

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Caucus Room of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, February 12, 2020**

The Chairman, Matt Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Roll Call

Members: Present –Vice Chairman Ralph White; Lois Shinko; Clint Gault; Chairman Matt Smith

Guests: Skip and Karen Conant; Eddie Herdendorf, President, Sheffield Village Historical Society; Paula Pitasky, City of Avon Community Liaison Consultant; Randy Lane

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Mr. Smith called for a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes of Wednesday, January 8, 2020, and approve said minutes as published. Mr. White stated that there were some corrections. Patrick Foyte's name was incorrectly spelled "Foye". Also, the minutes state that "the Stickney/Palmer House is not to be confused with Palmer Village" and that is wrong. It is associated with Palmer Village. He asked that those corrections be made to the minutes of January 8, 2020. A motion was made by Mr. Gault and seconded by Mr. White to approve the minutes as corrected and the vote was all ayes. The Chairman declared the motion passed.

Remove 34390 Detroit Road from Landmarks List/Demolition Permit

Skip and Karen Conant, owners of the property at 34390 Detroit Road, were sworn in by Mr. Smith: "Do you swear and affirm that the statements you are about to make before this Landmarks Preservation Commission for the City of Avon are true as you shall answer unto God or under penalty or perjury?" Mr. and Mrs. Conant answered, "yes".

Mr. Smith asked Mr. and Mrs. Conant to explain why they have asked to remove their property at 34390 Detroit Road from the Landmarks List, also known as the Historic Properties List. Mr. Conant stated that they intend to build a second house on their property and while it is under construction, they would like to live in their present house and when the new house is done, then they would demolish the old house. That is the plan at this point. The idea is that the house would be removed but they cannot get a variance to have two houses on one parcel and they need the variance while the house is on the Landmarks List, so it is really about getting the variance so they can have two houses on one parcel. Law Director John Gasior told them that they needed to go through this process first with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to get to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mrs. Conant stated that they have maintained that property beautifully for 33 years now and they do love it but they have decided that they would really like to build a home and the issues are that that particular house is probably not fit to continue to live in and grow old in. So they are trying to look ahead for the future. There are also issues with the road being widened and they really wish to be off the road. Traffic on Detroit Road is an annoyance; it is hard to live in a house that is so close to the road. So that was the thought in trying to construct a new house. They are intending to use a lot of the elements from the old house to construct a new house. Their intention is to leave the barn and the bridge so there will be the same sort of feel but the house will be set back and it will be a really beautiful design that would fit. They have 38 acres so they have to pick a spot that is relatively dry and in a buildable location. They would be

looking to build right at the back of the old house. If they were to parcel that out, they would essentially have their farmhouse right behind the other parcel so that is the reason that they did not want to do that. And the house needs a lot of repair. It looks alright from the outside but there is quite a bit of repair that needs to be done to the house.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. and Mrs. Conant if they believed that it is correctly listed as an Avon historic landmark? Mr. Conant said he did not think there was any doubt that the property is but is it the barn? The bridge? The house? Mr. White responded that it is everything together. The barn is not the landmark; it is part of it but it is not the landmark; the house is. With the bridge, it is just a beautiful thing. The house is a very popular house. Everybody loves that house and people are in disbelief that you want to tear it down. Mr. White said that he is listening to Mr. and Mrs. Conant and he understands but.... Mrs. Conant said that it is not so much that they want to tear the house down. It is that they have been there for these years and have decided to stay on their property and it would necessitate them having to carve that house out. They would not think of carving the barn, the house, and the bridge out.

Mr. Gault asked if they had looked into the idea of moving the structure and Mr. Conant said that they talked about moving the barn, about building to the back behind the pond and taking the barn back there with them, which would then leave the old house and then they could sell it. Mrs. Conant said, and if they did that, they would split up the landmark so it is kind of complex. It is not that they just want to tear everything down. They want to stay on their property but they need to upgrade and they wish to upgrade their living. Mr. Conant added, if they sold the house, they would sell it on the smallest parcel possible and that would not be to anybody's benefit. Mrs. Conant said, and it would not take the barn and the bridge with it; they would not even consider that. Mrs. Conant said, so she can see everybody's view but at the same time they would like to be able to utilize their property. Mr. Conant said, and the benefit to the City of them investing in a house there is going to prevent 50 homes going in there in a development. If they are not able to build this house where they want in a timely manner, then they will probably build it elsewhere which would probably mean a developer would buy their property.

Mr. Gault asked what their timeline was and Mr. Conant said that they would like to start this spring. Mrs. Conant added, which would mean it would be a year before the house would be coming down and that could change. We may get the house built and say we would rent the old house.

Mr. Smith noted that Mr. Conant had said that if they got the variance, they could live in their current house while they built. He asked, if that happened with the City, would that influence them more not to tear down the house and Mr. Conant said, no, not necessarily. They need somewhere to live so they cannot wait to tear the house down, move somewhere and then once the house is done, move into it. He added that the quickest way for them to go ahead to get the variance next month is to have the LPC remove them from the Landmark List.

