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Planning Department
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MINUTES

April 25, 2018
Historic Landmarks Committee
Regular Meeting

3:00 pm
Community Development Center
McMinnville, Oregon

Members Present: Chair Joan Drabkin, Mary Beth Branch, Mark Cooley, and John Mead

Members Absent: None

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

Others Present: Heather Sharfeddin, Steve Cox, Brigitte Hoss, Clark Hoss, David Fouste, Laura Fouste, Ellie Gunn, Michael Hafner, and Keith Richmond

1. Call to Order

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

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of Minutes

None

4. Action Items

A. HL 1-18 – Demolition Request 631 NE 1st Street

Associate Planner Darnell said this was a demolition request of an environmental historic resource on NE 1st Street. This was the lowest historic designation and the property was designated in the 1980s. The main factors were the structure's age and its location. The structure was likely built in 1920 with additions in 1928. He discussed the review criteria for the demolition request. The first criterion was to be consistent with the City's historic policies, which was to preserve structures and this request did not meet that criterion. However, not all of the criteria needed to be met and the HLC had to decide whether the criteria that was met outweighed the criteria that was not. The second criterion was to consider the economic use of the resource and reasonableness of the proposed action versus the preservation or renovation

of the resource. The historic resource was previously used as a duplex and had been vacant and deteriorated over the years. The applicant stated the cost of the renovation was not economically feasible and the interior of the structure was significantly damaged. No estimates of the renovations were provided, but the current owner described deals that had fallen through as people attempted to pencil out the renovations.

Associate Planner Darnell stated that the third criterion was an evaluation of the value and significance of the historic resource. The main argument the applicant provided was that the significance of the resource had been lost due to the deterioration of the structure and the replacement of the windows and doors with non-compatible materials. When the structure was designated it was in poor condition and was a lower level resource. The fourth criterion was the physical condition of the resource. The applicant had provided evidence that the existing house was in poor condition and had listed the items that had changed on the property. The fifth criterion was whether the resource created a hazard to the safety of the public or its occupants. The applicant had provided statements that in its vacant state there had been break-ins, loitering, and illegal activity to show the structure was a hazard. Staff did not think this was a strong argument as investment in the property would solve these problems. The sixth criterion was whether it was a deterrent to an improvement program, and that was not applicable in this case. The seventh criterion was whether retention of the historic resource would cause financial hardship to the owner not outweighed by the public interest and preservation of the resource. The applicant had provided findings and arguments for the cost of what it would take to improve the property. There were comments received by staff from the neighborhood who did not think public interest would be met with the preservation of this historic resource. The last criterion was whether retention of the historic resource would be in the best interest of the majority of the citizens in the City or whether it could be preserved by an alternative means.

Staff recommended that the HLC discuss and determine whether the review criteria that were met outweighed the review criteria that were not met. Staff thought the strongest argument was the significance of the structure and that there were some of the original features existing and could be renovated, but that it might be a question of economic feasibility and economic hardship. Another consideration was if the application was approved, if there should be a delay in the issuance of a demolition permit for the property owner to post an advertisement for someone to move the structure. This had been a precedent in the past. There was a timeframe of 180 days in past code, and staff suggested 90 days. The applicant planned to develop a mixed use commercial/residential structure on the property.

Brigitt and Clark Hoss, applicants, concurred with what staff had stated. They would potentially sign the purchase of the property tomorrow, but that would not happen if this application was not approved. They were concerned about the time it might take if this was appealed. They had gone through their due diligence, but they did not want to wait or go through more hurdles. To move forward with their plans, the structure would need to be demolished. They wanted to be positive members of the community.

Planning Director Richards asked if there had been an inventory of the number of windows and doors that had been replaced. Mr. Hoss said they had never been apprised of that information. Mrs. Hoss said the house had been open to the elements and the interior was rotted. She did not think it could be moved.

There was discussion regarding the appeal process.

David Foust said he and his wife owned a home adjacent to this property for seven years. This property had been an eyesore, attractive nuisance for drug use and trespassers, and a blight on the neighborhood and community. It had mostly been vacant, but deteriorated more rapidly when it was briefly a rental. They had to call the police 12 times for criminal activities inside the structure. This home was a fire and safety hazard to the neighborhood. He did not think the home was ever a significant historical resource. The structure did not have significant architectural details and had poorly built additions with severe rot damage. It did not make economical sense to save the home. Demolition was the last best hope and if the HLC did not approve the application the community would have to live with this nuisance for many years to come. After demolition, improvements to the property would provide incentives to preserve and maintain other neighborhood historical structures that were significant. He hoped the HLC would approve the application without conditions.

Laura Foust stated one of her worst fears was that the applicants would pull out and not fix this problem. It was a nuisance property. Her house was very close to this house and she was concerned about fire.

Committee Member Cooley asked them to restate their testimony in relation to the criteria.

Mr. Foust said it was a health and safety hazard. He was skeptical that anyone would want to restore the structure due to the cost.

Committee Member Cooley clarified some of the ongoing uses had contributed significantly to the deterioration of the resource so that it was not economically viable to restore it.

