

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, July 8, 2020**

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

Roll Call

Members: Present –Vice Chairman Ralph White; Clint Gault; Chairman Matt Smith
Member Lois Shinko arrived after roll call.

Guests: Paula Pitasky, City of Avon Community Liaison Consultant
Rick and Anca Obid

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, March 11, 2020

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, March 11, 2020, and approve said minutes as published. The vote was all ayes and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

Demolition Permit for 3410 Stoney Ridge Road

Rick and Anca Obid presented photos, drawings, etc. of the house they own at 3410 Stoney Ridge Road. Mr. Obid stated that for several years they had looked for a house in Avon with one or two acres where they could build a swimming pool. Finally a realtor friend found this property for them. He told them that the lot had a house on it and since the Obids were not ready to build right now, he suggested they just buy the property and maybe they could rent the house. Mr. Obid said that after they purchased the house, they kept it empty as they did not have time to work on it and then last December they were contacted by the Water Department and told that the house had water in it.

Mr. Smith apologized that he had neglected to have Mr. and Mrs. Obid take an oath. He then swore them in as follows: “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. Obid answered, “yes”.

Ms. Pitasky asked if it was a historical home and Mr. White responded that it was on the list of historical places in Avon. The City did not make that list; back when the Landmarks Preservation Commission started, an independent person went through and did an inventory of Avon properties and that house was included. Ms. Obid said that she called the Historical Society twice and they told her the house was not on the list. Mr. White stated that she talked to the wrong people because he is the President of the Historical Society. He noted that there is a plaque on the front of the house. Ms. Obid said that she saw the plaque and mentioned this in her telephone call. Mr. White said that it is not a problem. He would like the plaque back if that is possible and Mr. Obid said, yes, of course. Mr. Obid stated that when they heard about the water they told the Water Department that nobody was in the house and asked if they could cut off the water and they said they could. They have kept the house in shape and have hired someone to cut the grass.

Mr. Obid stated that when they went there they were surprised by the amount of mold. Mr. White asked how the water got in there. Were the pipes leaking? Mr. Obid said that they are not sure; first of all, water is filling up in the basement. The house is in two parts and basically has two basements. In the one part, the electricity shut off and the water started freezing. He said that he could not go in the basement

to investigate but took pictures. There was heat in the house because they got electric bills so it should not have frozen. The sump pumps failed to stop all this water. Each basement has different levels; one is higher than the other. Ms. Obid said that another bad thing is that the house is right next to the road. Mr. Obid added that their house is the only house that is very close to the sidewalk in front of the house.

Mr. Smith announced that Lois Shinko, the fourth member of the Commission, had arrived.

Mr. Gault stated that the role of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is to protect those houses that need to be protected and deserve to be protected, but public nuisances are not to be protected. He said they appreciated Mr. and Mrs. Obid doing the right things in this situation. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Obid if he had the demolition form for him to sign and Mr. Obid said, yes, he had it.

Mr. Smith pointed out the pictures to Ms. Shinko, showing the severe black mold and water damage in the house and asked if she had seen enough to vote, and Mrs. Shinko said, yes.

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to approve a demolition permit to be issued. The vote was all ayes and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

Mr. Smith explained to Mr. and Mrs. Obid that they should take the signed demolition form to the Building Department and then they would give them the demolition permit. Coming to this meeting was just the first step in the process.

Landmarks Letter of Recognition – Ralph White

Mr. White stated that he did have a letter of recognition for this month and that was for Adam and Sarah Petrucci for their house on the northeast corner of Detroit Road and Moon Road. They bought the house in the last couple years and have done an outstanding job of fixing it up. It was fixed up in the past and was starting to fail again. When they bought it, they contacted us to see what was involved with historical properties because they were concerned. We told them they could fix it up and do what they want; we just requested and hoped that they would keep it historical architecture, which they did.

Landmark Nominations – Lois Shinko

Ms. Shinko said that she did not have any nominations but she has been thinking about the area on the other side of the bridge on Detroit Road. It is a beautiful area; all the homes are gorgeous along that strip and she was thinking that we should make them part of a historical district. Mr. White clarified that this was the section from the Avon Brewing Company down to the high school. He said probably mostly from French Creek Road west to the high school but you could actually include Buck Hardware, the Avon Brewing Company, and Avon Isle as part of it also. He said he did not know that a Historic District is necessary but if Ms. Shinko wanted to do the legwork she could do it; there are a few property owner changes that have happened in the last ten years. He knows they wanted to do that years ago and people that owned the properties did not want it, although some people were for it. Ms. Pitasky asked if they were against it because of building restrictions and Mr. White said he did not really know. He thought it was not so much building restrictions as much as it was for investment and how it affects the value of the property when it sells. Some of the properties were commercial and there were some people who were quite adamant.

Mr. Gault thought it is all part of what the land is going to be used for but if somebody wants to buy land and their plan is to tear a structure down, that designation is seen as a hindrance, and they would ask themselves what they were getting themselves into. Part of it too is that the Mayor and the City have

been very supportive in the process of trying to beautify the French Creek District, so that there is a feeling that it is different than other areas, and we have made a lot of progress on that. The flowers down Detroit Road this year are fantastic and the coverings for the containers look incredible; they really class it up a lot. He sees people walking all the time now and enjoying the flowers. We have more banners signifying that you are entering the French Creek District, emphasizing the uniqueness, and in the future we will have the lights down the District which will have that antique charm look and feel to them. The more things we do to beautify and make it charming, quaint, and unique, the more people will want to protect and preserve the charm of this area. So these steps that we are making and the City is making, with the Mayor's support and backing, are helping to beautify the area for the future. So good progress has been made.

