

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: June 3, 2015

APPROVED

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Scott Dossett, Matt Metcalf, Alice Novak, Gina Pagliuso, David Seyler, Kim Smith

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Trent Shepard

STAFF PRESENT: Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager; Kevin Garcia, Planner II

OTHERS PRESENT: None

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

Chair Novak called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 6, 2015 Historic Preservation Commission regular meeting were presented for approval.

Mr. Dossett made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written by unanimous vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Draft Letter to Urbana City Council regarding Downtown Urbana
- Email from Frank Butterfield regarding *This Place Matters*
- Email from Jeannette Straub regarding the Mumford House

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

2015 Preservation Activities

Ms. Novak presented two pages from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as well as a correspondence from Frank Butterfield, the Regional Representative for the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, based in Springfield. Mr. Butterfield worked for the National Trust when they launched the “*This Place Matters*” campaign, which was redesigned in 2008 and now focuses on social media. Ms. Novak said the campaign was simple and easy for people to contribute to. Ms. Novak suggested speaking with the City’s Information Technology staff regarding this initiative.

Mr. Metcalf inquired into if the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission was still thinking of collaborating with the City of Champaign’s Historic Preservation Commission, which he was in support of. Ms. Novak responded that she would bring this up in a meeting with planning staff from the City of Champaign.

Ms. Novak asked City Staff if the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission could have a table at the Market at the Square. Mr. Garcia said that would be allowed.

Mr. Metcalf said he would be willing to prepare a tri-fold brochure, and he could start with getting the transcripts of the historic buildings podcast tours. Mr. Metcalf said he would prepare these materials for the next meeting.

Ms. Novak inquired into what it would take to have a joint meeting between the Champaign and Urbana Historic Preservation Commissions. Ms. Pearson stated it would take advanced planning, and that it could be a Special Meeting, as long as it was noticed properly. Ms. Novak wondered if they could have a space large enough for the joint meeting, and Ms. Pearson responded that the space and meeting organization just had to conform to the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Novak commented that a joint meeting would hopefully enliven historic preservation initiatives among residents.

Ms. Novak wondered what other outreach events could be utilized. Mr. Metcalf said he would reach out to the Sweetcorn Festival about the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission having a presence at that event. Mr. Dossett pointed out that the Urbana Business Association organizes the Sweetcorn Festival, and he suggested contacting its director, Cynthia Chandler.

Mr. Metcalf inquired about the potential for a window demonstration at the Sweetcorn Festival. Ms. Novak was unsure who would execute the demonstration, and Mr. Metcalf said he would speak with the Sweetcorn Festival’s organizers about this. Mr. Dossett mentioned that the Festival would be quite busy and alcohol would be served so it would be safer to hand out brochures. Mr. Metcalf said he would focus on creating an identification brochure and showing how to research a historic house. Ms. Novak replied that the Urbana Free Library had helpful guides on how to research such items, and they should see if the library had any flyers to hand out.

Ms. Novak suggested that they only focus on a few activities and that they delay organizing more walking tours. Mr. Metcalf brought up that the City already had walking tours via the historic buildings podcasts.

Ms. Novak inquired into the set-up needs at the Market at the Square. Ms. Pearson stated that a tent would not be available, but a table would be.

Mr. Metcalf wondered if the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission already had anything to hand out. Mr. Dossett stated there were tri-folds detailing the Royer Historic District.

Mr. Metcalf asked if they needed to give early notice of their activities at the Market at the Square. Ms. Pearson responded that spaces at the Market at the Square are in high demand, and that the Historic Preservation Commission would need to reserve a space. She recommended reserving a space in the fall when table space would more likely be available. The Market at the Square Coordinator liked the idea of the Historic Preservation Commission hosting a demonstration in the fall at the market.

Ms. Pagliuso asked if the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission could operate at the City's tent at the Market at the Square. Ms. Pearson replied that the City of Urbana tent is already in high demand, so she felt that the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission having its own table would be better received by attendees.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Letter to City Council regarding the Downtown District

Kevin Garcia, Planner II, stated that City staff held a discussion on how to communicate the proclamation to the City Council. City staff recommended that the Historic Preservation Commission send the proclamation in a letter to the City Council. Mr. Garcia stated that City staff drafted a proclamation in a letter, and Mr. Metcalf edited the letter. The amended draft was before the Commission members.

Ms. Smith recommended some changes to the language in the letter. One of which was to use "design review guidelines" rather than "Design Review Board" so that the City would not restrict a property owner's innovation and imagination of a design but yet they would promote design compatibility of the existing historical structures. Mr. Dossett responded that he did not want the City Council to consider guidelines. He wanted to see a Review Board/a process to be set. Mr. Garcia explained that design review boards rely on guidelines.

Mr. Dossett asked if the board would be charged with creating the guidelines. Ms. Pearson stated that the guidelines would have to be in the City Code. Ms. Pearson noted that a downtown overlay district is in the City Council Goals. Mr. Dossett agreed the letter should utilize the language from the City Council Goals.

