

CITY OF AURORA  
OHIO  
**Landmark Commission**  
Meeting Minutes  
February 18, 2016

The Landmark Commission met in a scheduled meeting Thursday, February 18, 2016 in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Jeff Clark.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Lauren Broderick  
Jeff Clark, Chairman  
Jason Coleman  
Tim Holder  
John Kudley, Vice Chairman  
Also Present: Ronald Lowe – Architectural Advisor  
Richard Fetzer, Historical Society Advisor  
Marie Lawrie, Secretary

**AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:**

**MOTION: To move Larry Lahnman, 76 E Pioneer Trail – Addition, to item “a” under New Business**

Ms. Broderick moved, Mr. Holder seconded, and the motion carried on a 5-0 roll call vote.  
Yeas: Ms. Broderick, Mr. Holder, Mr. Clark, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Kudley  
Nays: None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION: To adopt the minutes of the January 21, 2016 meeting**

Mr. Kudley moved, Ms. Broderick seconded, and the motion carried on a 5-0 roll call vote.  
Yeas: Mr. Kudley, Ms. Broderick, Mr. Clark, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Holder  
Nays: None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Goals for 2016**

Mr. Clark presented a list of goals to discuss for the upcoming calendar year. Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin was invited to discuss her vision for the Landmark District for this year. She hopes to balance the growth of the City with the historic and charming atmosphere of Aurora. She stated that Aurora has good roots and bones which should be protected and enhanced. The project at the Kiwanis-Moore Park, along with the expanding businesses of the Aurora School of Music and the 1815 Tavern focus on the Town Center and create community. Sidewalks are planned including East Pioneer Trail and Aurora

Hudson Road. Together with the Portage County Parks District and some Northern Portage communities, the City hopes to find a connection for the Rails to Trails bike path. The Mayor complimented the Landmark Commission on the newly installed Historic District Signs and stated that additional new signs for the City are planned. Accomplishments of the last two years were discussed including the moving of the Deed House. Referencing the Master Plan, she plans to enhance the green space of the triangle where the Deed House now sits. Landscaping, including historically accurate plantings, is being looked at for the project. The first order of business will be a pathway to the Deed House. The intersection of State Route 43 and Pioneer Trail is under review for some needed changes and enhancements.

Ron Lowe stated that Landmark Commission can comment about signage in the City and historic sidewalks. He asked that the administration keep the Landmark Commission informed as the sidewalk project progresses. The Mayor spoke about stamped concrete which has the appearance of sandstone sidewalks. This is more durable and easier to maintain for any pieces that need replacing.

Mr. Holder asked the Mayor if the landscaping of the triangle is an ongoing process. She gave details about where the project is heading, including hopes for a space in front of the Deed House for programs, presentations, and performances. She discussed the possibility of having a sandstone wall where people could sit. The City is speaking to Mr. Fetzner about the possibility of using sandstone from his historic property for the project. She discussed the challenge of the significant drop off that exists on the triangle property. Mr. Holder stated that drainage would be an issue if year round use was expected on the property. The Mayor agreed and stated that the issue is being addressed. The possibility of making the Deed House handicap accessible is also under review.

Mr. Clark encouraged the Mayor to think of Landmark Commission as a resource.

Mr. Kudley spoke about the history of Aurora and how it was built around a train station depot, the Central District, and Geauga Lake. This means we do not have a typical downtown area. However, he is confident that what we are creating, with faith and government alongside the cultural influences of the Aurora School of Music, and the Aurora Community Theatre, local restaurants and shops is heading in the right direction. This has happened with a partnership of the current administration, Landmark Commission and the Aurora Historical Society.

The Mayor discussed that the challenge of the historic residential area is maintaining it and allowing for a reasonable transition. The City is looking at a potential overlay district. This is in the very early stages. It would have to go to the ballot. This idea is not to damage the historic buildings, but to find ways to support them. Plans will be presented to Landmark Commission for comment.

The Mayor also discussed the subject of parking at the Aurora Inn. There appears to be no immediate perfect solution. She wants to preserve the area and also accommodate the growing business. Ongoing communication will exist with the Landmark Commission on this subject.

Mr. Clark discussed the challenge of Landmark Commission to increase property values in the Historic District and help people to maintain their houses. Jeff gave a recap of the presentation of the Cleveland Preservation Society. The Mayor agreed to look over the information.

The Mayor discussed the possibility of Landmark Commission and/or the Historical Society using the time frame between noon and 4:00 P.M. for additional activities to expand the holiday celebration the first Saturday in December. Breakfast with Santa will be held in the morning and the tree lighting service will happen at 4:00P.M.

Holiday lighting and greenery on the telephone poles were discussed. Landmark Commission is in favor of expanding these areas for the holiday season.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**LARRY LAHNAN, 76 E PIONEER TR ADDITION**

Larry Lahnman, property owner was present to answer questions. Mr. Clark announced that he would abstain from discussion and voting on this project, as this property is next door to his residence. Mr. Lahnman stated that the house was built in 1875. It is in need of repairs. He plans to demolish the addition on the rear elevation which is currently a kitchen. The addition aims to keep the farm house style of the residence. The applicant did not present a full set of building plans. Therefore, there was discussion pertaining to what materials would be used and how that new material would seam together or butt to the existing wood siding on the east elevation. There was a discussion about the dormers on the west elevation and the shed style dormer on the east elevation as pertains to snow and water drainage. The details of the doors were requested. Ms. Broderick explained to the applicant what to expect when he goes before the Architectural Board of Review board, including what sample materials he might bring. Mr. Lowe stated that overall the addition is very nice and will bring value to the property. Details about the foundation/ basement were questioned. The applicant was advised to choose his finishes and materials with samples before the next meeting. The applicant will contact his architect about the missing details needed to complete the review of the project and return with revised plans in the hopes of receiving a certificate of appropriateness for the demolish and addition.

