

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: April 6, 2016

APPROVED

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Scott Dossett, Matt Metcalf, Alice Novak, Gina Pagliuso, David Seyler, Trent Shepard, Kim Smith

MEMBERS EXCUSED: There were none.

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Dennis Roberts, Karl Weingartner

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

Chair Novak called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present with all members present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 20, 2016 Historic Preservation Commission special meeting were presented for approval.

Mr. Dossett moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Pagliuso seconded the motion. The minutes were then approved by voice vote as presented.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Historic Preservation Commission – 2016 Meeting Schedule
- Preservation Month 2016 – Tentative Schedule
- Handout from Dennis Roberts

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

PRESERVATION MONTH ACTIVITIES

Kevin Garcia, Planner II, began by talking about the handout, “*Preservation Month 2016 – Tentative Schedule*”. He explained that the handout lists many activities that Ms. Novak and he had discussed holding in the month of May to honor Historic Preservation Month. He then opened the item up for discussion amongst the members of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Ms. Novak commented that she would like the Commission to start promoting historic preservation more. While there are many activities on the list, they are all doable.

BROCHURES

Mr. Metcalf stated that he had sketched out some ideas for a brochure about recognizing different architectural styles in local structures. He suggested tying the brochure in with the presentation Ms. Novak has planned for May 11, 2016 since the topics are similar. Ms. Novak agreed.

Ms. Novak suggested a second brochure on what the Historic Preservation Commission generally does. Mr. Dossett mentioned that there is a brochure on the City of Urbana’s website titled, “*The Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance – UNDERSTANDING LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT & DESIGNATIONS*” which Mr. Metcalf could use as a model.

WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Garcia mentioned that the “How to Research Your Old House” workshop that was held on March 10, 2016 went well with about 18 to 20 people in attendance. As a result, they have planned two additional presentations, one on May 11th to talk about architectural styles and one on May 18th to talk about vernacular building forms, and corresponding walking tours on the following Saturdays. The concept is to keep good momentum going by holding these events.

FARMERS’ MARKET EVENTS

Discussion was held about the dates, staffing the events and times for the events. The Commission and City staff decided the following:

Dates and Staffing:

- May 7th – Gina Pagliuso, Dave Seyler and Trent Shepard (BOOTH)
- May 14th – Scott Dossett, Dave Seyler and Trent Shepard (BOOTH); Alice Novak (TOUR)
- May 21st – Matt Metcalf, Gina Pagliuso AND possibly Kim Smith (BOOTH); Alice Novak (TOUR)

Time:

Start all tours at 10:00 am and plan for 60 minutes. This allows people to still shop when they return to the market.

Booth Location:

The booth would most likely be located on the east side of the market with the other community groups. Information they could provide might include brochures and landmark applications for people stopping by the booth.

Discussion was held about rain dates and recording the walking tours. Since the month of May is scheduled with activities, rain dates would need to be held on a “*to be determined*” basis. With regards to recording the walking tours, Ms. Novak stated that would add another layer of organizing the event and could also add complications. Mr. Garcia mentioned that the whole month of May is Bike to Market Month. They also talked about advertising the events on the City of Urbana website. Mr. Garcia stated that he would be sure to post the information on the website.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

- Elm Street House – Mr. Shepard noticed tape around the house. Mr. Metcalf commented that if the house is condemned, there are valuable materials inside the house. Ms. Pagliuso commented that rumor has it that someone is interested in buying the house and moving it. Mr. Garcia stated that it is really expensive to move a house. The mover has to pay utility companies to take down power lines, etc. City staff had researched where the house could be moved to but could not find any suitable vacant lots.
- Zeta Tau Alpha House – Ms. Pagliuso asked for an update on the sale of the house. Mr. Garcia heard that the owner had reduced the asking price to \$700,000.

11. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

12. STUDY SESSION

DISCUSSION OF “HISTORIC RECOGNITION” LANDMARK STATUS

Mr. Garcia stated that City staff received an email from Dennis Roberts regarding this topic and asked that he give a brief presentation.

Mr. Roberts began by explaining that the idea he was about to present came about from his wanting more residents to engage in the historic landmark process. From his discussions with people in the community he had discovered that some residents fear landmark status for their properties because of having to be burdened with applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness to make improvements

to the outside of their homes. He commented that there are also homes in the City of Urbana that have a lot of merit but do not have the excellence for being landmarked.

He proposed creating a new level of historic landmark. He calls it "*Historic Recognition*". He believed it may encourage more homeowners to consider filing for local landmark designation of their properties in Urbana. He talked about possible criteria that could be used to determine if a property was worthy of "Recognition" status.

Mr. Roberts explained how "Historic Recognition" might differ from "Landmark" status. Once "recognized", maintenance would be based on the pride of the homeowner. Any changes that altered the property and no longer made it worthy would then lose their "historic recognition" status. A Certificate of Appropriateness would not be required to maintain the building, and designation could end upon the sale of the property.

He believed that this idea could get the community engaged and encourage historic preservation. He hoped this new level of historic status could be applied to commercial buildings, especially in the downtown area as well.

Mr. Shepard asked if the idea of having a sunset clause was being done anywhere else. Mr. Roberts replied that it is his idea and he was not aware of another town allowing the "recognition" to expire with the sale of a property.

Mr. Metcalf stated that he loved this idea. He felt that the City needs something other than "landmark" status because it has baggage that comes from outside the historical preservation circle. It hinders and poisons people's thoughts toward nominating their home or business. To have something that is less threatening is vital. This is fresh and new and would give the City a real opportunity to encourage historic preservation.

