

MINUTES
Joint Meeting of the
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION & ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
June 15, 2022

The City of Wyoming Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and Architectural Review Board (ARB) met on Wednesday, June 15, 2022 in the City Building Conference Room. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Gene Allison, Vice Chair of the HPC. Attendance was as follows:

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Gene Allison, Chair of the meeting
Maureen Geiger
LaBecca Hall
Rachel Kennedy via phone
Melissa Monich
Jim Walton

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS:

Gene Allison
Mark Browning
Scott Kyle
Dean Lutton, Alternate

ABSENT:

Cathy Ramstetter

STAFF:

Tana Bere, Community Development Specialist

OTHERS:

Amy & Andrew Holman, 35 Vale Avenue
Sally Noble, 413 Wyoming Avenue
Bobbie McTurner, 222 Oliver Road
Don & Mary Jo Peairs, 24 Clark Avenue
Fred Straus, 35 Walnut Avenue
Heather Shafer, 219 Elm Avenue
Bobbi Strangfeld, 254 Elm Avenue
Will Wolber, Unknown Address
Olivia & Larson Graham, 342 Durrell Avenue

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Kyle moved to approve the May 18, 2022 HPC-ARB meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Geiger. All members voted yes. The motion passed.

27 WALNUT AVENUE: APPLICATION TO DEMOLISH THE EXISTING HOUSE AND DETACHED GARAGE, AND CONSTRUCT A NEW HOUSE AND DETACHED GARAGE ON A PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ms. Bere introduced the request for Historic Review. Amy and Andrew Holman, owners of the subject property, as represented by Architect Sally Noble, are requesting Historic Review to demolish the existing two-story home and detached garage. The property is classified as contributing to the Village Historic District and Hamilton County Auditor lists 1870 as the built year.

Ms. Bere explained that since the request is for a total demolition of a principle structure, the HPC and ARB will make a joint recommendation to City Council. The public hearing will be held at the City Council meeting, where they will decide on the request. Mr. Allison stated the members are tasked with reviewing the demolition of the existing house and the proposed replacement construction.

Mr. Allison asked if the water was turned off by the City. Ms. Bere stated she confirmed the City never shutoff the water at this address. The previous owner had been up to date on their water bill, but their account showed they were paying for the minimum amount of usage. The City would not typically become aware of the issue unless there was a request to the shut off the water. Mr. Straus commented that he observed the previous owner bringing water jugs into the house and that he cut the lines.

Ms. McTurner attended as a preservation expert and provided information on the historical significance of the property. She explained that every historic resource within the Village Historic District contributes to the overall integrity of the district. Walnut Avenue is an incredibly preserved neighborhood with no visible modern intrusions and only two non-contributing properties which were built outside the period of significance. Specifically, the house at 27 Walnut Avenue was likely from circa 1865 and is a Queen-Ann with some Eastlake detailing. The garage is likely from circa 1925 and contains the original windows, and it is located in the rear corner of the property, where other early garages are found in the district.

The roof and siding on the house are not original, which is unfortunately common for houses in Wyoming. She explained that if the historic structure is covered by a non-historic material, the property can still be eligible if significant detailing is not obscured. The Wyoming Historical Society documents show that the aluminum siding is covering Fishscale shingles in the gables, which is a characteristic of a Queen-Ann. The windows are 2/2 with double hung sashes. On the rear of the property there are 1/1 windows with double hung sashes and one multipaned window. Both exterior doors are maintained. She said that the contractor speculated the fenestration pattern has changed over time and that there have been three additions. Based on the Sanborn maps from 1937, the footprint is the same as

today and there is not evidence that suggests there have been changes to the windows and doors. She does not believe there were additions to the home because the original footprint appears to be existing based on the composition of the foundation. The foundation is rough-cut limestone laid in regular courses. On the rear there is a two-story section of the house with a flat roof. It appears to have an ashlar pier foundation with concrete poured in and was likely a porch that was converted to living space. On the south elevation, there is a side porch that has been partially enclosed, and she believes it was done to make the kitchen larger. If there were any additions, she believes that were done at the turn of the century and are still within the period of significance.

