SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
EVANSTON PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 23, 2018,
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Room 2800
7:00 P.M.

Members Present: Robert Bady, Elliott Dudnik, Julie Hacker, Sally Riessen Hunt, Ken Itle, Jamie Morris, Mark Simon, Tim Schmitt, Karl Vogel and Diane Williams

Members Absent: Suzi Reinhold,

Staff Present: Scott Mangum, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Carlos Ruiz, Preservation Coordinator

Presiding Member: Diane Williams, Chair

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm with a quorum present.

Chair Williams proceeded with the explanation of meeting ground rules and standards for review of demolition.

2. NEW BUSINESS – PUBLIC HEARING

2603 Sheridan Rd. Harley Clarke Mansion (L) – Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager, applicant. Demolition of the Harley Clarke mansion and coach house. Applicable Standards: [Demolition 1-6].

City Manager Bobkiewicz provided a brief history of the property:

- 1927 - House built. Harley Clarke lived there.
- 1965-2015 – City purchased the property and leased the mansion to the Evanston Arts Center (EAC).
- 2011 – City Council directed City Staff to identify other uses for the mansion
2012-2013 – The City issued an RFP for the use of the property. The City received one response from Tawani to purchase and renovate the property. In 2013 the City Council rejected the proposal.

2013-2015 – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approached the City about relocating state programs to Harley Clarke; change in governorship resulted in request being withdrawn.

2015 - Citizens Committee was formed to study uses for the mansion. Report is made to City Council. City Council discontinued any further discussions.

2016 - City Council approves proposal for City to keep property and allocate $250,000 for improvements. Those improvements were made to the two Fog Houses adjacent to the mansion. Harley Clarke Planning Committee was formed to discuss next steps.

2017 - RFPs Issued Seeking Qualified Non-Profit Entity to lease the mansion; One response received from Evanston Lakehouse and Gardens (ELHG)

2018 – City Council rejected the lease.

June – August 2018 - Evanston Lighthouse Dunes (ELD) proposes to fund demolition of the Harley Clarke Mansion and Coach House. City Council approves an MOU with ELD and proceeds with filing the Certificate of Appropriateness application required to demolish the mansion.

City Manager Bobkiewicz continued presenting the standards for review of demolition in the City Code Title 2, Section 2-8-9 (D) 4.

- The Harley Clarke mansion and coach house are not prime examples of one particular architectural style or design.
- The design can be reproduced, which is a standard that permits demolition.

And City Code Title 2, Section 2-8-9 (D)
- The buildings require a significant amount of financial expenditures to resolve current property code violations.
- Financial hardship must be considered as reason for demolition.

City Manager Bobkiewicz listed the building’s physical deteriorating condition and building code deficiencies as follows:

**DETERIORATING CONDITION**

- Evanston Arts Center did not perform the necessary maintenance, repair or renovation work needed to keep the mansion in proper working condition.
- Main house remains vacant; the coach house is in extremely deteriorated condition.
- Current state presents a danger to persons inhabiting or visiting the property.
- A 2012 & 2015 building inspection identified multiple mechanical and plumbing code violations resulting in repair estimates from $430,000 to $600,000. Repairs would only make the house code-compliant as a single family home. Achieving building code compliance for a new stated use would trigger additional repairs/remodeling based on that specified use (ex. bathroom count per floor, accessibility, etc.)
MECHANICAL AND PLUMBING CODE VIOLATIONS
Walk through inspection was conducted to assess plumbing and mechanical systems on November 6, 2015. The following violations were identified:
• RPZ backflow preventer is leaking.
• Likely require boiler replacement and new radiator on third floor.
• Second and third floor bathroom remodel to meet ADA requirements.
• Suspected asbestos in basement boiler mains.

ELECTRICAL CODE VIOLATIONS
• Replace all painted and worn lighting switches and receptacle devices.
• Open wiring found on all levels of the property, including missing junction box covers, lighting outlets, and Wiremold raceway fittings.
• Provide Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter for all receptacles within 6’ of water.
• Replace incandescent track lighting and fluorescent fixtures with high efficacy luminaires.
• Repair ungrounded receptacles on first and second floors. Need to identify issue for missing ground and fix or risk an electrical fire.

City Manager Bobkiewicz concluded his presentation citing City Code Section 2-8-9(D) 6:
• The demolition of the buildings will result in open lakefront land which will restore the original condition of the property to its natural state.
• Represents the lakeshore in the early days when no buildings were present.

