

June 5, 2002

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** June 5, 2002

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rich Cahill, Liz Cardman, Sharon Irish, Alice Novak, Bill Rose, Trent Shepard, Art Zangerl

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** There were none.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager; Teri Hayn, Planning Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:** David Monk, Chris Stohr

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

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

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

There were some requested changes to the minutes of the meeting held on March 13, 2002. Mr. Shepard moved to approve those minutes as corrected. Ms. Irish seconded the motion. The corrected minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Rose wondered if the level of detail that was recorded in the minutes was appropriate. He preferred to see a more pointed and sharper discussion in the minutes. Mr. Shepard agreed that a summarization would be in order. Mr. Kowalski noted that most of the Historic Preservation Commission meetings are more discussion-oriented; therefore, staff would summarize the minutes in the future.

**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. NEW BUSINESS**

- **Review of Historic Urbana Brochure**

Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager, presented the draft copy of the brochure. He reminded the Commission that this was a brochure that staff was putting together with funding from a Certified Local Government Grant, which was a grant for about \$2,000. Most of that grant money would be used for printing the brochure. He briefly reviewed the brochure and the costs for printing the brochure.

The commissioners discussed the brochure and suggested some changes that should be made. Some of those changes were as follows: 1) state how long the ordinance has been effective; 2) list how long the landmarks and districts have been around; 3) list the landmarks lost; 4) language should inspire people to want to look at the buildings listed; 5) change some wording about the Mumford House; 6) fade the leaf design a little more to make it easier to read; 7) spell out PACA (Preservation and Conservation Association) for visitors to understand what it is; 8) use alternative wording in place of “transitional housing” in #4 of Local Landmarks; 9) #10 under National Register should state “Men’s Old Gymnasium”; 10) the City of Urbana should have a copyright on the brochure; 11) include definitions of local landmark and national register; 12) include a paragraph highlighting Nathan Ricker himself and show a picture of him; and 13) include a paragraph and picture of Joseph Royer as well.

- **Discussion of Downtown Walking Tour**

Mr. Kowalski explained that the Planning Division has two interns, Jennie Ely and Lauren Kerestes, who will be able to help plan the walking tour. Therefore, the City should be able to have two walking tours this year. The first walking tour will be through Downtown Urbana. There are a number of reasons for this, such as: 1) use the walking tour as an opportunity to talk about the Downtown Plan, which staff is trying to promote and 2) talk about streetscape improvements that

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are currently going on downtown. The second walking tour could be for the Elm Street/Green Street area and could be held in August.

Mr. Kowalski presented the map for the walking tour, which was handed out prior to the start of the meeting. He mentioned that he liked the idea of giving the history of downtown rather than focusing completely on the architectural style. He thought about highlighting buildings that no longer exist, like the Flat Iron Building, and maybe include pictures of what the buildings looked like when they did exist.

Mr. Kowalski welcomed any comments or ideas from the commissioners.

Mr. Shepard inquired as to how long the tour would take? Mr. Kowalski replied that Lauren and Jennie walked the tour path and found that it took between fifteen to twenty minutes; however, that was without stopping to talk about the different sites.

The commissioners talked about the important sites that should be noticed on the walking tour and various points of interests that should be talked about. These sites and interests included the following: 1) go down by the creek to see the station theater; 2) discuss the idea of the kind of development that might go into the empty space in the downtown area; 3) how new construction can or cannot compliment the historic character; 4) talk about how the Silver Creek restaurant was once a mill; 5) visit the Knights of Pythias; and 6) visit an early 20<sup>th</sup> century gas station to the west of where the Flat Iron Building once was.

Since most of the commissioners could help on June 29<sup>th</sup>, they felt that staff should start advertising for the walking tour. Mr. Kowalski noted that staff would put flyers in storefront windows in Downtown Urbana, along with a direct mailing, and posting it on the Urbana Public Television channel. He mentioned that the Urbana Business Association planned to help the City spread the word about the walking tour as well. Mr. Zangerl suggested having flyers available in the hotels for visitors to Urbana.

