

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING

City Council Chambers

March 19, 2013

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 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL – ITEM 2:

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

Commissioners Excused: Thomas Stanley, one vacancy

Staff Present: Planner Rosemary Johnson; Community Development Director Estes arrived at 6:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – ITEM 3(a): February 19, 2013

President Gunderson asked if there were any changes to the minutes. There were none.

Commissioner Caruana moved to approve the minutes of February 19, 2013 as presented; seconded by Commissioner Osterberg. 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.

The HLC continued to Public Hearings Item 4(b): EX13-02 at this time.

ITEM 4(a):

EX13-01 Exterior Alteration EX13-01 by Walt Postlewait to remove the east front stairs and reconstruct west front stairs on the north elevation of an existing residential structure at 811 - 813 Franklin in the R-3, High Density Residential zone.

This agenda item was addressed following Public Hearings Item 4(c).

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 Caruana stated the Applicant used to be his banker. He believes he could make an impartial decision on this application as he currently has no financial connection with the applicant. President Gunderson requested a presentation of the Staff report.

Planner Johnson presented the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and recommended approval with conditions. No correspondence has been received.

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

Walt Postlewait, 36468 River Point Drive, Astoria, believed the application included a request for a Code variance to keep the slope of the steps at 10¾" by 7½". Planner Johnson explained that is a Building Code issue that does not come before the HLC; it will be handled separately. Mr. Postlewait explained he is trying to keep the project within the existing footprint to avoid encroachment issues.

Commissioner Osterberg asked if the Building Official supports a minor change to the stair tread and Planner Johnson administratively approves a Code variance on the slope of the steps, would that substantially change any information in the Staff report. Planner Johnson answered no; the City Engineer and Building Official would work with the Applicant on how the steps are constructed. The actual rise and run of the steps is not an issue the HLC needs to address.

President Gunderson asked if there were any presentations by persons in favor of, impartial to or against the application. Hearing none, she closed the public testimony portion of the hearing and called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

Vice President Dieffenbach believed the repairs are necessary and did not have any issues with how the Applicant is trying to replicate the front's appearance, which was appropriate, as is working within the Code and the building inspector to get the stairs to work. It is a good solution.

Commissioner Osterberg supported the application and the findings. He noted that Staff's Finding 4 is partially contained in Criteria 2, which states that the stairs are not historic and have not acquired historic significance over the years, which identifies how Criterion 4 is met. He agreed that all of the criteria have been met.

Vice President Dieffenbach moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and approve Exterior Alteration EX13-01 by Walt Postlewait with conditions; seconded by Commissioner Caruana. Motion passed unanimously.

President Gunderson read the rules of appeal into the record.

President Gunderson stated for the record that Community Development Director Estes has arrived at 6:10 p.m. and that no audience is present.

The Historic Landmarks Commission proceeded to Item 5 New Business.

ITEM 4(b):

EX13-02 Exterior Alteration EX13-02 by James and Pamela Holen to remove the central chimney and install 2' x 4' flush mounted skylights on the north and south roof elevations of an existing residential structure at 877 14th Street in the R-3, High Density Residential zone.

This agenda item was addressed following Item 3(a) Approval of Minutes.

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 stated he knows the applicants through his membership in the Lower Columbia Preservation Society (LCPS) but believes he could review the application impartially. President Gunderson requested a presentation of the Staff report.

Planner Johnson presented the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and recommended approval with conditions. No correspondence has been received.

President Gunderson opened the public testimony and called for the Applicant's presentation.

Jim Holen, 877 14th Street, thanked Planner Johnson for her presentation. He noted the HLC had been given the same drawings showing the mold, mildew and fungus, which have become a health and safety concern for his family members, particularly himself. He believes he contracted a lung infection of some kind while installing insulation in the attic and does not want anyone else in or coming to the house to have the same problems. A five-foot wide stairway goes up into the attic. The walls of the stairway are lathe and plaster. The Applicant intends to apply for a permit to insulate around the rafters and increase the venting. The attic reaches 110 to 120 degrees in the summertime causing items like stored candles to melt. During the winter, the attic maintains the outdoor temperature, so heat was being lost. He asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Osterberg asked if additional roof vents would be added. Mr. Holen replied he has already had three additional vents installed for a total of five vents, which should be sufficient. He would like to enhance the airflow through the four-foot overhang currently in place. Planner Johnson added she has been working with Mr. Holen and Clean Energy Works Oregon (CEWO). An energy assessment will be completed and then recommendations will be made. CEWO contacted her about potential ridge or soffit venting, which Planner Johnson would approve administratively if used.

