

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEETING MINUTES

DATE OF MEETING:

June 6, 2024

APPEARANCE COMMISSION

6:00 pm

Village Hall Board Room
2020 Chestnut Street
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Hrymak called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Members Banks, Scheffke, Preston, Quirke, Kidd, Kluck, and Chair Hrymak were present.

In attendance from Village staff was Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development Noah Schumerth serving as Staff Liaison and Jay Heiferman serving as Board Liaison. There were seven members of the public in the audience. No members of the public were in attendance at the Zoom virtual meeting.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Hrymak noted that on page 3, a question about “adopt a plant” programs in Homewood was incorrectly attributed to Chair Hrymak; the comment by Member Quirke.

Motion for approval by Member Quirke; seconded by Member Preston.

AYES: 6 (Members Banks, Preston, Quirke, Kidd, Kluck, Chair Hrymak)

NAYS: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 1 (Member Scheffke)

ABSENT: 0

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

REGULAR BUSINESS:

Chair Hrymak introduced the Regular Business agenda items.

CASE 24-16 – Gottschalk House Porch, Stairway and Balcony Rehabilitation

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced the case and noted that the case was primarily focused on work proposed on the porch structure and balcony on the front of the home. Schumerth presented a history of the construction of the home and its Queen Anne style. Schumerth introduced the home’s status as a local landmark designated in 1982 by the Village Board.

Schumerth presented existing deterioration on the wooden structures of the home. Schumerth described construction diagrams provided by the applicant for the project to further identify the scope of the project. Schumerth presented the staff recommendation to conditionally approve the project.

The applicant, Ioannis Davis, was sworn in. Davis introduced his background as an architect with a specialty in historical reconstruction and renovation. Davis noted that the primary issue being resolved by the project is a lack of a strong support underneath the stairs and porch structures on the front of the home. Davis explained proposed foundation work to add support to the foundation on the home. Davis noted that the current railing and banister height on the home at 36" was not original to the home, and that the proposal to reduce the banisters on the railing to 24" will match the original design of the home.

Davis stated the steel rail is a modern element that is needed to meet current building codes.

Member Scheffke asked what the current height of the balcony railing is on the home. Davis stated that the railing is 36" in height.

Member Kluck expressed a desire to keep the original historic look of the home, even if the code required the railing is more prominent.

Member Kidd agreed that the original historic look of the home needed to be preserved. Kidd asked for clarification on whether the stair treads will be adjusted and cause challenges for users of the home. Davis mentioned that tread height will not be altered substantially, with treads not exceeding 7".

Member Quirke noted that the balcony is angled away from the front door of the home to the stairs and asked if this would be repaired with the proposed project. Davis said yes, and that the foundation will be repaired to correct the issue.

Member Quirke asked whether project elements were not included due to cost. Davis mentioned that full replacement of the entire porch structure was not viable, but the repair was a viable cost.

Member Preston stated that she appreciated the efforts taken by the architect.

Member Scheffke stated that he wished to see the side banister structures on the stairs brought up to 42".

Davis stated that if the banisters were raised to 42", the metal railing could be removed by code. Davis stated that the metal railing is a code-compliant guardrail and would need to reach 42" in height. Schumerth noted that if the banisters were dropped to 24" as on the original home, the 42" steel rail would be required to meet code standards. Schumerth clarified that 42" extends higher than the railing on the balcony and would meet columns on the porch at a point higher than the existing railing on the balcony which is not being replaced.

Davis mentioned that only portions of the building being touched by construction work would need to be brought to code. Davis disagreed with extending the banister structure to 42" because it would not align with the banister on the porch.

Scheffke asked if the balcony railing needed to be raised to 42". Davis stated that this did not need to be modified unless that railing was rebuilt, which would expand the scope of the project.

The building owner, Grace Yan Cui, stated that 36" would match the existing balcony railing and would look attractive.

Schumerth asked that if the metal guardrail would be required at 42" if the side banisters were raised to 36".

Member Banks asked about the difference between a handrail and a guardrail. Davis explained the difference. Davis explained that handrails are required to be 30-36" and the guardrails are required to be 42".

Banks noted that there is a discrepancy between colors on the elevations and asked if the colors were supposed to be the same. Davis confirmed the colors should match and there was an error in the drawing.

Chair Hrymak appreciated the level of care put into analyzing the history of the home. Hrymak asked if the rail could be painted to better match the architecture of the home. Davis said the guardrail could be painted any color.

