

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, July 12, 2023**

The Chairman, Matt Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Roll Call

Members:

Present –Vice Chairman Ralph White; Cynthia Murnyack-Czarnecki; Clint Gault; Chairman Matt Smith

Absent - None

Correspondence

Mr. White said he delivered the last letter of recognition personally to Susan Holbrook. While there he chatted a little bit about the new company that is working at the Center Cemetery, Graystone Restoration Services and that they are doing a really good job. Mr. White noted that once the restoration company was finished, they would give an overview of the work completed in a future Landmarks Preservation Commission meeting.

Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission Held Wednesday, May 10, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission held Wednesday, May 10, 2023, and approve said minutes as published. The vote was all ayes and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

Christie and Jerry Klein: Stickney House – 35161 Detroit Road

Christie and Jerry Klein live at 31636 Winter Circle, Avon Lake, Ohio.

Ms. Klein stated she is Owner and President of Christie M. Klein, CPA, Inc. and she would like to purchase the Stickney Palmer house and renovate it into office space to house her business. She said she is a small locally owned accounting firm and she used to have her offices in Avon, but the landlord of the George Clifton house where she was working decided to take the space over for his own use and did not renew her lease. Ms. Klein advised she looked around Avon but could not find anything that fit her goal and that is how she met Mr. Gault as she considered office space at his business, but she wanted more so that she would have room to grow. She said she ended up in the First Federal Lakewood building in Westlake between Columbia Road and Clague Road on the south side of Detroit Road. Ms. Klein stated she is starting to outgrow her current space and the Stickney Palmer house has been sitting looking pitiful for a very long time and she would love to clean it up and make something of it.

Ms. Klein advised her problem is that the Stickney house property is currently zoned residential, and she cannot add office space without getting a zoning change. She said she is looking to gain the support of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to recommend to the Planning Commission that the zoning change be granted so she can put her offices there.

Ms. Klein said to tell a little bit about herself, she graduated with an accounting degree from Rutgers University in 1995 and went to work with Ernst & Young and in 2006 she joined Cohen and Company, which is a regional firm in Cleveland and then ventured out on her own in 2010. She added that she did

some work for Jane Kuzma, CPA and ultimately bought her practice in 2010 in the George Clifton House and she was located there until 2018 when the landlord did not renew her lease.

Ms. Klein explained that when she bought her practice in 2010 from Ms. Kuzma, it was her and one part-time employee and now she seven part-time employees and herself and she will potentially be adding more employees and the reason she needs more space.

Mr. Klein said he is an attorney in Cleveland and married to Christie and he is also a history buff as well as an amateur genealogist.

Mr. Klein displayed pictures for the Commission on the Klein's laptop. He explained that Alvin Stickney was born in 1876 in Cornwall, Vermont and was a Veteran of the War of 1812. Avon was established in 1814 and in 1815 Mr. Stickney arrived in Ohio and moved to Avon, Ohio in 1817 so he was one of the earliest settlers on a 150-acre farm on a section along Detroit Road near Jaycox Road and married Clarissa Moon of Avon, Ohio in 1821 and had three children. In 1837 the house located at 35161 Detroit Road was built. Clarissa died in 1866 and Alvin died in 1867. The information was gathered from the book "History of Lorain County, Ohio", published in 1879. A quote from the book reads, "Alvin Stickney was a man of great industry and perseverance, of moral integrity and honesty of purpose. He accumulated a considerable property and in his later years loaned money. But such were his convictions of uprightness that while money everywhere commanded 10%-12%, he never asked or would receive but 6% of legal interest." Mr. Klein found that to be very fascinating as here was a man that could have earned a lot more money and yet he did the right thing. He continued by saying this is how the house becomes known as the Stickney Palmer house; in 1845 the eldest son Solomon Stickney marries Catherine Crowe and they have a daughter, Clara Stickney, born in 1864 who married Colonel Elver Palmer and that is where the Palmer branch comes into the picture and they ultimately inherit the house and have one son, Duane, born in 1901 who died in the late 1980's. Duane married Elsie in 1926 and they had six children.

