

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: May 6, 2015

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: Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager; Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Maximillian Mahalek, Planning Intern

OTHERS PRESENT: Dennis Roberts

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

Chair Novak called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present. Ms. Pagliuso arrived shortly after roll call was taken. All members were then present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 1, 2015 Historic Preservation Commission regular meeting were presented for approval.

Mr. Shepard proposed the following changes:

- Page 3, 1st Paragraph: delete the sentence, “*Now, the City is in the position that 20% of the remaining historic blocks in Downtown Urbana will be reconstructed with a new façade that they have no control over.*”
- Page 3, 6th Paragraph, First Line: change *detail* to *detailed*
- Page 6, 7th Paragraph: change *panel* to *element*

Mr. Metcalf proposed the following addition:

- Page 4, 7th Paragraph: add the following, “Mr. Metcalf wondered what they could do to prevent this from happening again *because he valued the historic sense of place in Urbana and would like to see it preserved.*”

Mr. Shepard made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Dossett seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously as corrected.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Dennis Roberts approached the Commission to express his concern about façade renovations in the downtown area. He believed it was pertinent for the City to consider the adoption of a historic design overlay district for the downtown area. A thoughtful discussion of whether the Historic Preservation Commission or another body should work with the City to draft an overlay district for the downtown area would be timely. He spoke with the property owner of the Tiernan building, who also owns 119-125 West Main Street, and the property owner mentioned that he is considering the idea of changing the front facades of the buildings that he owns. Mr. Roberts felt that it would be good for the City to take the time to prepare a design overlay to guide property owners who are interested in making a façade change in order to keep the massing, the nature of the window design and entrances, and the materials that are being used to align with the historic nature of the downtown buildings that still exist today.

He talked about the Urbana Free Library and used it as an example of good intentions that did not work out well. During the 1970s improvements, the Library Board decided to make the new construction look significantly different to offset it from the rest of the building. In the 1990s, they revisited the idea and retro-fitted the middle part of the building to match the original design by Joseph Royer.

Sometimes energetic people want to do something new, but they need to be reminded that the harmony of the downtown area means something as well. If we have a lot of disjointed store fronts, especially along Main Street, then it tends to harm the character rather than preserve it. Therefore, he encouraged the Historic Preservation Commission to hold such a discussion and give suggestions based on their knowledge.

NOTE: Ms. Novak introduced Lorrie Pearson as the new Planning Manager for the City of Urbana.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Novak mentioned that since the previous meeting, Scott Dossett, submitted a Draft Resolution regarding the protection of Downtown Urbana through the creation of a Design Review Board. Since this topic was discussed at the previous meeting, she added this item to Old Business.

Mr. Dossett explained that the proposed proclamation is intended to make the Historic Preservation Commission's opinion known. Mr. Shepard and himself drafted the proposed document and would like to add or subtract language based on the input from the other members of the Commission.

Mr. Metcalf stated that he loved the language specifically about the language that states modifications to buildings have compromised some of the historic integrity of Downtown Urbana. He even suggested moving this language to be at the top of the document. The downtown area is a large part of the City's identity.

He asked if an amendment to the Historic Preservation Ordinance is different than encouraging the Design Review Board. Mr. Dossett explained that the inclusion of Section XII-3-B of the Zoning Ordinance was meant to serve as an introduction to the bona fides of the Historic Preservation Commission to approach the City Council. The proposed document is not intended to change anything in the current Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Shepard wondered where proclamations usually come from. Does the Legal Department usually create them? Ms. Pearson replied that resolutions are generally done by legislative bodies not by advisory bodies, such as boards and commissions. Therefore, the Commission might want to discuss what the document should be called and about what format they should use. Proclamations are general announcements for declaring special days or events. They do not usually state positions or opinions. She asked that the Historic Preservation Commission allow Planning staff to consult with the Legal staff on the best format for the kind of document.

Ms. Novak recommended that they strike "*recent*" from the paragraph that begins, "Whereas recent modifications to buildings in this area...". Downtown Urbana is a result of modifications that have taken place over many years, and some bad renovations happened decades ago. She recommended that the sentence be as follows, "*Whereas modifications to buildings in this area continue to compromise the historic representativeness of this area, and*".

Mr. Shepard felt it would be a good idea for somebody to have some say over future front façade changes in the downtown area. He was surprised it had not happened before with the changes that Busey and the County Plaza property owner made years ago.