Hrymak asked if paint touchup would occur across the entire house. The property owner, Grace Yan Cui, stated that the paint and touchup work was included in the permit. Hrymak asked staff when permitting would be approved. Schumerth noted that the permit would be approved soon after the Appearance Commission approval of structural improvements.

Chair Hrymak stated that permit review should include providing clear code measurements to follow. Schumerth noted that the ADA code requires a handrail at 34-38", which was a part of the staff recommendation. Schumerth said clarity is needed on what guardrail requirements apply to a stair structure.

Schumerth clarified the options considered by the applicant, including the original proposal or raising the proposed banister to 36" with a handrail mounted inside of the banister structure. Davis noted a steel guardrail would still be required with a 36" banister rather than the originally proposed 24" banister.

Hrymak requested each Commissioner provide input again to create consensus on a decision.

Member Kluck noted that the existing structure adds consistency to the design because it will tie into the existing balcony railing.

Member Kidd stated she was uncomfortable with extending the railing to 42" in height. Kidd stated her primary goal was to choose whichever design was considered safe for users.

Member Scheffke stated that if the railing is raised, the square newel post at the end of the railing could look disproportionate.

Member Quirke asked if the newel post being larger would help the guardrail and other ADA features become less obvious. Quirke asked how tall the posts are now. Davis stated they are slightly taller than 36". Davis noted that the current proposal would have smaller newel posts, while raising the banisters to 42" would require very large newel posts.

Member Quirke expressed a desire to see original features on the house with safety maximized with a 42" guardrail as the applicant originally proposed.

Member Preston stated her preference for the original historical look of the house. Preston asked Davis what the original goal was for the design when originally discussing plans with the building owner. Davis stated his goal was to design the porch areas to reflect the original look of the home in the 1890s. Preston stood with her desire to see the banister remain at 24" as proposed by the applicant.

Member Scheffke asked what the height of the balcony railing on the second floor was. The property owner, Grace Yan Cui, stated that the railings are 36". Scheffke expressed a desire to see the railing extended to 36" to match the staff recommendation with a 42" guardrail more fully screened by the taller banister structures. Davis clarified that the guardrail is required at a 36" banister, and Scheffke retained support for the design.

Member Banks expressed support for a 24" banister as proposed by the applicant because the metal guardrail will need to remain and the Village can still ensure historical intent.

Chair Hrymak stated his desire to approve the original applicant's design with a 24" banister to ensure historical accuracy of the design. Hrymak noted a majority now supported the applicant's design.

Property owner Grace Yan Cui stated that she wished for the stair banisters and the balcony railing to match, and she did not want the lower banister structure installed. Schumerth noted that the owner's request was not in alignment with their applicant's plans.

Member Banks asked if the banister could stay at 36" and still meet the code, and stated she thought the banister had to be lowered or raised to properly address code.

Schumerth identified the three options available for consideration based on discussion: a 24" banister with a steel guardrail, a 36" banister with an attached handrail and a 42" steel guardrail, and a 42" banister with no steel guardrail installed.

Discussion occurred between applicant and owner. Banks asked for clarification that the owner wished for the Commission to consider a 36" banister. Yan Cui stated she wished to have the stair design include the 36" banister proposed by staff.

Chair Hrymak noted that a vote was needed. Hrymak asked for public comment prior to a vote.

Elaine Egdorf expressed appreciation for the discussion and the level of care put into the project by the applicant, property owner and the Commission. Egdorf expressed that the stair structure flowed better as currently constructed, even if it does not align with the original home design. Egdorf asked what code requirements would apply for the building.

Schumerth provided OSHA regulation information to the Commission, stating that it appeared from a preliminary assessment that OSHA regulations would apply to this structure as a multi-family building but he was previously unaware that this code was applied here.

Member Kidd stated that she was now in support of a 36" banister at the height currently found in the home.

Schumerth stated that the applicant was willing to comply with any requirement put forward by the Village. Schumerth asked if the Chief Building Inspector, Dennis Johnson, could be sworn in for comment on the matter. Johnson was contacted on the phone and sworn in for comment. Schumerth asked if the adopted code requirement for guardrails, based on codes adopted in Homewood, was 42" in height. Johnson agreed and stated the guardrail requirement was 42".

Member Quirke asked if only the steel guardrail was required to meet the 42" requirement. Chair Hrymak said yes.

Chair Hrymak stated that there was a majority to vote for the applicant's plan as proposed. Hrymak asked for clarification on the language for the recommendation. Schumerth said that the recommendation would need to be read without the condition if the Commission wished to approve the original plans proposed by the applicant with a 24" banister, including "as proposed."

