



Division of Development Administration and Review

City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning

200 Ross Street, Third Floor

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION OF PITTSBURGH

Minutes of the Meeting of January 7, 2009

Beginning at 12:00 PM

200 Ross Street

First Floor Hearing Room

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

In Attendance:

<u>Members</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Others</u>
		Ryan Vandegrift
Michael Stern, Chair	Katherine Molnar	Tom Gigliott
Paul Tellers		Jerome Jackson
Ruth Drescher		Anne Nelson
Earle Onque		Mark Kerrch
Jill Joyce		Richard Weaver
Erik Harless, for Sergei Matveiev		Russell Blaich
Noor Ismail		Dan Holland
		Steven Paul

Old Business

Nominations Report: There are two buildings in the nomination process. Ms. Molnar reported that the Workingmen’s Savings Bank building is still on hold at City Council. Saint Mary’s Academy building in Lawrenceville was approved by City Council on December 30th, 2009. The Mayor still needed to sign the legislation.

New Business

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Molnar asked for approval for the November and December 2008 minutes. Mr. Onque motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Tellers seconded the motion. All voted in favor, except Ms. Drescher who abstained because she had just arrived. Motion passed.

Certificates of Appropriateness: Molnar directed the commissioners to the Certificates of Appropriateness. In regards to the December 2008 Certificates of Appropriateness, Ms. Drescher moved to approve, Ms. Ismail seconded the motion, all voted in favor. Motion passed.

Applications for Economic Hardship: None.

Brief Discussion on Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act: Ms. Molnar described S106 of the NHPA, and the City’s role in implementing the review process. Ms. Ismail added that because we review demolitions using federal funding, the Bureau of Building Inspection cannot tear down any properties in historic areas without going through the complete historic review process, as per S106. BBI cannot tear down any properties with federal funding without going through the process, even if the Historic Review Commission issues a Certificate of Appropriateness for a specific demolition. Mr. Tellers asked if this review process has always

been in place. Ms. Ismail replied that it had been in place, but we had not been aware of our full compliance responsibilities until recently. We are working toward full compliance.

Hearing Items: Discussion on hearing items follows on the attached pages.

Post Hearing Items: The HRC revisited the topic of demolitions in historic areas. Ms. Molnar repeated the previously stated motion regarding demolitions, and Mr. Tellers said that there ought to be some kind of contingency for emergency demolitions. Molnar said that in the case of emergencies, she would use her best judgment to approve the demolitions. Molnar indicated that she wanted to consult the legal department about what to do when there are emergencies. Mr. Stern said he thought there should be an amendment to the previously stated motion:

Amended Motion : Mr. Stern proposed that *The HRC [should] identify a citywide preservation policy process as a high priority under the coordination of the DCP, and as a second part of the motion, that all demolitions in designated historic districts be on hold for six months, or until the first week of June 2009... except in situations of imminent risk to public safety or to adjacent properties as determined by the BBI.*

Second: Ms. Drescher.....seconded the motion.

In Favor: All.....**PASSED**

Opposed: None

Adjourn: Mr. Tellers motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Onque seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

ATTACHMENTS

OWNER: The City of Pittsburgh	WARD: 21 st	APPLICATION RECEIVED: 00/00/00
	LOT & BLOCK: 0022-E-00343	SITE VISITS: 00/00/00
APPLICANT: The City of Pittsburgh	INSPECTOR: R. Blaich	CERTIFICATES OF APP.:
	COUNCIL DISTRICT:	
ARCHITECT:	ZONING CLASSIFICATION:	
ARCHITECT’S REPRESENTATIVE:	ARCH. RATING:	
NATIONAL REGISTER:	LISTED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ELIGIBLE..... <input type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION:

1. Ms. Molnar introduced the Briefing, and introduced Mr. Blaich.
2. Russ Blaich – BBI introduced himself. He said that the City owns this address, and the Ed Jacobs would like to have it razed.
3. Mr. Stern asked for public comment:
 - a. Stanley Lowe introduced himself as a resident of Manchester. He said that he was out of town and he couldn’t come back to comment on the 1100 block of Warlo, which he had previously promised to follow-up with, but has since been demolished. He knew that the HRC was aware of the S106 process, and what it means regarding HUD money. He also wanted to make sure that the HRC knew what was happening in Manchester – building demolition by attrition. He said that in two months from now, there will be more demolitions before the HRC. He asked the HRC, that as the biggest landowner with the URA, put a cease-and-desist order on buildings in Manchester. It is wise, given that neighborhood, to make a policy on demolition. He wants a policy on demolitions, and he would like a meeting with the local neighborhood group regarding demolitions.
 - b. Anne Nelson introduced herself as a representative of PHLF. She was at the hearing to speak about the S106 process regarding all three demolitions on the agenda. HUD has asked for, by January 16th:
 - i. Update on City’s progress regarding revising its S106 procedures
 - ii. Assurance that the City has ceased demolitions in historic areas
 - iii. A reply to PHLF’s concerns
 - c. Dan Holland told the Commission that we’re loosing our city. The National Negro Opera House was condemned and Dan Holland’s group, YPA, was never notified. Had he not driven by, then who knows what would have happened to that building. Holland is concerned that there is no Preservation Plan for the City of Pittsburgh.
4. Mr. Tellers said that yes, we are confronted with demolition applications almost monthly. BBI tells the HRC that these are health and safety issues, and could pose imminent danger to people in the neighborhood. Therefore, the HRC issues CofAs for those demolitions. Manchester CC attended a lot of

