

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: June 20, 2001

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Cahill, Ms. Cardman, Ms. Irish, Ms. Novak,
Mr. Shepard, Mr. Zangerl

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Mr. Rose

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Tim Ross, Planner, Ms. Libby Tyler, Planning
Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Gerald Brighton, Catherine O'Conner

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

Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Chairperson, Ms. Novak, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There was an addition to the agenda. Mr. Ross would present Plan Commission Case #1778-T-01 as requested by the Plan Commission to get input from the Historic Preservation.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Zangerl moved to approve the minutes from the April 18, 2001 meeting. Ms. Irish seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

The first communication was a memorandum from Tim Ross, Planner, on Plan Case 1778-T-01; Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend Table IX-3 of the Zoning Ordinance, Standards for Projecting Signs.

Mr. Ross discussed the memorandum by giving a brief background on the case. He explained that this plan case had been presented to the Plan Commission on May 10, 2001. The Plan Commission had concerns regarding the size of the sign permitted, the location of the sign, number of signs permitted, and the relationship with other signage or awnings on the same business frontage. It was decided at the Plan Commission to present this case to the Downtown Plan Steering Committee and the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Zangerl stated that his understanding was that the Plan Commission's concern was regarding the size of the sign being permitted to be a maximum of twelve square feet. Mr. Ross stated that a maximum of twelve square feet was what was proposed. Many people feel that would be too large. Therefore, the maximum size could be made smaller. This is one of the major issues.

Mr. Ross stated that subsequently, there have been two petitioners who have applied for variances. He showed a picture of one of the signs that a variance had been applied for.

Mr. Ross commented that the City needs to write a text amendment to set limitations. Mr. Zangerl wanted to know if there were any limitations on placing the sign vertically and would the sign be able to go above the first level? Mr. Ross responded that the signs have to be hung at the first level due to safety reasons and to keep continuity.

Ms. Irish asked if there were regulations concerning where on a building that a sign could be hung to prohibit defacing of the building? Mr. Ross replied that signs are permitted to be bolted into brick but not into terracotta. He continued to say that in order to get a sign permit, the petitioner must pass a safety inspection. There are established safety guidelines. Review of materials, etc. is not done by zoning but by building safety.

Mr. Shepard wanted to know if there would be a limitation on the number of projecting signs per building. Mr. Ross replied that only one projecting sign per business frontage would be permitted. Ms. Tyler added that window signs would also be permitted.

Mr. Shepard wanted to know if the business had a wall sign could they have a projecting sign? Mr. Ross replied that if there was an existing wall sign, it would not be prohibited to have a projecting sign. However, if roof signs, awning signs, or freestanding signs were present then a projecting sign would not be allowed. Mr. Shepard referred to the memorandum dated March 29, 2001. On page 3, the third proposed change states the following: *Only one projecting sign is permitted if a free-standing, roof sign, canopy, or awning exists on the same business frontage.* Mr. Ross responded by saying that there was an error in the memo, and it should read as: *Only*

one projecting sign is permitted if there are no free-standing, roof, canopy, or awning signs already existing.

Mr. Zangerl inquired into whether the Plan Commission was hoping to get a formal recommendation from the Historic Preservation on this case. Ms. Tyler stated that it would be helpful for the Plan Commission to know where other commissions stand and to what extent a text amendment would be supported.

Mr. Zangerl motioned to move the Plan Case # 1778-T-01 to be the second item under new business where they could then vote on it. Ms. Cardman seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Novak noted that the second communication was a written request from the Preservation and Conservation Association, PACA for the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission to write a letter of support to nominate the Ricker House at 612 West Green for a 2001 Richard Driehaus Foundation Award. Mr. Cahill commented that when PACA took this project on, LPCI was the one of the first to give the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) a grant to get started on rebuilding the porch. Therefore, he felt it was a great idea.

Ms. Novak showed before and after pictures of the Ricker house and explained that the house was supposed to be demolished. However, an anonymous lender made it possible to purchase and rehabilitate the house. It is now being used for single-family use.

