

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 4/18/22

TITLE: 1245 Spaight St - Exterior Alteration in the Third Lake Ridge Hist. Dist. - Amendment to previously approved materials for construction of front porch; 6th Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 4/19/22

ID NUMBER: 70870

Members present were: Katie Kaliszewski, Ald. Arvina Martin, David McLean, and Maurice Taylor. Excused were: Anna Andrzejewski and Richard Arnesen.

SUMMARY:

Paul Creswell, registering in support and wishing to speak
Emily Reynolds, registering in support and wishing to speak

Bailey discussed the request for an amendment to a previously issued CoA to construct a new front porch. On November 15, 2021, the Landmarks Commission approved using wood for the materials for the new front porch, and the applicants are now requesting to use a wood alternative for the front porch floor boards, railings, and upper porch. She said that the Landmarks Commission has previously assessed the proposed product and determined that it would not meet the standards for use on a front porch because it does not adequately replicate wood. She specifically mentioned the faux wood grain and exposed end boards that reveal the plastic interior of the board. She said that staff recommends denial of the project as proposed, and the original approval for wood would still meet the standards.

Paul Creswell said the product staff had recommended, Aeratis, is cost prohibitive and not climate conscious to ship. They said the porch across the street from them uses composite, and the end boards look like wood. They argued that with climate change, composite products should be encouraged because they are more sustainable. Kaliszewski asked if the proposed product was created locally or would need to be shipped. Emily Reynolds said it is made in Ohio. Creswell said that it wouldn't need to be shipped specially because it is available at a local store. Reynolds said that having a product you can get locally is important, and Azek is working on a circular economy product.

McLean said that wood is very easily available and easy for a layperson to use. He said that not all synthetic products are durable for the long term. He asked what the life cycle is for the proposed product and where the product would go once the applicants decide they don't want it anymore, or the next people who live in the house want to get rid of it. Creswell said that Azek is a 40-50 year product, and wood wouldn't last that long. They thought they could send the materials back to the manufacturer once they want to get rid of them as part of the circular economy Azek is creating.

McLean said wood that has a heavily grained texture is usually damaged and saturated with water, which is part of why they don't recommend synthetic products with a faux wood-grain texture. Creswell said that the texture is advantageous during winter so the boards don't get slick. Regarding sustainability, McLean said that

if wood is maintained and protected, it can last over 100 years; however, he couldn't speak to quick-growth wood. He said that having the tongue and groove details are important in keeping the boards tight to one another, which is how historic porches looked. Boards without the tongue and groove will gap, which wouldn't look like the original porch boards. Reynolds said Azek makes a tongue and groove product for porches. Creswell said that new-growth wood doesn't last. McLean said that he was concerned about the life cycle of repairs and visual qualities of the faux wood. Reynolds asked if Aeratis has a longer life cycle, and McLean said that he did not know. Regarding Creswell's earlier comments about a textured surface being less slick, McLean added that one can have a slip-resistant product that still looks smooth, so one can expect the smooth decking product to have slip resistance as well. Creswell said that affordability is another issue, and they are having trouble accessing other products because of supply chain issues. McLean asked why other products were being held up. Creswell said they weren't sure, but the Aeratis would be shipped via rail from Alabama, which added considerable cost. They added that the existing porch is reasonably safe, but it is the fire exit for the tenant upstairs.

Kaliszewski said that the commission had previously assessed alternative decking materials in person because of the recent state statute, which says they need to approve materials that look like the original materials. Bailey said that in 2019, when the Landmarks Commission had looked at the various samples in person, she also reached out to the Wisconsin Historical Society to see what alternative materials they had approved. At that point, WHS has approved a project using Aeratis, but would not approve other products like Trex or Azek because of the false wood-grain texture and inability to have a wood appearance all the way through the cross section. The Landmarks Commission came to a similar conclusion during their review, finding that one product was able to adequately replicate wood, but the other products did not. Taylor asked about the wood-grain texture, and Bailey said that any composite or wood-alternative material needed to have a smooth surface rather than a false wood-grain texture in order to comply with the state statute.

McLean said that he would like more information on the product. Looking at the Azek website, he said that it looked like the product had a cap and when cut, one could see the core and surround. Creswell said they have a sample of the product, and Reynolds said that it is not capped but is solid throughout. Kaliszewski asked if staff had seen a sample, and Bailey confirmed she had. McLean said he didn't understand how one could get a uniform end on it. Creswell showed a photo of the material sample. McLean asked what the railings look like. Reynolds said they are a smooth white material. Bailey suggested that they make product samples available at the City Planning office for commission members to look at in person. Given the state statute, Kaliszewski said that she wasn't comfortable approving anything she hadn't seen in person, especially a product the commission had previously decided did not look enough like wood. McLean requested samples of the deck board and railing components because it is difficult to judge on photos. Reynolds said they had samples available. Taylor said that he did not dislike the product and thought it looked nice, though it would help to see it in person.

ACTION:

A motion was made by McLean, seconded by Martin, to refer the item to the May 9, 2022 Landmarks Commission meeting. The motion passed by voice vote/other.