Mr. Klein said they also did some research on sales activity for this property in recent years and his wife was going to talk a little bit about the difficulties here and the price of the property.

Ms. Klein stated Patrick Foye bought the property in 2019 and he put in a lot of work such as refortifying the basement that is now gorgeous. She said Mr. Foye tore the inside down to the studs and there was some framework done such as constructing a new staircase up to the second floor as well as stairs from the first floor down to the basement. Ms. Klein advised Mr. Foye brought in the sewer lines and gas and electric, so it is all ready to be modernized. She said in August of 2020, Mr. Foye sold the property and the new owner tried to sell it six months later for double what he paid for it but was not successful. The listing was on and off the market and the price kept getting adjusted lower and now is asking \$249,900 and recently rejected an offer of \$225,000 and she felt the owner was not motivated to sell but was looking for the right price at this point.

Ms. Klein advised the real problem with this property staying as a residential structure is the cost because if someone pays \$250,000 and they still have to renovate it to be able to live in it, it is upwards of \$450,000 for a 3 bedroom, 1 bath home. She said it is also located on a very busy Detroit Road and she does not see anyone being willing to do that. Ms. Klein stated her concern is that someone would buy the property and then tear down the house to build a new residential home. She said the problem is that you can buy a vacant lot for \$250,000 saving the expense of tearing down the residential structure.

Mr. White asked how much land was on this lot.

Ms. Klein said it is almost an acre. She stated she does not see it selling as a residential property in its current state.

Mr. White agreed and said when Mr. Foye bought the property, he was encouraged that someone was going to do something positive with it and then he stopped, and the current owner has not done any improvements that he knows of.

Mr. Klein said that for someone who can do the work themselves, it may only cost \$75,000 more to finish it, if they know what they are doing. He said he and Ms. Klein do not.

Ms. Klein reiterated that she does not see it selling for that price without the house being torn down. What she does see is great road frontage for a commercial property. It is close to Avon Commons and only a few hundred yards from the Jaycox Road intersection. She said it is zoned residential and there are a couple of residential houses between the house and Jaycox Road and there is a church in close proximity.

Mr. Gault facetiously asked if there was also a great financial firm near there as well, called Wealth Health.

Ms. Klein said a lot of historic homes have been converted to office space all along Detroit Road. She said she was told that it is surrounded by residential and she would never be granted the zoning change to commercial, but when she looks up and down Detroit Road there are a lot of homes that have been turned into commercial property and most of them are on a corner lot just like Palmer Lane is on the corner of this property and she felt this property was no different than a lot of properties along Detroit Road in Avon.

Mr. Klein stated looking north from this property across the street at the development off of Shakespeare Lane there are residential properties where their backyards abut Detroit Road so there is no frontage on Detroit Road for those homes and he did not feel they would look out of place with an office space.

Ms. Klein advised they were not looking to put in a dog kennel or smelly or loud manufacturing plant; she owns an accounting firm and even in her busiest times they might be working late, but she assured the Commission that they would not be making noise because they would be working in front of a computer. She feels it fits in with what has been done in Avon along Detroit Road. Ms. Klein said bonuses would be that it would bring in higher property values and bring more business into the City and withholding taxes for her employees and profit taxes on her business income. She stated they can maintain the ingress/egress along Detroit Road so they would not be conflicting with Palmer Lane. Mr. Klein added that Palmer Village has their own HOA and they have no plans to enter or exit using Palmer Lane and felt it would be better to pull in and out of Detroit Road for business.

Mr. Smith added they would also be saving a historic building.

Mr. Klein noted that the Country Store on the corner of Detroit Road and Healthway Drive was recently demolished and it was sad to see that happen.

Mr. Smith asked the Kleins if they knew when they would be giving their presentation to the Avon Planning Commission.