Ms. Novak went on to talk about some of the improvements including a new roof, replacing the chimney, removing the artificial siding, and recreating the porch. Mr. Cahill added that it now has an upstairs bathroom. Ms. Novak stated that she has no objections to writing two letters of support, and she would draft them and pass them on to Ms. Tyler. The deadline for the letters is June 24th.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Novak introduced Ms. Catherine O'Conner, from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency based in Springfield, Illinois. Ms. O'Conner would explain the newly acknowledged Certified Local Government (CLG) status to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission.

Ms. O'Conner congratulated the Urbana Historic Preservation for becoming certified. She presented a brief background of the agency. In 1931, the first Historic Preservation Ordinance was created in Charleston, South Carolina. The first Historic Preservation Ordinance in Illinois was started in 1960. She was here to explain the guidelines and expectations of the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission.

She discussed the components of a good Historic Preservation Ordinance. Those components are the following: 1) statement of purpose, 2) the creation of the Commission itself, 3) the criteria and procedures for designation of both landmarks and historic districts, 4) the section for due process, 5) design review procedures, and 6) stipulations about what merits review and the standards for review.

She continued by saying that of the Historic Preservation Ordinances in Illinois, 6% are strictly educational, 90% recommend designations, and 89 % have design review (of which 84% are binding). Ms. O'Conner added that the Historic Preservation Commission stands as an arm of local government. The Commission is appointed to uphold the Preservation Ordinance, should be concerned mostly with preservation of standing structures and sites, and is given the authority to do certain things in terms of survey, designation, and review. The Commission can educate the community on the benefits of the history and the preservation of the past through seminars and publications. The Commission should work with the other preservation organizations in the community.

Ms. O'Conner stated that the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission has agreed to do the following:

1. Enforce Acceptable Legislation for the Designation and Protection of Historic Properties.
2. Establish a Historic Preservation Review Commission consisting of seven members (three professional and four non-professional members).
3. Confirm that all Commission members have a demonstrated interest, competence or knowledge of historic preservation.
4. Verify that professional members of the Commission have been appointed to the extent available in the community and reviewed resumes that document professional qualifications that are acceptable.
5. The role and responsibilities of the Commission in local preservation decisions have been specified in detail, which includes the four basic responsibilities to submit an annual report, to be represented annually at an educational or informational meeting, to monitor national and Illinois registered districts, and to verify ownership within national registered districts.

6. Apply for CLG funds.

Ms. O’Conner stated that one of the requirements was to fill out an annual report. The annual review period will end on July 1st. Ms. Novak questioned whether the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission would need to fill out an annual report since they have only been a CLG for a month or two? Ms. O’Conner replied that they would not have to fill an annual report out this year.

Ms. O’Conner handed out a “Format for Annual Reports”. Then, she reviewed the handout. She explained that the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission should send members to attend some professional meetings. There will be a State Historic Preservation Conference on September 13th – 15th in Springfield in cooperation with LPCI.

Ms. Tyler asked what the registration fees would be for that meeting? Ms. O’Conner stated that she was not sure what the registration fees are. There is some funding in the budget for scholarships. Ms. Novak added that last year’s registration fees were \$75.00. There are dinners and tours that cost extra.

Ms. O’Conner mentioned that the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission should send in multiple copies of projects that they are really proud of, because they have a lending library to help out communities not as far along.

Mr. Shepard questioned if there was a form for the annual report that the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency sends out each year? Ms. O’Conner responded by saying that the group should just use the format to produce a report. Mr. Shepard asked if Mr. Kowalski was going to complete the report. Ms. Novak responded that the entire commission should keep the report in mind. Ms. O’Conner suggested that the commission may want to set the deadline one month earlier to have plenty of time to complete the annual report and get everyone’s approval.

Ms. O’Conner handed out a “Certified Local Government Evaluation Form”. She explained that every commission gets evaluated every 3 years. She said that this would be the tool that the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency would use to evaluate the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission. She reviewed the handout.