Mr. Metcalf asked if the proposed document would improve or give the Historic Preservation Commission any ability to advise or be advised regarding changes within a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District. Because the 204 West Main Street property is within a TIF District, the Historic Preservation Commission would not have been able to have any advisory ability over the property. He asked if this was germane or had relevance. Ms. Novak thought he might be getting the TIF District mixed up with the demolition delay ordinance. She explained that the front façade at 204 West Main Street was not supposed to be demolished rather the property owner planned to save it; however, it was too weak and caved in. Mr. Garcia added that the demolition delay ordinance does not apply to TIF Districts, which is why the Historic Preservation Commission was not notified.

Ms. Novak mentioned that the proposed document would support the creation of a review board. There are currently two review boards, the Design Review Board and the MOR Development Review Board. The Design Review Board reviews projects in the East Urbana Design Review District and in the Lincoln-Busey Corridor. The MOR Development Review Board reviews projects in the MOR Zoning District. Ms. Smith pointed out that she serves on both boards as a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. She mentioned that there was discussion to combine the two boards. Mr. Garcia stated that it is still pending; however, City staff felt it made sense to combine them.

Mr. Dossett explained that when drafting the proposed document, he avoided using the language, *zoning overlay district*. Zoning seemed like a deep well that he did not want to go into.

Mr. Garcia believed that one of the Implementation Strategies in the 2012 Downtown Plan calls for a design review district for the downtown area. Mr. Roberts mentioned that it is also listed in the City Council Goals. Each district typically has design guidelines that help architects working on projects aware of the City's preferences. The Community Development staff would ultimately draft the document for City Council. Getting the Historic Preservation Commission to support and motivate this would be great though because Mayor Prussing has always been supportive of creating a downtown design district.

Mr. Garcia noted that the Community Development staff has held one staff level meeting to kick off getting a design review district started for the downtown area. Ms. Novak suggested keeping this item for the next regular meeting since they do not know what to call the document or what the powers of the Historic Preservation Commission are.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

801 West Oregon Street, Royer House

Mr. Shepard mentioned that although the sign has been removed, the posts are still there. There was a big party held there, so we know it is now getting used.

608 West Oregon Street

Mr. Dossett mentioned that a professor at the University of Illinois had started renovating the house by painting. The professor approached him about colors used during a specific period of time.

11. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

12. STUDY SESSION

Historic Preservation Activities

Ms. Novak opened this item up for discussion, suggestions, and ideas for preservation activities that the Commission members could do to promote historic preservation more. She hoped to get some ideas that everyone agreed on and start creating an action plan to implement the activities.

Mr. Metcalf stated he liked the idea of incorporating a campaign in the City of Urbana asking people, “What is your favorite part of Urbana? Why? What is the history of this part? What is your connection to your favorite part? What makes it historic for you?” The idea came from the campaign, This Place Matters, which can be found at the following link: <http://goo.gl/P3NgKS>. People were asked to choose any place and take a picture of themselves holding a sign that says, “*This Place Matters*” and post it online. By holding such a campaign, he believed it would be a great way to connect with people and encourage them to look around the City of Urbana and to engage and become excited about historic preservation. Ms. Novak agreed with this idea and thought maybe they could partner with the Historic Preservation Commission in the City of Champaign.

Mr. Shepard asked if anyone remembered something encouraging people to record the history of their home. Mr. Roberts stated that there have been a lot of surveys done on properties in West Urbana and on properties in the central downtown areas. Since he lives in East Urbana, he wanted surveys to be performed on properties in his area as well, so he received a grant from Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) to conduct a mailing and do a survey of his area from Broadway Avenue to Cottage Grove Avenue/Hartle Avenue and from Washington Street north to Water Street.

He also took a digital survey of all the houses on every block. He planned to find a place on the City of Urbana’s server to post his photos and match the related text submitted by people to create an ongoing, growing database for the east side of town. He wants to accomplish this within the next year or so.

He went on to say that there are so many stories that you get anecdotally when talking to people in the neighborhood. He even bought a digital voice recorder to do interviews.

Mr. Metcalf stated that he would like to have a geographic component to that as well. They have the raw data with the digital photographs and background submitted by the neighbors. They have access to the City’s GIS equipment and could find a place on the City’s server to tie all of the components together.

Ms. Novak brought up the fact that they do not have enough historic landmark and district applications being submitted. She suggested holding a building research workshop to teach people how to research their own properties. She stated that they held a similar workshop about ten years ago, and it was crowded. Mr. Shepard and Mr. Metcalf voiced that this would be a good idea.

