

ALGONQUIN HISTORIC COMMISSION

MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING

October 09, 2019

7:00 P.M.

Held at Historic Village Hall - 2 South Main St. — Algonquin

Call to order – Establish Quorum

Present: Chairman Jolitz and Members Himes, Pawula, Purn, and Lewis

Approve Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 11, and Workshop Meetings of September 21 and 28, 2019. Moved: Member Himes Seconded: Member Purn

Voice Vote: All Ayes. Minutes Approved.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION – PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PUBLIC HEARING:

Public Hearing for Consideration of a Major Improvement in the Old Town District; Case No. PC19-11, 121 North Main St, for Porch Alteration / Replacement.

Petitioner: Jim Dawson.

STAFF PRESENTATION

The property owner removed most of the existing front porch this summer, and is in the process of replacing the porch with new decking, stairs, railing, skirting, spindles and columns in addition to rebuilding/reinforcing sagging floor structure and supports. Enclosed are photos of the previous front porch as well as the current appearance.

Also enclosed is a rendering of the proposed new front porch provided by the petitioner. The plan shows square columns and spindles. Due to the vintage of the house – circa the late-1800s Victorian era – staff recommends turned spindles and columns be used to be most compatible with the character of the home's design.

Additionally, staff would recommend a decorative lattice skirting be applied to the base of the porch and / or siding to match the rest of the home's exterior.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the following conditions:

1. The porch columns, spindles and newel posts shall all be turned, not square in design.
2. The petitioner shall be required to obtain a building permit from the Algonquin Community Development Department prior to starting construction.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Petitioner stated that in his opinion the porch is being repaired / undergoing maintenance work not replaced. Petitioner claims that there are numerous examples of square post and more modern additions in the area. He said Port Edward did not add old style decorative elements to their new outdoor dining area and he also showed some photos of other buildings in Algonquin without turned posts, etc. (Note: the examples he provided were more modern design buildings, or projects that were done before the Preservation Code, and just have had minor maintenance repairs since). He further claimed that “Algonquin was a poor community at the time the house was built, and homes built in Algonquin during this time did not have any decorative details like homes built in Elgin or other area towns”. He claimed that the house did not originally even have a porch on this side and that the house would never have had turned spindles or any decorative details, as “such things were economically out of reach for Algonquin residents”. (Note: This was a very inaccurate statement as Algonquin was NOT a “poor community” and almost all homes built in Algonquin 1880 – 1910 actually had varying levels of ornamentation. With some like this one, being highly ornamented). Chairman Jolitz stated that this homes design and ornamentation originally was much like the former clock shop (the C. Geister home at 302 S. Main Street, now on the National Register) with much detailed work , turned posts, brackets, fish scale shingles, end gable and roof ornamentation and a very detailed and ornamented tower. Chairman Jolitz also stated that old Sidwell maps confirm there was indeed always a long porch on the northside of the home.

It was further stated by Staff & Commission Members that the project was a rebuilding of the porch and clearly NOT routine maintenance, as the petitioner claimed, since MUCH more than 50% of the porch , literally almost everything below the roof is getting replaced. This project is a remodel/replacement, well beyond “routine maintenance”. Petitioner said he not want to replace what he has done and would like to compromise, maybe just replace the posts and keeping the square spindles. Chairman Jolitz said that he was unsure of why neither the petitioner nor the contractor had obtained a Building Permit as required considering the scope of the project. The Petitioner even stated what poor condition the porch was in, to the point of failure of the porch roof structure which was even failing - sagging 4” to 5” and had to be raised back in place and

supported with a reconstructed/enhanced porch floor support system. Ben Mason said that the style of the home is the most important determining factor in the design of the new replacement porch details. Features should be reflective of the architectural style of home. Craftsman, Prairie, and other styles of homes had square columns and square spindles not Queen Anne homes of the Victorian era. Chairman Jolitz said that petitioner lives in Trout Valley and is well aware that there are often Covenants, Guidelines, Building Codes, or Rules governing projects or improvements, and work done in certain places, subdivisions, or areas. Petitioner said that is how they like it where they live, as the rules they have in place maintains their quality of life in their area. Petitioner was asked, why should the residents and other property owners within Algonquins Old Town District be treated any differently and our local Code ignored. Are our residents not entitled to live in an area also protected by guidelines, which help afford them some level of protection of their neighborhoods, support property values, etc under the Preservation Code requirements that cover Algonquins Old Town.

The petitioner is a lifetime area resident, and is well aware his building, which he has had for decades, is located in the old town district an area covered by the Preservation code. Petitioner again stated he wanted a compromise on his project. Members indicated that they strongly felt that the current Staff Recommendation was already a huge compromise for this project. Chairman Jolitz stated that if this project had gone through the proper process of a Hearing in advance of the work, as it would have if they obtained a Building Permit before the project was started, the Commission likely would have looked for a more historically accurate porch rebuild, including traditional solid surface tongue-n-groove porch flooring, instead of the deck planks the petitioner used, and also the addition of other additional elements. Petitioner was asked – “ If a picture was presented to him of the home showing all the original porch details and all of the decorative brackets, upper porch railing lattice/spindle work and spandrels, would you be willing to rebuild the porch as it was originally ? “ Because that is what the Code requires in its Design Guidelines, and furthermore what several hundred other projects/property owners ALREADY have done for the last 21 years, and followed the code guidelines, since the Code was established. The petitioner replied; No, he did not want to.