Mr. Cahill inquired if properties that have been registered pre-2001 would be grandfathered in? He stated that there were many of the U of I properties already on the register. Ms. O’Conner replied that the Historic Preservation Commission could get the information on those properties from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency’s files. Ms. Novak added that the commission would have already been notified.

Ms. O’Conner continued reviewing the evaluation guidelines for the commission. She stated that their commissioner representative must attend at least one informational meeting per year. Ms. Tyler wanted to know if it had to be a commissioner or could it be their secretary or staff person? Ms. O’Conner then said that in many cases it is the secretary or a staff person.

Ms. O'Conner further reviewed the guidelines. Mr. Shepard questioned if grants went to the cities to be used for programs or do they go directly to properties. Ms. O'Conner replied that federal guidelines require that CLG grants be in agreement made with a municipality on behalf of the commission. The commission does the work and submits it, and then the city will sign off on it. Mr. Shepard then asked if the grants are not for house rehab? Ms. O'Conner stated that there is a Heritage Grant Program that is given to not-for-profit organizations. Mr. Shepard then asked if a not-for-profit owns a historic structure, then they would get this money? Ms. O'Conner answered that they would get a grant if it formed some public purpose.

Ms. Novak asked Ms. O'Conner to clarify what types of recognition the properties have to have? Ms. O'Conner replied that they either have to have national register recognition or a local designation of some kind (i.e., landmark or part of a historic district). Mr. Cahill wanted to know what power the commission has in preventing the demolition of a building. Ms. O'Conner replied that if the site were considered private property, then the commission would have no power. If the site was public property, the commission can get involved with the redevelopment of the property after the demolition has taken place. If the developer knows in advance that demolishing the building would not lead to the end that he has in mind, then, it would be easier to stop the demolition.

Mr. Zangerl asked if her office has access to information about federal or state monies that may be going to a particular project? Ms. O'Conner replied that there are people researching that very question. Those people monitor hundreds of properties and projects by using big databases. The commission acts as a satellite.

Ms. Tyler mentioned that Mr. Kowalski informed her that he had applied for \$2,000 for a brochure production for the public. This would be an example of the grant monies that are available through the program. Ms. O'Conner mentioned a press release announcing CLGs that are going to different areas for public education, survey, and design review. Ms. Tyler wanted to know what the design review would consist of. Ms. O'Conner replied that it would be for production of design review guidelines.

Ms. O'Conner commented that the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission needed to create a mission statement. Ms. Tyler said that there is a description of the purpose of the commission and vision statement on the Internet. Ms. O'Conner mentioned that the commission should make sure that the goals and objectives are consistent with the powers and duties. When creating a mission statement, it would be good to set aside long and short-term objectives.

Ms. O'Conner commented that the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency recently held a brainstorming session, where leaders of commissions and board members from the state organization got together and came up with a list of helpful suggestions. A summary of the suggestions were as follows:

- 1) Market to Associate Members (promote the advantages of this organization to non-members).

- 2) Image Building
- 3) Build Alliances- Social, Political, Environmental, Religious
- 4) Authentic and Reliable Media Relations
- 5) Local Awards Program
- 6) Holiday Events
- 7) Act Globally and Think Globally

Ms. Tyler commented that the brochure will be an important step and the website includes information on the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission. Ms. Tyler mentioned that the commission recently had a “Walking Tour of West Main Street” and held an “Old House Workshop” at the library.

Ms. O’Conner passed out more handouts, which were: 1) Commissioners Brochure, 2) Value of Historic Properties, 3) Data analysis of Economic Value of Historic Districts, and 4) 106 Processes. Ms. Novak stated that the 106 processes are on a website through the National Park Service on ACHP.gov, and there are even illustrated examples on the websites.

1778-T-01; Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend Table IX-3 of the Zoning Ordinance, Standards for Projecting Signs.

Mr. Zangerl began by saying the size of the sign is a concern. Mr. Ross handed out copies of Table IX-3. He stated that he was looking for a recommendation from the Urbana Historic Preservation of whether or not he should continue to work on this case. If so, then what areas should he look at modifying? He will come back with a new draft amendment.

