

Approved

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
VILLAGE HALL - COMMITTEE ROOM
801 BURLINGTON AVENUE

JANUARY 18, 2017, 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Davenport called the January 18, 2017 meeting of the Architectural Design Review Board to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked for a roll call:

PRESENT: Chairman Davenport, Ms. Acks, Ms. Chalberg, Ms. Hollweck, Mr. Larson, Mr. Lerner, Mr. Riemer

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Senior Planner Rebecca Leitschuh and Planner Swati Pandey

VISITORS: Gordon Rondeau, 1620 Chicago Ave., Downers Grove; David and Amy Gassen, 5320 Benton Ave., Downers Grove; C. Holtzen, 5226 Carpenter St., Downers Grove, Shannon Tully, 5413 Main St., Downers Grove; Chris Saricks, 1116 61st St., Downers Grove; Tom and Sue Weiler, 709 Maple Ave., Downers Grove; Rich Kulovany with Friends of the Edwards House, 6825 Camden, Downers Grove and Don Rickard, 4735 Main St., Downers Grove

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 19, 2017 MINUTES

A correction was noted on page 1, under Visitors: Revise “Charlotte Holton” to read as “Charlotte Holtzen”; page 4, third paragraph, delete the words “length of time of time it took” to read as “length of time it took.”

MOTION BY MR. RIEMER, SECONDED BY MS. CHALBERG TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 19, 2016 MINUTES, AS CORRECTED. MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE OF 7-0.

Chairman Davenport swore in those individuals who would speaking on the following public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. 16-ADR-0010: A petition seeking a Historic Landmark Designation for the property commonly known as 4437 Seeley Avenue, Downers Grove, IL (PIN 09-06-405-018). The property is located on the east side of Seeley Avenue approximately 190 feet north of Grant Street. Arthur and Judith Frigo, Petitioners and Owners. Planner Swati Pandey referenced a plat of survey from 2013 pointing out that the original Pierce Downer home was up for landmark criteria discussion but not the east addition of the home which dated from 1970s/1980s. She noted that on the east side of the property the original home barely sat back 7 feet from the west property line, pointing out there was probably was no zoning at that time. She

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also noted the angled position of the home to Seeley Avenue. A historic photo of Pierce Downer was shown on the overhead. Ms. Pandey stated the historic landmark designation of the home was being requested due to the historic significance of its first owner who was the first settler of the area and founder of the village— Mr. Pierce Downer. A brief history of Mr. Downer followed: He traveled west from Upstate New York to locate fertile farmland and staked claim to 160 acres which eventually became Downers Grove. He constructed his home on the highest point of the land. Historic photographs from the 1880s showed the Pierce Downer home with a western barn-like structure reflecting an open kitchen used to keep the fire away from the main house. A photo from 1905 reflected the main entrance of the home. A covered entrance to the basement was pointed out by staff and still exists today. Because staff did not believe Seeley Avenue was identified during the time of the photograph, some form of a lane was used to service the home on the east side that connected to Old Plank Road (now Ogden Avenue) traveling eastward.

Ms. Pandey referenced an undated photo, possibly from the early 1900s reflecting the barn-like structure. A 1968 photo of the home was presented which reflected a sidewalk and an address of 4437 Seeley Avenue. Another photo of the home appeared to be taken from the southwest and reflected the home with an addition on the rear of the home. A closer picture of the original exterior basement entrance was shown. Ms. Pandey explained that it not only had historic significance but also retained the original stone/mortar from when it was constructed.

A 2016 photo of the Pierce Downer home was then shown on the overhead with Ms. Pandey summarizing the historic significance of the home to its original owner, Mr. Pierce Downer, and the fact that his photograph sits in the Village Council Chambers and halls of Village Hall. She reiterated the importance of his community leadership and he was the founder and first settler of Downers Grove. Additional photos and research in the commissioners' packets were referenced.

Ms. Pandey reported the application met all standards for approval – Criteria 12.302.a: the home was more than 50 years old (150+); and Criteria 12.302.b: the structure was owned and/or occupied by a person of historic significance to the community – Mr. Pierce Downer, first settler/founder of Downers Grove, after whom the village was named. Based on the above findings, staff recommended that the board make a positive recommendation to the village council for the landmark status of this significant structure.

