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Historic Preservation Commission

Worksession / Hearing Minutes of August 25, 2008

Commission Members Christopher Pooser, Chairman, Scott Chandler, Cathy Sewell, Barbara Dawson, Betsy McFadden, Stephen Smith, Mara Truslow

Members Present Sarah Schafer, Matt Halitsky, Teresa Sobotka, Nicki Heckenlively

DRH08-00256 / Teresa Harrington / 1503 N. 17th Street

Requests Historic Preservation approval to remove a tree and modify the roof in order to incorporate a second floor on the project located in an R-1CH (Single Family Residential with Historic Overlay) zone.

SARAH SCHAFFER: As you can see from the vicinity map the property is on a corner lot at the northwest corner of 17th and Lemp Street. We have included photographs of the property as it is today. They have started on the reconstruction as approved under the original application which was DRH07-00333. The applicant had approval to construct an addition on the west side of the structure, replace windows, siding and roofing. I've also included several photos of adjacent properties so you can see some of the construction, roof forms and massing of the structures in the area. You can see the street frontage along Lemp Street and where the proposed addition is sitting in relationship to the existing garages. An additional request under this application is to remove a tree from the property, which you can see in several photos in the middle of your packet. In reviewing the applicant's request Staff looked at Boise City code Title 2, Chapter 18. As part of that some of the Findings that we needed to make were that the project was consistent with the design guidelines for Boise City's Historic Districts. This project is not located in the commercial district therefore they do not have to comply with the commercial design guidelines. Additionally we looked at Section 2-18-11.01 b., which states that they need to comply with the design guidelines for the residential historic properties. Staff does not believe this application complies with those guidelines. The proposal to change the established massing of the building would make this structure much more elongated. This is very important because this structure is located on a corner lot. In looking at the massing of the structure...the applicant initially had the approval to do the structure and this was their approved elevation from 2007. You can see the clear line as to where the addition comes from the new addition to the existing residence with the establishment of a lower roofline that would go under the eave overhangs of the existing structure. There's a stepping in the wall as well as some additional windows and

changes in the material, but there would be changes in the footings of the structure. This is the proposed change to the structure. As you can see they are proposing to maintain the exact same roofline. They don't get that differentiation between the old and the new addition. In looking at this application Staff also reviewed the minutes from the July 23, 2008 hearing and if you go to...under public testimony, Mr. Baltes states his concerns on the continuous ridgeline. If it is differentiated on the north side because there is a greater setback...this is the side where it's going to read as a long huge tube. I have concerns about this as well. Commissioner Sewell picks up on it after the close of public testimony. Commissioner Sewell, about half way through her statement says, Mr. Baltes addressed that as well and as a corner lot although it may not be a primary façade, it is a dominant façade given that it's on that corner lot creating a 2 inch offset, but still continuing that roofline certainly does present that long face which is probably incongruous or perhaps not likened to the Bungalow style. It would propose that the applicant look at that a little bit more gracious offset and even having a differentiation incur as well in that roof plane. There was a condition of approval, condition d.; the applicant shall work with staff on providing additional differentiation on that south side both in the wall plane and in the roof plane. Commissioner Stevens further states, "I would ask if we're given enough direction for d. in particular in working with Staff on the additional differentiation. I'm not sure that I'm comfortable with any further lack of direction there. I'm okay with it being done at the Staff level, but wanted to make sure we give you enough direction." Commissioner McFadden went on to talk about this particular structure seems like it's so simply that it can almost be visualized unless Staff gets it and it looks entirely different than what we're thinking as far as stepping the roofline. Because that was a site specific condition of approval and it was a topic of much discussion at the last hearing we needed to bring this application back to the Commission to review the lack of modulation and the roofline. On Item 4.1.1 in our residential design guidelines it states, "*Design a new addition to preserve the established massing and orientation of the building and character of the block*". In letting the ridgeline of this project go the proposal will change the established massing of the building by making it appear much more elongated. On Page 112, "*Designing a new addition in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new*". The jog in the roofline previously aided in making clear what was historic and what was new. Removing this jog will make this line less clear. If you look at Finding 1. c. which in relation to Boise City Code Section 2-18-11.01 C, which addresses the Secretary of Interior Standards, Staff did have a typo there. It currently states, "*This application is consistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards, but it should state, 'This application is not consistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards.'*" The Secretary of Interior Standards state, "*Designing a new addition to historic buildings or adjacent construction, which is compatible with the historic character of the site which preserves the historic relationship between the building or buildings in a landscape.*" That jog in the roofline ensured that the addition is compatible with the historic character of the site. Removing it will make the house uncharacteristically long, which is not compatible with the historic character. Staff also did not feel that removing that jog would create a consistent appearance with the rest of the buildings in the District. That it would radically change, damage or destroy the roofline, which was important to the overall character of the property. By removing the large tree it would be removing a prominent