Mr. Cahill was unsure of the role of this commission. He commented that the signs might be nice for people to notice business. If the signs are tasteful, then there should not be a problem. However, if there gets to be too many, it will become cluttered and ruin the streetscape.

Mr. Zangerl asked if these types of signs are prohibited at this point? Mr. Ross answered no, but they are prohibited to project over the right-of-way. He stated that there are some that were put up prior to the ordinance. Mr. Zangerl stated that looking at old photographs of Downtown Urbana, there have always been some projecting signs. He believes that the signs above the first floor level are the most obtrusive. Mr. Ross agreed that the wording in Table IX-3 does need to be clarified.

Mr. Zangerl stated that he did not understand the sentence stating that “*No sign should extend above that portion of the roof immediately adjacent to the sign*”. Mr. Ross explained that the sentence meant that a sign could not extend over the roofline or extend out from the roof of a building without being considered a roof sign.

Mr. Zangerl wanted to know the size of the sign in the photo. Mr. Ross said it was approximately six square feet or a little less. Mr. Zangerl commented that his preference would be to have a maximum of ten square feet instead of twelve square feet.

Ms. Cardman wanted to know if there are any precedent stipulating the materials that are permitted to be used to create signs. Mr. Ross answered that it is not regulated by the sign code. But, it does have to meet safety regulations.

Mr. Zangerl asked if neon was not allowed. Mr. Ross said that any signs with flashing or running lights would not be allowed. Ms. Tyler commented that some of the Plan Commission members voiced concerns in regards to the material of the sign, the dimensions of the sign, the placement of the sign on the building, and odd shape signs.

Ms. Novak then asked Mr. Ross what form of official opinion do you need from the Historic Preservation Commission? Would a motion mentioned in the minutes be sufficient? Mr. Ross agreed that would be sufficient.

Mr. Zangerl motioned that tentative standards are agreed to except the Urbana Historic Preservation would like the size of the sign to be limited to ten square feet and for the wording in the ordinance to be very clear that the sign cannot be mounted above the first level on a multi-story building. Mr. Cahill seconded motion.

Mr. Shepard agreed with the motion. He added that in many other places where there are active downtowns with businesses, they have projecting signs. He felt that projecting signs would be very helpful to find businesses.

Mr. Zangerl's concern is if internal lighting would be allowed. Mr. Ross answered yes, however, it had been discussed to not allow that as well. He said that he is still looking for input concerning that issue. It will be presented to the Downtown Steering Committee.

Mr. Zangerl said these signs are usually bubble signs made of plastic. Ms. Novak wanted to know if the plastic was over the lighted portion of the sign. Mr. Zangerl said yes and the sign is painted over the plastic. Mr. Zangerl then added that he would not be thrilled if we had a lot of these kinds of signs hanging around downtown. Ms. Cardman mentioned that she is still concerned with the materials that are going to be used to make the signs. Mr. Zangerl added that he would be willing to add the recommendation of not allowing internally lit signage in the motion. Ms. Irish wanted to add that there might be problems with uniformity. It would need to be balanced.

The motion was passed unanimously.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

Ms. Novak wants to add a monitoring section to the agenda and the minutes. She mentioned that a copy of an article in the News-Gazette had been passed out. The article was about a frat house that had been damaged by fire. The house used to be the home of Joseph Royer, an Urbana Architect. The article stated that the fire was contained to the attic; however, there was also water damage elsewhere.

Ms. Novak mentioned that in the recent issue of Historic Illinois was included "The Time Piece", which was a feature on the National Register listing of "Buena Vista Court" or better known as "Elm Street Court".

Ms. Cardman asked if a letter went out to the Chancellor? Ms. Novak replied no, because she has not received notice as of yet whether the Warm Air Research Residence has been officially listed in the register.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cardman motioned for adjournment, and Ms. Irish seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Submitted,

Rob Kowalski, Secretary