The porches and railings have been neglected but they are still intact and show the craftsmanship of the home. It is not often that we see Jigsaw Eastlake original porches because most Queen-Ann homes have spindlework. Items that diminish the integrity are the contemporary Georgian surround on the recessed porch, covered Fishscale shingles, and aluminum siding.

Ms. McTurner recalled the application mentioned the house does not face Walnut Avenue. She explained that this does not diminish the integrity of the setting. More than likely, the property originally faced Elm Avenue and it predates the abutting properties going toward Elm Avenue; there are several properties within the district that have this setting. It reflects the changing development land patterns of the neighborhood and this property likely sat on a larger lot that was later subdivided. The location and setting retain a high degree of integrity.

Ms. McTurner concluded the property remains a contributing resource to the Village Historic District and retains a large amount of its historic integrity. She addressed the claim of economic hardship and explained a property owner is not entitled to the highest and best use of the property. Factors that should be considered are the ability to sell the property in the current condition, alternate uses, and the extent to which the hardship is self-created. She stated that the property owners knew of the historic designation and condition of the home prior to purchasing it. It is the responsibility of the commissions to assess the evidence provided. It does not appear the general contractor is well versed on rehabilitation expenditures. The structural repair estimate vaguely states that it is their opinion that the remediation of the existing structure is extensive and time consuming. The applicants provided financials and a projected cost of approximately \$1,750,000.00. The estimate is not itemized and there are no proposals provided. Ms. McTurner believes the evidence is not substantiated or credible. She added that overpaying for a property is not justification for demolishing a historic property.

Ms. Holman explained that when they were initially interested in the house, their intent was to rehabilitate it. They saw the hole in the ceiling and the rot but they had to decide quickly if they wanted to purchase the house. Mr. Allison asked if they had an inspection prior to purchasing it. Ms. Holman replied they did not because that was a condition of the

agreement with the seller. An inspection was not required because they did not use financing to purchase the property. Once they bought the home, they had professionals look at the house with the intent to rehabilitate it. The structural engineer stated the roof and part of the second floor would have to be rebuilt, and at that point the Holman's made a decision to pursue demolishing the existing house rather than restoring it. The decision also factored in the placement of the house of the lot and its close proximity to the neighboring property, the presumed black mold and asbestos, and condition of the basement. Ms. Noble said when she initially viewed the house it appeared to be in decent condition given the circumstances. It was not until she viewed the deflecting kitchen and bathroom, cutoff pipes, and the exposed second floor did she realize the extent of the damage. She recommended to bring in a structural engineer from Advantage Group and noted they are a reputable company.

Ms. Noble stated the front porch may be original but there are columns inside of those columns which are not original. It looked like there was a definite line between the foundations and it was not all built at the same time. When they evaluated the basement, they noticed there was knob and tube wiring and water intrusion. The bids were not more detailed because they do not know what is happening behind the walls. She believes the estimated costs are accurate. She designed the proposed replacement construction to meet the Zoning Code and to complement the Historic District.

Mr. Allison asked the current condition of the floors. Ms. Noble said the first floor is all hardwood except for the butler's pantry and kitchen. On the second floor, there is a lot of buckling, and the floors were not in great shape, however the rooms had a lot of stuff which obscured the view.

Ms. McTurner said she is hearing conflicting statements on the homeowner's intention when they first purchased the property. She said they stated they bought the home with the intention to renovate it and bring it back to life. However, when Ms. Noble visited the property, she said that it did not have a good layout and was not livable. Ms. Noble responded that she meant the floorplan does not flow with how people live today. Mr. Straus said he agrees with Ms. Noble on her reasons to tear down the house.

Ms. McTurner asked if since properties have been selling so quickly, why did this one sit on the market. For it to be a taking, the Holman's must try to sell the home and not receive a return on it. They should sell the property and give someone else the opportunity to try to do right by it. The home might be beyond saving but the evidence provided does not prove that. She recommended the City receive a structural engineering report from a different company.