site feature, which was important to defining the overall character of the property. It was also mentioned as part of the previous application that the tree would also provide some visual mitigation of the addition and the property. It was going to be maintained as part of that previous hearing. Additionally in reviewing this application we have to look at the Boise City Comprehensive Plan and the plans that are found therein, which would also include the North End Plan. The North End Plan requires that the unique character of the neighborhood be maintained including architectural styles, sitting on the lot, the orientation of the units and the landscape characteristics. Staff felt that the removal of this tree and the removal of the jog in the roofline would go against this Finding. With that Staff will conclude their presentation and stand for any comments.

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: Was there any discussion with the applicant as to why they wanted to raise the roofline? My understanding is they want to raise the roofline to put in a different truss design to achieve a bonus room on the second floor. Was there any discussion with them about instead of raising the ridgeline to lowering the ceiling height in that additional area and lowering the floor level essentially putting it at a different level from the existing?

SARAH SCHAFER: I'm unsure if that conversation took place. Julie Archambeault wrote the staff report and worked with the applicant up until just last Thursday. I don't know if there was a conversation to that extent.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: On the picture, block face and the one immediately following it where you see the pressboard around the foundation...is that the new proposed addition?

SARAH SCHAFER: I believe so. I believe that's the start of the framing of the proposed addition.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Is that approved?

SARAH SCHAFER: It is approved to a certain extent. In 2007 they did receive approval for the addition. What we're looking at now is what would be the truss form. They've probably gone ahead and established the wall lines. We now are discussing the trusses that would go on and whether that ridgeline would continue or if they would have a ridgeline that is subservient to the existing ridgeline.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: Okay. Is there an arborist report?

SARAH SCHAFER: I have not seen one.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON: I'm noting in the drawings that were approved and the drawings that are submitted for this reconsideration there's a little hip there. A door coming off the addition that's not reflected in what I can see in the construction of that addition as it is now. That hip would be added later or once the roof pitch trusses are finally determined. Is that correct?

SARAH SCHAFER: That is correct. My guess is they'll go back and cut the openings. The windows and door. The roof trusses will reflect that other gabled end for over that entry on that street side.

SITE VISITS

Commissioners Dawson, Sewell, Chandler, Pooser, McFadden and Smith visited the site prior to the hearing. Commissioner Truslow did not visit the site.

TERESA HARRINGTON (Applicant): No objections to site visits.

CHAIRMAN POOSER: Would you like an opportunity to review the minutes from the previous hearing?

TERESA HARRINGTON: I would like to go ahead. The drop roofline, as she explained, was a point of issue per the neighbor. He was the one that initially brought it up. We complied. The plan was always that there would be a bonus room on the second level. Through the course of construction as commonly happens new information was had. I can only accommodate a 6 ft. ceiling with a 12 inch drop in the roofline. The 12 inch drop is what was approved last summer. This makes the space unusable for the homeowner and cannot legally be counted as square footage. This makes it a significant impact to my investment and the overall quality of the project. It represents about 10% of my total square footage between the existing and the addition. This is new information. We were complying with the historical districts recognition of the dropped roofline and differentiating the old from the new. We came back with a matched roofline because we still did have the recessed wall plane which in the guidelines one of the points specifically gives the example of recessed wall planes only as a way to differentiate the old from the new. I talked to my builder and he feels confident that he can still get a 7 ft. ceiling if I drop the roofline by 2 inches rather than by 12. That would accommodate the district and give me the 7 ft. I need to count as square footage, which was always planned. I'm confirming that we are at a stopping point. We can move forward from what is decided here.

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: Have you explored the option of lowering the floor?

TERESA HARRINGTON: Yeah. It will be below 8 ft.

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: It appeared to me in the drawings and also when I was there that the floor of the existing house is elevated above grade. It would appear to me that if you dropped the floor of the addition down to grade or slightly above that you would be able to essentially drop the entire addition down...I don't know how many inches, but certainly more than just 2 inches and therefore be able to get more of a differentiation in that ridgeline. Have you explored that?

TERESA HARRINGTON: Unfortunately another surprise that's come up when we took off the lap and plaster the beams supporting the second floor were only 2 x 6 and legally

by code they have to be 2 x 10. We had to drop it another 4 inches making my ceiling on the main level just at bare minimum of 8 ft. It would severely compromise the main level which is the bulk of my project if I were to go any lower.

CHAIRMAN CHANDLER: I'm still not sure if you've addressed my question and that is lowering the floor of the addition.

TERESA HARRINGTON: The floor is done.

