



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Bruce K. Walden, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Elizabeth H. Tyler, AICP, Director

DATE: May 15, 2003

SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Commission discussion on brick sidewalks

On May 7, 2003 the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission, as requested by City Council, reviewed a recently signed petition by a group property owners that requested the existing brick sidewalks in front of or adjacent to their homes be replaced with concrete. During the public hearing, the Preservation Commission listened to audience testimonies both of opponents and proponents of the petition. The Commission discussed the overall city policy and responded to the petition and audience concerns.

At the meeting on May 7th, the commission did not make a formal motion but did offer the following general comments to the Urbana City Council:

- Although the East Urbana neighborhood is not a designated Historic District per se, it does possess historical character and integrity, which may make it a future candidate of such designation. Lack of local designation does not indicate a lack of cohesive character. The character of the neighborhood begins from the streets and moves to sidewalks and into the homes and the history of the people that have inhabited the neighborhood over the past hundred years.
- Safety and Maintenance Concerns are important issues. Despite the lack of a City Brick Maintenance plan over the past 80 years, the new ordinance addresses the repair of this important historic infrastructure-asset. Brick sidewalks are as important to the community as a whole as they are to the buildings next to them. However, the City's projected timetable remains a concern.
- The City should put money into both repair and maintenance of brick sidewalk infrastructure.

- Brick sidewalks and streets have more meaning if they are consistently intact. Piece meal replacement of brick to concrete destroys the historical integrity of the neighborhood. The best thing the City of Urbana can do is to keep brick sidewalks intact, particularly those areas considered “major brick blocks.”

For additional information including summaries of comments from residents, please refer to the draft minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission meeting attached to this memo.

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DRAFT

DATE: May 7, 2003

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rich Cahill, Liz Cardman, Sharon Irish, Alice Novak, Art Zangerl

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Bill Rose, Trent Shepard

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager; Michaela Bell, Planner; Teri Andel, Secretary; Bill Gray, City Engineer

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Bliss, Liz Bowermaster, Gerald Brighton, Scott Dossett, Alice Englebretsen, Marcus Harris, Laura Huth, Eric Kang, Peggy Kovacic, Margaret Miller, Timothy Millikan, Philip Nogle, Lester & Barbara Pritchard, Dennis Roberts, Chris Stohr, Alethea Taylor-Camp, Frank Veach, Linda Wild

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

Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Chair, Alice Novak, called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Chair Novak proposed moving the Joseph Royer Historic District Plaque Presentation under New Business to be presented before Item #5 – Audience Participation. The Historic Preservation Commission unanimously approved the change.

3. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Ms. Irish moved to approve the minutes from April 2, 2003 as amended. Ms. Cardman seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote as amended.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Letter from David A. Kovacic
Letter from Lea Fry

5. NEW BUSINESS

Joseph Royer Historic District Plaque Presentations

Chair Novak mentioned that it was Historic Preservation Week sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It was held during the week of May 5, 2003 through May 12, 2003, and the theme was “Cities, Suburbs, and Countryside”. She pointed out that if it was possible, the Historic Preservation Commission has made a habit of celebrating this week when possible by presenting plaques to recently listed Local Landmarks and Historic Districts. She noted that this year, the Commission was pleased to celebrate the local lifting of a small, historic district, The Joseph Royer Historic District.

Michaela Bell, Planner, gave a presentation on the Joseph Royer Historic District. She talked about Joseph Royer’s history and pointed out that Mr. Royer had designed the historic Champaign Court House and the sheriff’s residence and jail. He also designed other well-known Urbana landmarks, such as the Urbana High School, Urbana Lincoln Hotel, Urbana Christian Church, the Urbana Free Library, the Alpha-Rho Chi Chapter House, the Urbana Flat Iron Building, and the Urbana Country Club among other buildings in the community.

Next, Ms. Bell described the Joseph Royer Historic District. She noted that the house at 801 West Oregon was designed and built by Joseph Royer in 1905. The house was built in the Missions Style of architecture with an Arts and Crafts influence. She went on to describe the exterior and interior of the house at 801 West Oregon. She stated that Joseph Royer and his wife continued to live in the house until their death in the 1950s. Ms. Bell provided a brief background on the “Ella Danely House” or “Fairy Cottage” at 701 South Busey Avenue. This structure was also built by Joseph Royer as a “mother-in-law cottage”, for his mother-in-law, Mrs. Danely in 1923. It was designed in the English Period Revival Style of architecture. It relates to the 801 West Oregon structure in the fact that the cottage was also finished with the stucco siding. She went on to describe the exterior of the cottage house. She mentioned that Ms. Danely resided in the cottage at 701 South Busey Avenue until her death in 1953.

At this time, Chair Novak presented the plaques to the current property owners, who were as follows:

801 West Oregon – Eric Kang, Steve Kang, and Scott Kang
701 South Busey – Alethea Taylor-Camp

Ms. Camp commented that she was pleased to live in the “Fairy House” and to live in a historic preservation house. She found it was an asset to have her home listed on the historic preservation list. She mentioned that the Kang Family was wonderful neighbors. She was honored to receive the plaque. Mr. Eric Kang also expressed appreciation with Ms. Camp living next door. He thanked the City of Urbana for recognizing their home as a historic district. They have enjoyed it.

Chair Novak mentioned that the Joseph Royer Historic District was the only historic district in the City of Urbana. We also have five Local Landmarks, which had been recognized. She noted that prior to becoming a historic district, the house at 801 West Oregon had been in jeopardy of

demolition. The Ella Danely Cottage was one of the most charming, incredible historic buildings in the community.

6. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Peggy Kovacic, of 601 South Anderson, noted that she gradually became aware of the problem with brick sidewalks over the last 17 years that she lived at this address. The brick sidewalks are currently 80 to 100 years old, on a sandy gravel base, and they are in bad shape. They have not been properly maintained by the City of Urbana for many years. From her understanding, there was not any money for brick sidewalk maintenance.

She commented that the safe way to do brick sidewalks was how they had been done in the Downtown Urbana area. An even safer way would be to have a concrete sidewalk with a brick edge to maintain the brick look, yet allow a safe walking pavement. The new sidewalks in her neighborhood were being planned to put on a gravel base, which would allow for continual shifting with freezing and thawing and tree root uplift. This would allow grass and weeds to grow in the sand in the cracks between the bricks, which would result sooner or later with the same problems that we have now.

Ms. Kovacic stated that her concern for safety increased about two years ago when she began walking daily for exercise and was appalled at the condition of some of the sidewalks in the area. There are bricks missing, uneven bricks sticking up in the walkways, uplift of bricks from tree roots, freezing and thawing, sink holes where someone could easily turn their ankle, overgrown patches where the bricks cannot even be seen, and even newly redone sidewalks that have been done over the last couple of years are already beginning to be covered by weeds and grass. She mentioned that she herself had tripped because she caught her heels in the cracks and have fallen. Her neighbor fell, broke her glasses, was scraped very badly, and has permanent scars. She noted that neighbors young and old often walk in the street rather than take a chance of tripping over brick sidewalks. They are more afraid of falling than they are of the automobile traffic. One neighbor, who is wheelchair bound, routinely wheels his way back and forth to town in the street, because using the brick sidewalks is not practical for him.

