

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** July 2, 2008

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

**PLACE:** City Council Chamber, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rich Cahill, Scott Dossett, Katherine Lipes, Alice Novak, Trent Shepard, Mary Stuart, Art Zangerl

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** none

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rebecca Bird, Historic Preservation Planner; Tony Weck, Recording Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Julian Gorski, Jean Gorski, Scott Kunkel, Joan Zagorski, Carolyn Baxley, Brian Adams, Linda Lorenz, Ilona Matkovszki

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Historic Preservation Commission Chair, Alice Novak. Roll was taken and a quorum was declared.

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

**3. APPROVAL OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES**

Mr. Dossett moved that the minutes of the June 4, 2008 meeting be approved as presented. Mr. Zangerl seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

**4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

**5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

Joan Zagorski addressed the Commission, stating that houses on Iowa Street at Washington Street were being demolished by the Urbana School District. She asked how it was possible for the School District to do this. She also asked where the materials from houses that are demolished go. Do they go to the dump? She noted that there are programs for salvaging and recycling useable materials from demolished houses and asked why more such materials aren't recycled. Ms. Zagorski also made mention of an addition being planned for the east side of St. Patrick's Church. She felt that such an addition would destroy the gothic appearance of the church.

Carolyn Baxley next addressed the Commission. She was in support of the landmark nomination for 508 West Elm Street. She felt that the house qualified under criteria a, b, c, d, and e of section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Scott Kunkel, representing JSM Development, spoke in opposition to the landmark nomination for 508 West Elm Street. He noted that this house "pales in comparison" to other local landmarks and that it would be "a stretch" to nominate this house. He stated that its condition is poor and that JSM has a contract with the current owner to purchase it.

Brian Adams spoke in support of the nomination of 508 West Elm Street as a local historic landmark. He said that there is little left of the historic structures in the West Elm Street area. One by one, he said, such historic structures are being demolished and eventually there will be nothing left if this trend continues. He stated that he did not agree with City staff's findings regarding the aluminum siding presently on the house.

Linda Lorenz addressed the Commission, concurring with what Ms. Baxley and Mr. Adams had previously stated. She said that she trusts Ilona Matkovszki's research regarding this and other historic or potentially historic landmarks. She expressed that she was saddened and angered at the prospect of another historic structure being demolished and felt that the neighborhood did not need another "file box with no windows".

Joan Zagorski addressed the Commission a second time, reiterating her support for saving the house at 508 West Elm Street.

**6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

**7. OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

**8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

- **Case #HP-2008-L-02, 508 W. Elm Street (Bills House): Preliminary determination for a historic landmark nomination, Ilona Matkovszki, applicant.**

Rebecca Bird gave a staff report on this application. She explained the details of the case to the Commission and gave staff's recommendation. City staff recommended that the house at 508 West Elm Street does not qualify for designation as a local historic landmark based on the criteria set forth in Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. According to the staff report, although the house would qualify as a contributing building in a historic district, and that it marginally meets one or two of the criteria for individual listing, it does not carry enough significance to designate it as a local landmark, particularly with its integrity being compromised by the addition of aluminum siding.

Ms. Stuart questioned the staff recommendation. She thought that it was seriously flawed and that the staff opinion was based on a misconception. She thought that the social context was missing in the staff analysis. She explained the importance of Postmaster appointments at this time in history, as well as the significance of women's clubs and other factors. Ms. Bird responded that she was not aware that Postmasters were appointed by the Federal government.

Ms. Novak asked the applicant, Ilona Matkovszki, if she would like to make a presentation.

Ms. Matkovszki reviewed with the Commission the research she completed on the Bills House and then addressed questions from the Commission.