Mr. Holman said he did not appreciate being accused of making a bad economic decision for purchasing the property for \$300,000. He said requesting a demolition based on economic hardship could not be further from the truth. The reality is that the neglect of the home over the last 25 years is the reason for the demolition request. The interior is incredibly

dilapidated, and labor and material costs have increased by over 45%. The value of the home after renovating exceeds the fair market value of the neighborhood. Mr. Allison asked what the cost estimate it to construct the proposed new house. Ms. Noble said it would likely cost \$1,250,000 at \$300 per square foot. Mr. Kyle said he would also use \$300 per square foot to estimate the cost and Mr. Browning added that is a reasonable place to start. Mr. Allison pointed out there is a lot of detailing on the house which increases the cost. Ms. Noble said the detailing is to blend into the neighborhood.

Mr. Allison questioned if the new construction would require any mature trees to be removed. Ms. Noble said there is one tree in the front that would be in danger. Mr. Allison asked if the house could be shifted back to protect the tree. Mr. Browning said there is a large walnut tree in the rear that would then be in danger.

Mr. Allison asked the applicants if they have previous experience renovating houses. Ms. Holman said she put a sizeable addition on their house on 242 Elm Avenue. Mr. Allison said that in their financial analysis it includes a \$400,000 addition and asked how large of an addition that cost is based on. Ms. Holman said it would be a two-story addition and approximately 2,000 square feet total.

Mr. Allison questioned what the Holman's have done to prevent further damage to the house. Ms. Holman said the previous owner had the roof tarped. Mr. Allison said additionally measures should be taken to prevent further decline.

Mr. Browning said their role is to protect the Historic District. He walked around the exterior of the property and it is clear it has not been maintained. Most of the architectural detailing has been covered up by aluminum siding. He said it is unfortunate timing with how fast everything has been selling the real estate market and he understands how the applicants got into the situation. Ms. Geiger stated that it also means they could sell the house if they wanted to get out of this situation. Mr. Browning noticed that the contractor's review talked about imminent collapse, but that language was not in Advantage Group's structural review. He said the house appears to be sound based on viewing the exterior and photographs provided in the application. He believes the house is salvageable and it should be saved.

Ms. Holman commented she wishes the members would have viewed the interior. She also thought the house seemed in good condition based on the exterior of the house. Ms. Monich asked Ms. Holman if she went inside the house before she purchased it. Ms. Holman said that she did.

Mr. Kyle said that based on what was submitted, he can visualize the extent of the damage and how difficult it would be to salvage the home. However, he thinks the home is worth trying to save and the City has to try to protect the integrity of their historic resources.

Ms. Geiger shared she has lived in a historic home like 27 Walnut Avenue for over 20 years. She questioned why someone would buy a Victorian house unless they adored it and could not imagine it demolished. She has put so much time and money into her house which they will never recoup but she knows it is a treasure. Ms. Holman said she thinks there is nothing more satisfying than taking an old home and restoring it. Unfortunately, she does not see that as a viable option. Ms. Geiger said the market is still strong and she can sell it to someone who would undertake the restoration.

Ms. Monich also believes this house is contributing to the historic district. She understands that as they were developing plans that the costs were higher than anticipated. It seems like the cost to demolish the house and construct a new one will also cost more than anticipated. She asked what it will cost to demolish the existing house. Ms. Holman answered \$25,000. Ms. Monich said when there is an option to put the house back on the market for someone else to save the home, it should be considered. The reason to restore a historic house should come from a place of love and not economic gain.

Ms. Hall said she agreed with the other members and that the home should be saved. When she purchased her older home, her family had to share one bathroom and lived with the layout until they could complete an addition. She bought the property knowing there would be some sacrifices but thought it was well worth for the opportunity to live in an older home.

Mr. Walton asked the applicants if they received enough feedback from the design professionals to feel confident in the demolition. Ms. Holman said she did not have multiple structural engineers give their opinion but there have been several contractors that said demolition is the best course of action. There have also been contractors that said they can restore the house, but it will be costly. When she purchased the property, she was not aware that most of the walls were loadbearing. Mr. Walton recommended she exhaust all her options before pursuing demolishing a house which is contributing to the district.