Chair Williams acknowledged communications in favor of retaining the mansion or denial of the certificate of appropriateness for demolition from: Aaron Packman; Beth Lange; Allison Toonen-Talamo and Sebastian Koprowski; Paul Janicki; Peter Babaian; Sara Schastok; Bonnie McDonald from Landmarks Illinois; Allen Letter, Former Executive Director of the Arts Center; Anne Sullivan, Program Chair in Historic Preservation of the Art Institute; Preservation League of Evanston (Mary Brugliera, Paul Janicki, Emily Guthrie and Sheryl Connelly); and Neal Vogel from Restoric

PUBLIC COMMENT
- Bonnie McDonald, President and CEO of Landmarks Illinois – Have assisted Evanston resident for four years to save the Harley Clarke mansion and develop a re-use plan. They urge the Commission to deny the City's request the COA to demolish the mansion. The Mansion is an Evanston designated landmark for which the City is charged with protecting. It is listed in the National Register of historic places. The City’s application is flawed and erroneously presenting that the buildings are a danger to persons and repairing it requires great difficulty or expense. There is no evidence to support this. The application describes the building in good working order and needing minor inexpensive repairs. An updated examination by appropriate experts is necessitated. A request to access the building with experts architects, engineers and contractors to examine the mansion’s interior and exterior condition was denied by City Council. Many experts will demonstrate this evening
that the mansion continues to meet the Evanston landmark criteria and there is no cause to award a certificate of appropriateness (COA) for its demolition. Asked the Commission to vote to deny the demolition application
- Tony Borich, Attorney representing Landmarks Illinois - Access should be provided, objected to the proceeding, requested findings in writing; do not believe assertions by CMO were supported.
- Lisa DiChiera, Landmarks Illinois – Cited Standards 1 and 2 – demolition will result in loss of heritage, architecture and landscape, a poor precedent for historic preservation. Preservation of the mansion relates to jobs, economic investment and the environment
- Anne McGuire, architect - concurred with other comments. She was hired in 2012 by the City to evaluate code compliance, no major deficiencies found. The mansion is safe and repairable
- Stuart Cohen, read statement from Susan Benjamin (architectural historian) - opposed to demolition; one of 42 properties included in book of North Shore, Chicago Houses of Lake front Suburbs, which include an essay on the Clarke house
- Julia Bachrach, consultant and author – Stated demolition should be denied based on 4 standards – the Jens Jensen’s landscape is among one the most important historic landscapes resources that remain today
- Audrey Niffenegger – Harley Clarke is an important cultural and history place for artists
- Tom Hodgman ELHG - cultural significance and future of the mansion, 1500 supporters, over 140 donations to re-use the mansion, 2000 individuals signed a petition asking the City Council to not demolished the building
- Michelangelo Sabatino, IIT - Demolition will attract negative attention, standards 1, 2, 3 are relevant when arguing against demolition- deprive an important part of their collective memory, it is part of the shoreline, demolition undermines the preservation ordinance
- Neil Vogel - estimate to repair steel windows overstated, the detailing on the home is special and better than any other landmark
- Paul Janicki - #1 archaeological significance the mansion is the entry to Evanston from North, few examples left in region, #4 cannot be reproduced
- Ed Gernes - #5 – building is in good condition
- Peter Babaian, structural engineer - observed exterior, no structural damage and not in imminent danger
- Brad White - Embarrassed by the City’s presentation, it shows lack of respect for the Preservation Commission and for this process. The City did not address the standards. #6 there is no plan for future
- Emily Barton, works for City of Chicago for the Historic Preservation Division- wrote master’s thesis on Harley Clarke, in building once, the required repairs and restoration is no different than what is typically needed. She cited adaptive reuse for the mansion as it was done with historic building in Chicago
- Mary McWilliams – In 1981 the Harley Clarke mansion was designated a landmark under three criteria: high quality of design; exemplify the work of a prominent architect; and exhibited distinctive design. (1) Demolishing the building will be detrimental to the public interest; (2) Architectural historian Susan Benjamin
declared the Harley Clarke house to be the grandest French eclectic style house in the Northeast Evanston historic district

- Virginia Beatty – Harley Clarke sits of five acres, which is part of 1,280 acres that were to a native American woman in 1829. Think about history, what’s been there and what would this history be if the Harley Clarke is torn down. Could be a monument to women who have built Evanston

- Karl Klein – Referred to the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, cited and relied on by the Illinois Appellate Court in 2015 as a codified plan. “...Evanston should seek to preserve the structures and environments which have given the community much of its physical appeal and special visual character…”

- Lori Keenan - represent those in support of saving building, citizens have volunteered to pay $15K annual maintenance, working to reuse with state officials to re-use Harley Clarke

- Sarah Shastok – Talked about the distinctive features of house, fine architecture provides spaces that go beyond mere shelter, they house our spirits while encouraging them to roam and to soar, and this is what happens at Harley Clarke as a public building, and offers such experiences to our community

- Allison Talamo - Assessed structural foundation and landscape. At a community in the same situation, they developed a history and support system for their property, now is thriving and generating more business than anticipated. Harley Clarke should be treated as a gem and rarity.

