

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDING REVIEW COMMISSION
OF THE VILLAGE OF KENILWORTH HELD
AT THE VILLAGE HALL, 419 RICHMOND ROAD AT 7:30 P.M. ON
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2006.

Chair Bossu was present and called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. She called the roll as follows:

Present:	Jackie Bossu	Chair
	George Sola-via telephone	Member
	Jane Hopper	Member
	Ray Drexler	Member
	Richard Schumacher	Member
	Rachel Noel	Member
	George Luscombe	Member
Other Village Officials Present:	Susan Criezis	Community Development Director
	Bradly Burke	Village Manager
Others Present:	Tolbert Chisum	Village President
	Sam Smith	627 Melrose Avenue
	Jean & Dave Whitford	623 Melrose Avenue
	Ed Hodge	111 Oxford Road
	Kathy & Curtis Barnett	626 Wayland Avenue
	Kelli Kobor	620 Abbotsford Road
	Antoinette Vigilante	123 Melrose Avenue
	Tom Sheridan	925 12 th Street, Wilmette
	Kathleen Cummings	Architectural Historian

Chairman Bossu introduced herself and members of the Building Review Commission to the audience. Chair Bossu introduced consultant, Kathleen Cummings, and described her background as an architectural historian and authority on Architect George Maher.

Kathleen Cummings placed the application for demolition of 627 Melrose Avenue before the Committee. Architectural Historian Kathleen Cummings stated the house had been built for Edward and Alice Hungerford by Architect Ernst Benkert, a Winnetka architect, in 1939. The house is a split level with the bedrooms on the upper level, and the recreation room and mechanicals on the lower level.

Kathleen Cummings stated the location of the house, west of the railroad tracks, was annexed into Kenilworth in 1920. Referring to the character of the block, Ms. Cummings noted there are some pre-1920s houses on the block while a majority of the homes on the block were constructed in the 1930s. Ms. Cummings noted there are some 1950s buildings and three new houses on the north side of the street, and one new house on the south side of the street.

Ms. Cummings discussed the concept of split level houses. She stated split levels are identified with the 1950s. She stated Mr. Benkert, the architect, was a contemporary of Morgan Yost, a Kenilworth architect. Ms. Cummings stated the living room is placed at the back of the lot, and

the kitchen at the front, for privacy. She also stated that the 1939 construction date represents a very early split level home.

Ms. Cummings discussed the architect's career. She stated 627 Melrose was Colonial Revival style design. She stated that Ernst Benkert worked in a variety of styles, and did renovations of older homes. He also designed two other houses in Kenilworth. Ms. Cummings stated the split level was an important design early in Mr. Benkert's career which meets Criteria C of the Building Review Commission's criteria.

Architects George Keck and L. Morgan Yost designed modernist houses on the same block and introduced modernism to the neighborhood which meets Criteria K of the Village's demolition ordinance when determining special importance.

Ms. Cummings stated the house meets four criteria of Kenilworth's ordinance.

Jane Hopper asked how the architect influenced the Village? Ms. Cummings stated it was the only example of colonialist design. Ms. Cummings noted Morgan Yost had designed a colonialist house elsewhere in the Village but it has since been demolished.

Dave Whitford stated there were no basements in the houses demolished on Melrose due to the dry creek.

Chairman Bossu explained the Building Review Commission's criteria, and that the process is done in two phases. She stated tonight represents Phase I in the process.

Sam Smith, the owner of 627 Melrose Avenue, stated the house is not livable. Mr. Smith stated only the kitchen and living room are on the main level, and most houses along the street are two story.

Chairman Bossu read a letter from a neighbor of 627 Melrose, Mrs. David Gormanous of 623 Melrose Avenue, expressing Mrs. Gormanous' opinion new homes do not blend in with the existing homes. Sam Smith stated the new house will benefit the street.

Kathy Barnett asked who will live in the house? Mr. Smith replied his sister will live there.

Ms. Barnett said she lives behind the property and she was interested in the size of the detached garage and whether it would remain. Mr. Smith stated the existing garage will be replaced with a structure of similar size.

Dave Whitford asked about other projects of the developer/owner. Mr. Smith stated he built a new house in Northfield and a home addition in Northbrook.