Mr. White stated that obviously he would like to see them save the house. The Landmarks Preservation Commission is here to not only acknowledge landmarks but to protect them, and legally, it is kind of hard. It all depends on the city and how they operate. In Avon, we have the six-month moratorium, which he has wanted to extend over the last couple years. They have never had a situation like the Conants' where, to him, a perfectly good landmark wants to be off the list for demolition.

Mr. Gault stated that everything Mr. and Mrs. Conant is saying makes sense but it is difficult because everyone loves their house; it is awesome. Mr. Conant said, yes, they know but is the City better off with them staying there and providing the green space or for a developer coming in and buying up the property

for houses. Mrs. Conant said that they do not want to do a bad thing; it is just that they really want to build a new house on the property. Mr. Conant added that they are tired of living in an old house and there is nowhere really to build a new house on the property other than sort of behind the old house and further off the road of course.

Mr. Herdendorf stated that years ago he was very much in the same situation that the Conants are. Their home in Sheffield on Detroit Road was in the family but his grandfather lost it in the Depression. Twenty years ago they were able to get it back but it was in disrepair. So they obtained an architect/designer and decided how to make the house livable. They brought in a house trailer and from April to November, they lived in that while the house was being rebuilt. And they had the same idea as the Conants that they wanted to have the house be a place where they could live in their later years. They modernized the bathrooms and the kitchen but kept the old fireplaces, the old flooring, and all the woodwork. Mr. Herdendorf said he was just pointing this out as an example of something the Conants might want to explore with a designer and an architect.

Mr. White said that he knows that living close to Detroit Road is a challenge. Mrs. Conant said that is probably the deciding factor and Mr. Conant added, and you know they are widening it. Mrs. Conant said that they are sad about it because they love their property. Mr. Conant said, but it is an old house and they are tired of living in an old house. Mrs. Conant stated that if the house sat one side of the property or the other it would be easy to parcel it off but it takes up the whole expanse with the bridge and the barn and house. The landmark part of what their place is encompasses the frontage and that is the challenge.

Mr. White stated that the Law Director had probably told them about the six months moratorium. If we deny the demolition permit request now, then in six months you would get that. So we have talked about it and will take a vote on it, but we felt what we would do is to let them off the Landmark List and they are free to do what they want. Mr. White added that he would like them to take the application and fill it out, bring it back next month and with it, bring the historic plaque back. We will vote on it at that time.

Mr. Conant asked if they could fill out the application tonight and he would bring the plaque in tomorrow because they would like to get on the agenda for the next Zoning Board meeting the first week in March, and the LPC agreed to this. Mr. Conant noted that it is going to be over a year before the house is gone and Mrs. Conant added, and they need to restate the possibility that things could change. Mr. White stated, and that is why we are not going to give you a request for demolition so you will have time to think about it but you are off the Landmarks List and you can do whatever you want. Mr. Conant said, yes, we can at least move forward with getting the variance to have two houses on one parcel and then even after six months to a year, if a buyer came along with the right offer, they might sell it. Mr. Conant said that their intention is to keep the barn and the bridge.

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to remove 34390 Detroit Road from the Historic Properties Landmarks List. The vote was: Mr. White, "yes"; Mr. Gault, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Ms. Shinko, "no". The Chairman declared that the vote was officially to remove 34390 Detroit Road from the Historic Properties Landmarks List.

Discussion of North Ridge Scenic Byway Strategic Management Plan

Ms. Pitasky stated that things are progressing really well. She said that Randy Lane has been a huge help in this project. They received some feedback from ODOT and it looks like preliminarily we have passed.

She has spoken with the Mayor and probably in the spring, we will be setting up some photo ops with Mayor Jensen, Mayor Hunter, and possibly ODOT, at the beginning and at the end of the Scenic Byway to promote the Byway. Mayor Jensen was fully on board with that and he is fine with everything that we are doing.

Mr. Herdendorf reported that the Sheffield Village archaeology group had the first successful lecture regarding sites along the Scenic Byway. He said that they had 160 people in attendance on a snowy, nasty night and it was a fantastic lecture. He said that the second event is coming up next month and is an artifacts, mineral, rock, fossil identification day and is free to the public. So he said we have those two events but what he would like to do is give Avon the opportunity to have one of the lectures series here, perhaps at Avon Isle. Mr. Smith said, yes, let's look into that and he asked about a date. Mr. Herdendorf said that he was thinking in April or May and Ms. Pitasky said if he wanted to pick a few dates we can check the availability of the Isle and coordinate that. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Herdendorf what topic he would be contemplating and Mr. Herdendorf suggested staying with the topic of "Archaeology in Your Back Yard" and do another subtitle. He said they have two folks who might be speakers who got their Masters' degrees from Kent, one on the ceramics the Native Americans built and the other on the migration of Native Americans from Lake Erie up the streams of North Central Ohio. Mr. Smith then asked Ms. Pitasky if she would check on the Avon Isle and email Mr. Herdendorf a list of open dates and she said she would do that.