these meetings in the past, and when they did, they often agreed with a lot of the demolitions. Tellers is encouraged by the public comment.

5. Ms. Ismail stated that she is aware of the process regarding S106; we have been advised by the legal department regarding the approval of PMOA, which will have to go to Council. This is only one step of a multi-tier process, and we are working on it. The City will not get its federal money until April or May, when the fiscal year starts, and thus demolitions using federal money will not start until then, at the earliest. We have talked about having a preservation plan at many occasions, but at this point, it seems counterproductive because the City has no money to rehabilitate properties or to implement the plan. The plan could not be followed at this point. Ismail said that PHLF indicated they would begin to form a plan to take over properties in Manchester, and they haven't communicated on that end yet.
6. Mr. Lowe came back before the HRC and said that the HRC has a copy of the Manchester Citizens Report, which defines the properties that Manchester citizens have a lot of concern about. If the city has been following its requirement of S106 in the past, then he would have no problem with what Ismail just said about not using federal money. However, the City is not following those requirements. That being said, the City just celebrated its 250th Anniversary – the policy ought not to be, “just come before the HRC and demolish a property.” The City has submitted an application to Obama's campaign to receive infrastructure-improvement money. He would like to know how the city would use that money for historic preservation. He would urge us to begin a conversation with Manchester, because there is money out there, and we need to protect Manchester.
7. Anne Nelson came back to the microphone and addressed Noor Ismail's concerns. Nelson said that the City was supposed to respond to PHLF regarding a line item in the budget for building rehab. She said that CDBG money can be used for rehab.
8. Michael Stern said that there are limited opportunities for action by the HRC body. At this time, we can approve or not approve the demolition. He said we could argue that the HRC should not approve the demolition to make a point, but then the HRC would be neglecting its public safety responsibilities.
9. Ms. Drescher said that the HRC has some role in developing some kind of preservation plan, or some kind of action toward planning for demolition. She thinks that we are acting in a disservice to the City by not planning for demolitions. She said that there have been people from Manchester in the past who did not seem particularly concerned, but this is the first time this discussion presented itself.
10. Building on what Ruth said, Mr. Tellers advocates that the HRC be a part of that planning process. He said we should be active in finding funding sources for the development of a preservation plan / demolition plan. Even if we do that, how do we determine what is worth preservation, what is eligible for demolition, etc.
11. Ms. Joyce said that we also need to address the subject of free and clear titles to property deeds. It is difficult to stop the demolitions of properties if we cannot locate an owner.
12. Ms. Ismail wanted to know who would be informed when a building is ready for demolition. Mr. Blaich said the notice is posted online.
13. Mr. Stern said that we are all committed to the preservation of these structures. We can deny the application to demolish this structure, as a statement about our values, but then what? There is some frustration that individuals come before us and complain about the demolitions, but yet they do not

necessarily come up with any alternative plans. He is not sure where this discussion goes. He thinks the public safety problem is legitimate. How do other stakeholders intend to move this planning process forward if the City is not doing it?

14. Ms. Drescher wondered if there would be some kind of a plan that should be developed, then we could hold off on demolitions until a larger plan could be developed.
15. Mr. Tellers said it seems to him that the HRC is hearing from various stakeholders, and everyone is saying, “someone ought to do something!” But there should be a convener to gather everyone together to gather insight on what to do with these demolitions.
16. Ms. Ismail said that it would have to be a policy decision as to whether the City should participate in the planning for historic preservation. There has to be a policy directive though, because there is no money for structures that the City owns. Ismail said that all of us are interested in a plan, but we do not know how to move this forward.
17. Mr. Lowe said that we have a defeatist negative attitude. He said, “I’m not just standing here because I am Stanley Lowe.” He listed his background qualifications. When we begin the discussion of “there are no resources,” it should rather be “how do we best manage our resources.” We have not even had a discussion of how to begin reaching out to the private sector. We need to have a positive attitude toward this!
18. This body can make recommendations, said Mr. Stern, but we don’t necessarily have the ability to do those things ourselves. The HRC needs to have a better understanding as to how other stakeholders can move this agenda forward. The citizens need to make this an issue, and that is not the responsibility of the HRC.
19. Mr. Tellers said that the DCP has attempted to start a preservation policy process – and that he would be happy to make a motion to recommend that the City make this a high priority, and that we put all demolitions on hold in City Historic Districts until a preservation plan can be developed.
20. Mr. Holland came to the microphone to say he might consider letting his Preservation Summit be involved with starting to plan.
21. Mr. Stern said that Dan should discuss that with his colleagues. It is the preservation community’s job to jumpstart the planning process for demolitions. The HRC would be more than willing to support their efforts, particularly by putting a temporary stay on demolitions, but we cannot do the work ourselves.
22. Mr. Tellers said that if he understands correctly, the DCP has an interest in starting the preservation planning process:

MOTION: Mr. Tellersmoved that the HRC identify a citywide preservation policy process as a high priority under the coordination of the DCP, and as a second part of the motion, that all demolitions in designated historic districts be on hold for six months, or until the first week of June 2009.

SECOND: Ms. Drescher.....seconded the motion.

As a point of clarification, Mr. Stern indicated that the buildings in front of us would also get put on hold.

IN FAVOR: *All*.....**PASSED**

OPPOSED: *None*

1403 Nixon – cancelled

1109 Bingham Street

OWNER:
CHAJKOWSKI THOMAS
1015 DEERFIELD DR
ELIZABETH, PA 15037-0000

WARD: 17th
LOT & BLOCK:0003-G-00154
INSPECTOR:Rich Weaver

APPLICATION RECEIVED:

SITE VISITS:

CERTIFICATES OF APP.:

APPLICANT:
Russell Blaich
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

COUNCIL DISTRICT:
ZONING CLASSIFICATION:
ARCH. RATING:

Discussion:

1. Ms. Molnar introduced the application, and introduced Mr. Rich Weaver from BBI.
2. Mr. Rich Weaver came to the table, along with the property owner, Thomas, and an adjacent property owner (Tom Gillatti). Weaver gave a bit of the history of the property, including the condemnation notice that was given this past year. Because work did not proceed as it was supposed to, the building permits that were issued were revoked. The condition of 1109 Bingham affects the condition of the building next door.
3. Thomas, the owner, said that the initial complaint was about a deck that he had on the roof, which he removed. He said that the double red brick building was a great structure. His plan at the moment is to get another building permit and fix it up. He needs to fix the front doors, the downspouts, there are some loose bricks, etc.
4. Tom, the adjacent property owner, said that Tom the owner has not lived at 1109 Bingham since 1995. The neighbor said that he would like the abatement work done by Tom-the-owner should be overseen by the HRC. The neighbor said that there are some issues with masonry and the doors at the front, but that the building could probably stand another year of neglect before it falls in on itself.
5. Tom the owner said that he has tried to find an architect, but they said the project was too small for their firm.
6. Ms. Drescher asked about the \$100,000 fine. Weaver replied that it would be up to the judge how to direct the fine, but if the owner abated the condemnation notice, then the fine would likely decrease, if not go away.
7. Mr. Stern asked if the owner was willing to talk to an architect and get a contractor and come back to the HRC next month. The building owner agreed.
8. The building owner can make necessary improvements for the time being, by securing a Certificate of Appropriateness through staff-review for only the most pertinent of changes.

OWNER:
VANDEGRIFT RYAN
1208 RESACA PLACE
PITTSBURGH, PA 15212-

WARD:22nd

APPLICATION RECEIVED:

LOT & BLOCK:0023-K-00086

SITE VISITS:

INSPECTOR: Ron Freyermuth

CERTIFICATES OF APP.:

APPLICANT:
VANDEGRIFT RYAN
1208 RESACA PLACE
PITTSBURGH, PA 15212-

COUNCIL DISTRICT:

ZONING CLASSIFICATION:

ARCH. RATING:

DISCUSSION:

1. Molnar introduced the application and introduced Mr. Vandegrift to the HRC.
2. Mr. Ryan Vandegrift introduced himself as the owner of 1216 Resaca. He purchased the building in November from an investor who had begun the renovation. He has an architect, who has completed the drawings. The two major modifications on the front of the building are 1) to extend the roofline (up an additional four feet) and 2) to bump out the portion of the building in the space between the two buildings by approximately six feet.
3. Mr. Stern asked about colors, and Mr. Vandegrift said that he wanted to do Victorian colors on all wooden siding. He wanted to do the corrugated downspouts. Mr. Vandegrift said he intended to install asphalt shingles on the roof.

MOTION: Ms. Joycemoved to approve the drawings as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Onque.....seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: *All.....PASSED*

OPPOSED: *None*