

CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING

10 North Division, Battle Creek, MI 49014

Minutes for July 14, 2025

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: By Commissioner Simpson at 4:01 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Commissioner Simpson asked for a roll vote.

Comm. Simpson, present

Comm. Drozdowski, absent

Comm. Davis, present

Comm. Sallee, absent

Comm. Thornton, present

Comm. Steinbrunner, present

Comm. Case, present

Staff Present: Travis Sullivan, Planning & Zoning Administrator, Melody Carlsen, Administrative Assistant, Patrick Batterson, Assistant City Attorney.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Approval of the June 9, 2025 meeting minutes.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER THORNTON TO APPROVE THE JUNE 9, 2025 MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CASE.

ROLL VOTE: Commissioner Simpson asked everyone in favor to signify by saying “aye”.

ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED, MOTION APPROVED.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. H13-25 (94 Walter Ave.)

Petition for a Certificate of Appropriateness filed by Jose Ortiz for the construction of a new 6-foot tall white vinyl fence located at 94 Walter Ave., Parcel #0601-21-400-0.

Staff Presentation: Travis Sullivan presented the staff report for H13-25.

Commissioner Simpson noted the staff report list the address as 94 Walter Avenue but the maps labeled the address as Walters Ave. Mr. Sullivan noted the map was taken from the County GIS mapping system and is not clear as to why but out system indicates the address as 94 Walter Ave. Commissioner Simpson asked if the front of the house is located on Walter Ave, not Wilkes. Mr. Sullivan responded, yes.

Commissioner Simpson asked if the Commissions main concern is the view of the property from the street. Mr. Sullivan responded that is correct and to take into consideration that the view of Wilkes did not exist in the past due to a house being present.

Applicant Presentation: Jose Ortiz was present to speak and answer questions from commissioners.

Questions by Commissioners:

Commissioner Case noted vinyl fencing does have issues and stains over time and can't really be cleaned.

Mr. Ortiz approached the Commission to show supporting photos. Commissioner Case noted that he has not seen fencing of the type shown in that area. Added, this is a historic district and you must maintain the standards of the historic district.

Commissioner Simpson mentioned there are materials that the Commission has approved, he thinks, for fences other than wood that better mimic the design. Asked Mr. Case if the proposed fencing pattern looks anything like what was popular back then. Mr. Case responded that he went around and looked in the district and there is nothing like that and no vinyl fences in that area that are privacy fences. They are all made of wood.

Commissioner Simpson asked Commissioner Case if he was aware of many modern materials that might mimic wood that might give the applicant what he is looking for as far as durability.

Commissioner Case responded he does not think they have ever approved a vinyl fence.

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked the applicant if he was putting the fence in the back of the house and if there was fencing already back there. Mr. Ortiz responded no, just the L-shape and the neighbor has fencing in the back area.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER CASE TO APPROVE H13-25. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DAVIS.

ROLL VOTE: NONE IN FAVOR, ALL OPPOSED. MOTION DENIED.

B. H14-25 (200 NE Capital Ave.)

Petition for a Notice to Proceed for the removal of the ADA ramp along the side of the building located at 200 NE Capital Ave., Parcel #4110-00-016-0.

Staff Presentation: Travis Sullivan presented the staff report for H14-25. Staff recommends approval to remove the ramp and rail by the entryway.

Questions by Commissioners:

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked if the applicant provided the photos in the staff report. Mr. Sullivan responded, yes. And asked if there was any plan for separation between this house and the neighboring property. Mr. Sullivan responded that the applicant has not indicated anything for a separation of the properties.

Commissioner Simpson asked clarifying questions regarding the ramp and where the ramp was located and where it was attached near the entryway. Is there a plan to put in another ramp? Mr. Sullivan responded, no, the ramp was put in to accommodate a business and the property is now a residential home and the ramp is no longer needed.

Commissioner Case mentioned he designed the ramp and recommends removal and add cedar shake back to match the rest of the porch.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER CASE TO APPROVE H14-25 SUBJECT TO REBUILDING THE SUPPORT RAIL THAT IS LEFT BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND THE CORNER POST TO MATCH THE CEDARSHAKE BARRIER WALL THAT IS PRESENT AROUND THE REST OF THE PORCH. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER THORNTON.

ROLL VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED. MOTION APPROVED.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: None.

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF:

Commissioner Steinbrunner asked if the City has recommendations for applicants regarding fencing. Mr. Sullivan responded that besides the design guidelines document found on the website, we do not right now.

Commissioner Simpson brought up a previous topic regarding the possibility of turning County Club Hills into a possible Historic District and asked if a letter could be put together and sent to residents regarding this. Mr. Sullivan responded that any way you can gather feedback would be ok. There was discussion about forming a Neighborhood Association and going to the Neighborhood Council meetings for feedback.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Simpson adjourned the meeting at 4:47 pm.

Submitted by: Melody Carlsen, Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant