the 8-foot wall heights even though the Applicant has offered to build the wall lower than 8-feet. The neighbors have reviewed the application with the 8-foot height. If there are issues with building the wall 8 feet high, other options can be discussed.

Commissioner Osterberg agreed, noting that adding a third alternative at the last minute, while the neighbor is unaware of the third alternative, would not be appropriate.

Commissioner Caruana said he would vote to approve the shorter wall, because everyone seemed to prefer it. Mr. Johnson replied it was actually the taller wall on the south side that was preferred. He noted Ms. Yowell would like the wall as high as possible. Commissioner Caruana understood the HLC preferred the design of the lower wall.

President Gunderson said that while she liked the lower wall, she was considering the compromises that have been made throughout the process; she was okay with either wall height option.

Commissioner Burns agreed, noting the shorter wall was more aesthetically attractive, but functionally, the property owners and the neighbor have indicated the taller wall is preferred. He preferred a motion that supported the 8-foot wall.

Vice President Dieffenbach agreed the 8-foot wall would be acceptable.

Commissioner Caruana stated for the record that he did not like the 8-foot wall.

Commissioner Caruana moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the 8-foot wall option proposed for Exterior Alteration EX 13-09; Commissioner Burns seconded his motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioner McHone moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff Report and approve Exterior Alteration EX 13-09 by Karl F. Johnson, with the following changes to the Staff report:

- Page 9, second paragraph, amend the second sentence to state, "The HLC finds the wall height of approximate 8' maximum height would be sensitive to the character and features of the structure."
- Page 9, the caption at the bottom of the photos will be corrected to state 'Comparison of proposed heights as viewed from northwest.'
- Page 13, amend Condition 1 to state, "The height of the side walls of the second story deck shall be limited to approximately 8' maximum."
- Page 13, amend Condition 2 to state, "The window on the west elevation is not required if it is determined by the Building Official that the improved structural plans will not accommodate the window."

Motion seconded by Commissioner Osterberg. Motion passed unanimously.

President Gunderson read the rules of appeal into the record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS – ITEM 6: There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7(a): Design Review Guidelines

Planner Johnson explained that Astoria applies to the State Historic Preservation Office for grants every two years. Grant funds are used for projects like the Adair-Uppertown inventory and to pay John Goodenberger to assist with applications. Remaining grant funds have been used to develop design guidelines that include information typically provided to applicants by Staff and Mr. Goodenberger. The guidelines include identifying features, reasons for styles and features, graphic examples of good and bad alterations, the new mid-century historic style, and basic definitions of terminology. Staff would like the HLC to approve or accept the guidelines. These guidelines are not code and can be changed as needed.

John Goodenberger, 856 Harrison, Number 2, Astoria, said this type of document has been used in many cities, so he had quite a few different models from around the country to use when developing these guidelines. He used as many local materials as possible, as well as materials from the National Parks Service, the State Historic Preservation Office, individual cities, and a few architectural magazines. He worked with Planner Johnson to include the type of information that applicants would need to know. These guidelines will answer at least 60 percent of the questions asked by applicants, allowing Planner Johnson to spend more time dealing with bigger issues. He hopes the guidelines will help the applicants understand the process, as City Code does not indicate what the HLC is looking for.

President Gunderson said the guidelines were developed in a very user-friendly format. She supported the guidelines, which are professional and reflect well on the City.

Commissioner McHone said he was excited to read the guidelines and believed they were well done. He appreciated the visuals, which are helpful to non-architects.

Mr. Goodenberger confirmed that a digital copy would be available online.

Commissioner Osterberg believed the house pictured on Page 3 was a poor example of historic alterations. Planner Johnson suggested the bolded sentence be edited to state, "The house below has undergone extensive *inappropriate* alterations." Commissioner Osterberg suggested adding a thumbs down or sad face icon throughout the document to indicate examples of inappropriate work.

Mr. Goodenberger said he tried to eliminate negative graphics because the document is meant to encourage historic preservation. Commissioner Osterberg appreciated Mr. Goodenberger's efforts to avoid negativity in the document, but believed the community would benefit from clear explanations and labels of what is considered inappropriate and appropriate. He suggested adding text to simply state whether each picture was a good or bad example.

Commissioner Burns suggested adding information on Page 4 that would help homeowners find out if their property was historic. President Gunderson agreed, noting that some homeowners and at least one contractor have not been aware that review by the HLC was necessary. The HLC and Staff discussed possible wording of a suggestion to check with the City on historic significance prior to doing alterations. Planner Johnson added that historic information is being added to the Geographic Information System so property owners can read a property's historic inventory sheet online. The information should be available online soon.

Planner Johnson stated the Commissioner's suggestions would be added to the guidelines, which would be included in the Commissioners' information books.

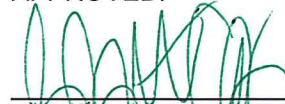
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:


Community Development Director/
Assistant City Manager