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

Vice President Dieffenbach believed the project would be an asset to the house. She was concerned about installing flush skylights as they are notorious for leaking in coastal environments.

A commissioner stated he was not in favor of cutting a hole in a perfectly good roof, but understood the need for additional light. Mr. Holen explained that the skylight would be installed in the same opening as the chimney.

Commissioner McHone stated he was in favor of the application. He believed the roofline of a Prairie style house is an important architectural feature; however, the visual impact of the skylights will be negligible on the roofline of this Prairie style house.

President Gunderson stated she was in favor of the application. The Applicants have come before the HLC before and have followed the Commission's guidance and are doing a beautiful job on the house.

Vice President Dieffenbach moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and approve Exterior Alteration EX13-02 by James and Pamela Holen; seconded by Commissioner Caruana. Motion passed unanimously.

President Gunderson read the rules of appeal into the record.

ITEM 4(c):

EX13-03 Exterior Alteration EX13-03 by Peggy Mills to remodel the garage to include raising the height by approximately 2 feet; change the flat roof to a pitch roof; install horizontal fiber cement siding on three sides; install steel garage doors; replace the existing T1-11 skirting on the house with horizontal fiber cement siding on an existing single family dwelling at 305 Alameda 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. Vice President Dieffenbach declared that she has hired the Applicant in the past, but believes she can make an impartial decision on this application. She confirmed that she has no financial interest in this project. President Gunderson requested a presentation of the Staff report.

Planner Johnson presented the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and recommended approval with conditions.

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

Greg Mills, 305 Alameda, Astoria, explained that the garage building is not usable in its current state being severely deteriorated. The trusses were originally hand hewn out of 2 x 12s, which have dry rotted and become an eyesore on the property. The building does not match the property whatsoever. He considered bulldozing the building and filling the space since the building is useless, but raising the height by 24 inches will allow a standard sized garage door to be installed so a moderately sized vehicle could fit and prevent people from needing to duck as they enter if used as a potting shed.

His biggest concern is the siding on the house. The previous owners made some repairs to the foundation of the house using T1-11 with faux wood grain, which looks obnoxious. He would like to replace this with 4-inch reveal

shiplap. However, this is not currently available so the Applicants opted to use smooth or no grain Hardiplank with a 6-inch reveal lap because the upper gable on all sides of the house has 6-inch reveal shingle, as shown in the pictures provided. Hardiplank is an available material that will last forever. His goals are to remedy some of the eyesores on the property and also make improvements that will last another 110 years.

He may not add a new window or vent in the gable end of the garage, as it will be difficult to make it look appropriate. A small architectural detail may be added instead, but he doubted that anything would be put in the gable. It would not be large and a vent or window would actually be an eyesore and detract from the facade.

Commissioner McHone understood Hardiplank is lap siding that replicates cedar siding and overlaps the board below; it was not shiplap which is flush to the wall. Mr. Mills confirmed Hardiplank is lap siding, where one layer overlaps the next layer. He believes it is probably the best siding system available for the coastal weather.

Vice President Dieffenbach asked why the Applicant chose to remodel the slope of the roof to match the house. Mr. Mills stated he wanted to increase interior volume and make the garage tie into the house and look as if it were built at the same time. He is proud of his Queen Anne style house, which is fairly narrow and tall. The subject building currently has a flat dome shape and is substantially subterranean with very little showing above ground.

Vice President Dieffenbach said she is concerned because most roof garages in town have a lower pitch. Raising the height and increasing the pitch will make the garage much more dominant on the facade of the site. Mr. Mills stated he has drawn about 15 different roof pitches. He has also driven around town to look at other garages that have roof pitches that match the house, as well as some that did not match. The property will not look right from the street unless the roof of the garage matches the house. The building is not very big and the volume of the new roof will not increase much. If the garage is not aesthetically pleasing, he does not want to complete the project. He would be happy to provide the HLC with his other drawings, but he prefers the one with matching roof slopes. Most subterranean garages in town were constructed after the houses and do not match the houses or the properties. He wants to tie the garage to the house for aesthetic reasons so the garage looks like it belongs on the property and was built at the same time as the house. This is important to him. He could make the building functional in many different ways, but he wants it to look right.