Per a question, Ms. Leitschuh explained that the whole property would be landmarked but the front façades that face the street are the primary concern when renovations or additions are proposed. The street-facing portion of the addition would have to return to this board for review but would not need to meet the same criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness. She confirmed the additions and other modest changes would mostly be non-contributing elements to the application and would fall under administrative approval.

Applicant, Mrs. Judy Frigo, discussed she and her husband purchased the home in 1970 and have lived there the longest of any of the owners (46 years), including Mr. Downer. They wanted to see the two-story portion preserved, given all of the changes occurring in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Frigo shared some of the research she did on the home, explaining that Seeley Avenue was created around 1927, and, what was the front door on the home was now the back door, and vice versa. She believed that many of the homes, when built, faced east to take advantage of the rising sun. Mr. Frigo went on to describe the location of the first addition of the home and why

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is was positioned where it was. The home stayed in the Downer family until 1924 when it was sold to the Dubiel family who rented it out during the Depression. Much of the history about the home, Mrs. Frigo stated, came from Mrs. Pauline Wandschneider.

Mrs. Frigo indicated the realtor at the time she purchased the home said the home was being sold as a “handyman’s special” because the electrical was 60 amps and there were wiring and safety issues with the home. In 1976, after her family had started to grow and her husband wanted a garage and she a family room, Mrs. Frigo said she approached an architect and also the village to see if they wanted to purchase the home because they had started looking for a new home to purchase on Maple Avenue. She shared that the Quick family in the 1960s had offered the home to the village at one point but were turned down and then the Quicks sold it to Rev. and Mrs. Kirby Wahl, whom she purchased it from three years later.

Mrs. Frigo recalled that the village visited her property, possibly with members of the historic society, who indicated they were interested in a larger structure and land on Maple Avenue. As a result, the Frigos added an addition in 1977 and another one in 1985. At that time the plumbing was updated. Mrs. Frigo stated the small front windows on the house were not original to the home – they were added in the late 1940s by the Quicks. The Frigos replaced all of the “Quick” windows because they were drafty and she tried to use the original six over six window style.

Mr. Frigo stated the home’s siding was painted while their kids were in college and then eventually replaced with the Hardi-board 4-inch siding that was down from the 8-inch siding. Mrs. Frigo said that in 2008 when the Hardi-board siding was installed they removed all of the aluminum siding that had been on the home. Referring to the photos in the packets, she pointed out that members could see the original clapboard siding, cut up, as well as the brown asbestos fake brick material. The roof was also replaced with the four underlying roofs removed.

Other facts that Mrs. Frigo shared included the home was part of the Underground Railroad, the Downer family held a family reunion at the property in 1982 during the Sesquicentennial celebration, when Mrs. Frigo invited them to her home. She remarked it was special because the last of the Downers family members remembered the home when they were children and orally conveyed some of their memories when living there – such as the trees that lined the lane that went down to Ogden Avenue – they were the Downer’s (grove) of trees.

Discussing the basement, Mrs. Frigo referenced the photograph she took of the hand-hewn timbers that were in the basement, along with the 2015 upgrades. She stated she had an architectural engineer come through the home because she and her husband were very young when they purchased the home (22 and 24 years of age, respectively). She estimated the last set of windows she had installed were Pella windows about 3 to 4 years ago when the home was resided.

Mrs. Frigo said she and her husband knew the home was historic and said they never tried to change or alter the two-story portion, other than replacing furnaces a couple of times, removing the oil tanks, and replacing the wiring. Mr. Frigo stated that the timbers in the basement did start to sag and he later found out that the timbers were set on the concrete floor which was added later, but there were no footings. So he said they had an engineering company come in and install steel girders, but the original timbers were in place.

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Mrs. Frigo indicated that school groups do stop by and if they are home they will let them tour their home. She added that in the basement cellar there are meat hooks that exist and she explained the challenge of relaying history to the children because so much of history is oral.

