

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MICHIGAN CITY HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD
1-23-2017**

CALL TO ORDER:

Board Chm Derrick Dircks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Lower Level meeting room at City Hall, due to the large number of citizens attending this meeting.

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joyce Dalton, Roger Potratz, Gigi McCabe-Miele, Todd Dickard, Tom Przybylinski, Jacqueline Hendricks, Connie Anderson, and Craig Phillips, City Planner.

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:

None,

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ron Bensch & Brad Miller, Community Preservation Specialists.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Newcomb

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON:

None

VISITORS PRESENT

A large group of citizens attended this meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Joyce Dalton moved for approval of the minutes, Tom Przybylinski seconded; motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Current officers were re-elected: Chm, Derrick Dircks; Vice Chm, Joyce Dalton; Secretary, Roger Potratz

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS:

112 & 114 E 10th: (Bostwick House) Brad Miller read the Certificate of Appropriateness report. The staff recommends approval as submitted with clarifications highlighted; i.e., new t&g porch deck perpendicular with the front of the house. Joyce moved to approve; Gigi seconded; motion passed.

114 Franklin: The Owner's contractor reviewed work to be done: new transom glass, rework exterior 2nd floor deck and increase the size by 5'; new railings. Brad read the staff report which recommends approval with comments to install the transom glass (approx ¾ is available); replace wood stair with spiral stair (metal); new railing to be properly painted with approved color. Tom moved to approve; Joyce seconded; motion passed.

701 – 703 – 705 Franklin: Proposal for demolition of the two buildings.

City of Michigan City Redevelopment Commission, Owner. Craig Phillips gave a general overview of the status of the project. The Redevelopment Commission has passed unanimous approval to demolish these properties. These properties were purchased by Michigan City in 2016 with the plan to provide a City Center Plaza for community events. According to earlier Master Plans, other locations were considered but more significant structures would have to be demolished. These two buildings currently provide 35,000 s.f. of two-story space on two lots equaling 80 x 165. A net of 65,000 s.f. of venue space is expected to be available by including the area between Franklin Street and Washington Street as well as temporarily closing one block of 7th Street for an event.

Letters of support were read by Craig from Roger Brooks International, Mich City Redevelopment Commission, and Mich City Mainstreet Association. Craig listed several other successful downtown projects: ArtSpace, Elson Grove, and current project for façade rehabilitation of the Greenhouse Bldg, a WPA project across from Washington Park.

The project proposes to preserve some historic elements on the two buildings. City Staff will determine who will maintain the Site prior to and following events. An Event and Marketing Director is to be hired whose responsibilities would include programming for this Site.

Chris Wolf of Shive Hattey - Architects, Valparaiso, gave an architectural critique of both existing structures. He noted the two buildings were constructed separately and showed a number of pictures. The façade of both buildings are largely intact except for entrances. He recommends preservation except that the value of what is planned for the site will greatly exceed the value of the existing buildings.

Joe Baldwin, president of Hitchcock Design Group, noted the space is to be multi-use including ice skating, elevated stage storage, concessions, fire pits, etc, and presented preliminary renderings for the proposed Plaza.

A staff report was read by Brad Miller. The report noted that the structures are rated as contributing resources in the Franklin Street Historical District.

The staff report utilized the four criteria for considering demolition set forth by the Historic Review Board on the “Application for Demolition of a Structure in a Historic District.” The staff findings are as follows:

- 1) Both buildings, 701-703 and 705 Franklin Street, are rated as contributing resources within the Franklin Street Local Historic District because of their age, architectural integrity, and overall contribution to the historic commercial atmosphere along Franklin Street.
- 2) 701-703 Franklin remains in overall satisfactory condition. The roof is compromised at the very rear (west) of the building, which has resulted in isolated water damage and mold growth. There is also minor mold growth in the basement from rising damp. The rear corner of the side (north) parapet wall along 7th Street has begun to lean away from the street in response to shifting brick masonry below on the second story. The two-story segment (roughly one fourth) of 705 Franklin remains in satisfactory condition before it transitions into a one-and-a-half-story building where the roof is compromised and significant water damage and mold growth has left the building in poor condition.
- 3) 701-703 and 705 Franklin Street contribute to the integrity of the historic district and remain as the only buildings anchoring the intersection of 7th and Franklin Streets; the other corners consist of an empty lot to the north and two parking lots to the east. The subject buildings are vacant, while most, if not all, other buildings on Franklin are occupied. The demolition of the buildings would make way for a civic plaza funded through the City of Michigan City that would transform the two parcels into a shared space for programmed events and public use.
- 4) Possible alternatives to demolition would include the rehabilitation and reuse of the buildings for commercial or residential use and/or partial demolition in the case of the rear portion of 705 Franklin Street. Moving these buildings would be infeasible.

