

Elkhart Historic & Cultural Preservation Commission

Meeting Thursday, February 15, 2024

Call to Order:

Ann Linley called to order the Elkhart Historic & Cultural Preservation Commission Meeting for Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 7:04 pm.

Roll Call:

Present: Bobby Glassburn, JA Whitmer, Ann Linley, and Bill Zimmerman. Eric Trotter with the City of Elkhart Planning and Development and Deb Parcell with Indiana Landmarks.

Absent: Raymond Enfield

Approval of Agenda:

Linley asked for a motion to approve two amendments to the agenda in order to add item 2.5 Election of Officers and Contract renewal for Deb Parcell with Indiana Landmarks as item B under New Business. Motion made by JA Whitmer, seconded by Bobby Glassburn; motion carried.

Ann Linley asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Motion made by Zimmerman, seconded by Whitmer; motion carried.

Election of Officers:

Eric Trotter stated as a reviewed the election would be a Chair person, Vice Chair person, and the Treasurer.

Linley opened nominations for the Chair. JA Whitmer nominated Ann Linley, seconded by Zimmerman; Ann Linley is Chair for the Historic Commission for 2024.

Trotter said that Zimmerman was Vice Chair previous year. Glassburn nominated Bill Zimmerman, seconded by Whitmer; Bill Zimmerman is Vice Chair for the Historic Commission for 2024.

Linley said that Whitmer was current treasurer. Zimmerman nominated JA Whitmer for Treasurer, seconded by Glassburn; JA Whitmer is Treasurer for the Historic Commission for 2024.

Approval of Minutes:

Linley gave everyone a minute to look over the minutes from May 18, 2023 to see if any corrections needed to be made.

Linley said she would accept a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Motion made by Whitmer, seconded by Zimmerman; motion carried. The May 18, 2023 minutes are approved.

Financial Report:

Trotter stated that the starting balance was \$8,000 mainly to cover the contract for Indiana Landmarks and incidental expenses incurred by the commission. Trotter said that he did not recall the balance but the Historic donation account would roll over from 2023 to 2024.

Linley said that the financial report does not need to be approved because there is nothing to officially approve.

Hearing of Visitors:

N/A

Old Business:

N/A

New Business:

A: 24-COA-01, 515 East Street

Deb Parcell: Application 24-COA-01 for property address 515 East Street. The subject property is a contributing rated building, 20th century functional build around 1900. Parcell said that she got an interesting History fact from the Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board that originally the building was a chewing gum factory.

Description of the proposed project: Demolition

Parcell saw the building and hoped that there was some way to reuse the building.

Applicable guidelines: Consider demolition only when fire, winds, flooding, or other natural disasters cause extensive damage to a building and its structural framework, and only if the building represents a threat to the health and safety of the public.

Parcell stated that this building does not fall into those demolition guidelines but it would be extremely difficult and expensive to rehab it because of the deterioration of the additions made over the years. Parcell stated that she recommended the same as the state of Indiana because of their funding, it had to be reviewed at the state level.

Staff Recommendation: Proposed demolition would provide space for construction of a new four-story 60-unit affordable housing complex in this location, also extending into the vacant parcel to the west. Two commercial spaces will be located on the ground floor. A surface parking lot will be constructed at the west side of the development, and new sidewalk and on-street parking will be added along Hug Street. The current occupant (Wheel Chair Help) will be relocating. Adaptive reuse of the existing building was considered, but was ultimately determined not feasible due to the substantial cost needed for rehabilitation and lack of space within the existing building as compared with that needed for the development.

An on-site inspection by staff found the building appears to be in condition where rehabilitation would be feasible; however, the multiple expansions over time would make the process very challenging. Although the proposed structure is greater in height than those adjacent, the ground drops off to the north of Division Street, allowing a four-story building to be at a compatible height with adjacent structures.

The Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA) also noted in their review that both sides of East Street between Division Street and the Elkhart River were historically occupied by manufacturing facilities, and thus it has always retained a different character than the residential neighborhood to the south.