Members felt and said, then what staff has included in its outline and recommendation, is actually already a huge compromise, and he should probably consider accepting what Village Staff is proposing. Members stated that the deck planks used for flooring can remain, but the posts/columns and railing should be of turned design as Staff has recommended. Petitioner said he only bought the property to stop a McDonalds from coming into the neighborhood.

He thinks it is ridiculous that he should have to do this or any extra work when the building is going to be torn down for a future development project in four or five years anyway. It was stated, we had NO knowledge of any current plan for any such pending project. He said he is willing to compromise and only just wanted to change the posts. He stated, it took him years to find someone to replace the railing and he was being treated unfairly. Member Purn said “you should have gone through the process of getting a Permit first”. All in the Old Town District are under the code, others have had to follow it. Members asked Ben Mason, what action has the village required of property owners previously, that have done work outside of the code or its requirements. Ben spoke about other cases in which property owners who did not follow the code were required to comply (which they all subsequently did). The property owner of 408 S. Main had to replace the square spindles and stair newel posts installed on his porch with turned ones, after he used square ones in error. Other Property owners have also had to bring projects into compliance, like when they purchased the wrong siding (width of clapboard) and been forced to return it and use the proper width clapboards. Petitioner thinks that it is unreasonable to have to follow the Village code. Purn stated that if you don’t like the Staff recommendations based on Code requirements you can appeal to the Village Board. Members Pawula said, he understands what the petitioner is asking for regarding his rental property, but the code clearly states what design is required, so this project should be bound and held to the same standards as to everyone else’s projects in the District. Members Lewis and Himes said they strongly agreed that the Code requirements should be applied consistently and uniformly across all projects in the Old Town District – it must be fair to everyone, to have all comply with the Code. There clearly cannot be two or more different sets of rules covering the District. All members agreed- there must be a uniform standard applied to all properties and all petitioners in the District. The petitioner stated that he still doesn’t believe he should have to comply. Members said he is still able to use, vinyl or other type of more maintenance free railing materials and does not have to use wooden railings, requiring painting etc.

MOTION:

Motion by Member Purn, seconded by Member Himes, that the Building Commissioner issue the requested Certificate of Appropriateness for Case PC19-11, for the proposed porch replacement at 121 N. Main St, consistent with the conditions listed in the October 9, 2019 Village Staff memorandum including the recommended use/addition of turned porch posts and railing design and also adding the use of a decorative lattice skirt to the base of the porch. Motion was repeated by Chairman and he asked if there were any questions or further discussion. Being none, he called for a Voice Vote: All members voted Aye.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Public Hearing for Consideration of a Major Improvement in the Old Town District; Case No. PC19-12, 123 South Harrison St, for Window Alteration/Replacement
Petitioner: Ken Stratton.

STAFF PRESENTATION

The petitioner is proposing to replace the window highlighted in the photograph to the right, with a slightly narrower, matching double hung style unit with mullions. The new window will restore the opening to its original size and be a little narrower than the current in appropriate window replacement from about 20 years ago and will more closely match the size of the first-floor double hung windows and allow for the proper width of window trim, matching other windows in the house. Enclosed is a spec sheet provided by the homeowner depicting the pair of double hung units proposed.

Additionally, the homeowner will also be replacing the four double hung windows on the north side of the home to match the existing size and style (see the photograph to the right). Straightforward window replacement – like-for-like size and style – simply requires a building permit, however due to the fact this petitioner was already going to be appearing at Wednesday evening’s meeting, Staff recommended the petitioner include this portion of their window replacement project as part of the overall presentation to the commission.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, for the proposed window replacement on the home located at 123 South Harrison Street, subject to the following conditions:

1. The petitioner shall be required to obtain a building permit from the Algonquin Community Development Department prior to starting construction.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Chairman Jolitz suggested petitioner make sure they are getting windows fitted with “jam extensions” because modern houses do not have as thick a wall as vintage homes, especially if the interior walls are still lath & plaster.

MOTION:

Motion by Member Himes, seconded by Member Purn, that the Building Commissioner issue the requested Certificate of Appropriateness for case PC19-

12 for the proposed window replacement at 123 S. Harrison Street, consistent with petitioner's submittal and the conditions listed in the October 9, 2019, Village Staff memorandum. Chairman Jolitz repeated motion. Being no further discussion, called for a Voice Vote: All members voted Aye.

OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Report on Participation in 09/21 Rotary Club – Harvest Day event. Event was prematurely ended by storms. We had good interest and thanks for the work the Commission was doing. The event and other events such as Thursday night concerts and Art on the Fox are also likely going to be in Towne Park next year.

APPROVAL OF BILLS FOR PAYMENT:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Report on the fall meeting of McHenry County Joint Council of Historic Groups on 9/18. Meeting featured a nice boat tour and history of Fox Lake was included.


CORRESPONDENCE, COMMENTS, AND OTHER BUSINESS:

- a. Chairman Jolitz and Member Purn got an email from Virginia Donahue to see if the Commission could give a talk about Algonquin in the 1920's in January, but the commission does not think it has enough information on this period to make an entire program. The library has found another speaker.
- b. Member Purn attended the 25th Anniversary of Angel Towne Celebration and received original plans and photos from the construction of Angel Towne for the Commission archives.
- c. Member Purn reported that Mineral Springs work/ plans have been further delayed, and will be now become part of an overall Towne Park redevelopment plan in several years.

ADJOURNMENT:

Member Lewis moved and Pawula seconded, that the meeting be adjourned.

Voice Vote: All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.


Secretary

11-13-19
Date Approved