After discussion of suggested changes, overlay districts, design guidelines and review boards, Mr. Dossett moved that the Historic Preservation Commission forward the proposed letter to the City Council with the following changes:

1. Changes made to the original letter as highlighted in gray on the proposed draft.
2. Adding the fourth and fifth purposes of the Historic Preservation Commission as written in Section XII-3.B of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to the first three purposes under “Recognizing”.
 - A. The fourth purpose reads as follows, *“Educating the public on the opportunities presented by historic preservation; and”*
 - B. The fifth purpose states the following, *“Performing such other functions as may be useful or necessary to safeguard and enhance the community heritage as embodied in historic parcels or buildings, structures, sites or objects”*
3. Clarify the third bullet under “Acknowledging” by saying the following, “The City has a precedent of Design and Development Review Boards appointed to provide guidance and ensure compatibility between new, existing and historic development in three other critical neighborhoods (MOR, Busey & Lincoln, and East Urbana)”
4. Changing the fourth bullet under “Acknowledging” to read as such, “There are currently ~~is no~~ guidelines or Design Review Board overseeing development of the Downtown area”.
5. Change the language in the last paragraph of the letter to read as follows, “..... request that the Urbana City Council expedite the protection of Downtown Urbana through the creation of a Design and/or Development Review Board and direct City staff to prepare a design overlay district for downtown to ensure compatibility of new buildings and renovations

Ms. Pearson stated that the Planning staff would make the changes to the draft letter and have the Chair review it for accuracy. Mr. Metcalf seconded the motion. The letter was approved unanimously by a voice vote.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

1403 West Lorado-Taft Drive, Mumford House

Mr. Garcia distributed a correspondence between City staff and Jeannette Straub, the daughter of Herbert W. Mumford, Jr. regarding the Mumford House on the University of Illinois campus. In the email, Ms. Straub was asking if there was anything the City could do in regards to the restoration of the Mumford House, and City Staff thought it would be a good idea to bring this correspondence to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Metcalf inquired into the current state of the property. Ms. Novak replied that it is being maintained to some extent. In the rear of the house there are new doors, and it looks more secure. The house is not occupied, and there is no plan to occupy the house.

Ms. Novak recommended that the Commission compose a letter to the University expressing their concern. She believed that the best thing for the building would be for it to be used. She stated that it had not been used in ten years or more.

Mr. Metcalf mentioned crowd-funding as an option. Ms. Novak suggested for the Commission to mull it over and think more about what to do in regards to the house

Cunningham Avenue Hotel

Mr. Metcalf stated the “old hotel” property on Cunningham Avenue was the subject of a demolition notice. The notice stated the demolition was to begin on June 8, 2015; however, demolition had already begun. Mr. Metcalf wanted the Historic Preservation Commission to emphasize that this was not acceptable. Ms. Novak asked City Staff to look into this issue.

702 and 707 East California Avenue Properties

Mr. Dossett stated that he received an email from Dennis Roberts, Council member for Ward 5, about a demolition request for 702 and 707 East California Avenue. In his email, Mr. Roberts stated the unique features of both properties and mentioned that they were on the blight reduction list. He was wondering if these two properties could be preserved because the demolition of these two properties would harm the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Novak said she would look into her students’ surveys to see if these properties had been studied.

Mr. Metcalf presented a brick labeled “western paver,” which was from the recently demolished structures at 101, 103 and 105 South Lincoln Avenue. He presented this brick as an example of historic elements in the community which there are no protections for. He wondered what could be done to protect such elements. Ms. Novak replied that the City has a Conservation District provision. Ms. Novak stated that this was a potential tool that no one utilizes as there currently are no conservation districts in the City of Urbana or in the State of Illinois.

Mr. Metcalf stated that there are historic properties that are being demolished that have not made it to the National Register list. He expressed concern that more development would move east into Urbana and promote the demolition of potentially historic properties. If this continues to happen, then we would not be able to tell the story of Urbana’s past and the people who resided here.

Mr. Dossett stated that since many of the properties such as 702 and 709 East California Avenue are not significant in terms of historical landmarking, the question becomes how we value these properties. Sixty percent of the homes in his neighborhood are rentals, so there are these “wear-down to tear-down” scenarios that change the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Novak inquired about the status of the two homes with regards to being demolished. Ms. Pearson did not know the status, but she encouraged the Commission members to read the staff report in the City Council packet for the previous week. The Commission will be able to read which list the two properties are on, where they are on the list and some details about the program.

Mr. Metcalf wondered if the City had a database or resource listing the construction dates of every property within the City boundaries. Mr. Garcia replied no, but the surveys from Ms. Novak’s students would have this information on properties that have been surveyed. Ms. Novak added that Cunningham Township has index cards with information on properties that is sometimes accurate and sometimes not. Mr. Metcalf thought a map or database with information on the properties inside City limits would help to educate the public as to why many properties are historic.

Ms. Novak asked Mr. Dossett if the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood Association (HEUNA) had any concerns about these two properties. Mr. Dossett replied that although Mr. Roberts had sent his

email to some members of HEUNA, nothing had been done. Mr. Dossett stated that HEUNA met irregularly, but he would present this issue to HEUNA's members.

Ms. Novak recommended the Commission members drive by 702 and 709 East California Avenue and take a look at them in context of the surrounding neighborhood. Ms. Novak asked the Planning staff to send the Historic Preservation Commission a link to the Conservation Ordinance.

Freeman House, Elm Street

Ms. Pagliuso mentioned that she noticed the capital that was missing on one of the pillars had been replaced with either a re-creation or the original that was repaired.

11. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Garcia reported on the following:

- City Staff was conducting a building design survey of the downtown area as part of the design review process. They have surveyed over sixty buildings as of yet.
- An advertisement had been placed for the interactive web grant intern. The ad would close on Friday, June 5, 2015, and there were already nine applicants already. City staff was also in the process of getting feedback on the web mapping project from the City's Legal Department.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Novak mentioned that the Illinois Historic Preservation Conference is scheduled for June 23 – 26. Mr. Garcia stated that Jeff Engstrom, Christopher Marx, and he would be attending the conference.

Ms. Novak the Commission members that any communications between Commission members need to go through City staff to avoid violating the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Dossett clarified that up to three individuals could communicate before violating the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Pearson encouraged that all communications go through City Staff rather than risk creating violations.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dossett moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. With all Commission members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Submitted,

Lorrie Pearson, Planning Manager
Historic Preservation Commission Recording Secretary