Ms. Noble asked what they would replace the aluminum siding, windows, roof, porch columns, and brick on the side of the house, etc. with if they were removed. They would essentially be left with the shell of a house but not the original house. It is her understanding that you are not supposed to mimic the historic features that were once there. Mr. Lutton clarified that you want to differentiate new components, such as additions, and it should not appear to be an original element. If you are trying to get back to what was once there, you do want to match the original as close as possible. Mr. Browning added that in one of the photos the aluminum siding was peeled back, and the siding underneath appeared to be protected. Ms. Noble asked how she would know what is original to the home and how to best restore it. Ms. McTurner noted that the windows could be preserved, the porches reconstructed with mixing in some new pieces, and new cladding would provide the opportunity to rehang the shutters correctly. Mr. Browning added that the original shutters appeared to be in the garage.

Mr. Lutton commented that he does not believe the financial argument that it would exceed the market value to bring the property into a safe and livable condition is valid. He said when you breakdown the costs with today's market values that it would cost \$890,000 to restore the home to a safe and livable condition per the applicant's stated desires and calculations. If that is truly the baseline, then the cost is at the higher end of the market but is reasonable. However, adding an optional \$450,000 for a complete rehab of the interior and another \$400,000 for the addition brings the total cost, including purchasing the property, to \$1,740,000. This amount includes optional items not required to make it safe and livable, therefore is not a valid hardship. He thinks the property is contributing and it should be restored.

Ms. Geiger added that construction costs are high for rehabilitation and new construction. Mr. Allison asked how much the proposed house and garage would cost to build. Ms. Noble said the garage is estimated to cost \$60,000 and the house \$1,250,000 plus the cost to buy the land. The cost of building a new home on the property is also well above market value and similar to the rehabilitation estimate. Ms. Noble said the cost of rehabilitation is a lot higher than new construction. The reason to demolish the house is because it is not safe, and they do not know what the actual cost is to make the property safe and livable. The estimate of \$590,000 was their best guess based on the information they had without doing an extensive investigation.

Ms. Kennedy said she echoes the comments of the other members. If she could vote, she would vote not to recommend the demolition because the house can be salvaged. If the current owners do not want to put it back on the market, maybe it is a matter of finding the right team for the project. She said that instead of putting the due diligence towards a new build, they should investigate what it would take to preserve the property. Even though their initial intent was to preserve the property, it seems like the focus has only been on the demolition. Ms. Holman added she had to pick a route and chose the path of demolition.

Mr. Allison asked for input from the neighbors that were present. Ms. Strangfeld said she agreed with Ms. Geiger's comments. In order to live in a historic house, you must really love the house and learn to live with the disfunction of them. The house at 27 Walnut Avenue is a big enough house that you would not need to add an addition and change the entire layout.

Ms. Shafer stated she hopes the house will be preserved and that they should embrace the house rather than trying to change it into something it is not.

Ms. Peairs said that she has been in the house many times and was close to the previous family. To her knowledge, there was never any maintenance done to the house and it did not have striking woodwork, which supports the idea that it was built as a farmhouse. She was appalled when she went through the house when it was on the market.

Mr. Peairs said the realtor said they showed it to a dozen people and all of them said it was worth \$100,000 for a tear down. The price was driven up when two interested parties started bidding against each other. He is worried what will happen if it is put back on the market and continues to deteriorate.

Mr. Allison stated he wished someone would have stopped the neglect before the house deteriorated this far. Mr. Straus said he knows the City typically operates on a complaint basis and asked if there was anyway they could have caught this sooner. Ms. Bere answered the neighbors typically alert the City of these kinds of issues. In this case, the damage was mostly contained to the rear of the house and the water was never turned off so there was no reason for the City to go onto the property. Once a neighbor made us aware of the conditions, the City got involved. She asked the members to focus on the demolition request before them because we will not tackle this larger question of property maintenance in this meeting.

Ms. McTurner added that there are ways to prevent properties from falling into disrepair through ordinances. She exited the meeting at 8:44 PM.