CHAIRMAN CHANDLER: So you put in the floor, put in the walls before you realized you had a problem with the trusses?

TERESA HARRINGTON: I'm going with my contractor on that and that's the order in which things happened.

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: Have you had an arborist look at the tree?

TERESA HARRINGTON: No. I don't feel that it contributes....

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: It appears to me that you've got a reasonably old evergreen there and as many evergreens do as they get taller many of the shed a lot of their lower limbs over a period of time. It would appear to me that with some pruning the lower part of that evergreen that has some less attractive limbs to it could probably be pruned back and the upper limbs retained. If it's not diseased or something of that nature. You might want to consider getting a professional to take a look at that.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON: I'm looking at Page 24 of our packet which are the truss details. My unschooled mind sees between the ceiling line of that truss and the floor 7 ft. 2 inches.

TERESA HARRINGTON: That would be if I got the matched roofline.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON: So these are the matched roof design not for the other one?

TERESA HARRINGTON: That's right. By going down 2 inches I would sacrifice about 25 sq. ft. because they would have to move more of those 5 ft. walls in. In this proposal I think it's 9 ft. 2 inches. That would come down to 8 ft. something. In terms of the square footage I would get in that bonus room if I drop it by 2 inches versus having a matched roofline.

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY

NO STAFF REBUTTAL

PUBLIC PORTION CLOSED

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: The first thing I'll state that is easiest to move through is I don't believe it's appropriate to move the tree that's there given the information that we've been presented at this point. With regard to the request to raise the ridgeline or to keep it 2 inches below the existing...while I understand the applicant's request for a bonus room on the second floor that is not the basis on which we considered the original approval on this. I agree with Staff that it does present a significant change to what is not the primary façade, but is certainly a very significant façade along the side street given this is a corner lot. If the applicant was to come up with another way to achieve their desired space up there...but at this point if and what is presented to use I don't feel as those I could be in favor of this proposal as presented as far as the continuous ridgeline.

COMMISSIONER McFADDEN: I concur with Commissioner Chandler. I know the floor has been built and it would be a huge hardship to lower that floor at this point, but that does seem like it would have been a good solution in order to keep that roof dropped. Based on going back to the minutes the discussion on the last application was that to have that differentiation between the old and new by that drop particularly since it is on a corner lot and it is basically a character defining façade even though it's a secondary façade. I'd also like to weigh in on the tree. Without an arborist report with information saying it needs to come down I'd like to see it saved as well. What they're doing to that house is looking and good efforts are being put in on it.

TERESA SOBOTKA (Legal): Please put the minutes from the last hearing in as evidence.

COMMISSIONER POOSER: Minutes of July 23, 2007 will be marked as Exhibit 1. That also includes some additional discussion on August 13, 2007. I have a question for Legal. This is a brand new application and we're not confined to Findings from the last application?

TERESA SOBOTKA (Legal): No you're not.

CHAIRMAN POOSER: I'm not concerned about the differentiation. There's already a jog where the addition is coming. That's sufficient differentiation to reflect the old and the new. The massing is a legitimate concern. Keeping the proportions of it...I don't have the same concern as my fellow Commissioners. Keeping the roofline the same would be congruous with the existing home as well as the District. I agree on the tree. We need more information to justify its removal and we don't have that in front of us.

COMMISSIONER SEWELL MOVED TO DENY DRH08-00256 BASED ON STAFF'S CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS.

CHANDLER SECONDED THE MOTION.

COMMISSIONER SEWELL: My motion for denial was based on the minutes from the previous hearing and the discussion here tonight in regard to the project.

COMMISSIONER CHANDLER: While it's unfortunate that the applicant didn't determine the difficulty they were getting into with regard to utilizing the second floor as livable space it is reasonable that something of this nature should become apparent not only possibly through the design process but also earlier in the construction process if it's deemed to be of vital consideration to the applicant's economic viability of this project. It seems very late in the project for this problem to arise and for us to decide to change what we considered to be a reasonable proposal over a year ago.

COMMISSIONER SMITH: While I agree with my fellow Commissioners that it's too bad this problem wasn't found earlier, I do think it behooves us to recognize that this problem does exist and one of the charges that we have is to ensure that livable space does exist in homes such as this. Pursuant to our earlier discussion tonight it seems to me that we should try to find a resolution to this problem that creates livable space. That being said I can't vote to approve this application without more information on the tree. I don't see the logic in cutting that down. I would be inclined if the applicant did come back to us with an arborist report or some better plan or a landscaping plan to allow her to go forward with the roofline and create livable space up there. I will vote to deny the plan, but only for the reasons that the tree is not addressed.

ROLL CALL VOTE 6:1. MOTION CARRIES WITH CHAIRMAN POOSER AGAINST.