Commissioner Caruana noted the proposed roof indicates a 5:12 pitch in the drawing, the house roof was more like a 10:12 pitch. The pitch of the garage roof should match the pitch of the house roof. Mr. Mills explained the roof of the house has a closer to a 6:12 pitch. Prior to starting construction, he will have to measure the actual pitch of the roof on the house. He did not want to do this in the wintertime.

Commissioner Caruana asked if the soffit detail and the fascia on the garage would also match the house. He wanted to know if the gable would extend out the same distance as the gable on the house. Mr. Mills stated that the house has a 6-inch gable. Commissioner Caruana noted the house also has a darker colored freeze board. Flat roofs can be dangerous, as kids will jump off of them. He supports a roof that matches the house, and the more the garage matches the house, the better.

Mr. Mills stated he has refined his drawing since submitting the application, and would like to do the eave returns on the short roof which had the same materials as the other roof. The problem was they extend 14-inches off the front and he did not want the overhang to extend further into the right-of-way and encroach on the sidewalk. Trim work would make the garage look more like the house without extending the overhang. He indicated rain catchers and assumed gutters over the sidewalk would cause accidents. Given the elevation on the low side, as well as the driveway, these gutters could be in the way if the overhangs were extended. He proposed a 6-inch overhang, which is consistent with what currently exists. When he purchased the property, there was a sundeck bolted on top of the garage which was removed 16 years ago. The building has gone through several different revisions, but his goal is to have a 24 inch extension on the low side. Currently, there is an 18-inch pony wall there so the proposed project will not increase the wall height as much as it may seem given the two different elevations. The low side would be raised 24-inches and the high side might be about 8½ to 9 inches.

Planner Johnson commented that extending the returns out far enough to encroach into the sidewalk area would require approval by the City Engineer. Because 90 percent of the garage is in the right-of-way, the City Engineer will have concerns with the headspace clearance for any encroachment. Commissioner Osterberg suggested

adding gutters if it was structural stating guttering is a possible encroachment that the City Engineer may permit. Planner Johnson noted the returns were not at the proper height, and confirmed that gutters were considered by the City to be the same as anything structural with regard to encroachments.

President Gunderson believed that could be accomplished with lines, not necessarily physical modifications. Mr. Mills agreed trimming it out would work. He added he wanted to replicate the house as it looks when standing 10 feet away or driving by so that the architectural lines appear to be the same without the encroachment. He does not intend to extend the eave line out over the front of the building farther than what currently exists. Planner Johnson confirmed she is able to approve any gutter additions, with or without the returns, and would work with the Applicant and City Engineer to make the project work.

Commissioner Osterberg recalled that Commissioner Caruana supported the garage replicating the house and asked for Commissioner Caruana's opinion on the addition of a window or vent. Commissioner Caruana stated he would like to see the garage look exactly like the house. He favored raising the structure and making the roof a pitched roof; however, it is important that the garage look just like the house, because the more the garage looks like the house, the less it will take away from the house. He would scratch the 5:12 pitch and just state that the pitch is to match the main pitch on the house. He believes more people should upgrade these garages. Mr. Mills stated he is not opposed to adding a window. It would serve no purpose other than for appearance. His concern is that the window would be very narrow and tall. The window would need to be relocated in the wall and would create a large structural hole. The trusses will be hand cut. Commissioner Caruana stated he liked the idea of a vent. Commissioner Osterberg liked the idea of a vent as well. A metal vent can provide a small bit of architectural interest in an English Cottage style garage. Mr. Mills stated he is not opposed to installing a vent and prefers a vent to a window.

President Gunderson asked if the two gables on the sides of the house have windows. Mr. Mills replied every gable on the house has a window and each window is a different size. The man who built the house also built the houses above and below it, but was not consistent in his construction methods. The house above is the same house with two more floors. The house below was almost demolished in the Columbus Day Storm, but after being rebuilt, it no longer resembles the original structure. The builder of the houses did not build the garage, which was built in the 1920s.

President Gunderson asked if there were any presentations by persons in favor of, in partial to or against the application. Hearing none, President Gunderson called for closing comments.

Planner Johnson asked if a condition is being added, stating, "A window or vent shall be installed in the gable end." President Gunderson believed that decision should be made by the Applicant and Planner Johnson. Commissioner Osterberg believed the Staff report should be left as presented. The HLC was just expressing some interest and possibly a slight preference that there be something in place as opposed to a blank wall. It was not a requirement.