Ms. Kovacic noted that her major concern was for the safety of the people in her neighborhood, and as an offshoot of that, the safety and accessibility of the brick sidewalks for the elderly and disabled neighbors. She was also concerned about her safety at her age. She has health problems, and at times, her coordination is not what it used to be. Her family has put a lot of work into their house, and they would like to live here for a long time.

When she learned that the City of Urbana was planning to redo the sidewalks soon, she inquired about having concrete sidewalks put in instead. She asked questions and found out that the City was planning to use brick because of historic preservation reasons. Her understanding was that the Zoning Ordinance was worded in such a way that property owner living in her neighborhood could appeal to the City Council against having brick sidewalks around their house, and if the City Council voted in favor of the appeal, then the property owner could have the brick sidewalk in front of their home replaced with concrete. Several neighbors who were equally frustrated with the brick sidewalks joined her in putting a petition together to go before City Council for help. The City Council did not realize the importance of the safety issue, because they referred the matter to the Historic Preservation Commission. She noted that she did not mean to be

disrespectful and did not understand how all of the City workings go together. She did not believe that this was an aesthetic historical kind of issue; it was more of a safety issue, which was a primary need to have a safe and accessible environment around the home.

In regards to maintenance of the brick sidewalks, the only maintenance that had been done on sidewalks in the area other than the handicap accessible ramps at the corners was to have asphalt patches put on when her neighbor fell. It does not look very pretty. Many of the people in the neighborhood have spent a large amount of time, money and hard work to dig out, maintain, and clean their brick walks over the years. In the winter, it is impossible to shovel, because you catch you shovel on the raised edges of the brick. Ice remains in the cracks. Freezing and thawing causes uplift. This raised a question of who would be held liable if a property owner shoveled their walk and someone slipped and fell on the ice? Also, who would be held liable if a property owner did not shovel their walk and someone slipped and fell on the ice? The spring season brings rain and mud in low places, which are also slippery places. The beginnings of grass and weed growth begin as well, which needs to be controlled. In the summer, grass and weed growth continues to be a problem, and they keep growing back after you remove them. In the fall, the leaves fall off the trees and mix with rain and mud, which makes the bricks slippery yet again.

She mentioned that the City would not bring in new bricks to replace the sidewalks with. The City would be using bricks that are already old and smooth. They are kind of like river rock, whereas after the bricks get worn, they get slippery. She noted that when pipes and sewer lines to homes need to be repaired, the brick sidewalks were torn up and not replaced properly. The end result was that the walkways sink, and the bricks become displaced. Although many people try, there were some neighbors, who were elderly and disabled, that could not maintain their walks. Many renters do not even try to maintain their walks. Maintenance has to be done continually year round to take care of plant growth and to fix the structural problems. The City of Urbana should be responsible for that task; however, the City seemed to have no money budgeted to maintain the brick sidewalks. She asked if the homeowners would still be expected to continue the task of sidewalk maintenance to keep the sidewalks safe and usable once they were redone? Who would maintain the sidewalks of the property owners who could not and would not do so?

Sidewalks in Downtown Urbana are placed on a concrete or asphalt base, and the bricks are mortared in place. There seemed to be no grass growth and very little possibility of uplift if there are on a concrete or asphalt base; however, that would be more expensive. She believed that these types of sidewalks had been limited to areas where more people would be using them than in the neighborhoods.

There is money budgeted for concrete sidewalk repair. There is less maintenance required for concrete sidewalks. These repairs are relatively fast and easy by comparison to what it would take to repair a brick sidewalk. The City of Urbana had also invested in a sidewalk scraping machine that grinds down raised edges of uplifted concrete slabs, so the concrete sidewalks are now safer than they ever had been before.

Ms. Kovacic mentioned that she had less energy because of her health problems. Nor did she choose to use the limited energy that she has, time and money to continue the extra upkeep that bricks sidewalks require. Her husband and she were wishing that the City of Urbana would take

this task over. If the City does not maintain the sidewalks and they cannot do the upkeep, then the sidewalks would become unsafe, and that would not be acceptable either.

In regards to safety, a four foot by four foot square brick walk has approximately 80 bricks with approximately 320 potential tripping points after uplift or displacement of the bricks occurs. Cracks become widen and catch heels, canes, crutches, and walkers. In contrast, concrete slab walks only have one crack every four feet for someone to trip over.

The new brick sidewalks may seem smooth and flat, but not if you are older and unsteady, if you have limited vision, if you try to walk with a walker, wheel in a wheelchair, push a stroller, or ride a tricycle over them. Add grass or weed growth, and the sidewalks become even more challenging to navigate. In addition, again freezing and thawing or tree roots cause the bricks to shift making the problems even more pronounced. The brick look concrete is safer than brick, but it would also not be as safe as concrete slabs, because again the cracks might create obstacles for some people.

Regarding accessibility, Ms. Kovacic asked if the current sidewalks were meeting ADA requirements for accessibility? She did not believe so. Would the redone brick walks also meet the standards when they are brand new and newly laid? After the bricks have been there for a while and after the freezing and thawing, the bricks will start wearing down. When the rain comes and mud compacts, it gets warm and the bricks will start buckling. Uneven pavement of the bricks is difficult for people with many difficulties. There are very nice concrete wheelchair ramps on every corner, which no one ever uses, because they prefer to ride in the street.

She was also worried about her elderly mother who comes to visit her. Her mother had tripped over a raised brick and is now terrified to walk on the brick sidewalks. She pointed out that there are a number of elderly people who live in the neighborhood. For someone who is elderly, a bad fall can mean pain, but it could also mean an end to their mobility, independence, and perhaps even mean the end of their life.

She noted that the people in here neighborhood who are the least able to maintain their walks (the elderly folks and the folks with disabilities) are the ones that are the most confined if their sidewalks are in disrepair and not maintained. We live in a time, which is long awaited, when accessibility is recognized as a right, and it is important that everyone has access to their own yards, their own blocks, and to their own neighborhood.

Regarding historical significance, she felt that the Historic Preservation Commission could speak to that better than she could. However, from where she sat, the argument for brick had been that the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood was historic and that the look should be preserved for aesthetics and for historical value. She noted that she respected history and was an elementary teacher for a long time. Her husband and she try to visit historical places when traveling and watch the history channel most of the time when they watch television. Their house was built in 1954, so to her, their house was not worthy of preservation, because it was not historic. She loved her older neighborhood, but she did not consider it historically significant either. There are no houses built by famous architects in the area, no one famous had lived nearby, and to her historical value should be secondary and safety should be the primary concern. On the map, there only seemed to be one historic house in the area that was designated for sidewalk repair.