Staff concurs with the DHPA recommendation that, if a certificate of approval is granted, the certificate have the following conditions:

- 1) Documentation of the building at 515 East Street in accordance with the "DHPA Minimum Architectural Documentation Standards" to be completed by Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority and approved by DHPA before demolition commences.
- 2) One interpretive sign discussing the history of manufacturing on the subject property and within the surrounding neighborhood, developed by Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, designed by qualified historic preservation professionals, and approved by DHPA prior to installation.
- 3) An archaeological survey of the proposed project area by a qualified professional archaeologist be performed.

Linley asked if there was anyone from 515 East LLC to speak to the project.

Meghann Thannikkunnath introduced herself from RealAmerican companies whom are the developers and intend to be the long term owners of the property. Thannikkunnath stated that first she wanted to share a little bit about them. Thannikkunnath stated that they are primarily developers that comes in and builds smaller workforce housing. In this case they were never planning in coming in and demoing something and building a high rise or of large stature. Thannikkunnath stated that in this case unfortunately, despite their experience with Historic preservation where they have done acquisition rehabilitation, worked with historic tax credit, and are familiar with the process of rehab Historic structures and weighing that the tremendous need of housing in the city of Elkhart they have decided that demolition was the most feasible option in order to move forward.

Thannikkunnath said that Wall Street Journal ranked Elkhart as the number three emerging housing market in the US last summer and it has consistently maintained a top five position in the emerging housing markets index report. However, behind this growth is increased cost of living and pent up demand for housing. Levon Johnson, president of the greater Elkhart Chamber said "Our greatest restriction point is not just people it's a place for them to live." 515 East is a significant step forward alleviating this problem and providing much needed workforce housing. Thannikkunnath said that is the thriving urban core.

Thannikkunnath said that looking at the pent up demand and the need for housing in the city that is so beautifully growing and thriving, they did have to outweigh that with how much of the building could possibly be saved if anything. Their construction and preconstruction teams, vice-president of construction and development, and their director of preconstruction toured the building and determined structurally, as you heard in Deb's report, that it was just not going to be feasible to build the amount of housing needed on the site. Thannikkunnath continued to say for that reason they were moving forward at the commission approval if granted. Thannikkunnath said

that they already received proposals from qualified archaeologists who have already visited the site and have sent them proposals for the process of creating the interpretive signage as well as doing an archaeological phase 1A as mentioned in the state report requirements. Thannikkunnath said that there is a plan for a mural on the back of the building to add possible references to the historic use of the site, the chewing gum factory, the planning process that they had there or whatever else they could find in those sandbar maps that were continuously combing through for inspiration.

Thannikkunnath said that she was happy to answer any questions that the boar may have specifically to the project.

Zimmerman asked could you define what you are terming as affordable housing. Thannikkunnath responded yes, it will be housing that is income based and in this particular project we have housing that is both income based and market rate. Thannikkunnath stated that the pend of demand in the areas demanding for a mix of income levels and they utilize the low income housing tax credit program in order to provide that valuable workforce housing at a variety of levels.

Zimmerman asked if there would be elevators in the facility. Thannikkunnath responded yes. Zimmerman asked if they are rate and standard. Thannikkunnath said that she believed that just standard. Zimmerman asked how many elevators. Thannikkunnath said that they have not started their official design on the construction or on the architectural side yet that is contingent upon this approval because they wanted to make sure they were adhering to the architectural standards of the area and she believed that the current plan is for two elevators. Thannikkunnath said that she would get that information for Zimmerman.

Zimmerman asked how many parking spaces will be attached to that. Thannikkunnath responded we actually received a parking reduction variance from the city because it is so tight. Thannikkunnath continued as currently plan they have the allotted number accessible spaces right next to the building it will be on the west side as where is planned currently and they got an additional fourteen additional non accessible spaces in addition to the at least four spaces and along with the parking variance received by the city they were giving permission to use the adjacent parking garage next to the site.

Whitmer asked Thannikkunnath to remind her how many apartments there would be. Thannikkunnath responded sixty. Whitmer stated not much parking. Whitmer asked a question that was inaudible. Whitmer said that there was a picture in the packet that was eyesore in the Historic district. It reminded her of the song "Ticky-tacky little houses on the hillside." Whitmer said that is not a reflection of what our area is and she asked Thannikkunnath if there would be some flexibility on the architectural. Thannikkunnath responded yes, absolutely and she hesitated to bring any renderings because she knew that. Thannikkunnath stated that to submit the funding application they needed to submit rendering and those were preliminary rendering which made sense for the site and concept.