The Commission discussed the idea and agreed it would be best to hold the workshop in one session on an evening in the fall. They could use neighborhood listservs and City resources to spread the word about the event.

Mr. Metcalf suggested doing something to connect with the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. He was flabbergasted and thrilled to see how many people attend the Market. He wondered if it would be possible to hand out information or to have a booth to provide descriptions of the different types of houses in Urbana. Mr. Garcia explained that staff would have to talk to the Market Coordinator, Natalie Kenny Marquez. Ms. Novak thought they might be able to hand out the information at the Sweet Corn Festival as well.

Mr. Dossett liked the idea of creating a brochure containing descriptions and pictures of the different architectural styles of houses. Ms. Novak stated that a brochure would be a lot of work. She suggested maybe a poster or something that would be a talking point. Mr. Metcalf commented that ideally they would have both. If we are talking about the design and setup, he would be glad to try to tackle that. He believed it would be important for people to have something to take with them even if they do not read it on the spot, they would have it later to read when they get home.

Ms. Novak asked what the Commission members thought about the idea of having a tour. Mr. Dossett asked if it cost money to provide bags and t-shirts. He really liked the Modern House Tour. Ms. Novak replied that they did not have to provide bags and/or shirts. When the Commission first formed, they held walking tours of the downtown area. They could hold a tour that starts at the Farmer's Market and walks around downtown with a guide talking about the history of the buildings.

Ms. Novak mentioned that the Commission has also used CLG grants to hold workshops that were hands-on demonstrations on windows, stucco, and unveiling of siding. These activities cost more money, but if they had an expert that they could bring in to do a demonstration, then maybe they could partner with PACA and the City of Champaign. Mr. Metcalf liked the idea of holding a demonstration on windows or on the effect water has on infrastructure. Ms. Novak stated that there is an international expert on water issues with buildings that lives in town. He has lots of visuals.

Ms. Novak felt that they should pursue the idea of "This Place Matters". She also liked the idea of having a tour come out of the results of this particular activity.

Mr. Shepard stated that tours take some work. However, they do gather mobs of people who care about historic preservation. Ms. Novak stated that they could have a neighborhood walking tour to look at the styles and types of architecture and not go into the buildings. Going into buildings require a lot more work and extra volunteers and can get really complicated.

Mr. Metcalf suggested having a theme that they could tie into such as a tour of industrial sites or things that were made in the City of Urbana and where one could see evidence of it or the infrastructure of where it was made. Mr. Dossett also mentioned the Royer arts and architecture district. The Commission has not done much to support it, and there is already a brochure for it. Ms. Novak liked the idea of having a theme. It certainly worked for the Modern House Tour. Ms. Novak mentioned that Stewart Urlacher has done a great deal of research on Pre-Civil War era buildings in Urbana.

Ms. Novak summarized the discussion by saying that there was emphasis on the following: 1) planning "This Place Matters" for the fall. She will contact the City of Champaign to see if their Historic Preservation Commission would like to do this at the same time; 2) have a table/booth

presence at the Farmer's Market and/or some simple downtown walking tours; 3) planning a workshop on "How to Conduct Research on Your Own House" in the fall; and 4) possibly planning a demonstration workshop.

Mr. Metcalf inquired when the Farmer's Market ends for the season. Mr. Shepard replied the fall. Mr. Metcalf said that there would be plenty of time to tie into the Market then with some of their activities.

Regarding "This Place Matters", Ms. Novak stated that they need to figure out how they can have access to the internet. They could talk to Sanford Hess, Information Technology Director for the City of Urbana. She asked if the Commission could meet in June to follow up on some of these plans. Mr. Garcia replied yes.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Novak mentioned that the Illinois Historic Preservation Conference is scheduled for June 23 – 25 in Carbondale, Illinois. One can go to the landmarks.org website to get more details about the conference. Mr. Garcia added that if any Commission member would like to carpool, there should be room in the car as there are three Planning staff registered to attend the conference.

Ms. Novak mentioned that the Mumford House has not been discussed for a while. At one time there was correspondence related to it, so she asked City staff to put it on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting in June. She also asked the Commission members to bring in any correspondence that they had received.

14. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Mr. Dossett moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. With all Commission members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Submitted,

Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager
Historic Preservation Commission Recording Secretary