She also pointed out that while people claim that her home was built in 1842, Mrs. Frigo pointed out that Mr. Downer built the original log cabin in 1832, then the daughter arrived in 1834 to help keep the house. She eventually married another early Downers Grove settler, Jerry Smith, and they purchased property and constructed a home at Carpenter and Maple (now gone) from land that had been purchased by her brother, Steven, who was the reason why Pierce Downer traveled here in the first place. Apparently Steven was constructing the lighthouse at Ft. Dearborn in Chicago, which fell down about three months later, and then he constructed a second lighthouse which remained.

Continuing the story, Mrs. Frigo shared that Pierce Downer sent for his wife, Lucy Ann, and children, from Upstate New York. Lucy came down by steamer through the Great Lakes, just as Mr. Downer had come, got a horse at the fort and rode the old Indian trail (old Plank Road/Ogden Avenue). As for the 1842 date, Mrs. Frigo stated her mother, an artist, painted a sign for the home and put "1842" on the sign, but Mrs. Frigo said it could have been constructed earlier. However, she stated she knew the home was constructed by 1844 because the original map showed the home as a log cabin but by 1844 it showed the home as a two-story clapboard house. The sign has since been removed.

Additional stories that unfolded by Mrs. Frigo included the time when Ms. Wandschneider and the historical society had a meeting at her home in the 1970s and pointed out that the basement was very tall, which led to remarks that Mr. Downer was a tall man (6-foot, 4-inches). More stories followed about the home, which were the same stories that Mrs. Frigo had heard when the Downer descendants had come to her home, such as Mr. Downer passing the day after his wife passed and the fact that the Downers could not be buried at the Main Street Cemetery because St. Joseph's Creek had flooded and the carriages could not transport them and so they were buried at the family farm on Linscott Avenue.

Other stories followed regarding how Mr. Downer passed – supposedly died while digging her grave or died of the same disease as the wife. As it turns out, Mrs. Frigo shared that an outbreak of influenza occurred in the 1860s so Mrs. Frigo assumed they both succumbed to the same infectious disease.

In closing her presentation, Mrs. Frigo commented on all the various locations where there are photographs of her home – the Village Hall, Fry's Electronics, and sometimes in the newspaper. She hoped this board would landmark their home because many of the surrounding homes were much larger now and developers were contacting them about selling their property. She stated there was no interest in selling. Her concern was that after she and her husband are gone there will be no control over the property, which was why they were petitioning this board for landmarking.

Positive comments follow regarding the petitioner's application and the research done on the home over the years. Mrs. Frigo added that she appreciated the "prodding" she and her husband received from a couple of the board members, as well as staff, for bringing their application forward. Mr. Frigo also acknowledged Mr. Mark Bragen, who helped him get the ball rolling on this petition.

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As another comment, Mrs. Frigo recalled that some of the Downer descendants spoke about a library in the home, which was a few books at the top of the stairs. She relayed it was the master bedroom closet and it would have been considered a large library back in the day.

Other facts about the home: the first addition was added by the Frigos; the second addition was done by Steven Wendell of A.W. Wendell & Sons who lived three doors north of them.

Board comments were positive and many appreciated the petitioners' stewardship of the home and how the community benefits from it.

Chairman Davenport opened up the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Dave Gassen, 5320 Benton Ave., Downers Grove, strongly supported the petition and said his oldest daughter was lucky to go on a field trip and see the Pierce Downer home.

Mr. Rich Kulovany, 6825 Camden Ave., Downers Grove, was so excited to see this petition and believed those who set the stage for this application needed to be thanked, i.e., the petitioners, Mayor Tully and Mark Bragen. He shared how he and Amy Gassen were able to tour the home and see the interior upgrades to the home. He described the additions he walked through and the fact that it does put away the myth that you cannot add on to such homes when you really can, referencing Section 12.302 of the Historic Preservation Landmark ordinance which states the proposed landmark "can be in whole or in part." The home was a gift from the Frigos for the future generations.