As far as the argument that brick sidewalks would increase property values, she contacted three different appraisers. The first appraiser stated that he honestly had never thought of this issue. It was subjective. The only way to quantify it would be to do a paired sales analysis, where you put a house in front of a brick sidewalk and put another house, exactly like the first, in front of a concrete sidewalk. Then, test all of the people who look at them to see which one they would prefer. The contractor could personally see it both ways, the safety factor and the cohesive look of an older neighborhood. A well-maintained and neat appearance typically does have a positive effect no matter what the sidewalk was made of. There would probably be a small, positive effect for brick sidewalks if they were maintained over the short term. However, over the long term, brick sidewalks might have a detrimental effect if they were not maintained.

The second contractor remarked that he was unaware of any statistics on this topic. From his experience, brick sidewalks would not have much effect on property values, if any. The maintenance would be the important factor. If bricks were to add value to a property, then they should be maintained. Bricks would be a detriment on a sidewalk if a property had brick sidewalks that were not maintained. Brick sidewalks would add to the general atmosphere if they were in a historic area and the properties had some historically redeeming value from an architectural perspective.

The last contractor stated that the condition of the sidewalk had more to do with the buyer's perspective than what the sidewalk was made of. It was more a matter of personal choice. Some buyers prefer brick, and some prefer concrete. For most people, it was about the same.

Regarding the cost of brick sidewalks over concrete sidewalks, she pointed out that concrete sidewalks would offer a better cost-benefit ratio, not only for new construction, but also for repairs. She was told that concrete was as durable brick. Installation of brick, according to the City Engineer, would cost more than installing concrete sidewalks if the brick sidewalks would be installed over a gravel and sand base as planned. Add a concrete or asphalt base, and the costs would go even higher. The upkeep of the brick sidewalk would also be costly, because it would need to be done every few weeks throughout the year. From her understanding, the City had budgeted money to replace the brick sidewalks; however, they had not budgeted any money for the upkeep once the brick sidewalks were installed, which will be expensive. If concrete was cheaper and would require less maintenance, then why is not concrete being used instead? Would taxpayers in newer areas be agreeable to spending so much money to upgrade this neighborhood's brick sidewalks over a gravel base and also for the continual expense of upkeep necessary to keep these walks accessible and safe from then on when concrete would be so much cheaper?

Ms. Kovacic brought up the concern of potential lawsuits filed against the City of Urbana due to pedestrians being injured after falling on uneven bricks. Money was tight in the City's budget. The City of Urbana has many needs that these dollars could be used to address.

Another potential cost would be for Round Up, which was used to kill weeds. Not to mention that Round Up was not safe around children or pets. The runoff gets into the storm sewers, which potentially harms the environment. Therefore, she was concerned about this as well, especially on the level if the City of Urbana would use it to keep the weeds down.

Regarding the City Council, she felt that they were “passing the buck” by referring this sidewalk issue to the Historic Preservation Commission. This issue was about safety and the preservation of the citizens who currently live in the neighborhood, not the preservation of the neighborhood. The issue at question involves the safety and accessibility, maintenance cost, maintenance and cost of the method that the City planned to use to install the bricks, and not how unsafe the sidewalks currently were. This neighborhood had been patiently waiting for an improvement in the sidewalks for a long time. The only reason that the present sidewalk condition had been emphasized was to show what would eventually happen again if the brick method were implemented and to stress the need for the City of Urbana to be responsible for the maintenance of every sidewalk in the City limits. If the brick walks were not uniformly maintained, then we will have the same problems all over again.

There are safer ways to lend character to the neighborhood and still have the feel of brick. A brick border could be added to the concrete sidewalk or the concrete could be colored. Concrete sidewalks have huge advantages over the usage of brick sidewalks. She pointed out the chart on the back of her husband’s letter that showed some of the benefits of using concrete rather than brick. In addition to being safer and being more accessible, concrete sidewalks would be smoother, relieve homeowners of the responsibility of maintenance, make maintenance easier for the City of Urbana, and they would be the most economical to the taxpayers.

Her preference would be to have concrete sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. If that was not possible, then her second choice would be for the City of Urbana to allow the individual property owners to decide whether they want brick or concrete in front of their homes. She requested that the City Council budget adequate money to keep all of the newly redone brick sidewalks in good repair and weed free, so that they would continue to be safe and accessible for pedestrian traffic from now on.

In closing, she had a list of questions that she would like to get answers to. Those questions were as follows:

1. Will the redone sidewalks meet ADA requirements initially? And after freezing and thawing?
2. Where was the \$75,000 to \$100,000 for 15 to 20 years to replace the brick sidewalks coming from? How much would come from grants and how much would come from taxes?
3. Where would the money come from for concrete sidewalks if used instead of brick? Would it come from grants, taxes, or a combination of both?
4. Will the City of Urbana be responsible for upkeep of the brick sidewalks once they are installed? Upkeep means for both structural repairs and weed and plant growth.
5. Where would the money come from for the upkeep of the brick sidewalks?
6. How much would the upkeep of the brick sidewalks cost per year?
7. How much would the upkeep of concrete sidewalks cost per year? And where would this money come from?
8. If crushed gravel would be used under the brick, how long would it take for the freezing and thawing and tree roots to again cause uplift?
9. How long will fabric and quasi-mortar mix retard plant growth?

10. Will chemicals be used if weed growth continues to occur? If so, what would that do to children safety, pet safety and the water supply?
11. Who pays for the lawsuits regarding accidents on brick walks?
12. What other needs are present in the City that could be addressed with the difference between the cost of concrete sidewalks and the cost of brick sidewalks?

Scott Dossett, of 501 East High Street, spoke about his desire to have the brick sidewalks repaired, replaced and maintained by the City of Urbana. In the most recent survey done in the community as a whole, 66% of the people who responded to City's questionnaire and 75% who were actual resident owners wanted the brick walks maintained. In spite of that fact, about 53% of those two populations noted the condition of the sidewalks as fair to poor.

He commented that this was a maintenance problem and not a material problem. He referred to the packet of information from the Public Works Department regarding the "Typical Brick Surface Installation" guideline that was put together after a lot of work and research. It notes a Geotextile fabric footer and minimum requirements to eliminate weed problems and some of the shifting problems that were noted in the first discussion.

He finds as much concern about safety on concrete sidewalks as he does brick sidewalks. The concrete sidewalks in front of his home have collapsed, pool awfully during the winter, and because of the properties of concrete, don't vent at all as opposed to the brick sidewalks in the neighborhood, which allow material to flow through and dissipate into the soil surface.

Mr. Dossett felt that aesthetics were a primary need in the neighborhood. Again, given the fact that the problem is one of maintenance and not of materials and the City has a good plan in place that had been well researched and well developed, he thought that the neighborhood's interest lie in sticking with the plan.