Thannikkunnath said that in their solicitation for proposals for architectural designers they specifically said they wanted someone who was experienced working in a historic district and who was open to working with local Historic preservation voices in the area and those plans were very

preliminary rendering and was absolutely up for discussion. Whitmer was glad to hear that because that is not what she wants for the Historic district.

Whitmer asked Trotter if the applicant needed to come back to the board to present the architectural design. Trotter responded yes and he explained that this was a two-step process, first step was the demolition request and then the applicant needed to come back as they developed and finalize their plans and have a second request before the commission.

Whitmer said that the state had five requirements but Parcell only had three. Whitmer asked Parcell if the other two were not necessary. Parcell responded that those were necessary.

Glassburn: If any archaeological artifacts or human remains are uncovered during construction, demolition, or earth moving activities, the discovery shall be reported to the Department of Natural Resources within two business days.

Parcell said that the other requirement is the certificate of approval is valid for two years but she assumed that it would start before the expiration date. Whitmer said that you would assume if the state found something they will report it and asked if they should have that concern. Parcell responded that the state will make sure that happens and she thinks that would not be a concern for the board. Thannikkunnath mentioned that is also in the contracts with the proposal received from the archeological team. Whitmer commented that she was sorry to see this building go because she liked the look of it.

Inaudible

Thannikkunnath said that they will do justice to the building.

Glassburn asked Thannikkunnath if the Indiana preservation board approved it back in October when they heard it or they are waiting on the Historic commission approval prior to their action. Thannikkunnath responded that they heard it on January 24 and approved it. Linley added that it was approved with the conditions that Parcell listed.

Linley gave everyone a couple more minutes to look through the paperwork.

Glassburn asked Thannikkunnath if the board approved it did they have a timeline to start the project. Thannikkunnath responded that if they got approval for the demolition they have planned to meet with the architects in two weeks to begin the design process and they are still working with the city to when the demo would actually take place.

Whitmer asked is there going to be a knock it down or is there going to be any salvage because there's interesting stuff in the manufacturing facility or nothing is worth in there. Thannikkunnath said that was part of their recon. Glassburn said that he was in the building one time and it was like a pack rat full of random stuff, Zimmerman seconded that. Glassburn asked if the current tenant have relocated or started the process. Thannikkunnath said that they have started but is to be announce since she does not know. Glassburn asked if the demolition was going to take place after designs are approved for the new structure or the demolition would happen while renderings and plans are being made for the new space. Thannikkunnath responded that she would defer to Trotter because they are open to make sure they are in compliance. Trotter said that this being a new project and a new info project he assured the board that they would be working with staff with the

city and Indiana Landmarks to make sure that there's something that will be appropriate that the sport will approve at the end. Glassburn said that he was just curious on the timeline of it.

Linley asked for a motion to approve **24-COA-01 515 East Street** to approve the demolition based on the caveats by the Indiana Departments. Motion made by Zimmerman, seconded by Whitmer; motion carried.

B: Deb Parcel and Indiana Landmarks Contract

Trotter said the contract is for \$7,250 dollars plus \$35 per member of the commission and they will be break down in two installment payments of \$3,665 each. Linley asked the members if they have any questions.

Linley asked for a motion to approve the contract for services as proposed. Motion made by Whitmer, seconded by Zimmerman; motion carried.

Announcements:

A: Neighborhood update/Progress Review/ Nominations

Trotter made the board aware that they are in the process of updating the zoning ordinance to a unified development ordinance and as part of that was incorporating the preservation along with the zoning and subdivision. Trotter hoped to have a date from the consultant to mark their calendars and he apologized for not having a date. Trotter said that he would anticipate some working session to talk through the updates, ordinance and have some feedback to move forward into this new era of redevelopment in the area of the city. Trotter said that he will emailing the board members some tentative dates for meeting.

Adjournment:

Linley said that she would accept a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm. Motion made Whitmer, seconded by Glassburn; motion carried.



Ann Linley, Chair