

**Members**

Ken House, Chair  
Edward Echtle, Vice Chair  
Katie Chase  
Jonah Jensen  
Megan Luce  
Daniel Rahe  
James Steel  
Duke York

Ross Buffington, Wedge Neighborhood Ex-Officio  
Marshall McClintock, North Slope Ex-Officio

**Staff**

Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer  
Lisa Spielmann, PDS Office Assistant



# MINUTES

## Landmarks Preservation Commission Planning and Development Services Department

Date: November 13, 2013

Location: 747 Market Street, Tacoma Municipal Building, Room 248

**Commission Members in Attendance:**

Ken House *Chair*  
Edward Echtle, *Vice Chair*  
Ross Buffington  
Katie Chase  
Megan Luce  
Daniel Rahe  
Duke York

***Staff Present:***

Reuben McKnight  
Lisa Spielmann

***Others Present:***  
Brent Bringle  
Tammy Bringle

**Commission Members Excused:**

Jonah Jensen  
Marshall McClintock

Chair Ken House called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

### **1. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Excusal of Absences:**

Commissioners McClintock and Jensen

**B. Meeting Minutes**

The following minutes were approved with corrections as noted:

- i. June 26, 2013 – Commissioner Steel pointed out that his name has an extra 'e' on the end of his name that should be removed from the meeting minutes and that he was present at the June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- ii. August 14, 2013
- iii. October 23, 2013 – Ex-Officio Buffington noted that he was excused and not present (minutes have him listed as both)

**C. Administrative Approvals**

The administrative reviews were approved as noted on the agenda.

### **2. DESIGN REVIEW**

**A. 615 N I Street (North Slope Historic District) Porch railings**

Applicants and owners Brent and Tammy Bringle were invited by Chair House to join everyone at the table.

Mr. McKnight read the staff report into the record and handed out a copy of the comments from Commissioner McClintock in support of the application.

Built in 1906 the home is located at 615 North I Street and is a contributing structure in the North Slope Historic District and this is an application to install metal hand railings between the existing columns on the porch. There is a previous administrative approval of the concrete work and steps at this address in September. The proposed railing will be 36" high and a mat-black finish will be applied. The railing along the side and rear of the porch are required for safety reasons due to the 4 and 5 foot drop.

The existing porch appears to have been significantly modified during this building's history including the removal of the front porch deck, which is now at grade surface, relocation of the entry stair, removal of the porch wall and placement of the original columns. Therefore this proposal does not appear to affect any historic fabric on the building. Staff identified the following North Slope Historic District design guidelines that would apply to porches:

Guideline #3: Replace missing porches with designs that reflect the original design as known. Avoid adding conjectural elements. Photographic or other documentary evidence should guide the design of replacement porches. Where this is unavailable the new design should be based on existing original porches from houses of similar type and age.

Guideline #4: In certain cases building code may trump preservation guidelines. For example the historic railing height may be considered a life safety issue and new railings are generally required to meet building code. In these cases innovative approaches may be needed to obtain the appropriate scale and appearance.

## **ANALYSIS**

1. This 1906 house is a contributing structure in the North Slope Historic District. As part of the North Slope it is listed on the Tacoma, Washington national register of historic places. Just for note of record – the Stadium Seminary District jogs across the alley between Yakima and "I" Street at this location so this is probably in the Seminary National Register District but it is in the local North Slope Historic District.
2. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has the jurisdiction to review and approve, or not approve changes to the building per 13.05.047 prior to those changes being made by virtue of its status as a city landmark.
3. The building and porch appears to have been significantly modified over time including removal of the raised porch on the front of the house, the removal of the original porch wall, relocation of the stairs and replacement of the original columns. The porch deck along the side of the home may also have been replaced at some time.
4. The installation of a standard metal railing for safety reasons will not affect any historic fabric on the home or obscure any character defining feature. The black finish should diminish visual impact from the street.
5. Installation of a wood porch wall as originally designed would be a significantly complex project requiring the removal and replacement of existing columns in addition to other structural work. If the porch was proposed to be reconstructed or replaced, guideline #3 would apply and the owner would be encouraged to consider closely following the historic photographs. However, this is a proposed installation of a barrier.
6. Building code requires a barrier rail along the side of the house.

Mr. McKnight said that the staff recommendation is approval of the application submitted. He noted that Commissioner McClintock's email reflects a similar opinion.

Chair House thanked Mr. McKnight then asked for comments.