He read a few comments made by Gary Kleier, the resident Architectural Conservator of Old Louisville in Kentucky, that he had found on the Internet about brick sidewalks in comparison to concrete sidewalks. Following are a few of Mr. Kleier's major points to consider:

1. *In terms of durability, brick has a slight advantage over concrete because it can accommodate small amounts of movement without cracking.*
2. *The cost to install a brick sidewalk over a bed of gravel and sand is about 3 times the cost of concrete.*
3. *The cost to repair a concrete sidewalk can be from ten to thirty times the cost of repairing a brick sidewalk.*
4. *The time required to repair a brick sidewalk is very little compared to concrete; it requires no heavy equipment and is relatively quiet.*
5. *Brick is more environmentally friendly than concrete because it allows some amount of rainwater to enter the ground where concrete will not.*
6. *Brick can be recycled where concrete cannot.*
7. *Where esthetics are a concern, brick is probably more desirable than concrete.*

Mr. Dossett asked the Historic Preservation Commission to turn this matter over to the City Council with a recommendation that a very well developed plan by Public Works be kept an implementation and that that the City move forward with a rebuilt of the brick sidewalks in the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood, which he felt would satisfy the safety concerns that were addressed earlier.

Mr. Zangerl inquired if Mr. Dossett had concrete sidewalks in front of his home? Mr. Dossett replied that he lived on a corner and had one concrete sidewalk and one brick sidewalk. Where he comes into his home, there was a concrete sidewalk that had been poured out from the house and there are concrete sidewalks on both sides. The water pools there during the winter and forms a solid layer of ice that he cannot chip through.

Another safety concern, that he had regarding concrete material, was when leaves fall on the concrete sidewalks, it gets really slick. His opinion was that a well maintained brick sidewalk would give superior adhesion as opposed to concrete.

Marcus Harris, of 310 Dodson Drive, stated that he owns rental properties on Anderson Street, Cottage Grove Avenue, Poplar Street, and Webber Street. He has become very fond of this neighbor and takes great pride in his rental properties. He has found that the brick sidewalks are difficult for his tenants to maintain. Although he has excellent tenants, it is not their property, so the tenants are not going to put the time into weeding the brick sidewalks.

Mr. Harris expressed concern over the liability of people falling and injuring themselves. We live in a society, where lawsuits are a common thing for everything.

Although the proposed area is an older section of town, he did not consider it to be historic. He buys houses in need of repair, fixes them up, and then rents them out. He had spent a lot of time and money in doing this.

Mr. Harris was happy about the installation of curbs at 503 Anderson, replacement of the streetlights, and he does like the brick sidewalks when they are maintained. For the most part, brick sidewalks are difficult to maintain and to walk on. If the sidewalks had been kept where a whole block was kept in brick, it would have been attractive. It currently looks like patchwork with concrete on block and block on concrete. Therefore, he would like to see concrete sidewalks replace the brick sidewalks. He would also like to see the difference in cost of what has been budgeted for the replacement of brick sidewalks compared to the actual cost of replacing with concrete sidewalks used to go towards streets in the neighborhood that still do not have curbs.

Dennis Roberts, of 507 East Green Street, has been a homeowner in the City of Urbana for the last seven years. He believed it was an excellent choice to move here rather than to the City of Champaign, because the people in Urbana value the quality of life as much as the commercial and other aspects, which seemed to be rampant in other parts of the City's areas. He noted that he has a corner home with brick sidewalks on both sides of his lot. He had shoveled those sidewalks every winter. For the most part, his sidewalks are in very good repair. Every summer he has to weed the sidewalk. Some people use salt to kill the grass and weeds that grow in the cracks of their brick sidewalks. He often wondered why the City of Urbana did not have a plan

of pouring salt on the sidewalks once a year. It should not be too expensive, and it certainly would maintain the sidewalks better.

Mr. Roberts mentioned that he has one spot on his sidewalks that has a patch. Apparently, there was a pipe that had been repaired, and cement was used to patch up the sidewalk. The cement is now cracked, and the lip between the cement patch and the brick sidewalk is the most dangerous part of his sidewalk. The cement patch has risen about an inch and a half creating an uneven surface.

He believed safety conditions of the sidewalks could be a significant thing to discuss. We all want people to be safe. He found that elderly people are able to fall down on dirt and gravel, cement sidewalks, brick sidewalks, and curbs. He did not believe it was related to the type of material that they were walking on. On the contrary, he felt it was because of the fact that they were elderly and had trouble moving their feet.

He noticed that in the wintertime when the sun comes out, the brick sidewalks actually warm up faster than the surrounding ground. The snow melts quicker because the brick is a darker color. He thought that was an interesting feature to think about as well.

He commented that because he and his wife are artists, they noticed the aesthetics of the neighborhood, and this was one of the reasons they decided to move to this neighborhood. If he had been an accountant, maybe aesthetics would not matter to him.

He appreciated the fact that the City of Urbana had an excellent plan and felt it was a wonderful thing that the City would care and be aware enough to renovate the sidewalks. The bricks are doing very well, especially since they are 80 to 100 years old. He encouraged the City to go forward with their plan. Those people who have a great deal of dissatisfaction with the sidewalks in front of their homes, can and probably have petitioned the City to replace them with cement, and he felt that they had the right to do that. But for the people like himself, who prefer to keep the brick sidewalks, he would encourage the City to support the renovation of the sidewalks.

Frank Veach, of 605 East California, mentioned that he was a fifth generation bricklayer in Champaign-Urbana. All of his life, he heard that bricks were not to be laid flat, because they do not last. Many houses have brick rowlocks underneath the windows. Because the brick sits straight up, the water sits on the bricks, and the bricks bust up. Again, brick are not meant to be laid flat.

He noted that he does not like his brick sidewalks. Every year he has to use Round Up on the weeds and grass that grow in the cracks. He noted that moss grows on brick sidewalks as well. Whether there is a slurry mixture of cement or whatever, it will wash out later. When it does wash out, it will look like a big, gray mess all over the brick. By using a dry sand and cement mix, the City would be trying to cut the weed growth down, which he appreciated. Most people use either concrete or asphalt underneath the brick.

Brick sidewalks look fine on a dry day. The bricks are nice and flat. However, in the morning dew, when someone is walking on them, people can slip because of the smoothness of the brick.

Brick is harder than concrete. Concrete absorbs moisture better than brick and will make a better and safer sidewalk.

He believed this was really a safety issue. He thought that the Historic Preservation Commission should turn this matter over to the City Council for them to figure out. Ms. Novak clarified that the matter would be going back to the City Council. The City Council merely asked the Historic Preservation Commission for their opinion. It was the City Council's decision.