## **9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

David Monk, of 115 North Market Street in Champaign, mentioned that there is a vernacular section on Broadway, which has some earlier cottages of Urbana. They are very simple houses with single chimneys. One of those cottages is located at 724 South Broadway, and another one is located at 201 East Washington, which is also known as the Garrett House. Jan Kalmar is hoping to tear down the home at 724 South Broadway, so that she can move the house from 201 East Washington Street to that lot. Mr. Monk suggested an alternative vacant lot that the Garrett House could be moved to, instead of tearing down the cottage at 724 South Broadway. He suggested that the house at 724 South Broadway was worth saving as well. He would like to see the City take a serious involvement in moving those two buildings. He would like to see a historic district be nominated for some of the houses in this area. The area at 724 South Broadway was once the old fairground.

Mr. Monk wondered if these houses could become a work-study program for high school kids. They could work with PACA and contractors.

## 10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

- Garrett House – Mr. Kowalski reported that there is a lot of interest in this house. The school district has done a wonderful job of keeping the options open for trying to allow someone to move the house. There have been two other proposals over the last year and a half to move the house, but both of them failed due to the following: 1) the taking down of some power lines was a major issue for moving the house to Philo Road and 2) the taking down of about fifteen mature trees was the issue for moving the house to Race Street (close to Oregon). The latest proposal is by Jan Kalmar to tear down the house at 724 South Broadway to move the Garrett House to this lot. She is negotiating to purchase the lot at 724 South Broadway and plans to move into the Garrett House once it is moved. Since the Garrett House was too big to move on the lot at 724 South Broadway, Ms. Kalmar got approval for a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow for a reduction in the required fifteen-foot front-yard setback along Washington Street.

There was discussion from the commissioners regarding the school district's future plans. They have been selectively buying houses and converting them into rental properties. Mr. Shepard was told by a member of the school board that potential acquisitions could not be discussed. Mr. Kowalski stated that he would follow up on this.

- Unitarian Universalist Church was granted a Special Use Permit to temporarily use the house at 310 West High Street as an office until renovations on the church are finished. Some of the residents in Urbana are concerned that the house will eventually be torn down to expand the church's parking. There is a growing concern of the demolishing of houses to expand churches or parking lots in Urbana's residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Zangerl asked about the tax status and zoning of the house? Mr. Kowalski replied that the church currently pays taxes on the house and does not have any intention of filing for tax exemption. The church is zoned Mixed Office-Residential (MOR), and the house is zoned R-2, Single-Family Residential.

- Warm Air Research House – Mr. Cahill heard rumors that Mr. Hunter, the owner, found a new place to live. Mr. Shepard added that he believed that the University of Illinois is close to purchasing the house, because they had it appraised again just recently.

## 11. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Kowalski reported on the following:

- Plaques for Royer District Homes – Mr. Kowalski stated that he planned to purchase two plaques for the homeowners in this district. Staff received a Certificate of Appropriateness application for minor works to replace the rotted windowsills and rotted fascia boards. Most of the work is interior. The owner intends to paint the house as well. Staff has an eye on what is happening.

Chair Novak was concerned about setting a precedent by giving plaques to homeowners in historic districts. The City would not be able to give out individual plaques to homeowners if there were a decently sized historic district in the future. Mr. Kowalski responded that typically with a larger historic district, there would be a sign instead of individual plaques. Chair Novak went on record to say that these plaques would be given to the homeowners because it is only a two-building historic district.

- On Monday, June 10, 2002, City Council will be discussing the regulations and requirements for Historic Districts. It was a request by Howard Wakeland for the City Council to discuss the percentage requirements for nominating a district. Joe Whelan has requested that the City Council put it on their agenda. Mr. Kowalski is prepared to share research performed by the Planning Staff.

## 12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

## 13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Ms. Irish mentioned that in the Daily Illini on April 24, 2002, there was an article titled, “C-U Ranked Among The Best”. One of the things that worked against Champaign-Urbana’s ranking was that we had a low number of historical sites and historical districts.
- Mr. Shepard inquired about the information on the Chicago Bungalow business that he had given to Mr. Kowalski. He asked if Mr. Kowalski had had a chance to look into where the money that they were able to parcel out came from? Mr. Kowalski replied that would be a great task for the interns. Mr. Shepard explained that the City of Chicago has this program where there are thousands of bungalows. There were grants of \$1,000 for energy-efficient appliances, property tax reductions, and sales tax exemptions for renovation materials. He wondered where the money came from for this program. He thought it might be helpful for staff to put together something that showed what the monetary benefits are for being a historic district.

## 14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Zangerl moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Ms. Cardman seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Submitted,

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Rob Kowalski, Secretary