Owner Brent Bringle stated that the home's original structure in 1906, when it was built, had a railing that was approximately 24" high. During that era that was the normal design of how high the rails went that were made of

wood. We want to go higher to meet city code, which is 36", with metal construction. We have a 4-5 foot drop along the front door which was previously mentioned, so it would be very easy to fall off that ledge. As far providing rails back on there isn't necessarily the issue, it's the kind of construction that we are proposing to do seems to be a better longevity because the metal construction. The proposed railings meet the type of design; they meet the safety standards and also improve the design look of the house. The front of the house appears very stark and does not show the appearance of an old style era. We sold a home over in north Tacoma that we brought it back to its original condition after 9 years. We sold it for three times more than what we paid for it. We are not new to the Tacoma area; we are new to the North Slope so we are definitely promoting the fact of being the same element of era design. We are definitely in favor for improvement of designs.

Chair House thanked Mr. Bringle for his comments and opened up the discussion for Commissioners comments or questions.

Commissioner Luce recused herself at this time.

Commission questions and discussion followed.

- Ex-Officio Buffington and Mr. Bringle discussed how the railings would be attached. The original columns have been replaced with wood columns. The metal railings would not be attached to these columns since it would damage them. The railings have been designed to come in 8 foot sections and they come with side posts that will be reinforced and bolted in cement. They will be stand-alone rails but will be installed close enough to the columns to have the appearance of being attached.
- Commissioner York agreed with North Slope Ex-Officio McClintock's email comments by stating that the rail is not historically something you would see on a structure like this so it is not an enhancement of the historical value nor will it detract from the historical value. It is a significant safety factor for that porch and appears to be a very attractive rail and therefore he did not have a problem with it. He then moved to accept this proposed railing.

**MOTION:** York

**MOTION:** Seconded by Chair House

**MOTION:** Approved

Mr. McKnight stated that he would sign off on the permit and that he would have a written decision completed within the next couple of days.

Mr. Bringle then asked how long the permit was good for since parts needed to be ordered and installed. Mr. McKnight told him the permit was good for one year and the Landmarks Commission approval is generally eighteen months or the life of the permit.

#### **B. The Olympus Hotel (Old City Hall Historic District) Storefront painting**

Chair House noted that the Applicant was not present. Mr. McKnight stated that the Applicant wanted to proceed and was not required to be present, and offered to present the application.

Mr. McKnight then passed out paint chips of the proposed colors and read the staff report.

This building is located at 815 Pacific Avenue. It was designed by the prominent Tacoma architecture firm of Drummer & Cutting and constructed in 1909. The Olympus Hotel is a contributing structure in the Old City Hall Historic District. The last major renovation occurred at this address was in 1999, which included the reconstruction of the pedestrian level storefront façade. The historical retail front was removed by 1949 and there are photographs in the staff report showing a "modernish" storefront in Wilkinson sandstone remodel. The current configuration is wood which appears to be hemlock on plywood with a dark stain, and thermal display windows, which are probably all from 1999. The proposal is to paint the storefront red (sample of

paint color chips were provided) in the restaurant area occupied by a new tenant. The remaining retail level of the building, including the building entrance will remain the dark stained wood.

The action requested is the approval of the paint color.

The applicable Secretary of the Interior's Standard is Number 9, "New additions, exterior wall alterations or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with matching size scale and architectural features to protect the historical integrity of the property and its environment."

## STAFF ANALYSIS

1. The Olympus Hotel, constructed in 1909, is a contributing building in the Old City Hall Historic District, which is listed on the Tacoma, Washington and National Registers of Historic Places.
2. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has jurisdiction to review and approve or not approve changes to this building per TMC 13.05.047, prior to those changes being made, by virtue of its status as a City Landmark.
3. The proposal to paint the existing storefronts red will not affect any historic fabric or character defining features on the building, as the existing storefronts are modern.

Mr. McKnight also noted that there are a variety of different storefront colors and schemes in the historic district throughout. Therefore, based on that, Staff recommends approval of the application.

Chair House called for discussion, questions or if the Commission wanted to go forward or not on this decision.