Tim Millikin, of 804 East Oregon, mentioned that he also grew up in a bricklaying family. He agreed that brick material creates problems. He knows a lot about brick. In 1999, there was a plan setup that stated the City of Urbana would install and maintain sidewalks mostly to the City's Regular Capital Improvements Program, and the City was planning to continue to maintain the brick streets and sidewalks in the same fashion. When he first moved to Urbana, the first thing he wanted to do was replace his brick sidewalk. The City of Urbana had previously patched his brick sidewalk with a big concrete slab, which was ugly. He did not want the guarantee of the City to continue their patchwork in this manner. When asking about replacing the brick sidewalk in front of his house, he was told that he would have to lay down a specified bed covered with concrete, and then lay the bricks according to the City's Zoning Ordinance. Then, he found out that the City was planning to redo the sidewalks; only the City does not have to follow the Zoning Ordinance. He did not understand why he had to replace the sidewalk at a very expensive fashion; however, the City can use a bed of crushed rock or sand.

Mr. Millikin mentioned that he works as a physical therapist and had worked exclusively for twelve years with the population with mobility impairments, which utilized canes, crutches and wheelchairs for mobility. As a professional physical therapist, he would tell elderly people to not walk on brick sidewalks, because they are not safe.

He mentioned that when people walk up and down the street, they cross over to the other side when they get to his sidewalk, because they do not like to walk on brick sidewalks. Across the street, there is a concrete, which is more aesthetically pleasing, safer and more convenient.

He addressed the idea of the study that was done in Louisville, KY. He pointed out that there is a huge, brick factory located in Louisville. Therefore, the town is brick oriented.

Alice Englebretsen, of 501 East California, noted that she was in favor of the brick sidewalks. She lives on a corner lot and has brick sidewalks on both sides. About three or four years ago, she worked with the City of Urbana to replace a portion of one of her sidewalks. She was very pleased with the outcome. It has held up beautifully and was very walkable. The contractor did the job at a cost effective rate. She added that there are some weeds that come up, but not nearly as many as before.

She talked about the concrete and sand issue by saying that the portion of her sidewalk that the City replaced was done using this mixture, and she stated that it did not put slime over the sidewalk at all. It holds the bricks in, yet it allows the bricks to breathe and let the water absorb in. She expects it to last a long time.

She felt it was a very important thing to do in the neighborhood to keep the historic quality and the safety quality. She hoped that the Historic Preservation Commission would recommend to

the City Council that the City maintain the brick sidewalks. However, she believed that the homeowners, who preferred concrete, should have the right to have concrete sidewalks. She thought the majority of the neighborhood would really prefer the maintained brick sidewalks. The secret would be to have them maintained properly.

Lester and Barbara Pritchard, of 601 West Pennsylvania, were asked by a resident of Urbana to comment on the Accessibility Requirements for city sidewalks. He noted that the State and Federal requirements for accessibility were mostly the same except for one major difference, which was that the Federal Law gives people the right to file a petition to the city if they don't meet the accessibility standards. The bottom line is that there was not any prohibition against brick sidewalks, but they have to be flat, nice and stable, and slip resistant. Changes in level between ¼" and ½" must be beveled, and changes in level greater than ½" must be accompanied by a ramp. It will require some effort coming from the City of Urbana to make these brick sidewalks under these conditions.

Mr. Pritchard noted that they currently have concrete sidewalks. They pay property taxes, and he wonders if his tax money should go towards brick sidewalks, because they cost two to three times more than concrete, and the brick sidewalks would not be maintained by the City.

Philip Nogle, of 404 South Cottage Grove, noted that he had lived at this address for 27 years. They have concrete sidewalks, and they are very satisfied. He commented that as you go down Green Street, there are brick sidewalks with places where it looks horrible. There are tree roots that have pushed bricks up and created places for people who are walking to stumble.

Chris Stohr, of 405 East High Street, spoke in favor of brick sidewalks, not only for their aesthetics, but also because he believed that brick sidewalks could help reduce runoff and allow infiltration into the ground, which is important, not only for ground water recharge, but also reduces surface water runoff to our streams. He stated that concrete was not without its flaws. It polishes and can be displaced much more than a half inch. He believed that broken concrete and settled brick sidewalks are both a hazard. Perhaps the City should look to property owners to help maintain the sidewalks.

Greg Bliss, of 407 East California, noted that he supported brick sidewalks. Although he did not have any safety expertise, any expertise on how the bricks are laid, or any expertise in the manner in which they are maintained, he noticed that the previous speakers were comparing 80 to 100 year old brick sidewalks that had not been maintained to concrete sidewalks that have consistently been maintained. He did not feel that it was a fair comparison. He stated that the mere fact that the brick sidewalks have lasted 80 to 100 years speaks to the quality and stability of the material. He believed that brick sidewalks look nice.

In regards to historic preservation, Mr. Bliss commented that people keep knocking down houses and building new ones, then the neighborhood would never become a historic district. If City Council put their fingers down on this issue and stand firm on it, then it could be the beginning for the neighborhood to become a historic district.

Linda Wild, of 702 East Oregon, noted that she had lived there for 12 years. At first, she thought her brick sidewalks were charming. However, now she is tired of it, because her brick sidewalks are way to dangerous and way to hard to maintain.

Margaret Miller, 501 East High Street, noted that she lives on a corner. On one side, she has an old, brick sidewalk, and on the other side she has an old, concrete sidewalk. Through the years, she had found that the brick sidewalk was much more pleasant to maintain, not to mention that it was safer and nicer in every way. Her concrete sidewalk is broken and no longer functioning well. She felt this was a historic neighborhood, because there are several homes in the area that are over 100 years old, including hers.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Brick Sidewalk Petition in Historic East Urbana Neighborhood

Mr. Zangerl noted that he had to leave at 8:30 p.m., and he wanted to present his discussion on this topic before doing so. He explained that when this topic popped up on the City Council's agenda, one of the members contacted him and wanted to know if he had an opinion about this issue. Since the brick sidewalks are a historic infrastructure, he believed that they should get some input from that perspective. He could not give input for the entire Historic Preservation Commission as an individual, because he could not speak for the other members. Therefore, the City Council asked the Historic Preservation Commission to discuss this issue and give them some input. He noted that the Commission's only role would be to give their opinion to City Council. It is the City Council's decision how money is spent within the City, what gets fixed and how it gets fixed, and what laws govern what happens.

Mr. Zangerl pointed out that one of the difficulties that the Historic Preservation Commission has was that the Historic Preservation Ordinance had only been in effect for a few years now, and the only properties that are designated are ones that people happen to nominate. There are actually considerably more properties that are considered historic than what has been designated. East Urbana has some very old neighborhoods, and regardless of whether there were notable architects or particularly significant pieces of architecture, there was still a historic significance to the neighborhood potentially.

As far as brick sidewalks, his perspective was that they could be an important asset in terms of historic character to the buildings that are around, as well as to the potential historic districts that might come about in the future. It was certainly a shame to look at the map and see how much a lot of these sidewalks had been broken up with brick and asphalt. He agreed that the City of Urbana had not done its job in maintaining brick sidewalks in the last 80 to 100 years. From his

perspective, the best thing that the City could do would be to keep the brick sidewalks intact as much as possible, particularly in areas where there is a high percentage of them. Ironically, this is in the East Urbana Neighborhood. The Historic Preservation Commission should encourage the City Council to put the money into keeping the brick sidewalks in excellent shape so that they are not detriment to safety and are aesthetic as well as historical asset. Ultimately, it was up to City Council to determine how much emphasis they were going to put on the historic infrastructure. If the City Council does not foresee being able to put enough money into maintaining the resources that we have, then they should look at where they could make their last stand on brick sidewalks. He noted that he was worried about piece meal conversion of blocks of brick sidewalks into concrete sidewalks.

Ms. Bell presented a brief staff report. She stated the Historic Preservation Commission had been asked to review the City of Urbana Sidewalk Replacement program as it pertains to the "Near East" Urbana area. She reviewed the Urbana Historic Preservation Plan that was adopted in 1999, specifically where the plan speaks about the governmental roles and responsibilities of supporting preservation in plan development. She noted that it addresses the City's controls over resources under the section heading, "Municipally Controlled Historic Resources".

Bill Gray, City Engineer, gave an overview of how the ordinance came about. Staff provided a lot of information on this. It was an exhaustive effort that the Public Works staff undertook several years ago to get the information on brick sidewalks, inventorying the entire City of Urbana, what are the leanings and reactions to people who live in the City. They did a fairly in depth survey to get a pulse of what people's thoughts were with brick sidewalks. From the results of the survey, they carefully crafted a sidewalk plan. He stated that he was ashamed to say that the City of Urbana did not previously have a brick sidewalk maintenance plan for decades. It needed to be addressed in some fashion, so they factored in a plan with available capital improvement dollars to maintain brick sidewalks in the future. They have not begun a significant effort to repair brick sidewalks. They have done minor efforts in working with a contractor. Those results have worked out real well, because it is a passion of the contractor's to really study brick sidewalk repair and maintenance. Staff worked with this individual to try to come up with some of the information that they presented here.

Mr. Gray mentioned that the City has \$150,000 targeted. They are looking at \$75,000 per year for at least the next fifteen years to address brick sidewalk repairs. To address the question of whether the City would maintain the brick sidewalks once they have been replaced, he answered yes, but to what degree he did not know, because they have not developed a plan and will not until after the brick sidewalks have been repaired/replaced. The City cannot do all the maintenance, so they encourage the homeowners to help by weeding them, just as they expect homeowners with concrete sidewalks to help keep them weed-free. There is a detailed plan that staff believed would help retard the weed growth by using a filter consisting of compacted stone and the sand-mortar mix. Although it was not weed proof or grass proof, it should be better than the past.

He gave credit for brick sidewalks and streets in respect to the fact that the current ones are 80 to 100 years old, and there had been very little done with them. He added that it was not until about ten years ago that the City did anything with the brick streets. City Council passed an ordinance a few years ago stating that they wanted to preserve the remaining brick streets in town. A lot of dollars were spent in repairing the brick streets on High Street, Michigan Avenue, and Orchard Street last year.

He added that in the ordinance that was adopted by the City Council, staff realized based on survey information and on the public input, there would be people that do not want to have brick sidewalks in front of their homes. As a result, there is a petition before the City Council requesting that those people be allowed to have concrete sidewalks. When staff developed the ordinance and had a discussion with the City Council, they did not conceive that there might be as many property owners coming in all at one time and submitting the petition.

Ms. Cardman wondered if Mr. Gray was aware of any studies of how other towns have maintained their brick sidewalks? The cycle that might be necessary given our climate, etc? Mr. Gray responded by saying that he did not have that data in front of him; however, when staff did the research, they had called several communities that they were aware of that had brick sidewalks. Staff's focus was more on whether they should convert brick to concrete or not and if they should even maintain brick sidewalks. He noted that there should be a list in the Commissioner's material packets. Generally, those communities had some kind of effort in trying to maintain their brick sidewalks, but admittedly it was not perhaps the high attention it should even in other communities.

Ms. Cardman inquired about any plans for maintenance of brick sidewalks? Mr. Gray replied that staff did not have a grass maintenance plan in place as of yet. They had tried using some folks from Lincoln Challenge to look at removing grass and weeds in an area once. Shortly after all the grass and weeds were removed, it came back quickly. They are leaning towards using some sort of Round Up or type of application. He commented that the salt idea was interesting.

Ms. Cardman asked about heaving of the sidewalks as well? Mr. Gray remarked that in respect to heaving, he felt this was a superior construction detail than what was used in the past. There will still however have to be maintenance in the future.

Ms. Irish commented that one pro of having a bed of compacted gravel under the bricks would be the reduction of runoff into streams and allowing a more gradual infiltration of the water. She asked if there was a different construction system used than that in the past, would there be the same problems as with concrete sidewalks? Mr. Gray answered that the construction detail proposed would allow infiltration to still occur, because the fabric would be porous with respect to the water. However, it would inhibit grass and weed roots from rising up to the top. Staff would have to study the amount of additional infiltration allowed in brick versus concrete.

Ms. Cardman questioned who would be held liable if someone was injured on a sidewalk that was in disrepair? Mr. Gray responded that the City has liabilities anywhere and everywhere in the public right-of-ways. Generally, speaking with respect to sidewalks whether they were brick or concrete, if the City was aware of the defect and responded reasonably once it had been brought to the City's attention to repair the defect, then the City would be in a more favorably position to defend those situations. If anyone falls on a bad sidewalk or crack, then there would be exposure of the City. The City does from time to time have lawsuits that are filed to recover medical costs, pain and suffering, etc. The key would be to have a maintenance program. The fact that the City does have a concrete repair and maintenance program, it has kept the City in a good position to not pay out any extraordinary costs versus going to the judge and saying that the City has no program or that we do not respond. The City would be liable and has an insurance company that would deal with the person that falls.

Ms. Irish thanked all of the people who attended this meeting and expressed their opinions. It seemed like they had a lot of careful thought and a lot of opinions. She noted that she had done some research on Round Up, which seemed to be the herbicide of choice for dealing with weeds in brick sidewalks. She had problems with herbicides and with brick and concrete sidewalks. She noted that she was confused with Mr. Pritchard's comments regarding ½" difference in the surface of the sidewalk. It seemed to her that the City would be out of compliance on most blocks. It would be easier if there were a maintenance program to repair brick than it was to repair concrete.

Mr. Cahill commented that this was a tough decision. He used to own a house on Clark Street that had an orphan block of brick. It was a struggle to keep it maintained. There was a little foot traffic, so it was hard to tell that it was a sidewalk most of the time. He currently lives on the corner of Orchard Street and High Street. The City worked on the street last year, and it was amazing how much work had to go into repairing the street. The street was tore up, and all new grading was installed underneath of it. On top of the grading, concrete was poured and then the bricks were relayed.

He stated that as he walks down High Street towards Lincoln Square, he walks on the street rather than on the sidewalks, because the sidewalks come and go. At night, it is safer to walk on the street, because the sidewalk is not well lit. On the other hand, it was nice to see High Street from Busey Avenue to almost Lincoln Avenue in brick. The City felt that the brick streets were important, so they put money into repairing them. If the City felt that the brick sidewalks were important too, then they should put the money into them as well, instead of having orphan chunks of brick sidewalk here and there unmaintained.