- Gregory Dowell, architect - report from Landmarks Illinois, the condition of Harley Clarke does not meet standard 5; it is not unsafe or imminently hazardous, and can be restored. It should mothballed if can’t be reuse now

- Nicole Kustok, Lighthouse Dunes Group – by removing both structures at 2603 Sheridan Rd. would be preserving the lakefront and spotlighting the Grosse Pointe lighthouse, a National Historic Landmark. It is obstructed from the public view by the Harley Clarke home and coach house. There are three options to fund operation costs: taxes, philanthropy or commercialization. No one wants raise taxes to support the house. Removing Harley Clarke results in parkland, freely accessible and equitable for all of Evanston

- Evy Russell - Lighthouse not obstructed, taxes not affected because of funds to maintain it, maintenance cost are $150,000 and $200,000 has been raised. The house is not a danger

- Mario Machnicki, stone mason - Travelled the world and found unusual details in the building. His work today is training masons; unfortunately there are no masons that could build such a beautiful building. The materials from mortar to the brick to the style or technique of setting these are very unusual materials. The building is a sanctuary to learn about the traits of the past and craftsmanship

- Tom Riley – They chose to live in Evanston because its reputation as preservation City. There are better alternatives than tearing down the building

- Barb Riley - attended Open House Chicago and viewed other repurposed buildings, They own a building older than Harley Clarke and they are held to higher standards than City

- Allie Harned – With Save Harley Clarke formed in July 2018, they gathered in 10 days over 3,300 signatures. They received donations from Oregon, New York,
Pennsylvania and more. The building is not a teardown. Harley Clarke could became an economic engine for a thriving community

- Jen Shadur - Harley Clarke self-made man, philanthropist for the arts, educational pioneer for film in education. In 1918 Mr. Clarke stared the Society for Visual Education and funded a study in Evanston schools, including Foster School. This study proved the worth of motion pictures in education, its curriculum was roll put nationwide in 1931

- Ray Friedman - Agree with others, except Ms. Kustok. The residents want to save the mansion and use the mansion. It would not cost anything extra to the City because it is privately funded

- Betty Esther – Learned about the building when she moved to Evanston 26 years ago. The photo of Harley Clarke was used promoting affordable house as a ‘dream house,’ but then the message would say, ‘but this is the house one could afford with the program.’

- Madeline Gelis, Emeritus Board of Landmarks Illinois - Einstein quotes: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” Would Einstein be in favor of demolishing a mansion for the opportunity of more lawn? – “It’s not that I am so smart, it’s just that I stay with problem longer.” She appealed to Evanston elected officials to allow citizens of Evanston stay with this problem longer and help them solve it

- Patrick Donnelly, ELHG - Film producer - What will Commission do when overruled, the building is not unsafe, money available for other projects, money could have been raised during the last three years for the building

- Jeff Smith - Standard 5 – The building is not only usable but it has been used for many events from 2009-2015, it is not unsafe. The building was in condition when the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) made an offer to buy the property building. DNR believes in conservation. The building is sound and original

- Bennett Johnson – Talking about returning the property to its natural state, as a child he lived on Milburn St. as child. A picture with his sisters and cousins facing the water, and there was no beach. The idea to returning to its natural state is a fallacy. Regarding demolition, there was a limit suggested and passed by City Council to demand that the Dunes group pay for all the cost, it was not included in the memorandum of understanding. Therefore there is no limit. The cost may eventually be held by the City for the demolition. Restoring the building will create an economic engine, not only jobs but income and activity that will bring money into the City and people. If the building is saved it will have public access to all the people

- Ben Gasbarra - Demolition shouldn’t be considered when adaptive reuse is a possibility, it is unique building for small group programming. He read a letter from One Community Museum a group interested in the property. Their mission is to build a national network of community-based facilities museums which offer the public equitable opportunities for experiential learning

City Manager Bobkiewicz clarified that the City Council allocated for the building, $250,000, that money was instead used in the Fog Houses restoration.
COMMISSION’S FINDINGS
In response to Commissioner Bady’s question, Alex Ruggie, Assistant City Attorney, said the Commission is approving or denying the certificate of appropriateness, a final administrative decision, or the applicant can revise their application and bring it back. Chair Williams said the applicant could also apply for economic hardship, or special merit, or appeal to the City Council.

