

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 9/16/19

TITLE: 2115 Kendall Ave - Exterior Alteration in
the University Heights Hist. Dist. -
Replacement of windows; 5th Ald.
Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 9/26/19

ID NUMBER: 56714

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

SUMMARY:

Raj Shukla, registering neither in support nor in opposition and wishing to speak

Bailey described the proposed work, noting that the Landmarks Commission referred the project at the August 12 meeting and requested more information about the window component dimensions and the cost of repair and lead paint abatement. She said that most windows are original with the exception of #9, which is currently a casement that is proposed for replacement with a slider, which will have a different profile. She showed photos of the window deterioration from the previous application, and shared the updated information supplied by the contractor on the window component dimensions. She said that there are differences in dimensions between the existing and proposed windows, but the difference is negligible in terms of accurately replicating what is historic. She read Ald. Bidar's comments that the applicants have done their due diligence in reaching out to numerous contractors and could not get a bid for repair, and that if the Commission requires repair, it should be limited to windows 1-3. She said that staff's recommendation is that the standards can be met and the project approved with several conditions, including the replacement of gutters in-kind, window #9, five historic windows due to deterioration, repair of remaining historic windows, and repair or replacement of window frames and sills as necessary with cedar and painted to match existing. She noted that the property is located in a National Register Historic District and is eligible for state tax credits for the work. She pointed out that two windows are located on the rear and are not visible from the street and three windows are located on the side, behind dense vegetation. She pointed out that the standards in University Heights have a lesser requirement for windows not visible from the street. She said that the vinyl windows are clad in aluminum on the exterior, and they have previously allowed aluminum-clad windows in other cases. McLean asked for more information, and Shukla said that the original wood windows have aluminum storm windows. McLean asked if the new windows are all vinyl, and Shukla confirmed they are.

Shukla said that he and his wife and their alder, whom he pointed out is the Common Council President, think that all 16 windows should be replaced. He said that staff recommends replacement of six windows, consideration of replacement for an additional four, and restoration of six windows. He said that two of the windows to be restored are in a child's room and are difficult to open; he mentioned that the child has a disability and the windows need to open easily. He said that no restoration professionals they contacted were willing to bid on a subset of the windows or the full package. He said that the compromise proposed by Ald. Bidar, which asked for the restoration of windows 1-3, is not possible because there is no professional willing to do the work. He said that they are in a position where they would like windows that are safe and functional.

He reiterated that his alder is the Common Council President, and asked that the Commission go along with her recommendation, which was to support the applicants' original proposal.

Kaliszewski asked if the applicants are wrapping the window frames, and Shukla said no. Bailey said that was the original proposal, but the applicants changed it to replacement with cedar. Kaliszewski pointed out that the original application does say white vinyl windows with white aluminum cladding. Shukla said that they amended that proposal in correspondence afterward. McLean referred to Ald. Bidar's recommendation for repair of windows 1-3, and asked if those windows are front-facing. Shukla said that two are on the front and one is east-facing.

Martin asked what they do when there is no one that will do the restoration work. Bailey said that they have recently been dealing with this for other window replacement proposals. She explained that they are in peak construction season, so it is hard to find people who have space in their schedule to bid on projects. She said that it means the applicants did their due diligence and can't find a contractor, so the work can't be done. She said that for the other projects in this situation, the Commission decided that if the property owner did their due diligence and weren't able to find a contractor or one that was financially reasonable, the Commission said that they could replace the windows. She pointed out that the additional requirement was to adequately replicate what was there, and in this situation they do have measurements as to whether it will replicate the historic windows.

McLean asked if they have seen a sample of the window. Shukla said that their contractor said there is no sample because it is custom-made, and said that the contractor gave them the measurements. McLean asked what type of window they are, and Bailey said that they are Okna 500. Arnesen asked if there were any intricate muntins or details to be concerned about with these windows. McLean said that the proposed windows have a lot of fussiness around the perimeter, but that he couldn't remember if it was in the window sash or the framing. He said that the existing windows appear to have a simple sash, and asked why the applicant selected the proposed windows. Shukla said that it was cost and energy efficiency. McLean asked if they considered aesthetics, and Shukla said that they want functional windows that aren't covered in lead paint. McLean said that there are a lot of manufacturers that would make such a replacement. Shukla said that if McLean would like to do the research and offer other options, he could, but that this product seemed doable. McLean said that the proposed windows have a raised detail around the edge, which is more expensive to manufacture, and mentioned that Pella, Marvin, and other manufacturers make simple, flat sashes. Shukla said they are concerned with cost and the performance of the window.