Mr. Allison added that the second phase of discussion is the replacement construction. Ms. Noble asked if there is any point to discuss the new house when it is clear the members do not support the demolition. Ms. Bere said the commissions are making a recommendation to City Council on the request and that includes the replacement construction. The recommendations could be split into two motions – the first on the demolition and the second on the proposed replacement construction.

Mr. Kyle asked if the applicants feel like they have done enough evaluation. He wonders if there was a report that called out the structure as failing, if that would enable the demolition to be considered. Ms. Geiger asked if the members received Ms. Ramstetter's comments on the request send via email. Ms. Ramstetter said the house on Grove Avenue which was demolished, was considered uninhabitable. Ms. Bere said another option, if the applicants are agreeable, is approve a continuance to allow the applicants to gather more information. Mr. Holman asked what the members would need to see to change their minds on the demolition. Mr. Kyle said a report that shows it is structurally unsound. The members recommended using Steven Schaefer Engineers if they seek a second structural opinion. Mr. Allison requested that the members be allowed to view the interior of the house if there is a continuance.

Mr. Allison said there are two options. The members can go ahead and vote on the request, or the applicants can consider their options and come back before the commissions. Mr. Holman said he is nervous about the continuance with more due diligence because the purpose of the forum it not to create circumstances for demolition. He is more informed about what is important to this group; and the only thing that will satisfy them is a report definitively stating it is structurally unsound and the only viable conclusion is demolition. He

added this seems like a very tall order. Mr. Lutton added they can use the continuance to digest the information received at tonight's meeting and decide their next steps. Ms. Bere added that if the request was denied tonight, they could not come back again with a similar request. Mr. and Ms. Holman said they want a continuance to discuss their options and make an informed decision on how to proceed.

Mr. Lutton explained that their charge is to follow Chapter 1136 of the Code. The only criteria this could be approved under is if there is not feasible and prudent alternative to the Change and denial of the permit would deny the property owner a reasonable rate of return on the property; or deny the property owner the use of the property for an already permitted use; or amount to the taking of the property without just compensation. He asked at what point does it qualify for a reasonable rate of return. Mr. Kyle suggested submitting a more robust construction cost with an itemized estimate. The difficulty is there needs to be a large contingency.

Ms. Noble asked about the proposed house and if they would approve the plan. Mr. Kyle said he did not have any comments on the design. Ms. Geiger said the scale of the house seems to be too large and changes the way the street looks. Mr. Browning questioned the vertical scale and floor to floor height since similar houses typically have high ceilings. It appears to have 9' ceilings. Ms. Holman stated the ceilings are shown as 10' and they are close to the maximum height restrictions. Mr. Browning said he wanted to see the vertical scale in comparison to other houses on the street. Mr. Allison commented that the scale seems overpowering, and the detailing looks costly and recommended they consider simplifying the design. He is concerned about the renovation cost compared to the cost of new construction because they seem to be similar amounts. Ms. Holman said her family is in the building products industry so items, such as the detailing, may cost them less.

Ms. Geiger asked if they were concerned it was so close to the street. Mr. Lutton said the proposed location maintains the average front yard setback. Ms. Holman said the rendering of the house reflects the intended design except the window grids would match the current house at 2/2. Ms. Kennedy asked the difference between the existing and proposed footprints. Mr. Allison answered that the footprint of the proposed new construction is larger by approximately 1,000 square feet but is similar to the footprint with the addition.

Mr. Kyle made a motion to continue the request to allow the applicants time for further evaluation. Mr. Browning seconded the motion. All members voted yes. Mr. Lutton and Ms. Kennedy abstained. The motion passed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Bere said the HPC members will receive an email with the nominations for the Historic Preservation Awards. Members need to view these properties on their own from the sidewalk or street and be ready to discuss the winner(s) at the next HPC meeting.

Mr. Allison informed the members that ARB will review the revised pavilion design on July 7, 2022. He said the HPC is invited to attend the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Browning moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Lutton. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tana Bere,
Community Development Specialist
Secretary of the June 15, 2022 HPC-ARB Meeting

Gene Allison,
Chair of the June 15, 2022 HPC-ARB Meeting