Mr. White said, as far as the Historical District, it is possible that you would actually take it to Rt. 83. However, that would be a lot of work and even if you did that and made it a Historical District in that area, he was not sure that it would preserve things. Ms. Shinko stated that there is a church there and a lot of nice places and she was just thinking that she would not want Pizza Hut to move in. Mr. White said that she could probably bring about a Historical District; she would have to get everybody's approval. Mr. White said he would give an example of a disappointment. There is a Historical District on Center Ridge, from about Stoney Ridge Road west; actually it might even be from Rt. 83 west to Maddock Road. The signs are still posted but if you notice what has been going on the last two years there, there has been a total disregard for anything historical and most everything has been torn down or is being sold as commercial. All those century homes that are between Stoney Ridge and Maddock are kind of blighted right now. This is unfortunate but he did not think that a Historical District helped them and that is his point. Not that it would not help ours but sometimes efforts do not make a difference.

Ms. Shinko stated that she did not know where she would start to talk about it but you think about it because it could happen. Mr. White said, and actually going down Stoney Ridge Road all the way to Kinzel is pretty historic. You have St. Mary's Church, the Baptist Church, Old Town Hall, the barbershop, and all the century homes on both sides of the road all the way down to the pond. It basically has been untouched; all of that has been there for well over 100 years. So he said to Ms. Shinko that it is something to think about if she wanted to do the legwork. She should start by making sure that everybody wanted to do it and get signatures and then go from there.

Ms. Pitasky stated that it might be better to do a historical core of Avon with a designated Historical District if people are concerned about resale or property values and how it would be marketed. There could be a little map that people could follow. Mr. Smith said that Oberlin has an app that is available on your phone. He was in Oberlin a couple years ago and he had read about this app in the paper. He went into the library there and one of the workers set it up on his phone and he started walking on a self-guided tour, using the app. Ms. Pitasky said that she has connected with that group in Oberlin who has done this. That app is programmed and is not expensive and we could link it here with the oral histories that the library is doing. We offer such a rich history that would be an attraction for tourism; that could be a future project for us.

Comments

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Pitasky about the status of the Scenic Byway. He said the last email had noted that everything was approved. Ms. Pitasky said yes, we are approved; we have a few things that we are supposed to do by 2021 but we will take a breather for right now. Mr. Smith stated, and we can discuss those things at the LPC meetings because it does fall under this group and by having the North Ridge Scenic Byway, that preserves the buildings on it; by having that designation, it gives a layer of protection

to those buildings, so definitely that is something we can discuss at our meetings. Mr. Smith thanked Ms. Pitasky for all her efforts in getting the designation and Mr. White added that she had done a great job.

Mr. White stated that after all of their hopes and excitement about the Stickney House when the owner started fixing it up, now it is for sale. The owner called him and told him that he is selling it but if he does not get what he wants for it, he said he will keep it. Mr. White thought, though, that his plans for restoring the house and finishing it are on the back burner and he would really like to sell it. So you know what that means; it probably will not survive if somebody buys it. Of course it could; he has done enough to it to where somebody could see a little hope. He thought that the building codes were very discouraging for him. Mr. White said that he was very disappointed because he thought that another historic home had been saved and an important one too. Technically he thought that house was eligible for National Register because of who the man was who built it. He was a Revolutionary War veteran and he and his whole family are buried in the Mound Cemetery. So just that alone and the idea that the house was 1836, he thought it would be eligible and basically it still looks original. It is not really ruined with modernization.

Ms. Shinko asked about the demolition of the “bridge house” on Detroit Road and Mr. White said that is still in limbo. We removed the house from the landmarks list and as far as Mr. White knows, the owner had not applied for a demolition permit so maybe he has changed his mind.

Mr. Smith stated that the work on the museum at the Cahoon House is stalled right now as Sheri Seroka, who was in charge of the work, has been furloughed by the City. We do not know when Ms. Seroka will resume working so that is where that stands right now. Mr. White asked about landscaping and grounds maintenance and things that desperately need to be done at the Cahoon House. Mr. Smith stated that he talked to Rick Varga about three weeks ago and he was going up there to do something with the landscaping. Mr. Smith said he is going to see him next week and he will ask him. Mr. White said, yes, ask him because there is so much that needs to be done. The grounds are really overgrown, there is moss and algae growing, the house needs gutters and pressure washing, and the fence needs to be removed. So many things need to be done and he was just wondering what the plans were. He said they are not faulting it; with the Coronavirus and the shutdown, it has kind of put things on hold. Mr. Smith said that he ran into Service Director Mike Farmer about a week and a half ago and he was doing something with the electrical system at the Cahoon House. Mr. Smith asked him about putting in a security system and Mr. Farmer said they were going to be doing that. He also told Mr. Smith that he was going to be sending him some samples of tile or shingles for the Old Town Hall. Mr. White stated that he had talked to Mr. Farmer today and is supposed to meet with him in the next couple days to look at what their plan is for the Old Town Hall roof. It is going to be a 30-year asphalt shingle and that is fine with him.

Date of Next Meeting

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission would be held on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, at 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