There was a discussion, during which Commissioners made the following observations and recommendations:

- Commissioner York asked if the proposed paint color will only be applied below the canopy or if the light green trim above will be painted as well
- Commissioner Steel asked if the proposed paint color will be contiguous or will there be a structural break between the transom windows above and the storefront below. Mr. McKnight will do further research and follow up with additional information regarding the above inquiries
- Commissioner Steel then asked if they would be painting the entire storefront section from pilaster to pilaster or just the 815-A section of the storefront and stopping, because it is another address and business. Mr. McKnight responded by saying "correct".
- Commissioner Steel then stated he thought painting just part of the storefront would be problematic. He feels that it would be more appropriate to paint the whole storefront section rather than just an individual business.
- Commissioners Steel and Rahe then proposed that an architectural site visit might be in order.
- Commissioner Steel then recommended that the whole system be painted one continuous color rather than individual businesses being able to distinguish themselves by just painting parts of a storefront system. He also recommended that the transom windows above the canopy be painted the same color as well so the storefront reads as one system. If the businesses want to distinguish themselves, he can understand painting a door, but painting an entire architectural element or parts of those elements different colors doesn't seem appropriate. He thinks that the buildings from this era

that have these more traditional looking storefront systems, even if it isn't the original one, we would want to keep the appearance of an historic storefront which is the whole thing being one whole storefront system and not broken up and replaced or painted in different sections with different colors.

- Mr. McKnight then asked the Commission their thoughts about painting the entire storefront all the way across, if the applicant could obtain the building owners permission.
- Commissioner Echtle responded by saying he would feel comfortable with that. He agrees with Commissioner Steel and thinks that it would be more appropriate to request the applicant stay with a consistent massing color and not break it up as proposed.
- Commissioner York then stated that if the entire storefront, including the clear stories all the way across were to be painted one solid color, he might have a problem with the color selection.
- Commissioner Steel again suggested a site visit might be needed because it is difficult to determine how these two systems relate to one another regarding the storefront system below the canopy and the system above the canopy. There might be a good reason that they don't need to be the same color, but it is difficult to tell from the photo. He agrees with Commissioner York and thinks that this color seems a little bright and not appropriate for the color and massing of this building and it might be worth a site visit to view it in the daylight. He also stated that there is a precedent for using bright colors in Tacoma, especially on Antique Row, so he didn't think ruling out bright colors just because they are bright is the case here, but believes seeing it in person in exterior light would help this determination.
- Commissioner Chase agreed that a site visit seems necessary. She then pointed out that there is already a red paint color on the windows up above on the mullions and trim so if they wanted to match that, it might be an appropriate compromise without being as jarring. She and some of the other Commissioners are hesitant to say no on the paint color since it is a personal choice.
- Mr. McKnight suggested that if the Commission is not too uncomfortable with the idea of just painting the entry door for now, he can suggest that to the applicant as an alternative and then tell them that the Commission would like to visit the building, look at the storefront and the paint color in the daylight so they have a better idea of what the visual impact will be. I can also pass on the suggestion about tying in the red color to the existing red on the upper stories of the building and see what they think. They are planning on having this business up and running by the end of this month, but with the humidity we have right now I'm not sure this would be the best time of year to paint the front of the building anyway. If the Commission is comfortable with a motion indicating that just painting the door red, for now is acceptable and putting off painting the rest of the storefront until later, I'll take that suggestion to the applicants and see if they are okay with that.
- Chair House then commented that, after the site visit, if the Commission agrees that they can use the color that is around the windows they can just re-paint the door or just leave it.

There was a motion:

*"I move that the application for storefront painting at the Olympus Hotel in the Old City Hall Historic District be deferred until there is a site visit by the Architectural Review Commission with the exception that the store front door could be painted cherry-picking red."*

**MOTION:** House

**SECOND:** York

**MOTION:** Approved

### **3. CHAIR COMMENTS**

There were no chair comments.

### **4. BOARD BUSINESS**

Commissioner Luce noted that there was a Public Notice for the Conditional Use Application submitted by Corban University for the Weyerhaeuser Mansion, which is near her home. She stated that the CUP application is to allow a private catering company to operate the mansion as a wedding venue seven days per week, until midnight. She said that the company has been conducting weddings already on the site, which has had an adverse effect on the surrounding neighborhood due to traffic, noise and alcohol consumption. Commissioner Luce said that the neighborhood is rallying to stop the permit from being approved, and noted that there is a petition and comment email if people are interested in signing or submitting comments.

There was discussion of the property and the conditional use permit process.

Chair House thanked Mr. McKnight and adjourned the meeting at 6:20 PM

Submitted as True and Correct:

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Reuben McKnight  
Historic Preservation Officer