

**Historic District Commission
Minutes Of June 5, 2024**

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

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission ("HDC") held June 5, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1) Roll Call

Present: Chair John Henke, Vice Chair Dustin Kolo; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Keith Deyer, Natalia Dukas, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Member Mary Jaye

Absent: Board Member Patricia Lang; Alternate Board Member Steven Lemberg

Staff: Planning Director Dupuis; City Transcriptionist Eichenhorn

2) Approval of the HDC Minutes of May 1, 2024

06-11-24

Motion by Ms. Jaye

Seconded by Mr. Deyer to approve the HDC Minutes of May 1, 2024 as amended.

Motion carried, 7-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Henke, Debbrecht, Dukas, Kolo, Jaye, Deyer, Willoughby

Nays: None

3) Courtesy Review

4) Historic Design Review

A. 137 W. Maple – Field Building (Postponed from May 1, 2024)

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

Chris Longe, architect, and Ken Kojian, owner, spoke on behalf of the project.

HDC members made the following comments in the course of discussion:

- The massing, proportion, and scale may prevent the project from complying with Secretary of the Interior Standard for Rehabilitation (SOR) nine. The entirety of the downtown should not be five stories, the addition would be a fifth story in this case, and it would be inappropriate to add a fifth story to this building. Approaching from the south side, this building would look to be five stories.
- The two-story buildings on the south side of Maple are not obsolete, and an addition of this height is not necessitated for market viability. Additionally, market viability is not a factor for the HDC to consider under either SORs two or nine.
- Alternatively, the massing did not present an issue. The addition was well-distinguished from the historic building, and was stepped very far back. The proposed addition was a

worthwhile solution. There was no reason to be concerned about a fifth floor if one was not concerned about the fourth floor. It is possible to respect a historic property while allowing it to be built to the extent of the zoning ordinance. This could create a beneficial precedent.

- The proposed addition would appear odd in the middle of a block of shorter buildings.
- The AT&T building behind this building is also large. The HDC is charged with making sure any addition is subordinate to the historic building. The canopy does draw a lot of attention to the addition. The addition would not necessarily be too obtrusive because it is stepped back so far it looks like infill.
- Mr. Kojian's offer to remove the canopy could make the addition less overwhelming.
- It might be more appropriate to remove the fifth floor. The canopy could be retained or removed.
- Since this addition is stepped back, it would not establish a precedent allowing for additions aligned with the front facades along Maple. Preservation brief 14 speaks to the benefits of allowing increased density in already dense urban environments.
- This addition in the context of this block would not be aesthetically pleasing.
- The canopy might be more appropriate if its projection were halved.
- It might be appropriate to approve the addition without the canopy if Mr. Kojian restored the historic portion and brought it up to code. This could help preserve the historic portion's longevity.

06-12-24

Motion by Ms. Dukas

Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to approve the Design Review application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for 137 W. Maple – Field Building. The proposed work will meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation numbers one, two, five, nine, and 10 with the following conditions:

- 1. The canopy on the fifth floor will be significantly modified or eliminated; and,**
- 2. There is a commitment for a historically-appropriate rehabilitation of the historic portion of the building, adhering to standards for renovation, where any historic material should be preserved or repaired if at all possible.**

Motion carried, 5-2.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Debbrecht, Dukas, Kolo, Deyer, Willoughby

Nays: Henke, Jaye

5) Sign Review

6) Study Session

A. Historic Preservation Master Plan

PD Dupuis provided an update on the item and answered informational questions from the HDC.

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**

D. Communications

- 1. Proposed Expansion of State Tax Credits**

PD Dupuis summarized the item. The HDC expressed support for the proposal.

8) Adjournment

No further business being evident, the HDC motioned to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.



Nick Dupuis, Planning Director



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist