

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:**        **October 3, 2001**

**TIME:**        **7:00 p.m.**

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

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

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:**        Mr. Cahill

**STAFF PRESENT:**         Rob Kowalski, Senior Planner

**OTHERS PRESENT:**         Linda Berent, Gerald Brighton, Lois Brighton, Denni K.  
  Hubert, Karen Kummer, Ann Wymore

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

Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Chairperson, Ms. Novak, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There was a request by staff to move audience participation immediately before new business.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Irish moved to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2001 meeting as amended. Mr. Zangerl seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

**4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

## **5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

## **7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

## **8. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

**Dr. Linda Berent**, Secretary and Treasurer of the Theta Club (which is the owner of 801 West Oregon Avenue), stated that she loved the house. She had been affiliated with the house for the past eleven years. The Theta Club is a non-for-profit corporation, which is made up of alumni. The service activities of the students raise a lot of money; however, they donate the money to needy organizations. Very little of the money is used for basic maintenance.

Dr. Berent stated that the alumni group's function is to make sure the house stays standing. They collect dues and keep enough money in the bank to basically cover one year's worth of taxes and insurance. The house expenses were paid for by renting to student members of the veterinary school for about \$200 a month. That was enough to pay for the basic utilities and upkeep.

Dr. Berent mentioned that the Theta Club has owned the house for 32 years. Last June, there was a fire in the house. Although no one was hurt, the Board of Directors and the Officers of the Theta Club decided to sell the house. It would cost a lot of money to restore the house, and the Theta Club cannot afford to renovate it. The Theta Club had the house appraised, and they found that the house was worth more than they expected.

Dr. Berent added that there are some neighbors who oppose the house being used as a rooming house for students. One neighbor was interested in buying the house; however, they do not want to pay the appraised value. Although she does not question the goals of the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA), she does question the timing of this proposal. The Theta Club currently has a contract on the house, and if this proposal is passed, then the contract will likely fall through.

Mr. Shepard inquired as to whether the contract had a provision in it that would allow the buyer to get out of the contract? Dr. Berent replied that was correct. There is a 15-day provision, in which, the buyer could look at the house and assess the damage from the fire. The provision was extended to the day after this meeting to be fair to the buyer. Mr. Shepard commented that the buyer could walk away from the deal. Dr. Berent agreed.

**Karen Kummer**, President of the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) and author of the Historic District Nomination, responded to the concern over the timing of the nomination. Ms. Kummer stated that PACA has only recently been able to nominate the house for district status, because the City only recently passed a Historic Preservation Ordinance.

**Ann Wymore**, owner of the “mother-in-law” house property located at 701 South Busey Avenue, supported the petition. She stated that she understood the concerns of the veterinary medical group. They have been great neighbors, and she was sorry to see them go. She was concerned that the integrity of the property be maintained. She felt that if they could preserve the structural historic integrity of the properties, then it would be a nice thing to hang onto for the neighborhood.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

### **HP-01-HDD-1; Preliminary Determination for the nomination of a historic district filed by the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA). Property consisting of 801 West Oregon Avenue and 701 South Busey Avenue.**

Rob Kowalski, Senior Planner, presented the staff report. He began with an introduction to the case and continued with an overview of the background including the application process and the criteria from Section XII-4-C-1 and Section XII-5-C-1 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance that is outlined in the staff report for consideration of a proposed historic district. He gave a brief description of the properties in the proposal.

Mr. Kowalski read the options of the Historic Preservation Commission. He stated that staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission make the preliminary determination that the proposed nomination meets the criteria for historic district consideration in its entirety and that the request should be further considered for designation through the public hearing process.

Mr. Shepard asked who reviewed the application and determined it to be complete? Mr. Kowalski answered that although PACA was the author of the application, City staff reviewed it for completeness. When the application was submitted, the Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission had five days to consider the application complete. Mr. Kowalski added that the Certificate of Appropriateness process begins when a preliminary determination has been made.

Mr. Rose asked if a Certificate of Appropriateness would be required after tonight if the Historic Preservation Committee voted to considerate this case for a hearing. Mr. Kowalski replied that was correct.

Mr. Shepard commented that the southwest corner of the fraternity house looks like it was added on. In the staff report, it states that neither structure (the fraternity house nor the “mother-in-law” property) had been significantly altered. Ms. Kummer stated that the first story of the fraternity house was original; however, the second story was an addition built in 1968.

Ms. Irish questioned how many options the Theta Club has for selling the house? It seemed to her that the Theta Club was between a rock and a hard place. They love and cherish this house. Ms. Irish asked if Ms. Berent had investigated other options. Ms. Berent replied that there were several things to consider. One of which was the fact that they have an insurance check that would cover the actual fire damage. They would need to supplement the insurance check to have the entire roof replaced.

The veterinary school consists of approximately 80% women. Therefore, the Theta Club is having a difficult time getting students who want to live there. There are a limited number of bathrooms, and in addition the house is drafty and cold.

Ms. Berent also felt that the house needed to be rewired to be safe to live in. She stated that to make it more inhabitable, the house would need to be rewired, another bathroom, and some windows replaced. The Theta Club decided that would be a lot of work. This place had outlived the needs of the Theta Club.

Ms. Berent added that the Theta Club had to make a decision with the insurance company rather quickly, so they did not look into grants to help restore the house. They decided to sell the house.

Mr. Rose asked Ms. Berent to describe the activity associated with finding a potential buyer. Ms. Berent responded that the Theta Club contacted a real estate agent, who found a potential buyer interested in paying the appraised value of the property.

Mr. Rose asked if Ms. Berent knew what other market of potential buyers were for the house? Ms. Berent stated that a neighbor across the way was interested; however, the neighbor did not want to pay the \$225,000, which the house was appraised at.

Mr. Zangerl commented that the discussion was getting offline. The only thing that the Historic Preservation Commission had to decide at that time was whether this district nominations fulfills the criteria that had been set forth. He added that it was hard to think of an individual who had contributed as much to the City of Urbana as Joseph W. Royer did. From his perspective, the Historic Preservation Commission has no other choice than to forward this nomination on the merits.

Mr. Shepard agreed with Mr. Zangerl that based on the facts and the criteria, the Historic Preservation Commission should forward the nomination on to be considered for designation through the public hearing process.

Ms. Cardman added that Joseph W. Royer, as a master architect for what he had designed for all of Urbana, much less the fact that this was his design for his personal home, fully met the criteria. While historic district seemed a little exaggerated in the case of two properties, it clearly falls within the definition of a district to include both properties.

Mr. Rose agreed that the importance of this focus was what might be in the best interest of the property. Mr. Rose motioned that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the preliminary determination that the proposed nomination met all three of the criteria for historic district consideration in its entirety, met “a” through “e” of the landmark criteria, and that the request should be further considered for designation through the public hearing process. Mr. Zangerl seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

## **10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

The section “Monitoring of historic properties” was added to the agenda in June. Ms. Novak mentioned that one of the first topics discussed in June was the Theta Chapter House.

Some meetings ago, the Historic Preservation Commission had decided to write a letter to the University of Illinois in regards to the Warm Air Research House on Stoughton. Unknown to Ms. Novak at the time, the property had been officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **11. STAFF REPORT**

Mr. Kowalski reported on the following:

- There is still the CLG Grant for the brochure. He will start working on the brochure as of October 1, 2001. The brochure will discuss Urbana’s landmarks and give an overview of the Historic Preservation Commission.
- The Historic Preservation Commission meeting decided to meet again on October 29, 2001 at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Ms. Novak requested to add Announcements to the end of the agenda before adjournment.

## **12. STUDY SESSION**

There was none.

## **13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. Novak announced that Lachlan F. Blair, who was one of the first appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission, died on August 5, 2001. At the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual State-Wide Preservation Conference, which was held in Springfield on September 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, the conference was dedicated to Lachlan F. Blair. She read the dedication. Mr. Zangerl recommended sending a formal letter to Mary Blair of recognition of Lachlan Blair’s contributions to both the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission and the Urbana Plan Commission. He volunteered to write the letter.

Ms. Irish commented that on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois would be hosting a town hall meeting in the atrium of the Temple Buell Hall from 12:30

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p.m. to 2:30 p.m. The point of the town hall meeting will be to consider the effects of the hi-jacked jet attacks on the design professions.

#### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Irish motioned for adjournment, and Mr. Zangerl seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Submitted,

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Rob Kowalski, Secretary