

Matawan Historical Sites Commission
Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 7pm
Matawan Municipal Community Center Conference Room

Call to Order: 7:05pm

Roll Call

Members present: Kurtis Roinestad, Barry Orr, Lorraine Arnold, Gail Chester, Janilee Yanny
Council liaison: Steven Russell
Recording Secretary: Amy Denholtz Lewandowski
Public Members: Reggie Hawn, Guy Buckel, Suzanne Reynolds, Jason Peist, Daisy Orr, Cathy Zavorskas, Mark Chidichimo, John Lazar, Borough Administrator Ryan Michelson, Andrew Scibor, Antonio Scibor, Patrick Lesbirec AIA Architect (Brick City Reconstruction)

Presentation on the Ryer House

Architect Patrick Lesbirec provided an architectural summary and update on the Ryer House, 226 Main Street, noting his and the property owner's considerable interest and investment in maintaining the historic character of the building, and his experience and expertise with historic homes. He described the slate roof and substantial costs associated with replacing with slate, as well as alternatives such as cedar-imitation with a similar look, and asked whether the commission would endorse that for the Planning Board. Curved slate costs significantly more now than in 2019 when the project was first proposed.

Owner Andrew Scibor stated that when they purchased the building they didn't expect to change the roof but what's best for the building is to seal it, make it watertight, and then remove the slate but the slate wouldn't be reusable.

Mr. Lesbirec estimated that pre-COVID the roof replacement would cost \$60,000-\$70,000 and now would be about \$150,000 because finding a contractor to do slate work in this area is challenging. Agreed to look at the Diaz House.

Mr. Lesbirec proceeded to discuss the siding, and noted their focus on the longevity of building. Commented that there is no doctrine to govern the maintenance of this structure with an unknown owner if the property changes hands. At the heart of this plan, wood maintenance is extreme and a better alternative would be Hardie board plank, which is a composite of paper and concrete that's more durable than wood and comes with a 50-year warranty.

Jason Peist asked about an alternative, DaVinci. Suggested that if the siding is ripped off the Hardie board would be the better product for longevity.

Mr. Scibor responded that from far it's indistinguishable if it's slate or shingle. Mr. Lesbirec noted they've kept the wood detailing, replacing wood in-kind with wood.

Mr. Peist commented that maintaining the front and detailing is most important to the look of the building. Removing heavy slate can also lengthen the life of a roof.

Ms. Zavorskas noted the roof includes two different colors of slate.

Mr. Lesbirec proceeded to discuss the windows, noting the Planning Board approved vinyl windows. They're considering the option to restore windows in-kind, which would be an historic benefit, and could install storm windows on the front, with a matching clear glass panel.

Chairman Roinestad noted that the Burrowes Mansion restoration had that option. Thinks most people would be more interested in the façade. If the historic façade is always maintained, don't expect a lot of pushback from this board; the priority is to maintain the overall look. If the

commission is asked to write a recommendation to Planning/Zoning, then the commission wants to know the specifics like color matching, trim. The commission wants to see this project completed as it's the most recognizable house in town and county. Can provide contractors who worked on the 2017 Burrowes Mansion restoration, when there were options on the windows resulting in a slight change in the façade. The biggest difference is this home is being converted to an 8-unit dwelling.

Mr. Lesbirec acknowledged that the roughs are done: plumbing is in, ceiling trims are there, they're taking plaster down and replacing with rock, not many walls were moved but the spaces were split up.

Ms. Arnold asked about the interior molding as well as the slate roof condition.

Mr. Lesbirec responded that historic light fixtures and plasters are all there. The roof is in detrimental repair, at over 100 years old because of the 1895 construction date of building. Slate roofers in this area are not feasible. DaVinci only comes in a square tile. Proposing a slate scallop. Concerned with maintenance of cedar.

Chairman Roinestad asked if the presenters are looking for something in writing.

Mr. Lesbirec came to have a conversation. Intend to keep the historic nature even though it's technically not in the historic district.

Chairman Roinestad asked what map they're using, since different maps have different boundaries for the historic district. The State's historic district is different from what's recognized by the Planning Board, and technically this property is in the historic district.