Ms. Amy Gassen, 5320 Benton Ave, Downers Grove, thanked the Frigos for deciding to landmark their home and for allowing her and Mr. Kulovany to tour the home. It was a wonderful gift for the entire community. On a side note, she stated the game show Jeopardy had Downers Grove and Pierce Downer as part of their game clue today.

Per a question, Senior Planner, Rebecca Leitschuh, elaborated on what other features could be landmarked besides the main structure and the various levels for approval. She explained that Section 302 does state "in whole or in part" but that is explaining a property that has additions can also be landmarked, not that a portion of the home can be landmarked versus the entire home. The entire home is landmarked, additions and original; they just meet different standards when reviewed for alterations.

Mr. Gordon Rondeau, 1620 Chicago, Downers Grove, asked if the lot underneath the structure is landmarked also wherein the chairman stated it was just the house.

A resident believed the side facade of the home should be preserved because the stone stairs were located on the south side which stairs were part of the Underground Railroad during the Civil War.

Ms. Leitschuh reiterated that the village's ordinance only allowed for the landmarking of the front façade, and that the stairs continued along the plane of the street-facing facade. One board member also pointed out that zoning protected the sides of the home. Further discussion on this matter followed with Ms. Leitschuh referencing Section 501 and how it addressed the sides of structures.

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Hearing no comments, Chairman Davenport closed the public hearing.

Another board member shared his appreciation of the petition and the stories that unfolded, including the story about the well located across the street.

Final comments from Mrs. Frigo included that when the Downer descendants visited in 1982, she was told that the original barn that went across Seeley Avenue was used more for cooking, and the barns that housed cattle were basically located where Pierce Downer School exists today.

The chairman entertained a motion for approval.

MR. LARSON MADE A MOTION THAT THE ADRB FORWARD A POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION TO THE VILLAGE COUNCIL TO RECOMMEND HISTORICAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION FOR 4437 SEELEY AVENUE.

MR. RIEMER SECONDED THE MOTION. ROLL CALL:

**AYE: MR. LARSON, MR. REIMER, MS. ACKS, MS. CHALBERG, MS. HOLLWECK,
MR. LERNER, CHAIRMAN DAVENPORT**

NAY: NONE

MOTION CARRIED. VOTE: 7-0

Ms. Leitschuh stated the first reading for the above petition will be on the February 7, 2017 Council agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leitschuh reported that the second proof of the brochure -- The Downers Grove Architectural Styles Guide -- will be provided prior to the next board meeting. Details followed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dave and Amy Gassen, 5320 Benton Ave., Downers Grove provided an update to their American Four-Square initiative. To date, of the 130 identified Foursquare properties existing, 45 owners have provided their email addresses to them. Since the last meeting in October, Ms. Gassen and her husband have been touring other Foursquare properties and have taken photos and sketched floor plans of the homes' interiors. An overview of the photos and floor plans to date were presented with Ms. Gassen stating their goal is to catalog the layouts and the improvements the owners have done. Most interesting is that Foursquare owners are interested in what other Foursquare owners have done to their homes. Ms. Gassen explained her group is also working on an interactive map and an electronic newsletter to keep Foursquare owners informed of latest information and location of the homes.

Mr. Rich Kulovany, 6825 Camden, Downers Grove announced that Landmarks Illinois Chicago Suburban Preservation Alliance has asked Downers Grove to host a free meeting on March 11, 2017, 10:30 a.m. at the Avery Coonley School due to its recent landmarking activities. He encouraged the board members to attend. The meeting will also include a tour of the Avery

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Coonley School. Following that, the Illinois Heritage Preservation Agency will hold a presentation about the tax freeze program for homeowners as well as commercial building owners.

Before closing the meeting, Chairman Davenport welcomed the new board members. He also believed the process of volunteer landmarking of properties was unique in that it normally does not occur very often and so he thanked those individuals who were committed in the community. He believed that if the board can continue to educate the community and provide incentives for landmarking, it was a positive move.

ADJOURNMENT

MR. RIEMER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:17 P.M. MS. ACKS SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE OF 7-0.

/s/ Celeste K. Weilandt
(As transcribed by MP-3 audio)