

AGENDA # 7

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 6/17/19

TITLE: 417 Cantwell Ct - Exterior Alteration in the
Third Lake Ridge Hist. Dist. -
Replacement of porch floorboards;
6th Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 6/25/19

ID NUMBER: 56074

Members present were: Stuart Levitan, Richard Arnesen, Katie Kaliszewski, Arvina Martin, and David McLean. Excused was Anna Andrzejewski.

SUMMARY:

Mary Paul, registering in support and available to answer questions

Howard Paul, registering in support and available to answer questions

Ben Bobzien, registering in support and available to answer questions

Bailey said that the applicants are proposing to replace the wood flooring on the front porch with Azek PVC flooring. She discussed the Third Lake Ridge standards, which state that alterations of the street façade shall retain the original or existing historical materials. She said that the Commission will first need to determine whether the entire porch is deteriorated beyond repair in order to decide whether to allow replacement of individual boards or the entire porch. At that point, the Commission will need to decide if the proposed alternative material adequately replicates the original wood. She said that she recommends that any replacement be of similar dimensions as the existing flooring and be of a tongue-and-groove style.

Levitan asked if there are additional photos showing the overall state of the porch in order to make a determination as to whether it can be fixed. Mary Paul said that they are proposing to use composite because they have experience with the product and have found it to be durable and low-maintenance. She said that the front porch is not a large space, and all of the wood needs to be replaced because it has not been sealed and is rotten. Levitan asked if the small selection of photos in the application are representative of the entire porch's condition. Mary said they are. Levitan asked if Commissioners feel they have enough information to determine whether the entire porch would need to be replaced. McLean said that typically he would like to see more photos of the boards, but if the wood has never been sealed or painted, it won't take it at this point and will keep deteriorating. Arnesen said that more photos would be nice, but in the photos submitted, the deck looks horrible. Levitan asked if the group was okay with a full replacement, assuming these photos are a representation of the whole deck. Arnesen said that he will accept that. In looking at the photos, Martin said that it looks like people could get hurt on the deck in its current condition.

Bobzien, a neighbor of the property in question, said that he agrees that the entire deck needs to be replaced. In terms of material, he said that he doesn't want to harm what could be saved, but there is no historic value to the existing deck. He mentioned that textured composite is safer than a smooth surface when wet.

Levitan asked if the group agreed that replacement of all of the porch flooring is acceptable, and the group concurred. Levitan moved to the next question of whether the proposed alternative material adequately

replicates the original wood, and asked the applicant if it is available in a tongue-and-groove style. Mary said that it is. Bailey said that the State Historical Society does not approve Azek because it is too plastic-looking in appearance. Kaliszewski said that would indicate that this material does not follow the state statute.

Bailey said that this project is not new construction and is on the street façade. McLean said that he is concerned about the appearance of the edge detailing at the top stair, which is at eye-level. Mary said that they could install an edger. McLean said that it is classic to this type of house to see the end of each board and have the boards pitched toward the front to drain, so he is concerned about using Azek on this house. Mary asked if he wants to see the individual boards on the end, and McLean said that it is classic of this era to construct a porch like this that drains to the front, so there is no front edge piece because of potential for rot. He explained that they will have a hard time putting a product on that they can orient perpendicular to the street so that one can see the edge of each board as they approach the house. He said the only way is to add a trim board on the front, but that is not what houses looked like or how decks were made back then. He stated that he would argue for replacing the existing tongue-and-groove wood with tongue-and-groove wood. He said that on porches of this era, the tongue-and-groove shows on the edge. Bailey pulled up the Google Maps street view of the house, and Kaliszewski pointed out that you can see the ends of the boards on the neighboring porches. Arnesen asked if they could show the exposed edge of the Azek, and McLean said that it would look odd and unfinished.

Bobzien said that composite is far from good, but good from far away, where one can't tell a difference between wood and composite. Kaliszewski said that some people can tell a difference. There was brief discussion of various types of wood that could be used.

McLean asked about the board width of Azek compared to the existing porch. Bailey said that composite materials are available in a variety of widths. Arnesen said that the Azek doesn't appear to be the same thickness as the existing wood. McLean said that the composite appears to be a thicker profile than what is currently there.

Howard Paul asked who would notice the difference in materials from the street. Kaliszewski said that many people may notice, such as herself, people who work in historic preservation, or architects, among others.

Levitan read from the ordinance that alterations of the street façade shall retain the original or existing historical materials. Arnesen asked if there is a precedent. Bailey said that they have approved composite in areas not visible from the street, but this is different; they have not approved a composite wood alternative for the front of a building. Arnesen said that according to the state, they would not approve this material because it is not similar enough.

Arnesen asked if the applicants have priced out wood flooring. Mary said that it is a little bit more, but could be twice as much. She said that the labor costs for the installation of Azek will pay for itself over the years because they won't have to pay for stain. Arnesen said that it appears to be a well-protected porch. McLean said that painted deck boards will last a long time when they are protected like this.

McLean said that a problem with alternative materials is that they change over time, so if one looks at them in 10-15 years, one can tell a difference between the old and new products and that it is something made in 2019. He said that wood never goes out of style, and one can paint it to update, which is another reason he is leaning toward wood for this project. He said that the front porch design with the board edges visible above the stair is an important detail that composite won't bring.

Bobzien suggested that the applicants could replace the front stairs such that the top step meets the end grain of the deck. McLean said that he would still like to see the boards as they end, as it is a classic porch. Kaliszewski said that rebuilding the front steps in that way would not meet the standards. Levitan said that if Bobzien's suggestion was something the applicants want the Commission to consider, they would need to refer the item and the applicants would need to come back with a design. McLean said that the edge detail is common to the era, and to build new stairs and hide it would be like saying they built the stairs incorrectly

relative to the era and history of the house. Arnesen suggested they approve replacement of the porch flooring with wood, and if the applicants end up wanting to change their plans, they can come back. McLean said he thought that was reasonable.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Kaliszewski, to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that the replacement flooring be constructed of wood that is of similar dimensions as the existing flooring and is of a tongue-and-groove style. The motion passed by voice vote/other, with Kaliszewski voting opposed.