Mr. Lesbirec clarified that in terms of the Planning Board there is no historic requirement; his clients want to do the right thing. They came to have a conversation here first, informally, then go to the Planning Board. As a professional architect and with historic qualifications: there are issues with renovating this into a multi-unit residential building, making material choices for easier maintenance and use while keeping its historic details – using Hardie board rather than wood, scalloped shingles, etc. – and preserving this historic, iconic building in the county. Very happy to do this project and have his name on it. Nearing the end and costs are extremely high so there's a need to discuss solutions and move forward with the Planning Board. The board denied a previous office proposal. Now the sprinkler system is in, the plumbing system is in, and only a few questions remain, like whether to repaint the wood and pay for painting every few years or find a long-term solution to last.

Chairman Roinestad asked about the roof, and Hardie board or shingles, and the windows.

Mr. Scibor noted he's unwilling to spend \$2,000 per window.

Mr. Lesbirec stated the windows match spec and the exterior will look the same. The windows will stick with the original Planning Board approval; if there's a sash it'll have a sash. Life safety trumps everything else. The major question is Hardie board or shingles for the siding.

Borough Administrator Michelson asked about seeing siding samples.

Ms. Zavorskis asked about mimicking the diamond pattern.

Discussion continued about the blue colors and shingle materials. Mr. Lesbirec offered to bring books with materials and discuss as a group what fits best.

Chairman Roinestad clarified the commission is consultative.

Discussion ensued about the roof materials. Mr. Lesbirec noted the roof product was used in Ocean Grove and Loch Arbor. Jason Peist added that it's often used as a replacement when the exact same material isn't available. Mr. Roinestad shared that the Burrowes Mansion restoration looked at shutter alternatives that appeared as wood but will last longer with less maintenance because they couldn't be reused. A very good replacement was composite and wouldn't need to be repainted for 30-40 years, plus it had the same texture so it looked the same. Even the State

wants longevity with the façade to maintain historical integrity. Declared that if the commission were to provide a letter to the Planning Board supporting this, the commission needs as much detail and specific information as possible.

Mr. Lesbirec offered to come back and discuss it further with sample books and make a collective decision. The developer needs help and approval to move forward, and using shingles to replace the slate roof would be ideal.

Jason Peist recommended meeting at house in the daylight and looking at the blue samples there. Chairman Roinestad stated some of the commission members could visit.

Discussion ensued about planning a daytime visit with a subcommittee of less than a majority of the commission.

Jason Peist volunteered to visit and provide feedback to the commission. He advised that it could be difficult to get the identical color and must maintain balance to keep the integrity of house but work as a building. This product gives better maintenance and holds color in its entirety.

Chairman Roinestad observed it looks like the same material as the Burrowes Mansion shutters. Mr. Scibor emphasized that winter is coming and it's essential to do this before the temperature change. They're ready to do the roof now and trying to reuse what can be reused. Want to do this within the next weeks.

Ms. Yanny asked about the windows and storm windows over.

Mr. Lesbirec clarified that vinyl was already approved. Storm windows leave the window intact and are placed over. Vinyl is better insulating.

Ms. Chester weighed authenticity compared to restoring, and the need to discuss this further as committee.

Chairman Roinestad asked about whether it's possible to keep colonial grills with vinyl windows.

Antonio Scibor stated there are no grills in the front, it's all picture frame windows.

Ms. Arnold, as historical building archaeologist, requested to be part of the visit.

Longstreet House

Mr. Lesbirec explained some of the questions they're discussing, about how to split it up properly and keep the interior walls intact. There are more concerns about the outside. The inside would be 8-units, left and right one unit per floor similar to the Ryer house but they won't pursue basement apartments. The Ryer house is above-grade and this isn't. The back already has a duplex. They would go to the Planning Board the same way they did for the Ryer house.

Ms. Zavorskis asked if there would be a restaurant on the first floor. Mr. Scibor responded that they need a tenant and they'll do it.