Staff finds the demolition of 701-703 and 705 Franklin to have a detrimental effect according to criteria 1, 2 & 4, and therefore, recommends denial of application as submitted due to the architectural contribution of the buildings to the character of the historic district. Staff defers evaluation of criteria 3 to the Board, because it considers the balance of the public interest in preserving the building and interest of the owner of the building in the use of the property.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS:

Craig: final design is to be approved by the HRB including an intentional effort to put existing elements into the Plaza design.

Ron: noted that earlier “Urban Renewal” efforts that were not successful.

Todd Dickard made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness; Tom Przybylinski seconded. Public discussion was invited.

Gigi: if this building comes down, it needs to be replaced.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION INCLUDED:

Joe Coar, Tonn & Blank, reported that it would take \$3.6+ million to renovate these buildings; in his opinion they are not worth it as there are extensive mold issues to be considered. This is not a structure like the Warren Building, this is a wooden building, not a concrete building which was renovated for ArtSpace. He noted that Valpo wants and ArtSpace, Mich City wants a plaza.

Don Babcock noted this is not an easy decision but would encourage the HRB to pass the motion.

Larry Silversti spoke that he was for restoration but changed his mind after walking thru the buildings, noting especially the mold. He also noted that if this demolition is not approved, many other potential projects may not get financing. The demolition would open up the view to the Barker Mansion.

Tom Murphy, Uptown merchant, remarked that the downtown was nothing when he was growing up and now it is developing.

Justin Post gathered 498 signatures in two hours in favor of the demolition; he remarked that if they are not demolished, it would be procrastination, not preservation.

Ryan McLaughlin lives downtown and considered these buildings present a blighted appearance after many years of neglect.

Chris Schwanke, former member of the HRB agrees with saving the building. The death of an Historic District starts by punching holes in it.

Corbin Wagner, retailers are in favor of the demolition.

Rich Murphy, City Councilman, appealed to economic possibilities of the plaza; reclaim the legacy of these two building plus the Wall building and Barker Mansion in the new plaza. Family values will be promoted as the community can gather for cultural activities; mitigating circumstances far outweigh preservation.

David Augustus, preservationist, encourages public hearing forums to establish a "wish list" preservation of facades before considering demolition.

Tim Bietry noted that consideration be given to the cost of not tearing it down.

OTHER COMMENTS:

People are not against the plaza but against demolition.

The Michigan City Preservation & Education Foundation reflected that the City knew the condition of these buildings when they were purchased; the City is ultimately responsible; why do we need to hire someone to tell us it should be preserved when the MCP&EF was formed to provide that service?

Prior development (Franklin Street was closed to become a plaza) did not work; this one will.

There was a lot of pushback in Valpo; lots of good vibes for a plaza there; it will work here also.

Abby May – Bd of Directors for Mainstreet Assoc -- Old rundown buildings hold us back; she like preservation of the City, not necessarily preservation of buildings.

There is a mandate to hold to the HP regulations; why not same for these two buildings and try to save the buildings.

Thanks to Mr. Phillips for his presentation; the Gant Building and 711 building has worse mold/water issues than the 701-705 buildings.

Very exciting time.

Without people on the street there is no business; need a “shot in the arm”; it’s about people, to revitalize the downtown; a center civic plaza.

The buildings are not adding to the downtown.

SUMMARY BEFORE VOTING:

Craig: we will put our money where our mouth is – the cost of demolition vs. restoration is not a consideration. This location is least disruptive; the public will be involved.

Derrick: The City purchased the buildings knowing that they have a bad roof; this is negligence on the part of the City.

Roger asked about realtor/owner responsibility to maintain vacant buildings; Craig replied that is hard to enforce the existing ordinances.

The motion was passed 5 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 abstained

Aye: Joyce Dalton, Gigi McCabe-Miele, Todd Dickard, Tom Przybylinski,
Connie Anderson

Nay: Derrick Dircks, Jacqueline Hendricks, Roger Potratz

Abstained: Craig Phillips

PRESENTED TO BOARD:

None

MAINTENANCE REVIEW:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Review of New Historic District Guidelines: remarks include: if work is out of sight it does not need to be reviewed further by the board; limitation of communication devices (satellite dishes) needs to be studied more; signs (conflict with City ordinance – the stricter of the two will apply).

Bring the staff review back to the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Joyce moved to adjourn; passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roger Potratz, Sec.