Chair Hrymak requested Schumerth come forward for clarification on condition language. Schumerth stated that the guardrail needed to be 42" and could not be modified. Schumerth discussed the current motion under consideration with the applicant and property owner. The property owner again expressed a desire to see the banister raised to 36" as the Village staff recommended.

Hrymak asked if the item should be tabled because of concerns that the applicant and property owner were no longer in agreement. The property owner reiterated the support of the 36" banister in alignment with the balcony railing.

Member Preston noted that if the changes were proposed by the property owner, new drawings would need to be submitted prior to approval by the Village.

Schumerth recommended a recess as an alternative to tabling the item to allow the applicant, property owner, staff and the Commission Chair to clarify the discussion.

A ten minute recess was taken by Chair Hrymak at 7:15pm.

The meeting was called to order at 7:27pm.

Chair Hrymak asked for clarification from the applicant that the new proposal was a 36" banister with a 42" guardrail as required by code. Hrymak noted this was now the proposal by the applicant and a modified version of the recommendation from staff.

Member Quirke asked about the letter from the Chief Building Inspector stating that the Village was requesting a full structural report on the porch structure and whether these issues needed to be addressed before approval by the Commission. Schumerth noted that the Commission could approve the improvements proposed without the full structural report. Schumerth said that the report would be

pursued separately, and should more substantial structural work need to occur, there would be no need for the porch structure to be returned to the Commission unless changes were made to the design of the porch during reconstruction.

Member Kluck expressed concerns that the proposed 36" banister would cause issues with alignment between the handrail proposed on the stairs and the existing balcony railing. Davis said work would be done to ensure proper alignment of the balusters/spindles of the stairs with the newel and the columns on the porch.

Hrymak stated that he respected the judgment by Homewood Historical Society member Elaine Egdorf speaking as a member of the public, who supported the 36" banister.

Schumerth asked the applicant whether the newel post and the steel guardrail would be connected in the new proposed design. Davis said the guardrail structure would be separate and that the guardrails would be adjacent to the banister structure.

Chair Hrymak requested a motion for the approval of the case with staff-recommended conditions.

Motion made by Member Kluck; second by Member Preston.

AYES: 7 (Members Banks, Scheffke, Preston, Quirke, Kidd, Kluck, and Chair Hrymak)

NAYS: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

ABSENT: 0

OLD BUSINESS:

Schumerth shared that a memo was attached to the agenda packet summarizing old and new project information for the Appearance Commission.

Schumerth noted that the Starbucks renovation on Harwood Avenue was largely complete. Schumerth also noted that Homewood Brewing Company may be set to open in the summer and was completing the last work on the exterior of the building.

Chair Hrymak asked if the mural was still planned to be included on the west side of the new Metra train structure. Schumerth noted that the letters were embedded into the concrete on the structure, and that the wall around the lettering would eventually receive a mosaic art treatment as originally proposed.

Member Preston noted that there is water buildup on the steps of the new station near the Metra platform which is causing a severe safety hazard.

Chair Hrymak stated that he had concerns about the final design of the Wind Creek Casino parking garage as it continues to be constructed, and asked if the exterior cladding will still be installed as approved. Schumerth noted that he had brought it to the attention of Chief Building Inspector Dennis Johnson and Director of Economic and Community Development Angela Mesaros to prepare code enforcement staff to watch for deviations from approved plans.

Chair Hrymak expressed a desire to see the new Appearance Plan include language on enforcement of maintenance and changes to buildings, including a clear process in Village code for how buildings that are not compliant with approved drawings are brought back to the Appearance Commission for review.

Member Quirke praised building signage installed by Homewood Brewing Company. Quirke expressed a desire to use the brewery as an example of best practices for completing the Appearance Review process.

Schumerth noted that Building Department staff now completes a preliminary review for new permit applications to ensure that the project will not require Appearance Commission review.

Village Trustee Heiferman expressed a desire to see maintenance requirements followed more closely. Schumerth noted that the Village will include maintenance language in the new sign code and Appearance Code document.

Member Kluck expressed concerns about poor paint application at the Target on Halsted Street.

Member Quirke praised the quality of work following the addition of Economic and Community Development staff. Schumerth noted that the addition of Dennis Johnson as Chief Building Inspector has played a crucial role in enforcing property maintenance.

NEW BUSINESS:

Schumerth shared Planning and Zoning Commission cases which may create new Appearance Review cases in summer 2024.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made for adjourning the meeting by Member Preston; second by Member Kidd.

AYES: 7 (Members Banks, Scheffke, Preston, Quirke, Kidd, Kluck, and Chair Hrymak)

NAYS: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

ABSENT: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Noah Schumerth