Mr. Lesbirec noted that restaurants, generally now, aren't doing well so it's not as feasible and there isn't a great deal of parking.

Chairman Roinestad questioned if the backyard was sizable for parking since it's already in a commercial district.

Mr. Lesbirec referenced the housing deficit in New Jersey and the affordable housing focus. Old historic buildings bring housing when people want to live in downtown. People will pay a premium to live in an old historic space. They'll keep fireplaces. This is a unique opportunity since this market is limited in this area where there's more big box developments like at the train station.

Mr. Scibor noted there is a high demand for one-bedroom units.

Chairman Roinestad added there's more pushback for multi bedrooms.

Mr. Lesbirec explained that it was one step and now it's three steps: one-bedroom apartment to a town home to a single-family house. The restaurant is nice and would be a good fit for Matawan but it may not survive. A two-story building will only have the first floor to work with for a kitchen,

and ADA compliance requires other changes to the second floor. Therefore the most rationale thing is apartments, which would maintain the historic nature and people will use it.

Chairman Roinestad asked about the number of units and two parking spots per unit.

Mr. Lesbirec noted they could work with neighboring property and have a land lease agreement and keep the backyard, or access from the neighbor's lot to this one. Restaurant fit-out would be costly, approximately a half million. In reality, the Planning Board doesn't look at cost or cost benefit. Someone will always rent an apartment on Main Street in Matawan. A restaurant may not last but residential development will be followed by commercial. This would be similar to the Ryer house, as it's a similar design from a similar era but it would be broken up differently. Reiterated that with the Ryer house there were minimal walls moved, some filled in, but no structural changes.

Mr. Peist asked about the lead time on the siding, roof, and windows.

Mr. Lesbirec responded that custom windows would be approximately 6-8 weeks plus installation. The first priority is the roof with the windows and siding next. Windows would be cut from the inside, with the side trim popped out. Mr. Peist agreed that from the inside out would be the best way to handle the windows.

Ms. Arnold asked about the Longstreet drawings.

Mr. Scibor responded that their priority is the Ryer House because the plumbing and electric are completed but the roof has problems and it needs to be fixed before winter.

Mr. Lesbirec reiterated that the roof is their first priority, to be done as soon as possible, then they'll determine the siding. He's aware of the home being on the historic endangered list.

Mr. Scibor acknowledged a movie was filmed here and he loves the town and grew up here.

Borough Administrator Michelson noted the borough has a strict mandate for affordable housing.

Mr. Lesbirec responded that if there was an affordable housing component they would be asking for a PILOT and pursuing historic tax credits. Suggested focusing on new construction for affordable housing but agreed to look at existing agreements.

Ms. Arnold confirmed Mr. Lesbirec would be available on Monday at 2pm to provide a tour to two commission members, such as her and the Chairman.

The Ryer House representatives (Mr. Scibor, Mr. Scibor, and Mr. Lesbirec) departed.

Update from Borough Administrator

There have been several conversations about the proposed ordinance, including with Rainone Coughlin Minchello, legal firm, which is reviewing the ordinance and intends to respond with edits and suggestions by November.

Ms. Chester asked when a new member will be sworn in to fill the vacancy. Mr. Russell responded that he hasn't heard back from the Mayor on it.

Chairman Roinestad stated that Matawan has been waiting over 17 years for this, and restoring this iconic house is what the commission wants to see.

Ms. Chester acknowledged the architect is coming from a good place.

Chairman Roinestad added that with the Longstreet house the commission should keep in mind equally balancing investment; property owners wanting to do the right thing but also getting something out of their investment. If they can do so in a conducive way, doing it right will be historical and more of a draw, leading to higher rent in a trendy downtown. He also added he's precluded from voting on the project due to the proximity to his home.

Ms. Yanny suggested the cedar shingles would be a good choice if they're a better product.

Chairman Roinestad was critical of the word better, noting that it's possible to replace with slate but more expensive. He reiterated the need to balance conscientiousness with understanding what's conducive for investment.

Ms. Chester motioned for Ms. Arnold and Chairman Roinestad to tour the Ryer House, with Jason Peist providing professional expertise. Seconded by Mr. Orr.