**MOTION: To postpone the project**

Ms. Broderick moved, Mr. Kudley seconded, and the motion carried on a 4-0-1 roll call vote.

Yeas: Ms. Broderick, Mr. Kudley, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Holder

Nays: None

Abstentions: Mr. Clark

**AURORA SCHOOL OF MUSIC, 211 S CHILlicoTHE RD - LANDSCAPE PLAN CHANGE**

The original landscape plan, which received a Certificate of Appropriateness, included a fence along the south property line parking area. The new landscape plan was presented for discussion and information purposes. The fence will be replaced by an evergreen landscaped barrier. The change was approved by the Planning Commission on February 17, 2016. Mr. Clark stated that the Master Plan suggests working with the City Arborists and Garden Clubs to select historically accurate plantings in the Historic District. Mr. Lowe stated that there is nothing in the Landmark Ordinance which gives the Commission that jurisdiction. Ms. Broderick stated that the fence was previously approved and by removing that feature of the landscape plan, a vote would be in order pertaining to the revised landscape plan. Her recollection was that originally the Commission was in favor of a planted barrier and asked the property owners to consider that. Ms. Davis remembered that originally the property owners considered a fence along the east property line as well, at the back of the parking area and the Commission suggested planting greenery there in place of a fence. Plantings will be more beneficial with drainage concerns. Mr. Lowe advised the Commission not to get involved with regulating landscape plantings. Mr. Kudley stated that it would be appropriate to vote on the change because the fence was previously approved. Ms. Davis agreed.

**MOTION: To allow a change in the landscape plan to exclude the fence along the back and south side of the property**

Mr. Kudley moved, Mr. Holder seconded, and the motion carried on a 4-0-1 roll call vote.

Yeas: Mr. Kudley, Mr. Holder, Ms. Broderick, Mr. Clark

Nays: None

Abstentions: Mr. Coleman

Mr. Coleman abstained due to the fact that he was not present for the original vote on this project.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

The Deed House

Mr. Kudley reported that netting has been installed on the Deed House to deter the woodpecker from damaging the siding. Ms. Broderick asked if the committee had considered a removable feature that might meet ADA requirements to allow access to the structure on an as needed basis. Mr. Kudley stated that due to the historical nature of the building, ADA accessibility is not required as long as you provide a visual representation of what is on the inside. With the building being so small, there will not be much room on the inside after displays are installed. Other historical sites, including Colonial Williamsburg are not handicap accessible. Ms. Broderick spoke about some legal ramifications that Severance Hall has faced with that historic property. The challenge is when a program or event will take place in an inaccessible area of the building. It can be addressed on a case by case basis with an individual plan for access.

Something removable might be appropriate. Mr. Clark wondered if it might be beneficial to landmark the structure. Mr. Lowe stated there might be some leeway in that case.

#### Circulation Changes around the edge of the District

Mr. Lowe stated that it might be beneficial to have a representative available to comment on plans for circulation changes and the parking needs for the Aurora Inn. He requested that the Building Department keep communication with Landmark Commission on this project. Ms. Davis will bring future preliminary plans for this and the Deed House triangle to the Commission. She also stated that on projects within the Historic District, the City Arborist would be made aware of that and asked for his comments on appropriate plantings.

#### Aurora School of Music

Mr. Kudley stated that he attended the opening of the Aurora School of Music. He reported that Vera Holczer thanked the Landmark Commission for all their reviews on the project. He reported the building as state of the art and outstanding. The school has 1000 students from all over Northeast Ohio. He also felt that the city parking lot will benefit the whole district and not just one restaurant or business.

#### Sidewalks

Mr. Lowe requested a preliminary plan of the sidewalks planned for the Historic District for informational purposes. Mr. Clark wondered if the sidewalk assistance plan would be available to homeowners in the Historic District. The program splits the cost 50/50 with the homeowner to replace pieces of sidewalk. It is available on a first come, first served basis. It is up to the homeowner to apply for the program. Mr. Kudley stated that the City Ordinances puts sidewalk maintenance responsibility upon the homeowner. A yearly program available for approximately three years has been instituted due to past administrations failure to enforce this code. At the end of this period, the City will start sending letters to homeowners instructing them to fix their sidewalks. If they do not comply, their property will be assessed. This program will be available during the transition period. There were questions about how this program is being promoted and what type of sidewalk pieces would be available in the Historic District where sandstone is prevalent. Mr. Kudley and Ms. Davis were asked to get more information for the Commission. Mr. Lowe recommended adding this information to the City website once the program is defined. Ms. Broderick asked if the sidewalk program is considering the drainage problems that exist which can add to the deterioration of the sidewalks. Mr. Kudley stated that any improvement projects are to do just that, improve an area and not make an existing condition worse. The sidewalk project is being overseen by an engineer. Easements must also be granted. This project is ongoing and not yet complete.

Meeting Times

The Commission was asked if a time change for the meetings might be considered. Other Boards have changed their starting time to 6:30pm. The members determined that 6:30pm would be agreeable. Starting in March, the meetings will begin at 6:30pm.

**MOTION: To change the meeting start time to 6:30pm**

Mr. Kudley moved, Mr. Holder seconded, and the motion carried on a 5-0 roll call vote.

Yeas: Mr. Kudley, Mr. Holder, Ms. Broderick, Mr. Clark, Mr. Coleman

Nays: None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.**

Mr. Kudley moved to adjourn at 8:56 p.m. Mr. Coleman seconded, and the motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

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Jeff Clark - Chairman

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Marie Lawrie - Clerk