

**Historic District Commission  
Minutes Of September 6, 2023**

151 Martin Street, City Commission Room 205, Birmingham, MI

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held September 6, 2023. Chair Henke called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**1) Rollcall**

**Present:** Chair John Henke (left at 8:31 p.m.); Board Members Natalia Dukas, Dustin Kolo, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Members Mary Jaye, Steven Lemberg

**Absent:** Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Keith Deyer, Patricia Lang; Student Representative Ian Weinberg

**Staff:** Planning Director Dupuis; City Transcriptionist Eichenhorn

**2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of August 16, 2023**

**09-27-23**

**Motion by Mr. Willoughby**

**Seconded by Mr. Kolo to approve the HDC Minutes of August 16, 2023 as submitted.**

**Motion carried, 6-0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Kolo, Jaye, Lemberg, Dukas, Willoughby

Nays: None

**3) Courtesy Review**

**4) Historic Design Review**

**A. 380 S. Bates – Community House**

Mr. Willoughby noted that he has previously served on the Board of the Community House and that there exists no conflict of interest. No concerns were raised regarding Mr. Willoughby's disclosure.

PD Dupuis presented the item. Victor Saroki, architect, and Bill Seklar, President and CEO of the Community House, spoke on behalf of the project. All answered informational questions from the HDC.

HDC members' discussion was as follows:

- There was some concern regarding how the project would be received by the neighbors to the north on Townsend, and there was some additional concern regarding the massing of the project. It was requested that the removal of the upper floor or half a floor be considered;

- Some support for the massing was also stated, citing the design appearing to be a number of buildings instead of one larger building, Preservation Brief 14 from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and the value that a larger Community House would bring to the community;
- The new building and the old building were well-differentiated in the plans;
- The present landscaping outside the Community House blocks the view of the historic building, and it would be positive if the landscaping could be modified to place more emphasis on the historic building;
- Rehabilitating the historic building would be worthwhile. Adding historically appropriate windows, and restoring the entrance to the original location further south were two suggestions made;
- Modifying the addition on Bates Street to look less like the historic building would be appropriate; and,
- Simplifying some of the design elements to create more of a cohesive impression might be worthwhile.

The Chair summarized that the HDC was generally supportive of the plans, with a request that some aspects of the design be studied.

It was decided that the applicant team would bring the same plans to the preliminary site plan review at the Planning Board, with the caveat that some changes to the facade based on HDC's feedback would be pending.

**09-28-23**

**Motion by Ms. Dukas**

**Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to postpone the design review application and issuance of a certificate of appropriateness for 380 S. Bates – Community House with the date to be determined.**

**The Chair confirmed for Mr. Saroki that the Planning Board would understand why the item was tabled.**

**Public Comment**

**Penny Sage, resident of Townsend, raised a concern about Community House windows that might face into her bedroom and about a potential increase in traffic and parking congestion.**

**Motion carried, 6-0.**

**VOICE VOTE**

Yeas: Henke, Kolo, Jaye, Lemberg, Dukas, Willoughby

Nays: None

**5) Sign Review**

**6) Study Session**

**A. Historic Preservation Master Plan — Update**

PD Dupuis presented the item and answered questions from the HDC.

HDC members' discussion was as follows:

- The aim should be to identify historic resources, to evaluate them, and to plan for preservation of the resources with the support of the community;
- The process should be very well-publicized. Realtors should have access to a list of historic resources in the City;
- The plan should include the City's Historic Design Guidelines;
- Evanston, Illinois is a positive example of historic preservation;
- The Peoria, Arizona, City of Plano, Texas, and Township of Montclair, New Jersey historic preservation master plans were well received;
- Pleasant Ridge, Michigan's design guidelines could provide a model for Birmingham's historic preservation master plan in terms of its simplicity; and,
- As part of the process, the HDC should identify buildings that are not being maintained and examples of demolition-by-neglect.

## **7) Miscellaneous Business and Communication**

### **A. Pre-Application Discussion**

### **B. Draft Agenda**

### **C. Staff Reports**

- 1. Administrative Sign Approvals**
- 2. Administrative Approvals**
- 3. Demolitions**
- 4. Action List**

## **8) Adjournment**

No further business being evident, the HDC motioned to adjourn at 8:39 p.m.



Nick Dupuis, Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist