



City of McMinnville
Planning Department
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MINUTES

May 27, 2021
Historic Landmarks Committee
Regular Meeting

3:00 pm
Zoom Meeting
McMinnville, Oregon

Members Present: Mary Beth Branch, Mark Cooley, Joan Drabkin, Christopher Knapp, John Mead, and Hadleigh Heller – Youth Liaison

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Heather Richards – Planning Director, and Chuck Darnell – Senior Planner

Others Present: Barb Hofenbredl, Mario Espinosa, and Jim Franklin

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Cooley called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Election of Chair

Senior Planner Darnell explained the process for election of the chair.

Vice Chair Cooley nominated Committee Member Branch for Chair. She declined at this time.

Committee Member Branch nominated John Mead for Chair. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Drabkin and passed 4-1 with Committee Member Mead voting for Committee Member Branch.

4. Approval of Minutes

A. August 27, 2020

Vice Chair Cooley moved to approve the August 27, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Branch and passed 5-0.

3. Action Items

A. HL 6-20: Certificate of Approval for Demolition - 826 SW Gilson Street

Chair Mead asked if any Committee Member wished to make a disclosure or abstain from participating or voting on this application. There was none. He asked if any Committee Member needed to declare any contact prior to the hearing with the applicant or any party involved in the hearing or any other source of information outside of staff regarding the subject of this application. There was none.

Senior Planner Darnell presented the staff report. This was a request for a certificate of approval for demolition of a contributory resource at 826 SW Gilson Street. He explained the site location, property information, applicant's findings, and review criteria. The applicant provided a list and photo evidence of the poor physical condition of the structure. The applicant argued that the structure had little historical value and significance based on previous evaluations. The applicant also stated that the economic use of the historic resource was low and that preservation would cause financial hardship. They planned to replace the house with a newly constructed dwelling unit. Staff agreed there was deterioration over time, although notes at the time of the survey listed the condition as "fair" and it was evaluated as a contributory structure. There was a lack of data and evidence to support the lack of economic use. The most potentially compelling argument was the value and significance of the historic resource, since this was a contributory resource. The improvement to the property would be a one-for-one replacement of a new dwelling unit, which might not be a "substantial benefit" to the City. If the demolition were to move forward, staff suggested looking at alternative means of preservation, such as moving the structure, and delaying the demolition permit until the time of submittal of building permits for new construction. If the HLC agreed with the applicant-provided findings, staff recommended approval with conditions. If the HLC did not find that the applicant provided adequate findings, staff recommended a continuance to allow the applicant time to provide additional information or to allow staff to update the decision document. He then reviewed the proposed conditions.

Committee Member Drabkin suggested adding a condition that a manufactured home would not be appropriate in this neighborhood. Senior Planner Darnell would have to research whether that was allowed.

There was discussion regarding the R-2 zoning and certainty that the applicant would follow through with building a new structure, and bringing these types of structures up to Code.

Barb Hofenbredl, representing the applicant, said there were a couple of manufactured homes in this neighborhood and a new house in the back of this house. There was nothing original left on the house as it had been added onto a few times. She did not think it could be moved without falling apart. It was not livable at this point. The owners wanted to sell the property, and they had to get the demolition permit to allow potential buyers to tear the home down and build a new one.

Committee Member Branch said the applicant had owned the property for many years. She asked what the property had been used for in that time. Ms. Hofenbredl said their daughter had lived there until last summer. They had tried to do cosmetic fixes, but with no foundation it was crumbling and unsafe.

Committee Member Knapp would have liked to see estimates for repair. Ms. Hofenbredl said contractors had not wanted to write up estimates because it was not worth repairing. They planned to sell the property and it was up to the new owner as to what would be built.

Committee Member Cooley asked if any contractors had expressed interest in rehabilitating the home and provided cost estimates. Ms. Hofenbredl said there were many investors interested in the property and all of them thought the house should be torn down. She did not think the house was safe for the public.

Maura Towda, McMinnville resident, lived across the street. Her home was not a manufactured home and she would prefer that a manufactured home not be allowed.

Committee Member Drabkin agreed the home was in very poor condition and should be torn down. She thought it should be replaced by a stick built house.

Committee Member Cooley suggested continuing the application to get more concrete rehab costs. He thought rehab could be done with the right contractor.

Committee Member Branch agreed the home was in bad condition, but was frustrated that the long-term owners had done nothing to maintain it. She thought if it was approved, the demolition should be part of an overall building permit application instead of allowing an empty lot.

Committee Member Knapp agreed the house should have been maintained. It was listed on the inventory, and he was having a hard time seeing the house go.

Chair Mead said there was still integrity in the structure and with the right contractor, it could be rehabilitated. He thought there was merit in continuing the application for the applicant to get more bids and for staff to research preventing a manufactured home on the property.

There was discussion regarding the demolition as part of the building permit, possible continuance of the application, and how with the current market, the data on rehab costs would be difficult to obtain.

Committee Member Branch said the approval should be based on the condition of the structure, not the financial burden of the owners.

Based on the findings of fact, conclusionary findings for approval, and materials submitted by the applicant, Committee Member Branch moved to approve HL 6-20, striking Condition #1 and amending Condition #2 to say that the demolition permit would not be issued solely for the demolition of the historic resource. Any future applicant would submit a building permit that included the demolition of the historic resource and the proposed new construction. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Knapp and passed 3-2 with Committee Members Cooley and Knapp opposed.

B. HL 2-21: Certificate of Approval for Demolition - 415 & 423 SE College Avenue

Chair Mead asked if any Committee Member wished to make a disclosure or abstain from participating or voting on this application. Committee Member Cooley was an alumnus of a college fraternity chapter that had a housing corporation associated with this property. He had not had any prior contact with the applicant or fraternity on this application. However, he would abstain from voting to alleviate any concerns.

Chair Mead asked if any Committee Member needed to declare any contact prior to the hearing with the applicant or any party involved in the hearing or any other source of information outside of

staff regarding the subject of this application. Committee Member Branch said she was a member of a different fraternity, but planned to participate.

Senior Planner Darnell presented the staff report. This was a request for a certificate of approval for demolition of environmental resources at 415 and 423 SE College Avenue. He discussed the code criteria and applicant's findings. The applicant argued that the structures had little historic value and significance and the architectural feature and building materials described in the inventory sheets for the structures had been removed. The applicant provided a list and photo evidence of the poor condition and argued that the economic use of the structures was low. The costs for renovation were not reasonable and preservation would cause financial hardship. The applicant planned to put in two new dwelling units in place of the existing historic resources that would be similar in style and fit with the neighborhood. Staff thought the potentially most compelling argument was the lost value and significance of the historic resources. Staff suggested a one-for-one replacement of the two dwelling units with the proposed construction to be similar to the existing size and scale of the current homes and compatible with the surrounding area. There was not a significant amount of detail provided about the condition of the structures and a lack of data and evidence to support the lack of economic use and financial hardship. Staff suggested considering alternative means of preservation by allowing the opportunity for relocating the structures. The applicant had submitted building permits for the two new buildings and would like to construct them over the upcoming summer period prior to the next school year. If the HLC agreed with the applicant-provided findings, staff recommended approval with conditions. If the HLC did not find that the applicant had provided adequate findings, staff recommended a continuance to allow the applicant to provide additional information or to allow staff to update the decision document.

There was discussion regarding the timing of getting the building permit and demolition permit at the same time, permits for past work, and moving the structures.

Mario Espinosa, representing the applicant, said they had looked into repurposing the structures. However, they were not in good shape structurally. The buildings were not able to be used as intended, as residences. They had lost all of the historic value and were not worth saving. They planned to maintain the same scale in the new buildings, which would be two story bungalow style homes. They did not know these were historic homes at the beginning and would have gone through this process first if they had known. He thought replacing the homes would be an upgrade to the neighborhood.

Committee Member Drabkin asked if the homes would be used by the fraternity. Mr. Espinosa said they were single family homes, used for students.

Chair Mead asked why the homes could not be moved. Mr. Espinosa explained how it would not be financially feasible or safe to move them.

Committee Member Branch asked about the ownership of the property.

Jim Franklin, representing the association, stated the association had owned them since the 1970s.

Committee Member Knapp said the plans were well done and the new structures would look better. He was in support.

Committee Member Drabkin agreed the architectural significance had been removed. She was also in support.

Committee Member Branch was disappointed that the owner had owned the homes before they were on the historic inventory and all of the architectural significance had been removed during their ownership. However, she was in support of this application.

Committee Member Drabkin agreed that it looked like intentional neglect.

Chair Mead said the homes were not significant historical structures. He thought they could probably be moved, but he did not want to delay for further research.

Based on the findings of fact, conclusionary findings for approval, and materials submitted by the applicant, Committee Member Drabkin moved to approve HL 2-21 with the proposed condition and additional condition that the fraternity submit photographs or documentation that would enhance the record of these two structures. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Branch and passed 4-0-1 with Committee Member Cooley abstaining.

4. Discussion Items

A. Presentation from Northwest Vernacular Historic Preservation on Demolition Code Review

Katie Pratt, consultant with Northwest Vernacular, gave a presentation on McMinnville's demolition ordinance. She discussed the review tasks for the consultant, ordinance and process review that was done, comparisons to other cities, key takeaways from city comparisons, considerations for how to apply the demolition process to all historic resources and if application requirements should be tiered by resource classification, enhancements to the demolition review criteria, and potential code amendments.

The Committee gave feedback on the recommendations. There was discussion regarding improving the application process, moving away from hardship criteria, demolition permit fees, using the permit fees towards other preservation work, creating a packet for applicants to have all the information at the beginning of the process, creating a pre-application process, notifying people when they bought a historic home, why McMinnville had more demolition requests than other cities, ways to help reduce the time staff worked on getting applications to completeness, adding integrity into the criteria, demolition by neglect, incentives, and requiring a plan for what would be done with the property after demolition.

Senior Planner Darnell said Ms. Pratt would incorporate these comments and bring back a final document with recommendations.

5. Committee Comments

None

6. Staff Comments

Senior Planner Darnell said the City had been awarded the CLG grant for the marketing program work.

7. Adjournment

Chair Mead adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.