Ms. Novak then asked if the property owner would like to address the Commission. Julian Gorski, current owner of the Bills House, addressed the Commission briefly, providing further details regarding the house. He stated that he had owned the house "in one form or another" since 1975 and had lived in the house from 1996 to 2006. He said that he did not know if it was "significant" or not but that he understood that it was the Commission's duty to define its significance. He spoke as to the integrity of the house, stating that the aluminum siding on the house was present when he purchased the house. Regarding the porch, he stated that the steps had been replaced and that the porch's columns had been scorched by a fire at the house next door. Lastly, he said that the spindles in the porch railings were "a disaster". He had tried to maintain them by painting and making other repairs but that many were rotted at the bottoms and 10 to 15% of them were missing. He did not know what was under the main part of the aluminum siding.

Mr. Zangerl asked Mr. Gorski if the porch columns had been replaced as a result of their being scorched by the fire next door. Mr. Gorski answered in the negative but noted that the bases of the columns were not original. Ms. Stuart sought clarification of Mr. Gorski's earlier statement that he had owned the house in one form or another since 1975. Mr. Gorski answered that he purchased the house in partnership with another individual, after which the two of them owned it jointly until Mr. Gorski sold his share to his partner. His partner later sold both shares back to Mr. Gorski.

The Commission then discussed the case. By consensus Commissioners agreed that the house qualified as a local historic landmark despite its current condition and aluminum siding. Commissioners expressed that the house had significance based not only on its style and

construction but also because the original owner of the house, Frank L. Bills, was an Urbana Postmaster, a pioneer in telecommunications, and a prominent businessman.

Commissioner Zangerl expressed reservation about the house's qualifications for landmark designation. Specifically, he did not feel that the structure qualified as a familiar visual landmark in the community. Moreover, he felt that the aluminum siding significantly compromised the integrity of the building, substantially diminishing its original design.

Following discussion, Scott Dossett made a motion that in Case HP-2008-L-02, the house at 508 West Elm Street qualifies for designation as a local historic landmark under criteria a, b, and c of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and that the case should be forwarded to a public hearing. Katherine Lipes seconded the motion. With no further discussion Ms. Novak asked for a roll call vote. Commissions voted as follows:

Cahill – yes	Shepard – yes
Dossett – yes	Stuart – yes
Lipes – yes	Zangerl – no
Novak – yes	

The motion having carried, the application was forwarded to a public hearing. Mr. Gorski, the property owner, stated that he would not be able to attend the August HPC meeting. With the consent of the applicant, the public hearing for this case would be postponed until the September HPC meeting.

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

Ms. Novak mentioned the Mumford House and the ongoing construction of the new carillon on the U of I campus. She suggested that the Commission draft a letter to the U of I Board of Trustees regarding the Mumford House and its preservation. The Commission agreed.

Mr. Dossett noted the condition of the Round Barns on St. Mary's Road, stating that their paint finishes and foundations were in a bad state of repair. He said that he had written a letter to Melvyn Skvarla at the U of I in regards to this matter but as of this meeting had received no reply.

Ms. Novak noted that the Ricker House now had a new owner. Mr. Cahill briefly provided details on the house.

## **11. STAFF REPORT**

Ms. Bird reported that City staff had received a landmark designation application from Betsey Cronan for her house at 305 West High Street. She announced that the preliminary determination for this property would take place at the August 6 meeting.

Additionally, Ms. Bird reported that on Tuesday, July 1 at 11:00 a.m., she had listened to a radio show called "Focus 580" in which the Chief Architect at the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Mike Jackson, spoke about historic preservation. The show can be heard on the WILL website or that it could be downloaded as a PodCast. She elaborated that Mr. Jackson spoke on the subject of the ecological importance of preservation, the link between preservation and conservation, and

green building practices. There is a related article by Mike Jackson on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's website.

**12. STUDY SESSION**

There was none.

**13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Cahill announced that Bob Yapp, an area preservationist who had presented at the Commission's windows workshop, had left the Danville area and was now in the Hannibal, Missouri area.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Dossett made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. All Commissioners present were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Submitted,

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Robert Myers, AICP  
Planning Division Manager