

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: May 22, 2019

APPROVED

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: City Council Chambers, Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS PRESENT David Hays, Alice Novak, Gina Pagliuso, David Seyler, Kim Smith

MEMBERS EXCUSED Trent Shepard

STAFF PRESENT Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Marcus Ricci, Planner II

OTHERS PRESENT Susan Appel, Randy Kangas, Ilona Matkovszki, Laura O'Donnell, Edith Peacock, Dennis Roberts, Joe Williams, Phyllis Williams, Jeff Yockey

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Novak called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 3, 2018 regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was presented for approval. Ms. Smith moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Seyler seconded the motion. The minutes were then approved as written by unanimous vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Letter from Cynthia Hoyle regarding the removal of some brick sidewalk for the Lincoln and Springfield Avenues Resurfacing Project
- Aerial map of the Downtown Urbana Historic District

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Phyllis Williams, of 810 West Main Street, approached the Historic Preservation Commission to speak. She talked about the following:

1. She expressed concern about there being little notice given to residents in Urbana of this meeting.
2. She did not want the sign for the West Urbana Historic District relocated across the street in front of Howard Wakeland's properties. Residents in the District want the sign to remain on the north side of West Main Street.
3. She would like the same sidewalk treatment in her neighborhood as what was done around Leal School, which was to relay the bricks and use polymer sand to reduce the growth of weeds. The large Maple tree in front of her house has created problems for people in wheel chairs to use the sidewalk. She asked that the City not turn their brick sidewalks into concrete sidewalks when making improvements.

Randy Kangas, of 804 West Main Street, expressed confusion over what the improvements to West Main Street would be. He requested to speak after City staff's presentation on the improvements.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Public Works Project – A discussion with Craig Shonkwiler, Urbana City Engineer, regarding the West Main Historic District: Lincoln Avenue & Springfield Avenue Resurfacing Project

Chair Novak opened this item on the agenda.

Craig Shonkwiler, Urbana City Engineer, gave a slide presentation on the resurfacing project. His presentation focused on the following:

- Area to be resurfaced
- Required by the American Disability Act (ADA) to bring certain parts of the sidewalks into compliance. Therefore, the City plans to make improvements to curb ramps and upgrade one side or the other for easier passage. They look at a benefit cost analysis to make the determination of which side of the street to upgrade the sidewalk. The east side of Lincoln Avenue was not easily addressed as the sidewalk is narrow, there are retaining walls up and down the corridor, and the City would have had to retain right-of-way acquisitions. These are all beyond the scope of this project.

- The Bicycle Master Plan identified that the Lincoln Avenue and Main Street and Lincoln Avenue and Stoughton Street intersections were difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. The resurfacing project proposes to create a multi-use path and a safe refuge for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Lincoln Avenue. All improvements would be made within existing right-of-way.
- He showed photos of current conditions and described the proposed work. He noted that no parking would be removed from Main Street.
- He showed the section of brick sidewalk that would be converted to concrete. He noted that it would be done for the safety of bicyclists, and this was endorsed by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission.
- The Main Street Historic District sign can stay where it currently is located. There is no requirement to move the sign.
- He showed a map of the properties in the West Main Street Historic District that would be adjacent to the resurfacing project. He noted that there is only one contributing property that would be affected.
- He mentioned that the resurfacing project would be funded by the State Motor Fuel Tax. This requires the City to go through environmental clearances, which requires the City to look at impacts to historic properties. While there are no properties in the proposed work area currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, there is the West Main Street Historic District. He reviewed the options of the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission in determining if there are any adverse effects and noted the potential outcome from each option.

Jeff Yockey, of Champaign County Bikes, approached the Historic Preservation Commission to speak. He showed a map that bicyclists use to indicate streets with fewer traffic and routes that are easier to use. The map also had red dots on certain intersections that bicyclists use to indicate problematic for crossing. One of the red dots on the map is on Lincoln Avenue and Main Street. He said he believed that the proposed improvements would be beneficial and make crossing Lincoln Avenue safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. He related a bicycle accident that he had when he was a kid involving how slippery brick pavement can be, so he advocated for making the short strip in the resurfacing plan concrete.

Chair Novak asked if the Historic Preservation Commission members had any questions for City staff.

Mr. Hays expressed concern with pedestrians and bicyclists merging. He felt there would be benefits to keeping the brick sidewalk and creating a separate concrete path for bicyclists. Mr. Yockey replied that there are many other places where bicyclist and pedestrians share common spaces. They just need to be aware of each other. A cyclist would be able to scan ahead and adjust their movements accordingly. Mr. Shonkwiler pointed out that the multi-use path would be 8 or 10-foot wide and there would be “yield” and “look” markings on the path.

