

City of Portage – Historic District Commission  
Wednesday- February 3, 2016  
Portage City Hall – Conference Room #2

Meeting Called to Order at 8:30 AM

**Present:** Katie VanLonkhuyzen, Suzanne Nemeth, Collin Forrest, John Lotz, Jesse Duniphin, Erica Eklov, Martha Maytnier

**Absent:** Russell Randall, James Ebert, Fred Grunert

**Guests:** Carl Kunda and Jordan Bartle from Full Circle Communities

**Old Business:**

Minutes from regular meeting of January 6, 2016 approved without changes.

**New Business:**

Presentation and discussion of Selinon Park, a new development proposed by Full Circle Communities that includes properties located at 1521, 1603, and 1605 E. Centre.

- **1521 East Centre Avenue is a single-family historic home. It is proposed that this home will be retained and used as the on-site manager residence.**
- Local, state and federal funding sources will be used to provide for residents with (1) physical and sensory impairments and other special needs that require barrier free units, (2) for under-housed, working families burdened with housing costs, and (3) for households with annual incomes between 30-60% of area median income.
- The building nearest East Centre Avenue frontage will be three stories and consist of 48 units. The southern portion of this building will be one-story and provide community and property management areas. In addition, the one-story portion of the building incorporating the community and property management space has been designed to appear as an office building to be consistent with the office corridor designation of East Centre Avenue.
- Two additional townhouse buildings to the north will be two-story and contain 13 units per building.
- All buildings include varied rooflines and other building materials intended to add interest and also reflect local design.
- Buildings will be constructed of high-quality, durable materials designed to reduce maintenance and replacement costs.
- Exterior materials will include brick, masonry, and fiber cement siding in various colors and textures.
- **The project will be developed in one phase. It is expected that construction will begin in March 2017 and conclude in March 2018.**

**1521 East Centre Avenue Historic Residential Building and Barn**

- Full Circle Communities is aware that a Certificate of Appropriateness is needed from the Portage Historic District Commission before the start of construction.
- Encroachment onto this historic property has intentionally been minimized.
- Full City Communities is aware that in addition to the home, an historic barn accessory to the property recently collapsed and has been removed from the property.
- Prior to this proposal from Full Circle Communities, HDC was negotiating replacement of the barn with Davis, the current property owner.
- Full City Communities is aware that receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission is contingent on replacement of the prior barn with a structure similar in design to the original structure or the possible relocation to the historic property of a barn currently located at 1603 East Centre Avenue that is of the appropriate age and design of the barn that has been removed from the property.

### **Old Business:**

3221 W. Milham (Nieuwenhuis)/ barn:

- On January 30, 2016, a letter was sent to the Nieuwenhuis' outlining items of concern and clarification that were discussed during a conference call to Matt Nieuwenhuis at the December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 HDC meeting.
- HDC has nothing to review, there has been no further communication from the property owners.

5720 Oakland (Vergunst)/barn and outbuildings:

- Noted that property owners had removed a pool, fence and poured concrete foundation to the property.
- No further communication about the barn and outbuildings.

2663 Mandigo (Kiley)/ house & outbuildings:

- Code enforcement still on-going.

8007 Cox Drive (Kasten)/ building designation

- No news

### **New Business:**

10234 East Shore (Giem) / property status

- Nothing has been done.
- Airstream still parked on property.
- Windmill needs maintenance.
- Original house is gone. Current house using the foundation.
- Entire barn is NOT original. Only the part facing the house. The Garage and silo were added to original structure.

Train Barn (on same property)

- City Manager toured the property to explore how the concept could be preserved.
- There has been no public access to the barn for 7-8 years.
- Downstairs there is a retail shop with merchandise stock still in place. Upstairs there are model train displays.
- Structure is not compatible with ADA access guidelines.
- There has been some slight damage to the building that would need repairs, and other possible safety issues.
- If the city were to take over the project, code infringements would have to be addressed.
- Question about whether the property could be run privately without adherence to current codes under the “grandfather” designation.

#### Non-historic Property Development Inquiry

- 12 acres
- House is historical but does not have an HDC designation. (Note\* about 16 properties originally identified by the HDC – not part of original designation.)
- Owned by trust – owner passed.
- Property owners would like to move the house.
- Property has a barn built in the 1880’s.
- Property also has several other out-buildings that may have historic value. Fellow district property owners might be interested in possibly moving some of the out-buildings to their properties.

#### **Other Business:**

##### On-going discussions:

- Should HDC have a newsletter?
- Should HDC hold an annual event highlighting something to do with historic preservation?
- Property assignments for committee members to be on the agenda for March meeting.
- Proposed amendment to 1970 Public Act 169, the law that allows local Michigan communities to protect their history throughout local historic districts.

On January 27, 2016, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network issued a press release informing citizens that Rep. Chris Afendoulis, R-Grand Rapids and Sen. Peter McGregor, R-Rockford, planned to introduce legislation that would weaken protection afforded to Michigan’s historic districts.

Significantly, the proposed amendment would: (1) dispose of current process for dissolving historic districts, allowing local legislative bodies to eliminate local historic districts without guidelines or justification or community input. (2) Change the appeals process for an aggrieved property owner within a district, removing review by a third party, the State Historic Preservation Review Board. (3) Automatically dissolves historic districts after 10 years.

A letter **against** support for this amendment was sent (on behalf of the City Manager) to Senator Margaret O'Brien and Representative Brandt Iden.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.  
Submitted by Martha Deming Maytnier