He noted that High Street had some owner-occupied homes mixed with rentals with some good landlords and some poor landlords. Thus, there is a variation of some maintenance to no maintenance. The "Near East" area of Urbana seemed to have more owner-occupied homes and have a more cohesive sense to him.

He asked if it would be a bad precedent to see one block turn to having concrete sidewalks? He was not sure. It seemed to him that the City Council was passing the buck to the Historic Preservation Commission to make a decision or recommendation. He felt that the City Council should make this decision. For character, he would like to see brick sidewalks; however, if the City does not maintain them properly, then the homeowner should have the right to put in concrete sidewalks.

Ms. Cardman felt heartened that there were so many people who cared about their neighborhood and preserving it. She felt this was a difficult decision as well. She had the unique experience of having her leg in a cast for four months, and two of those months she was on crutches. Brick sidewalks that are not maintained are extremely hazardous. She mentioned that she has a frail, elderly mother who uses a walker. The ½" increment was too much for her mother to push the walker over without assistance.

She agreed with Mr. Cahill in that the key issue was one of maintenance and the commitment of the City Council to not just improve the brick sidewalks, but also to maintain them on a strict schedule. Historic properties that are not maintained would not be infringing on public safety in the equivalent way that historic brick sidewalks would. She believed that brick sidewalks that are maintained could add to the historic character of the neighborhood, and she believed that East Urbana qualified for being historic. However, the City has a 15 to 20 year cycle planned just to improve the

sidewalks. Did that mean that the City would start maintaining the brick sidewalks on a regular basis in 15 to 20 years from now when they are finished with the replacement?

Ms. Irish questioned in terms of a timetable, the City was looking at a lot of sidewalks in disrepair. Would it be faster to replace the sidewalks using concrete as opposed to brick? Would the maintenance factor be quicker with concrete replacement? People in danger is obviously the top concern. Mr. Gray answered by saying that it would take 15 to possibly 20 years to address all of the brick that needs some kind of repair that Public Works had inventoried. They will know a lot more in a year from now from how the summer efforts go along. There may be 100-foot area of brick walk and 80 feet of it may be in reasonably good condition. Then, only 20 feet would need to be replaced. It is kind of like remodeling a home, in the sense that once you open something up, surprises happen. Twenty feet could end up becoming more. Unless funding changes or some new technique that the City gets, it will take 15 to 20 years. Staff had looked at some ideas of maybe getting some volunteer help to augment the labor involved. The Canaan Baptist Church area was a good example. It had been budgeted to cost around \$12,000 to \$15,000 had it been contracted out. There was about three or four blocks of work that was done with some volunteer effort from the church.

Ms. Irish inquired that since Green Street is considered to be a corridor street, was it part of the plan to put concrete sidewalks on Green Street? Mr. Gray stated that if a property owner who lives on that block wants to keep it in brick, then the City would keep and repair the sidewalk in brick. The distinction was in areas that were not zoned R-1, R-2, or R-3 or are on collector or arterial streets, where presumably the pedestrian traffic was higher, these homeowners did not have to petition the City Council to request the brick sidewalk be converted to concrete.

Ms. Novak was not clear about the petitioning to switch to concrete in this case. She inquired if there had to be a certain percentage of residents that were petitioning within the block? Or could it be done on an owner-by-owner basis? Mr. Gray replied that if it was a major brick walk block in either the "Old West" area or the "Near East" area and defined that 60% or greater of the sidewalk in the area was brick sidewalk, then the homeowners needed to petition the City Council to convert their brick sidewalk to concrete on an owner-by-owner basis.

Ms. Novak mentioned that there was a map included in the packet material, which focused on the areas where the petitioners live. She asked if the gaps represented driveways? Mr. Gray replied that the gaps represent concrete sidewalks. Ms. Novak inquired if as part of the repair program if the concrete would be maintained? Mr. Gray replied that was correct.

Ms. Irish commented that as a member of the Historic Preservation Commission when she thought of the neighborhood in East Urbana, the reason it is an interesting area was not because someone famous lived there or because there was a particularly incredible house, although there are a number of incredible houses. It was the whole character that starts with the street, moves to the sidewalk, moves into the yards, and moves into the houses. It was how the whole neighborhood works together and the history of the various people over hundreds of years that have lived there. In terms of wanting to cultivate and preserve the neighborhood, it was more than a single house or single piece of brick sidewalk. You want to try and foster the unity and the integrity of the whole area. In an ideal world, she would want all of the sidewalks to be brick, because that would hold the fabric of the neighborhood together more. Although some houses are around 50 years old and others are

older than that, the houses have a unity because of that look and because of the way that the neighborhood had grown.

She felt stuck, because this was not an ideal world. As Mr. Dossett stated, it was not really a materials problem; it was a maintenance problem. Well-maintained brick sidewalks would be reasonable flat and reasonable safe. She stated that a lot of this was how the City wanted to spend money in the community and what the priorities are. For her, safety is a big priority. Aesthetics are not secondary, but a separate issue where once the safety issue was addressed adequately, then other issues like historic preservation could be addressed. People need to feel that their neighborhood is a safe place to walk in. Therefore, she was torn, because it was still not clear to her whether the City could maintain brick sidewalks fast enough to make it work.

Ms. Novak thanked the City Council for seeking the advice of the Historic Preservation Commission. She did not see this as “passing the buck”. The Commission was not only here to advise on local landmarks and historic districts, but things that effect the historic character of the City. This was just strictly advisory.

Ms. Novak stated that there were a number of people, who mentioned that the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood was not of historic significance. She reiterated what Mr. Zangerl had stated before leaving that they hoped there were more than five local landmarks and a two-building historic district in Urbana. She believed that the City had the potential to have some very large historic districts in residential neighborhoods. She felt very strongly that the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood Area was a good candidate at some point for a historic district.

She mentioned that she taught historic preservation at the University of Illinois, and last year, she had her students do some survey forms, research, and architectural analysis of some of the properties in the East Urbana neighborhood. She felt it was really an amazing area, and it was one of the older areas in the community. While the houses are not of textbook examples of architectural styles, she believed that there were some very significant, vernacular architecture in the neighborhood. She felt that part of the historic character came from other features like the brick sidewalks, historic fences, and street furnishing things. It was very easy to get the historic feel of the neighborhood when you are walking or driving through. With that being the case, she saw the Historic Preservation Commission’s mission to advise the City Council on the importance on what they deal with, which is historic preservation. She believed that the historic sidewalks are an important feature in many of the neighborhoods, including the Historic East Urbana area. She pointed out that there had been a great deal of work and investigation done on behalf of the Public Works Department. It would be unfortunate to see things happen in a piece meal fashion. The brick sidewalks and brick streets have much more meaning when they are consistent.

