

AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 8/17/20

TITLE: 911-915 Jenifer St - Exterior Alteration in
the Third Lake Ridge Hist. Dist. -
Replacement of porch railing; 6th
Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 8/19/20

ID NUMBER: 61543

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

SUMMARY:

Abby Davidson, registering in support and wishing to speak

Dave Drapac, registering in support and wishing to speak

Paul Schechter, registering in support and available to answer questions

Bailey explained that one year ago, the applicants received a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the balcony railing; however, the completed work differed from what was approved. She said that staff then recommended that if the applicants wanted to build something different than what was approved, they should submit a new application for review by the commission. She discussed the applicable standards, which consider visual compatibility with historic resources within 200'. She emphasized the rhythm of mass and spaces, as well as alterations retaining the original or existing historical proportion and rhythm of solids to voids and historic materials. She said that she did not know how historic the previous railings were, but were likely an alteration outside of the period of significance. She showed images of the former porch railing prior to last year's work as well as the plans submitted last year and the existing conditions. She pointed out that there is a continuous railing all the way across and the posts do not have caps on top, and there is no precedent of that in the vicinity or historic district. She said that instead of using simple square balusters, they introduced decorative turned spindles, which could create a false sense of history. She showed images of historic resources within 200' and pointed out the rhythm of the balcony posts lining up with the porch posts below. She said that the historic resources also tend to use simple square balusters, not decorative spindles. She discussed the various modifications the applicant proposed, including introducing caps on the existing posts or introducing decorative posts that line up with the columns but leave the structural posts in place. She said that staff recommends the commission deny the request and enforce the 2019 Certificate of Appropriateness.

Davidson said they are looking to come up with a solution that works for both historic purposes and the building code. She said that after receiving last year's COA, they discovered structural issues with the previous setup that didn't meet building code. She said that they needed to put in posts that would be structurally sound and spaced no more than 6' apart.

Schechter said that they would take advice from the commission regarding the posts. He said that the original COA didn't describe the type of spindles to use or the specifications for the rail. He said that they would be happy to put rail caps on, but the alignment of the posts will be more of a challenge as they also need to meet building code. He offered to install fake posts to continue the vertical alignment with the columns.

Kaliszewski asked if the applicants submitted a plan for what the railing would look like as part of the COA application last year, and Schechter confirmed that they did. Kaliszewski said that the plans specify what the railing will look like and the applicants are required to follow the plans they submitted. Schechter said there was a disconnect because one person submitted plans and another did the work. He said they are happy to correct it.

Andrzejewski summarized that the project was not built as it was approved, and one option is to do a complete rebuild of the porch. She said that the applicants also submitted other solutions for altering the railing for the commission to consider. There was brief discussion of the various options submitted by the applicants.

McLean said that he feels for the applicants because anything they do to move the posts will require reroofing. He said that it is disappointing they built the railing against the plan that was approved. He said that he was torn because the railing was not historic to begin with and now clearly identifies itself as such. He said that he was leaning toward addressing the verticals relative to the top rail and breaking up the top rail.

Taylor referenced staff's recommendation to deny the request and asked if that would mean they would need to demo the existing railing, and Bailey confirmed it would. Bailey showed images of the approved plans compared to what was built.

Arnesen said he didn't like any of the options proposed by the applicants, but if he had to choose one without requiring them to rebuild, he would ask that they put caps on the existing newels. He said that adding the thicker newels above the existing columns makes it look worse. McLean said that it looks odd and the applicants could have aligned the posts like in the submitted drawing and met the 6' code requirement, so he didn't know why they deviated from the plans. He said that he was leaning toward rejecting the proposal for a number of reasons, and pointed out that it can be built to code as originally designed and approved by City staff. Kaliszewski said that she would like to see the spindles made into straight balustrades. Bailey pointed out that the applicants are also seeking state and federal historic tax credits, and the original design would align with what the State Historic Preservation Office would approve for them to receive tax credits.

ACTION:

A motion was made by McLean, seconded by Kaliszewski, to deny the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness and enforce the 2019 Certificate of Appropriateness for the balcony railing. The motion passed by voice vote/other.