President Gunderson closed the public hearing and called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

Commissioner McHone stated his only concern was the height, which was discussed. Based on the drawings, it appears as if the total height increase would be between four and five feet, which is significant. The presence of the building would increase as viewed against the house. He agreed with Commissioner Caruana's statement that the more the garage is made to look like the house, the more the impact to the house is diminished. He is in favor of the application.

Commissioner Caruana moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and approve Exterior Alteration EX13-03 by Peggy Mills with conditions; seconded by Vice President Dieffenbach. Motion passed unanimously.

President Gunderson read the rules of appeal into the record.

The HLC returned to Item 4(a): EX13-01 at this time.

NEW BUSINESS – ITEM 5(a):

Special Assessment Request by Rose Marie Paavola for 431-433 13th Street.

Planner Johnson presented the Staff report, which recommends approval of the Special Assessment. Upon HLC recommendation, she will send a letter of support or denial to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on March 20, 2013.

Commissioner Osterberg stated it appears that the Applicant has completed all of the different elements of the Preservation Renovation Plan. Planner Johnson confirmed that is correct. The Applicant is working with SHPO and on a project like this, sometimes the application date is the date that the initial assessment is completed. Special Assessments freeze the assessed value of the property. Because Special Assessments are only reviewed and approved periodically, SHPO allowed the work to be completed while in the application process so as not to delay their decision on the Special Assessment.

Commissioner Osterberg stated the process appears backward and inappropriate, although it is not. All of the work that is normally identified for a plan typically stretches out over a period of years, which is why Special Assessments are necessary. Commissioner McHone noted the work has already been done, so it was interesting that the application is just being processed now. Planner Johnson clarified the application has been in the process since the fire. The work needed to be done, so the Applicant developed a plan and proceeded with a lot of the work, but that was with SHPO's approval. The idea of a Special Assessment allows the money saved from the taxes to be invested back into the home or building. In this case, the Applicant can use that money to repay her loan each year. The cost is still spread out for her even though the work has been completed.

Commissioner Osterberg explained the application appeared different from what he is used to seeing. It is great that the work has already been completed and that the owner has already been working with SHPO. Director Estes added it was good that SHPO was willing to work with the Applicant to allow construction to proceed. With the Plan already in process, she is able to start collecting rent revenue. Planner Johnson said SHPO has been very supportive of some unique projects in Astoria. President Gunderson added the HLC has also been supportive of this project and it would be a shame to deny the approval.

Commissioner McHone moved that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend that SHPO approve the Special Assessment program for 431-433 13th Street; seconded by Commissioner Osterberg. Motion passed unanimously.

Vice President Dieffenbach asked for clarification about the second paragraph in the letter from SHPO. Planner Johnson explained that the new Special Assessment Program defers the design review process to local CLGs when local Code requires a review. Once the HLC completes a review, Planner Johnson contacts SHPO to get their concurrence. Director Estes added that local landmark commissions have more involvement now which expedites the process. Planner Johnson stated each time she or the HLC reviews an alteration; SHPO is contacted to make sure they have no problems with the project.

Vice President Dieffenbach asked how likely SHPO would be to deny concurrence. Planner Johnson replied that SHPO would generally defer to the local commission's decision. She usually ensures concurrence with SHPO before presenting a request to the HLC.

President Gunderson asked if this property should be nominated for the Dr. Edward Harvey Historic Preservation Award. Planner Johnson stated she would have Staff add it to the list of nominees. President Gunderson added that the property could be nominated for next year's award if the work is not 100% complete. Planner Johnson believed the work has been completed.

Commissioner Osterberg asked if the owner had plans for the storefront. Planner Johnson explained the owner operates Columbia Travel out of the storefront. The upstairs apartments have been restored and included Murphy beds, which were original to the building.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS – ITEM 6(a):

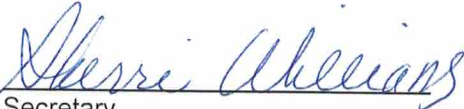
Planner Johnson has included status report photographs of the following: NC11-01 for 229 West Marine and EX13-03 for 2042 Marine. The projects are complete and conditions have been met. This status report is for Commission information.

Planner Johnson corrected that "EX13-03" on the agenda should read "EX12-03". The status report for NC11-01 was not included in the packet and was presented to the HLC at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:



Community Development Director /
Assistant City Manager