Ms. Kovacic asked for some answers to her questions from earlier. Ms. Novak mentioned that the maintenance issue was discussed. Mr. Gray added that the source of funding would come from the Capital Improvement Replacement Fund.

Ms. Kovacic questioned whether the new brick sidewalks would meet ADA requirements and be able to withstand freezing and thawing? Mr. Gray replied yes, with maintenance, whether it was concrete or brick, the sidewalks would meet ADA standards. The difference with respect to ramps was that the City does not use brick ramps at intersections. There were many ramps in many areas. However, there are still some barrier curbs still remaining, which in time would all have concrete

ramps installed. Ms. Novak stated that if she had additional questions, then she urged Ms. Kovacic to talk to her Council member and with Mr. Gray directly.

Ms. Irish drafted a motion to read as follows: The Historic Preservation Commission recommended that brick sidewalks be repaired and maintained in East Urbana. Ms. Cardman stated that the draft motion did not cover her concerns, because it did not mention any assurance that the City would provide regular maintenance to meet the safety issues. Ms. Bell noted that staff needed a recommendation that pertained to the petition.

Ms. Irish read the petition, which was stated as follows: *We the undersigned property owners of these addresses request that the brick sidewalk in front of our homes be removed and replaced with concrete sidewalk.* Ms. Novak added that the petition directly related to the map, which showed where brick sidewalks currently were.

Ms. Irish stated that the Commissioners already knew that the property owners could ask for concrete in front of their houses. So, why was the Historic Preservation Commission discussing this? Ms. Novak commented that it had to be a Council approval on an individual basis. Mr. Gray added that each property would need to be reviewed by City Council and approved by motion, unless there was some omnibus motion that all the addresses could be consider together.

Mr. Gray mentioned that these are major brick block walk areas, and yet the petition did not address 100% of any one block. He did not know if the Historic Preservation Commission had a concern with respect to what was a more or less fairly consistent brick walk block might turn into a partial brick-partial concrete block. Does this occur elsewhere in the community? Absolutely, it does. He thought that the City Council wanted a sense from this Commission as to that issue per se. Some people still want their brick sidewalks.

Ms. Novak inquired about how often a year was there people requesting a conversion of brick to concrete? Mr. Gray answered that it was fairly infrequent. He believed what would happen was that as the City starts getting into this program, by mere contact with people, staff would find more people wanting to convert whether it be from brick to concrete or concrete to brick. As a result, there may be more such requests before the City Council. Ms. Irish inquired if it would be unlikely that people would be turned down? Mr. Gray noted that this was the first such request. The ordinance was just passed.

Mr. Gray gave a little more historic background in respect to brick sidewalks being converted to concrete. In the previous ordinance, there were major brick block walks within the Campus Master Plan area, specifically west of Harvey Street and south of University Avenue. It was deemed since the Master Plan boundaries of the University would go up to the west side of Harvey Street, City Council said that it would be University properties and would be a high pedestrian area. As new buildings were being built, the University would be doing a major site work improvement to i.e. removing brick and putting in concrete sidewalks. City Council then said that was fine.

He brought up another example. There was another request by an apartment building owner in the Harvey Street area that requested that the brick, which was in disrepair, be converted to concrete at his expense. Again, the City Council did grant the request in a high pedestrian traffic area.

Mr. Kowalski mentioned that the concept of the draft motion could work if it was directed towards the properties in the petition that was submitted.

Ms. Irish's opinion was that it was unfortunate that these people wanted to replace their brick sidewalks with concrete. She understood that the people's concerns were safety and maintenance. Given that these people live with these sidewalks that have been either successfully or unsuccessfully maintained, it seemed to her that they ought to be able to change them to concrete if that was what they wanted, despite the fact that she thought it was unfortunate. She believed it would ruin the integrity of the neighborhood.

Ms. Irish came up with another draft motion that read as follows: The petitioners that want to change their brick sidewalks to concrete sidewalks ought to be able to do so with the permission of City Council. Ms. Cardman added "with the Historic Preservation Commission's regret that a historic element would be lost in the neighborhood". Ms. Irish noted that she was trying to come up with a motion, so that the Commission could vote on it. Ms. Novak commented that the draft motion would be in favor of the petition.

Ms. Irish stated that her intent was to be in favor of it, if people are living with brick in front of their house and are not willing to maintain it or cannot maintain the sidewalk, and the City was looking at 15 to 20 years where brick would be an issue that people have to live with. The people should then be able to petition City Council to convert the sidewalk to concrete. The timeframe was such that if the City would be responsible for maintaining the sidewalk, then concrete would be easier to maintain. The City, despite its good intentions, cannot be everywhere, because there would be a lot of sidewalk to maintain.

Ms. Novak noted that the Commission was looking at the piecemeal destruction of a significant aspect of this neighborhood. It was still not a cure-all, because there are little stretches of people who still want their brick sidewalks. Those brick sidewalks would still be there no matter who was walking or riding or using a wheelchair on the sidewalk. That being the case, what would be the recommendation? When looking citywide at the map that showed the brick sidewalks that were left, clearly the highest concentration was in this neighborhood. If people were allowed to convert brick to concrete, then that may no longer be the case.

Once again, Ms. Novak stated that they were not the City Council and was not making a decision. The Historic Preservation Commission's mission was to advise on matters of historic properties and historic preservation in the City. The Commission needs to keep this in mind when forming a motion.

Ms. Cardman commented that for her there were two issues. One was philosophical, and the other was very practical. She could not ignore the practical issue, which was unless there was a real commitment to maintain the brick sidewalks, they would pose problems. She wanted the City to commit to the maintenance.

Mr. Kowalski suggested that if the Commission could not make a formal recommendation, then staff could summarize the comments of the members of the Historic Preservation Commission and would give them to the City Council. He did not believe that the City Council specifically asked for a motion and a vote on this issue from the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Cahill inquired about when the City did the repairs on High Street, why did not the City fix the sidewalks at the same time? Mr. Gray replied that it was focused as a street improvement project. There was not any money assigned at that time for the brick sidewalks.

Mr. Cahill questioned if the City was talking about Green Street becoming a corridor? Mr. Gray replied that Green Street was classified as a collector street. Arterial or collector streets can have the brick sidewalks converted to concrete. However, the brick could remain brick also. It was the choice of the property owners. Ms. Irish inquired if Green Street was a collector street because it was used as a bus route? Mr. Gray answered by saying that was part of it. Green Street was a collector designation for a variety of reasons.

There was no formal motion or action taken by the Commission. Mr. Kowalski agreed to summarize the Commission's comments for the City Council.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There was none.

11. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Novak reminded the Commission about the Kid's Building Fair. She mentioned that she needed one more volunteer to help out. She noted that it would be held on Saturday, May 18th from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. They would share a booth with the Champaign Historic Preservation Commission. They would be helping the children with pastel rubbings of architectural features. Ms. Cardman volunteered to help.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cahill moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 p.m. Ms. Cardman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted,

Rob Kowalski, Secretary