Voice vote: all in favor, none opposed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were not considered at this meeting.

Public Comment

Mark Chidichimo noted that houses change over time. Emphasized that the most important thing is the exterior maintains an historic look as much as possible. For the Ryer House, the tile pattern on the front is a unique architectural feature that sets it apart, and maintaining the front tile façade would be great for the town.

Cathy Zavorskis confirmed that the roof leaking presented a major problem, as a whole ceiling from upstairs was lost. There may also be difficulties with tarps because how the roof goes into the roof. She also noted that the wooden framing and detail work makes it look arched. By removing windows from the interior, it will preserve the exterior of the house.

Daisy Orr pointed out that the Diaz building to the Ryer House wasn't a fair comparison because while there is an interesting roofline it never had the design like the Ryer house.

Mr. Roinestad indicated that the Diaz house demonstrated that a slate roof can be changed to a shingle roof and still maintain historic character. On Monday they'll further investigate the roof and ask about the condition of the diamond pattern and whether it can be kept or it's been compromised.

Jason Peist suggested it's a question of labor and craftsmanship versus a quick fix; will they lose it or take longer to do it right, and how they'll replace things.

Suzanne Reynolds wondered if the roof can use two different materials together and whether it would compromise the roof.

Reggie Hawn argued that the commission is only hearing information being provided by the person who wants to do this. Other alternatives are possible, like simulated slate, or slate roof types that catch solar, but that information was not provided to the commission at this meeting.

She questioned how the commission can make a decision if that's the proper or only approach.

She contended that the property owner compromised on all the things he was going to do.

Looking at the whole building now, it's the original beams and staircase, but would be a new roof, new siding, and new vinyl windows. She asked about alternative storm windows/invisible storm windows but doesn't know if it's acceptable in multi-family home, but it's an option not presented that should be considered. She's worried that a lot of gingerbread has already been stripped off the house with no discussion of restoring. Other roofers could offer different approaches, didn't hear about the kind of underlay, and the commission should find out more before making any determinations. The Hardie board is acceptable but what about the diamond patterns on roof. She's counting on this entity to review the project and make recommendations but it only heard information from one side.

Chairman Roinestad declared that the small contingency visiting the house on Monday will be a fact-finding mission to preview the updates. The commission will decide whether to write a letter at the next commission meeting. A letter could make recommendations but the commission has no authority to approve anything. The house already received Planning/Zoning approval. For example, the vinyl windows were already approved and there is no recourse. Discussion ensued about change of use and making certain changes because of life safety. Mr. Roinestad recommend that the front windows be restored so the front maintains the historic look and the remaining windows could be replaced for life safety. He reiterated that restoration is far more expensive than replacement and there is extensive trim work required. Cathy Zavorskas noted the disrepair and diminished features over the last 20 years. She expressed concern that if the commission pushes too much the project will be delayed and the condition will worsen. She referenced their earlier mentioning of selling it once he makes his money back, and how far should the commission push for historic features if the house is lived in and looks very close. For example, if the diamonds were omitted the average person might not notice and just see the historic shape, color, and overall grandeur of the house. Ms. Zavorskas emphasized that the owners' narrative is the house is saved. Reggie Hawn argued that people don't want a tour of a plastic house made to look like an original, and the owners shouldn't be adjusting what was initially approved. Mr. Roinestad pointed out that they are looking to use the most realistic material available presently. Jason Peist mentioned that slate is infrequently used because it's extremely cost prohibitive. DaVinci and Hardie plank are products he recommends. Thinks the diamonds likely wouldn't be replicated the way the commission would want.

The Borough Administrator noted the next Planning/Zoning meeting is scheduled for October 7th, before the next commission meeting.

The commission will meet next, room subject to availability, on Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at 7pm, in-person, exclusively to discuss the Ryer House.

The next general meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 9, 2024 at 7pm.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Arnold

2nd: Yanny

Ayes: all present

Nays: none

Adjourned: 8:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Denholtz Lewandowski, RMC
Recording Secretary