

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
June 27, 2022
MINUTES**

Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the HARB was held on Monday, June 27, 2022 in a hybrid format combining an in-person meeting with a Microsoft Teams virtual meeting. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by Mr. David Huber, Chair. Note: The virtual meeting recording was started at 6:04 pm.

1. Roll Call

HARB Members present: Alex Encelewski (AE), Old Fairgrounds Resident
Phillip Hart (PH), West Park Resident (arrived at 6:06 pm)
David Huber, Chair (DH), Allentown Resident
AJ Jordan, Vice Chair (AJ), Old Allentown Resident
Glenn Lichtenwalner (GL), Architect

HARB Members absent: Bill Harvey (BH), Building Inspector
Patricia Jackson (PJ), Allentown Resident, *Alternate*
Vacant, Real Estate Broker

Visitors present: Brian Graham (BG) on behalf of 1139 W. Linden Street
Wendy Agramonte (WA) on behalf of 526 W. Liberty Street
Edwin DePeña (ED) on behalf of 526 W. Liberty Street

Staff present: Meredith Keller, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Allentown, PA (MK)
Jesus Sadiua, Senior Planning Officer, City of Allentown, PA (JS)

HARB Consultant present: Lisa Easton, Easton Architects (LE)
Siri Olson, Easton Architects (SO)

2. Approval of Minutes, June 6, 2022 HARB Meeting

AJ Jordan requested an amendment to the motion on item 4g for the property located at 1015 Oak Street to read “the 6 panels on the first story roof are removed *or relocated* to the upper roofs...”

A motion to approve the minutes as amended, of the *June 6, 2022*, HARB meeting was made by HARB member AJ Jordan and was seconded by HARB member Phillip Hart. The motion carried with unanimous support.

3. Old Business

Following are the minutes recording the review and action taken on each agenda item. For detailed information on the individual applications, refer to the Preliminary Review Documents – on file with City Staff – prepared as part of the public record for the HARB review.

Item #3a –	HDC-2022-00021
Address:	1139 W. Linden Street
Proposed Alteration:	Demolish rear garage, retain parking pad, install fence
Historic District:	Old Allentown

Property Owner/Applicant: Brian Graham, Owner
Current Photos:

**View of Garage from Backyard
(Applicant)**



**View of Garage from Webster St.
(Applicant)**



Recommendations:

Approval, provided the fencing is wood with painted finish rather than vinyl, pursuant to Chapter 3.15 Demolition and Chapter 3.12 Fences & Streetscape Features.

HARB Discussion:

Discussion between HARB chair DH and the applicant (BG) to clarify the extent of removal and retention of the concrete parking pad and the use of wood as the fence material, which the applicant confirmed.

AJ objects to the recommendation for demolition, siting scale and massing are important characteristics to the district and the age of the building warrants reconsideration to be saved.

BG stated the roof is leaking, has a large-scale hole, the structure is sagging and the overall condition presents a potential safety hazard.

AJ acknowledged that demolition by neglect is not something the HARB condones or advocates.

GL presented support on both sides of the interpretation, stating that the diverse character of the neighborhood is defined by the various shapes, sizes and uses of the structures in the district and the garage contributes, in this regard, to the overall character of the neighborhood. GL also suggests that age alone does not warrant consideration as an historic feature or structure and asked if the City's Building Inspector has determined the building is beyond repair.

BG stated when he purchased the property, he was instructed by the building inspector to reinforce the structure with new wood members and exterior siding, which he did and has come to the point where the structure is in need of significant repairs that are cost prohibitive.

Some conjecture on what the building had been used when constructed. AJ stated regardless of its intended use and current use, the importance is to maintain the scale of the district and perhaps the building is demolished, and a new structure built in its place to maintain the characteristics noted.

AJ noted there is little to no historic fabric remaining therefore it could be considered a blank slate for design of a new structure out of contemporary materials to fill the void and honor the scale, massing and placement of the original.

GL reinforced the sensitivity to maintain a structure in this location.

DH and AJ asked BG if he wanted to take the time to reconsider maintaining and repairing the structure after obtaining a professional recommendation on the structural stability or propose demolition and replacement with a structure of similar scale.

BG stated that acquiring the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the main house is being held up because of the state of the rear garage, as the CO apparently includes the two structures. AJ stated the condition of the CO is unorthodox in linking two structures, one of which is an unoccupied structure, and the City should work with the applicant to obtain the CO for the occupied structure while considering what to do with the deteriorated structure.