Ms. Shinko stated that she belongs to the Westlake Clague House Museum and they published a listing of their discussions. There might be some events that we would be interested in attending and she said that she would get that list and make copies for everyone.

Ms. Pitasky asked Mr. Lane if he had anything to add about the Scenic Byway and Mr. Lane said, no, he was just happy to know that Tom Barrett of ODOT answered all of their questions in a timely way. He asked what kinds of comments ODOT had or changes they requested and Ms. Pitasky said it was just minor detail stuff. Mr. Lane asked when ODOT would give a final approval and Ms. Pitasky answered that it sounded like it would be June. But they said that everything was fine, that it looked like we had a good committee formed, and had made a lot of progress in terms of making a commitment to the Byway and they were really pleased with it. So now she just needs a City signature basically approving everything that we did. Mr. White asked if we get the final approval in June, if we are good then for the next five years and Ms. Pitasky said, well, we have five years to implement the plan that we outlined. Mr. Lane added that we have to still keep letting ODOT know the things we are doing; they will come back and ask for another update in the next four or five years.

Mr. White said that he had told the Mayor that we have jumped through a lot of hoops for approval of the Byway and he thought that we have to get something from it. Mr. Lane said that the Scenic Byway is one of those programs that used to be seeded with some federal dollars for some capital projects and education, and even hiring staff to help support more tourism and marketing of the Byway. That money went away but on the federal side, there are a lot of folks out there that are interested in re-seeding a program like this with the next reauthorization. So it is always something where we could then capitalize on making some real improvement or marketing, interpretive things, hiring a manager, all kinds of different things. Ms. Pitasky said that when we applied for grants for along Detroit Road and when we are doing beautification, they do ask if this is on a Scenic Byway. She added that she appreciates everyone's efforts on this and she will keep them posted. Mr. Herdendorf mentioned that Ann Bort, who lives in the Moon House in Avon, is now Vice-President of the Sheffield Village archaeology group. She teaches art at Lake Ridge Academy and Mr. Herdendorf said, if everyone agrees, that he would like to talk

to her about designing a logo for us for the Byway; we can have a logo of our own. Everyone said yes, certainly, and they all thanked Ms. Pitasky for all her work on the Byway. Mr. White said if it were not for Ms. Pitasky, the approval probably would not have happened.

Certified Local Government

Mr. Smith said that Mr. White had asked him to bring up the Certified Local Government with the premise that if Avon would have that, that might be a tool for at least slowing down or preventing historic properties from being demolished. Mr. Smith said that he spoke to his father, Taylor Jack Smith, about it this past week and his father said it is not a good idea. He did not elaborate a whole lot, other than he said ultimately, it does not stop demolition of buildings and it puts on layers of restrictions that just make people angry. Mr. Herdendorf stated that he was hired as a consultant to go down to Columbus and talk to the people about CLG and so we put together a plan that they tentatively approved. A CLG entity allows you to get low cost loans and that is the real carrot if people want to restore a historic home or do some things like that. But it also gives you some teeth in trying to protect historic places, He said that Jack Smith did not like it because a five-member board was required and Mr. Herdendorf felt that the only way to get the CLG passed was for the Mayor or the Council to appoint at least one member and Jack Smith thought that would not happen, and so it just kind of died.

Mr. White said that the reason he talked about this with Matt Smith and asked him to revisit the idea is to try and prevent what we did tonight. There are some situations where we do not hold up demolition of a landmark because generally they are in pretty bad shape. You always vote to approve their request. He said that this time he really did not want to do that. Also, there have been some issues with the Stickney/Palmer House and it happened with the building codes. He said that in the near future he would like to go over some of the building codes that have something to do with historical properties because there are a couple of different areas in the codes where they could be looked at in different ways in regard to historical properties. He would like to look into that to see if we could come up with something. He suggested that sometime they might schedule to read the Building Code as a group. So he wanted to touch base with that and also with the Certified Local Government. Maybe to look at it again? Mr. Smith said that they could explore it. Mr. White noted that when it was reviewed the first time, we had a different City Council and a different Mayor; maybe now it would be different. He agrees that a lot of the things that are on the CLG he would not want to impose on people, such as the requirement for a slate roof or wood-framed windows, or clapboard siding that is wood. A lot of that is part of it but we could delete that; we would not have to use that.

Landmarks Letter of Recognition – Ralph White

Mr. White stated that he had none.

Landmark Nominations – Lois Shinko

Ms. Shinko said she did not have any nominations.

Comments

Mr. Lane thanked everyone for allowing him to participate.

Date of Next Meeting

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission would be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, in the Caucus Room of Avon City Hall at 7:00 P.M.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to adjourn the meeting and the vote was all ayes. The Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Transcribed by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council