Kaliszewski said that she is concerned the vinyl will look too plastic-like. McLean said that he agreed, especially with the details around the edge. Shukla said that they have vinyl siding as well, so there are a variety of features on the house that don't meet the aesthetic standard the Commission is trying to reach with the windows. McLean clarified that his question is why the applicants selected the ornate style as opposed to something simpler. Shukla said that the windows did not seem ornate to them. McLean said that his concerns are the vinyl and the details. Regarding the vinyl siding, McLean said that they did a nice job getting as close as they could to the historic clad or profile with a 4" exposure, and it looks like they did the best they could to match what was probably there. He said that because there is simple detail on the house, a simple window would be appropriate if they were to be replaced.

Martin said that she agreed with Ald. Bidar that the applicants did their due diligence and if there is not an option in terms of repair, it needs to be safe and openable, and she would be inclined to say they should be able to replace them.

McLean asked if that would include all interior trim and interior window stools because it is all the same lead paint? He said that it wouldn't just be the sashes, but also the doors, base trim, crown molding, door casings, and window casings. Shukla said they are trying to do a lot of that. Kaliszewski asked if they are replacing the exterior surrounds as well. Shukla asked if she meant the wood frame, and said yes, where there is rot. McLean asked if that will be replaced with the cedar, and Shukla said yes.

McLean said that he is leaning toward replacement, but is not sure about the vinyl, and said it would be nice to see the window. Arnesen said this has been an issue because if the Commission says that people can't replace their windows, they will deteriorate more. He said that he is not familiar with the proposed window, but that if they are going to accept the argument that a window is impossible to repair, it would be nice to have a substitute that met a minimum standard. He pointed out that there are dozens of vinyl windows, and it would be nice if they could require a specific window or equivalent so that people aren't using bottom of the barrel vinyl windows. Kaliszewski pointed out that they could apply for tax credits for the project. Shukla said that they have done the calculations. Arnesen asked if they were given other options in terms of a series of different windows. Shukla said that they trusted their contractor to give them the most cost-effective window option.

McLean asked what staff thought about materials and profiles. Bailey said that she always has concerns about the appearance of vinyl. Kaliszewski said that vinyl does not last as long. Bailey agreed, and said that you get into a cycle of continual replacement. She said that she wants to think about the equity consideration as well, which is not part of the standards, and asked if it is financially feasible to live in a historic district. She asked if there is a product that is financially reasonable that meets the standards and makes it possible for people to continue to live in these properties. Arnesen said that if they could set a standard like that, it would be helpful because he doesn't want applicants to have to continue coming back before the Commission. He said that if the Commission is going to entertain full replacement, at the beginning of the process, staff could provide information on the specific level of windows likely to be accepted. Bailey said that she would work on preparing these materials.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Martin, to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that gutters be replaced with materials in-kind and in a color to match trim. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Bailey explained that for window replacement requests, staff has been advising applicants that they need to provide evidence that windows are deteriorated beyond repair. She said that for some recent projects, applicants were asked to provide an estimate from someone who does window repair. She pointed out that there was a recent lead paint abatement project, and the applicants were able to find a contractor because they planned it earlier in the season. She said that as a matter of policy, she would like to ask applicants to provide an estimate for repair as part of the application so that the information is available to the commission to begin with rather than needing to refer the item to multiple meetings. She asked if commissioners were agreeable to this idea, and there was general agreement that they were. Arnesen asked if they could suggest specific types or brands of windows or have a list of acceptable options for applicants. Bailey said that she can work on a list. Kaliszewski suggested that if people want to install vinyl windows, an extraordinary level of proof should be needed. McLean suggested they ask applicants to bring in window samples. Arnesen agreed and said that if applicants are not using a window off the approved list, they should bring a sample. Kaliszewski suggested that applicants also bring their contractors to the meeting.