Richard Schumacher stated there is not compelling evidence of significance or special importance for this structure. Mr. Schumacher noted in this area of Melrose Avenue, there have been three new houses constructed, and a fourth house was totally renovated. Mr. Schumacher expressed his opinion the block has changed, and only three small homes remain. Mr. Schumacher stated 627 Melrose Avenue is not a George Maher house, nor is it part of a contiguous grouping of homes. Mr. Schumacher stated the house is not worth saving.

George Luscombe expressed his opinion that within the guidelines of the Village's ordinance, he did not see the significance of this architect's work. Mr. Luscombe expressed his opinion being an early split level house is not significant enough and noted the streetscape is not significant. Mr. Luscombe stated the architecture in this area of Melrose is not uniform.

Rachel Noel stated she agreed with Mr. Luscombe. Ms. Noel stated it is interesting academically, but not compelling. Ms. Noel stated it is not a significant house worth preserving.

Ray Drexler agreed too. He stated the house does not have the potential for redevelopment. He stated economics dictate starting over again. There is no basement, and the house is missing important elements of basic houses.

George Luscombe stated the owner cannot preserve the existing architecture and renovate for current standards.

George Sola agreed with Mr. Schumacher, Mr. Drexler, Mr. Luscombe and Ms. Noel. Jane Hopper also agreed with the other members.

Chairman Bossu stated the house meets the letter of the ordinance, but not the spirit or intent. Chairman Bossu expressed her opinion the home is not exemplary in materials or workmanship and noted it is difficult to meet the criteria of the ordinance.

Dave Whitford stated that it has been a rental property for twenty years and should be torn down.

Kathy Barnett stated she had no problem with the house being torn down, but was concerned with the replacement.

Richard Schumacher encouraged the owner to sit down with the neighbors to discuss the new home planned for the site.

Gwen Yant suggested documenting the existing house, if it will be torn down, with an organization called Docomomo, a non-profit organization devoted to the documentation and conservation of buildings and sites of the modern movement.

Ray Drexler made a motion to find the subject property not significant and to not impose any delay in its demolition. Rachel Noel seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Chairman Bossu placed the minutes of the August 2, 2006 meeting before the Commission. There was a suggestion to add page numbers to the minutes. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes with the correction.

A discussion regarding the criteria of the Village's demolition ordinance to determine properties to be of special importance followed. George Luscombe expressed his opinion the Department of Interior standards are guidelines and must be applied to each case.

Richard Schumacher stated interpretation is a different issue.

Chairman Bossu asked if there is a need for a training session, or a meeting with other Preservation Boards.

George Luscombe noted it is difficult to put a property owner through Phase II when it is not realistic to renovate.

Chairman Bossu stated it is not the Commission's purpose to assess Phase II.

George Luscombe referred to the Commission's experience of going through Phase II for 112 Oxford Road which showed that the existing house could not be preserved without radical alterations.

Rachel Noel expressed her opinion the Commission cannot ignore the spirit of the ordinance. She stated that every house could be deemed significant in some way. The Commission members must use their brains to interpret and exercise discretion.

Richard Schumacher expressed his opinion the Building Review Commission must determine if a house meets the criteria. He suggested revising Section 110.10 to read "may" rather than "must" determine significance.

George Luscombe suggested not changing the term, and stated the Building Review Commission must determine the degree of significance.

The Commission agreed to have a training session.

Chairman Bossu stated the Building Review Commission's job was to interpret the report from the historian.

A discussion regarding the criteria in the ordinance followed.

Chairman Bossu stated the Commission could do amendments to the ordinance, but she would like to wait until after the zoning public hearings in October. Chairman Bossu felt it was important to hear public sentiment. The members of the Commission agreed with Chairman Bossu.

Jane Hopper gave an update on the meeting with Jack Bigoness, the owner of 126 Abingdon Avenue. She stated it was a positive meeting, and the owner was open to discuss options. Ray Drexler reported some good ideas were discussed, and noted the owner seemed willing to go forward. Mr. Drexler stated the stumbling block is the need for a Zoning Board variation. Chairman Bossu suggested the Commission should go as a group to the zoning meeting to support Mr. Bigoness' project.

Ray Drexler reported that Mr. Bigoness was cooperative.

Ray Drexler made a motion to adjourn. George Sola seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Criezis