Ms. Pagliuso asked if a future extension of the Kickapoo Rail Trail might take the place of this branch of the bicycle path. Mr. Yockey replied that was a good question. There will be a study started in the near future to figure out the best way to bring the Kickapoo Rail Trail west into Urbana and onward into the City of Champaign. There are many solutions. Mr. Shonkwiler added that he is a member of the KRT Extension Study, and the boundaries of the study would be from

Smith Road to Lincoln Avenue. There are many phases they would need to go through, so implementation of an extension will take some time. He said he did not believe that the proposed improvements would be redundant to any extension of the KRT in the study. Cyclists use the Main Street route and would benefit from the resurfacing project.

With there being no further questions for City staff, Chair Novak opened this item for public input.

Randy Kangas again approached the Historic Preservation Commission to speak. He stated that he now has a better understanding of the resurfacing project. The City would only be resurfacing 60 feet of Main Street, not the entire street. Mr. Shonkwiler explained that the City would resurface approximately 207 feet of Main Street east of the center of Lincoln Avenue.

Mr. Kangas talked about the Rael development north of this intersection. He expressed concern about the City narrowing Lincoln Avenue and the impact it would have on large truck traffic. With the mass increase in density from the new residential developments in the immediate area and the reduction in the number of lanes of West Main Street at Lincoln Avenue, he was concerned that traffic would get backed up on Main Street. He felt that the City should resurface all of West Main Street, especially since it is a bicycle corridor. Currently, bicyclists veer out into traffic to avoid hitting holes in the street. He recalled the following quote that the developer of the Rael development had made at a City Council meeting, *"The heart and soul of this project is the brick street. It brought a historic feel to it."* Here we are with this project on Main Street pulling up bricks. Regarding the West Main Street Historic District sign, many of the property owners along Main Street would find it insulting if the City relocates the sign across the street to one of Howard Wakeland's properties due to a previous lawsuit they had with Mr. Wakeland regarding an upzoning of some of Mr. Wakeland's properties.

With no further input from the audience, Chair Novak closed the public input portion and opened it for discussion and/or motion(s) by the Commission.

Ms. Smith felt that the City should keep the sign located on the north side of the street. She expressed concern about bicycle traffic merging onto the sidewalk with pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Hays felt that the City should keep the bicycle path and the pedestrian sidewalk separate until it gets to the corner where the curb cut is. He said he believed this would increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians while retaining the bricks, which contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Chair Novak asked how much space would be between the brick pavement and the new pavement. Mr. Shonkwiler stated that the City has never done a parallel path like Mr. Hays was suggesting, but that does not mean that it could not be done. He felt it would be a minimum of two feet between the two paths. They would need to merge at the corner of the intersection to cross Lincoln Avenue. If the Historic Preservation Commission felt that the City should keep the bricks because they are part of the historic district, then they could recommend that as a condition. Mr. Hays responded that the two paths would not need to be that far apart. He could provide examples of what he is proposing. Further discussion ensued on this topic and covered the plans for the south side of West Main Street as well. Mr. Hays felt it would be important not to delaminate the two lines but important enough to mark them so that bicyclists and pedestrians would know how to circulate there.

Mr. Garcia noted that he understood that in the discussion at the BPAC level, there was concern about cyclists crashing when they hit the brick sidewalks. Mr. Hays stated that having the materials be different would help such as having different striping for each path. Cyclists need to pay attention and be aware anyway due to the number of holes in the road that could cause them to wreck. Mr. Shonkwiler commented that he would try to balance the needs of both interests without halting the project completely.

Ms. Pagliuso asked when the project was slated to happen. Mr. Shonkwiler replied that the City has a lot of environmental clearances to get through and some easement acquisitions to obtain. City staff is in the final planning preparation now. He hoped to get the project out to bid by late summer/early fall. It would take all of the year 2020 to build.

Mr. Seyler asked what material/element would be used to separate the two paths. Mr. Shonkwiler said he did not believe that they would want the two paths right next to each other if they retain the brick sidewalk for pedestrians. It would have to be investigated; some options include grass or mulch. A rail would pose safety issues to bicyclists striking it.