AJ recommends withdrawal of the application for convenience of the owner allowing him time to obtain professional guidance and return to the HARB with a new application if the decision is made to proceed with removal of the structure and/or renovation of the structure.

MK reiterated the applicant can work with staff to achieve approval for the renovation/repair and can obtain approval without having to present before the HARB at a public meeting if the repairs meet the requirements of the Guidelines.

Action:

The applicant withdrew the application.

4. New Business

Following are the minutes recording the review and action taken on each agenda item. For detailed information on the individual applications, refer to the Preliminary Review Documents – on file with City Staff – prepared as part of the public record for HARB review.

Item #4a-	HDC 2022-20030
Address:	526 W. Liberty Street
Proposed Alteration:	Legalize porch reconstruction
Historic District:	Old Fairgrounds
Property Owner/Applicant:	Wendy Agramonte, Former Owner
Current Photos:	

Law Street elevation of 526 Liberty Street in 2019.
(Google Street View)

Law Street elevation of 526 Liberty Street after work was completed.
(Staff)



Recommendations:

Approval provided the wood posts, balusters, and railings are painted, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches and Steps.

HARB Discussion:

WA clarified, as the former owner, she is present to address legalizing the alterations as a condition of the sale of the property so the current owner can obtain the Certificate of Occupancy (CO). She stated that she was instructed by a City representative to proceed with replacing the railings and porch structure because it was viewed as potentially unsafe, and that she was not told the work needed a permit and hence she proceeded with the work.

GL asked if the intention was to paint the wood members and the applicant responded yes, had they remained living in the house, they had an offer to purchase the property that happened so quickly they did not have time to paint it prior to the new owner's occupancy.

DH stated the design as built does not meet the guidelines and questioned the railing height meeting code.

GL reinforced the position of interpreting the guidelines for an acceptable design solution.

AJ stated the design as built does not meet the guidelines, nor is it something the HARB would approve in ordinary circumstances and suggested the HARB work with the applicant to find a solution that could be approved as appropriate.

DH suggested the potential for adding trim to the top and bottom rails that would be more in keeping with the other profiles in the neighborhood.

GL suggested removing the vertical balusters, adding a top and bottom rail with a profile more in keeping with the historic profiles found elsewhere in the district.

AE recommended visiting the properties down the block where appropriate profiles to model the trim profiles on.

GL suggested tabling the application to allow the owner time to come back with the appropriate alteration to the railing profiles. WA stated she is trying to move this forward because the current owner needs a clean CO to rent the property.

WA suggested flipping the railings around so the top and bottom rails appear thicker from the street face and when painted will provide the appearance the HARB members have advocated for.

AJ requested additional trim molding be added for detail.

DH requested the posts be chamfered on all four vertical edges.

Action:

HARB member AJ Jordan made a motion to approve w/conditions, the application presented on 06/27/22 for legalization of the porch replacement at 526 W. Liberty Street with the following conditions agreed to by the applicant, that the wood posts, balusters, and railings are painted, wood trim is added to the base and top of each post in compliance with Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches and Steps and the posts are chamfered and railings are reoriented to ensure balusters do not overlap the face of the rails in compliance with Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches and Steps, and find that the circumstances unique to the property are that this is a proposed violation correction to legalize a built condition executed without a permit to allow for a CO for the present property owner. HARB member Glenn Lichtenwalner seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous consent.

5. Staff Approvals

- a. 1436 W. Linden Street – Install solar panels on flat roof.
- b. 1639 W. Linden Street – Reroof rear mansard with Slateline shingles.

6. Violations/Abated Resolved (see spreadsheet)

- a. Reviewed spreadsheet on violations provided by Staff and noted new entries and updates therein.
- b. Discussion of the property located at 503 W. Allen St. where tar sealant was applied over the face of the brick above the roof.
- c. Discussion of the property located at 745 Turner St. with deteriorated and loose masonry presenting a potential safety hazard.

7. Staff Reports & Other Business

Staff requested input and guidance from HARB in discussion of design for temporary gates added to mimic railing designs to porches, added for safety (which is in compliance with the Guidelines). An example was presented which is a temporary condition that can be reversed, the request from staff is for an interpretation if this condition is worthy of a violation or if mitigation measures can be advocated including advocating painting wood, installation be reversible, size and shape of wood to blend with the railing it is connecting to and that no dimensional lumber be used. MK suggested sending the property owners the relevant section of the Guidelines, 3.7 Porches and Steps to remind them of the requirements for these types of modifications. HARB members agreed that staff should proceed with mitigation measures rather than issuing violations for work of this nature.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lisa Easton", written in a cursive style.

Lisa Easton