Mr. Klein said it is his understanding that they need some sort of sale agreement with the current owner or some kind of letter of intent before they can ask the City to consider rezoning the parcel since they are not the current owners. He stated they have a few hurdles to overcome, but one of the major ones is the

price point as the owner is asking \$250,000 and they feel that is too high. Mr. Klein advised they need to cross that hurdle first to see if they can negotiate a deal and they need to get at least three contractors in there to advise them as to the cost to renovate so they have a good idea of what they might be spending overall and have an "as completed appraisal" done. He said it is going to take a little time to get the financing piece in place, but he does not see that as a problem, but the initial price point is what they see as difficult.

Mr. Smith advised for them to please contact the Landmarks Preservation Commission if they are indeed going to be in front of the Planning Commission as they could provide some support.

Mr. Klein stated they would definitely ask for the Landmarks Preservation Commission's support because if they get to that point, they want all the help they can get to move this project forward. He said their plan is to try to make the structure look as 19th century as possible within limits to preserve a home that was built 200 years ago.

Mr. Smith asked the Kleins to keep him apprised of the situation.

Mr. Gault added there are people on the Planning Commission who also have a strong history to Avon.

Mr. White advised he does not have a problem with the request as long as they paid attention to the architecture and the flavor of what the house is rather than totally remodeling. He said ideally he would have liked to have seen someone move in and use it for their residence, but he understands that is not practical. Mr. White stated if they could restore the house to what would be historically correct to keep that Stickney House kind of thing going.

Ms. Klein said that would be their goal as much as possible.

Mr. Klein advised it was mentioned there used to be a covered porch and he and his wife talked about wanting to add a farmhouse covered porch.

Ms. Klein asked the Landmarks Preservation Commission if they have any pictures of the house before it was so run down.

Mr. White advised no, but Ron Palmer and his son had an aerial view of the farm hanging on a wall in his house. He said the picture was probably from the 1800's as there were horses and buggies and the old-fashioned style of clothing and they were standing in front of the house, but he was not able to get a copy of that picture.

It was noted that there was a coin dated 1839 found in the dirt of the basement of the house and it was felt the coin should go with the house as well as the plaque designating the house as a historical landmark, which can be mounted somewhere on the outside of the house.

There was no motion made and no opposition given to the Kleins regarding their proposed intent.

Update on Center Cemetery, John Bowman and Restorations – Ralph White

Mr. White advised he installed the John Bowman marker at the Center Cemetery so that is now complete. He said the restoration work is going good at the Cemetery. Mr. White indicated that Milano Monuments is the company doing the restoration work.

Mr. Smith said he was at the Cemetery with Mr. White and the three people doing the restoration work are doing a very fine job.

Mr. White noted that every stone that is restored gets cleaned as a part of the price and he felt that was good. He said they were talking about a plaque for the property and he showed them a rendering.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki said when it was mentioned that you would see it from the road, she was thinking more along the lines of the size of the current Cemetery sign or filling up the space on the bottom of the size as that would be very visible from the road.

Mr. Smith said what was Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki was talking about could work.

Mr. White stated the local Avon landmark plaques are like the one he pointed out and confirmed they are small. Mr. White suggested that could be discussed at an upcoming meeting and see what they want to do. He said he was not too particular as long as they are able to say what they need to and make it legible and visible from a distance.

Landmark Letters of Recognition

There were no Landmark nominations.

Mr. White said he has a property picked out, but he does not have any information yet to provide a letter of recognition.

Member Comments

Mr. Gault said the French Creek Foundation is planning a Christmas in July first time event coming up in about a week and half. He said they would be paying tribute to a bunch of great kids who are going through tough times. Mr. Gault added that the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and Walk would be having a subcommittee meeting tomorrow and he was expecting about 25 people for that meeting. So, good things are going on in the community.

Audience Comments

There were no comments from the audience.

Next Meeting

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission would be held on Wednesday, August 9, 2023, in the Council Chambers of Avon City Hall at 7:00 P.M.

Adjourn

Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The vote was all ayes and the Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council