The Historic Preservation Commission members talked about possible conditions they could include in a motion. Mr. Hays moved that the Historic Preservation Commission grant a finding of No Adverse Effect with the following conditions: 1) Preserve the brick sidewalk whenever possible for the character of the neighborhood and 2) Keep pedestrian and bicycle circulation paths materially and spatially separated as far as possible until the two need to merge before approaching the curb cut. Ms. Pagliuso seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

HP-2019-NRN-01 – A request by Alice Novak to nominate the Urbana Downtown Historic District, consisting of 42 contributing and 3 non-contributing structures, to the National Register of Historic Places.

Chair Novak recused herself from the Commission due to conflict of interest. She then turned the meeting over to Kim Smith, Vice Chair.

Vice Chair Smith opened this item on the agenda. Marcus Ricci, Planner II, gave a brief staff presentation. Referring to Exhibit A, he noted the location of the proposed historic district. He gave a brief background on the origin of the nomination and reviewed the criteria for evaluation. Using the aerial map of the proposed downtown historic district, he showed individual photos of each structure in the proposed district. He noted the Summary of Staff Findings in the written staff memo. He read the options of the Historic Preservation Commission and presented City staff's recommendation that the Historic Preservation Commission come to a general consensus that the nomination of the proposed Urbana Downtown Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places satisfies criteria #2 and #4 of Section XII-10.B of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and direct the Vice Chair to complete the application to be submitted to the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council (IHSAC) selecting "Approve". He noted that Ms. Novak was available to answer questions.

Vice Chair Smith asked what implications this would have on the property owners. Are there any restrictions? Ms. Novak said that there is a common misconception that being listed on the National

Register of Historic Places provides some protection for properties, but in fact, it does not. It is mainly a recognition and an honor. For this specific district, it is a way to allow property owners to be eligible for the 20% Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit; however, if a property owner chooses to use the 20% tax credit and qualifies, then there are restrictions. The property owner would need to follow the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines and the state would get to review any changes.

She said there used to be a 10% tax credit; however, it no longer exists. There were no architectural restrictions and was based on whether the property had been constructed prior to 1936. It was not available to properties on the National Register list. With this tax credit no longer existing, there is now no reason not to be on the list.

Ms. Pagliuso inquired about a 25% state income tax credit available when you apply for federal credit. She asked Ms. Novak if she had any knowledge about this. Ms. Novak replied that there was a state tax credit that passed at the end of 2018. It was so poorly written that the State is having problems creating the rules of how to get through the state tax credit. She had not heard whether this had been resolved or not. She mentioned that there are also "Redevelopment Zones" for four towns [in Illinois] along rivers.

Ms. Pagliuso wondered what the reactions were of the property owners about the proposed nomination. Kevin Garcia, Planner II, noted that all of the property owners were invited to an informational meeting, but only two or three showed up. They had some misconceptions as Ms. Novak mentioned earlier. Mr. Ricci noted that he had received some calls with the same misconceptions.

Ms. Pagliuso felt the nomination was well written. Mr. Hays commented that if anybody had any doubts about the merits of the proposed district, the nomination leaves no doubt. The evidence that it meets the criteria is demonstrated in the nomination. Vice Chair Smith agreed. She said that she learned a lot about many of the buildings.

A straw poll was taking and the results were as follows:

- Ms. Pagliuso felt it meets Criteria #2 and #4 and wanted Vice Chair Smith to fill out the appropriate paperwork.
- Mr. Seyler agreed that the Historic Preservation Commission should move forward with the nomination.
- Mr. Hays agreed.
- Vice Chair Smith agreed and said she would be happy to fill out the paperwork.

Vice Chair Smith thanked Ms. Novak and her class for all of their hard work in preparing the nomination.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Ms. Pagliuso talked about the following:

- A letter of intent was approved by City Council to move forward with a redevelopment deal on the Landmark Hotel. The exterior of the building will be reconditioned. The prospective owner wants to apply for both federal and state tax credits.

- The City Council passed a new fee structure, including a new \$200.00 fee for a local landmark application if the owner is not in agreement. There are additional duties that City staff have to fulfill when an owner disagrees that bear the same weight as other permitting fees.
- Mumford Barn is looking in disrepair with some clapboard coming off, peeling paint and some windows that were covered are now exposed.

Ms. Novak mentioned that #5 Buena Vista Court received a Heritage award from Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) for stucco restoration. She expressed concern of Buena Vista Court overall noting that there is some serious deterioration of some of the bungalows.

11. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Garcia announced that Mr. Ricci would be handling the bulk of historic preservation cases in the future.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Seyler moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote.

Submitted,

Kevin Garcia, AICP
Historic Preservation Commission Recording Secretary