Commissioner Dudnik asked what was the City doing regarding the maintenance of the mansion’s exterior? City Manager Bobkiewicz said the maintenance was mostly on window issues and moisture entering the building. Commissioner Dudnik said there are no hazardous conditions and that the code violations cited in the report are trivial. City Manager Bobkiewicz said the City stands by the 2012 and 2015 reports.

Chair Williams said after her visit to the building and reading the City’s report, she did not find any issues associated with the physical condition that would necessitate its demolition. The features in the interior of the building are quite extraordinary as is the exterior. Looking at it as a historic resource, it does not meet standards of demolition 1, 2, 4 and 5 at all. The application did not address those factors.

Commissioner Schmitt referred to the 2012 McGuire Igleski report (pages 5-9), and standard 5 – the repairs and the hazardous conditions. He did not find anything to support that in the City’s report, specifically on page 8, it starts with “No major structural deficiencies were observed in the EAC. The conditions observed are generally a result of deferred maintenance and material degradation.” The interior of the house appears to be in good structural condition. There is no mention of anything that speaks of public hazard.

Commissioner Schmitt said the quote for $430,000 on page 331 of the packet; is a preliminary budget for code compliance and it says that ‘this is the minimum code upgrades for no change in use.’ In other words the EAC stays. Other costs include improving the kiln room and the basement for extra ventilation and fire compliance. The report also talks about what budget would be required for providing other business use, and it is $265,000. So it seems to be some discrepancies in the application and what is referenced in terms of economic hardship.

Chair Williams said standard 1 gets to the issue of what the Commission does and its statement of purpose is in terms of preserving, protecting, enhancing and encouraging rehabilitation of buildings.

Commissioner Dudnik said the Weiss Janney report indicates that the condition of the mansion is as good. He cited Mary McWilliams' document that addresses each standard very effectively.

Commissioner Morris said her interpretation of standard 3 is that tearing down something that’s designated locally as a local landmark, is contrary to the objectives of historic preservation.
Commissioner Vogel said that it is critical that people see the inside of the house. He said the interior of the house is incredible. He said the City’s proposal does not meet any of the standards.

Commissioner Bady said that he visited the Harley Clarke mansion last Saturday for the first time, it was breath taking. He was struck by the building. Regarding standard 5, he did not see where the building was structurally unsound.

Commissioner Riessen Hunt said that she evaluates buildings for site, structure and interiors, doing property condition assessments as a professional architect. She was in the building on Saturday, and saw very little, if any, structural damage.

Commissioner Hacker said that she was very concerned that the building is not being maintained in any way. Continued delay on just its maintenance, will continue the building’s deterioration.

Commissioner Itle said that he saw nothing that was presented to justify the demolition under any of these five standards. The first four all relate to its significance, architectural character and uniqueness. It is very clear that it’s a significant building and piece of architecture and it’s a unique design. It would be great loss to the City if it were demolished. Under standard 5, he agreed with many of the other experts and that it’s in surprisingly sound condition and could very easily be protected and mothballed for five or even ten years, while figuring out what the right permanent use and the right permanent organization to use the building would be, and come up with that renovation plan. It is unfortunate that the last 50 years the City hasn’t done what they should have to probably maintain it as well as it could have easily been, but it still is very salvageable and very repairable.

Chair Williams agreed with Commissioner Itle on the issue of mothballing the building. She did not see where there is a real imperative or need to demolish the structure at this point. Examples of mothballing buildings for years have been mentioned, and have ultimately found their use, as long as that use isn’t dictated. It needs to fundamentally be market based. She said in terms of the findings of fact, the Commission found that the City’s application does not meet any of the standards.

Chair Williams said that as part of any motion, is to request that the Commission’s findings of fact is based on the discussion the Commission had tonight, and ask staff to prepare a report to that effect, and that it would be reviewed at the November meeting, and then submitted to the City Manager’s office and to the Council.

Commissioner Dudnik asked about the Commissioners’ notes about their visit to Harley Clarke. Chair Williams said it was done not as meeting. The City’s legal counsel may weigh in on that. Tony Borish’s statement will be shared with legal.
Commissioner Itle made a motion to deny the application for certificate of appropriateness for demolition of the Harley Clarke mansion and coach house, demolition standards 1-5 apply and none have been met by the application, and direct staff to prepare a report of the Commission's findings of fact. The draft of the report to be reviewed at the November 13th Preservation Commission’s meeting, seconded by Commissioner Simon.


The motion passed 10-0.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Itle made a motion to adjourn the special meeting at 9:25 pm on Tuesday, October 23, 2018, seconded by Commissioner Bady. The motion passed 10-0.

Respectfully Submitted

Carlos D. Ruiz
Senior Planner/Preservation Coordinator

The next Preservation Commission meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, November 13, 2018.