Ellie Gunn concurred this house had a reputation among criminals and the homeless. If it was not demolished these activities would continue. She did not think it could be moved as it would fall apart. She thought the applicants were committed to making something good happen there.

Keith Richmond was a carpenter and had looked at this property several years ago. He had ruled it out because the house was too far gone. He would have had to start from scratch, as was being proposed.

Committee Member Branch asked if there was a copy of the inspection report or if the applicants could share details of the inspection.

Mrs. Hoss said there had been a geotech and asbestos evaluation done and she could forward the reports. Mr. Hoss said doors had been ripped off, cupboards had been torn apart, appliances had been destroyed, and holes were in the walls. There was mold and rotting of wood and the chimney was crumbling. There was moisture from the windows being open.

Mr. Foust said even if it was remodeled, there were still setback issues as this house was right on the property line and about 16 inches to his house. There was no way to upgrade that safety issue.

Planning Director Richards said the Committee had to think about the precedence they would set by this decision.

Mrs. Hoss stated there was dry rot, and they would have to take the house down to the studs, which might also have rot.

Steve Cox lived across the street. He had represented a prior party who tried to acquire the property in 2016. They had to abort the process because it was not economically feasible. Their plan was to maintain the structure and renovate it and it could not be done. He had a friend who purchased multiple older homes and renovated them and she looked at this house and did not think it was worth it. This was not an attractive structure, especially with the amateur additions. He thought the building was too far gone and irretrievable. Holding out for someone to renovate it would never happen.

Committee Member Branch asked how long had it been since there was a regular occupant in the home. Mr. Hoss said the owner rented it about five years ago for six months.

Committee Member Branch asked if the applicants would be willing to have a period of time for portions of the house to be salvaged. Mrs. Hoss said they would be open to that, but were concerned about further entanglements or liabilities.

Committee Member Mead agreed with staff's assessment that the criteria to allow the demolition would be the economic feasibility and the value and significance of the property. It was the lowest class on the significance list and was not a desirable property as demonstrated by the multiple people who looked at it and found challenges with renovating it. Just because the additions were done in 1928, did not make them architecturally significant to the value of the structure. He did not think it had value to the community and was a public safety hazard.

Committee Member Branch concurred with those points as well as the physical condition of the resource that had been discussed by the neighbors. There was evidence that the house had not been maintained and past potential buyers who wanted to renovate it found it cost prohibitive. It was also a public safety hazard and she was concerned about its proximity to other historic buildings.

Committee Member Cooley thought the application met four of the criteria. There were some issues with the original designation of this property, especially with the porch addition which was not period appropriate. The siding had been replaced with T-111 which detracted from the significance of the resource. The process for designation that was used at the time might have contributed to the confusion. There had been testimony that the current use and occupancy had produced considerable loss to the physical condition and the historic features. There was testimony from people who had been inside the structure and indicated most of the interior surfaces were gone. Regarding the financial hardship, there was testimony supporting the conclusion that it was not financially feasible for any perspective owner to retain the historic resource. It was not in the best interest of citizens due to the effects to the neighborhood and neighboring homes that were part of the historic inventory. The current condition of the structure was a threat to those homes.

Chair Drabkin thought it might have been a mistake that this home was placed on the inventory. She had looked at the property and had walked by it for years. It was important that they not let bureaucracy get in the way of economic development. It was important that this piece of property be developed economically especially since what would replace the current structure would have a historic look. The current structure was a safety hazard and she had seen children that should have been in school doing illegal activities on the property. There was other criminal activity as well even in the daytime. They should support economic development and it was currently a safety issue. She was in support of the demolition.

Heather Sharfeddin did not agree that it should not have been listed on the inventory, however she did think the house had surpassed its value to the neighborhood. Multiple people had tried to purchase it and had walked away. This house was a hazard and she did not think it should be preserved.

There was discussion regarding whether or not to add conditions to the application.

Chair Drabkin thought photographs should be taken of the existing structure and that the new structure should be built in the style of the neighborhood.

Associate Planner Darnell said the property was in the downtown design standard area and would be subject to those criteria.

Committee Member Mead would be in favor of allowing a period of time for salvage.

There was further discussion regarding how long the period of time for salvage would be and how a professional photographic survey could be done.

Committee Member Cooley was concerned about the safety of photographing or salvaging.

Committee Member Cooley moved to approve HL 1-18 without conditions subject to the findings and criteria that was discussed. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Drabkin and passed unanimously.

5. Discussion Items

A. Secretary of the Interior Standards and Guidelines Training

- Joy Sears, a staff person at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be attending the meeting to provide an overview and training on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the preservation of historic structures.

Planning Director Richards introduced Joy Sears from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. She would provide training on how to apply the Secretary of the Interior's standards for preservation of historic structures on May 2. The next regular HLC meeting would be on May 15.

6. Old/New Business

None

7. Committee/Commissioner Comments

None

8. Staff Comments

None

9. Adjournment

Chair Drabkin adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.