Mr. Dossett agreed. He believed it was worth having City staff research whether other towns have a similar "recognition" status. He feared that we are developing animosity between property owners and the Historic Preservation Commission and the City of Urbana. He believed that a new level of historic preservation might help preserve the condition of properties that are worn down and torn down, because pride and ownership will drive people to make improvements on their properties.

Mr. Metcalf stated that this concept would also take away the idea that a property has to be associated with Joseph Royer in order to be a historic landmark. The local and cultural history is far deeper than Joseph Royer. This concept could allow people to discover how an entire neighborhood came into being part of Urbana's history. It would be strictly voluntary and would have no restrictions.

Mr. Shepard commented that Mr. Robert's idea for a historical "recognition" status appeals to him. The City has had very few properties nominated as landmarks. The idea is worth talking about.

Ms. Smith asked if any other City has a similar level of historic status. Mr. Garcia replied no. Ms. Smith felt it would be worth looking into.

There was discussion amongst the members about the Neighborhood Conservation District. Ms. Novak explained that the ordinance took a great deal of time to create, review and get approval by

the City Council. She mentioned that there are other cities with conservation district ordinances in the State of Illinois, some of which are included within a Historic Preservation Ordinance; however, no place in Illinois has created a conservation district yet.

Ms. Pagliuso felt it was an interesting idea. Any interest in historic properties would be good publicity; however, she expressed concern that it might give the impression that the City is abandoning the landmark status in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. She believed that if a person has pride of ownership in his/her property, then they have it even if their property does not have historic status. Many properties in the City of Urbana are rental properties. So, if a person is a landlord and does not have pride of ownership in their property, historic “recognition” will not change that. If a property owner will lose their historic recognition of the property if they change out their windows, then what would be the incentive to get them to nominate their property for becoming historically “recognized”?

She hoped that the preservation activities that are being planned for the month of May will help educate the community on historic preservation. Maybe we can start to reverse some of the misinformation that people have about historic preservation. If a house is landmarked, it could still be demolished. The existing Historic Preservation Ordinance does not prevent that from happening. It just states that a property owner has to go through an additional step and prove Economic Hardship before they can demolish their property.

Although she thinks it is a great idea and brings up a lot of interesting points, she felt that there would need to be a lot more discussion about the idea before integrating it into what the Historic Preservation Ordinance is, what the different levels would mean and what it would mean to be historically “recognized”.

Ms. Novak agreed with Ms. Pagliuso. There are over 100 communities in the State of Illinois that have Historic Preservation ordinances, and many of the communities struggle with the same problem as the City of Urbana with not having many landmarked properties or large historic districts. The National Register of Historic Places has been in existence since 1966, and there are many places of historical merit that are not on the National Register.

She agreed that the idea of adding a new layer, Historic “Recognition”, felt like a watering down of what the City and the Historic Preservation Commission has worked hard to have. She also believed that the City’s Certified Local Government (CLG) status would be revoked if this component was added into the Historic Preservation Ordinance because it would not be binding. This would cause Urbana to lose out in the opportunity to receive funding for workshops and tours as we have been recipients for in the past (such as the stucco workshop, the unveiling of a house on High Street, the podcasts, etc.). The City of Urbana has been able to achieve and get done things that other communities have not been able to due to great City staff and the CLG grants.

Property owners can have pride of ownership regardless of whether they have a plaque or a flag or nothing at all. A person she knows has pride in ownership and he believes in making everything look new on a house when he renovates. When a house is made to look new, it no longer has historic value.

When looking at people’s reactions to the proposed idea, she proposed that this level of recognition belongs in a different location, such as a neighborhood organization, and not in City government

and not in a place where an existing ordinance would be watered down. She felt that many people who have come forward and agreed to their properties being landmarked or become part of a historic district want protection for their properties even after they no longer own the properties. They do not want to see the properties altered and have the historic character removed.

Mr. Dossett made a motion that the Historic Preservation Commission direct City staff to research whether similar “recognition” ordinances exist in other communities within the State of Illinois and report back to the Historic Preservation Commission about sub-Secretary of the Interior standard level designations that other communities have. Mr. Metcalf seconded the motion.

Mr. Metcalf stated that he seconded the motion because he does not see any harm in gathering more information. However, the status quo is problematic and at some point in time, they are going to have to figure out a way to either broaden out the existing Ordinance or find other ways to encourage more property owners to be willing to landmark and to combat the misinformation that is out there.

Ms. Novak replied that there is no harm in gathering more research; however, other possibilities could be that the City Council be more supportive of historic preservation and more consistently supportive of the neighborhood located directly between Downtown Urbana and the University of Illinois campus. Property values in historic areas in other communities are higher because they are protected.

Mr. Metcalf agreed. Support needs to come from other bodies as well, such as the Zoning Board of Appeals. Historic preservation does not just come from the Historic Preservation Commission. It also comes from developments in the downtown area are consistent with the setbacks of existing businesses. The Historic Preservation Commission cannot be up for constant flogging because they are trying to do their part while other groups sit by and do nothing.

A vote was taken on the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

There was further discussion about CLG restrictions and about pride awards.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Downtown Design Guidelines** - Mr. Garcia noted that City staff has been working hard on creating design guidelines for Downtown Urbana. They should have a draft available in a few months.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dossett moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. With all Commission members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Submitted,

Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager
Historic Preservation Commission Recording Secretary