

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** September 13, 2007

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

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rich Cahill, Katherine Lipes, Alice Novak, Trent Shepard

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Scott Dossett, Mary Stuart, Art Zangerl

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**STAFF PRESENT:** Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager; Rebecca Bird, Planning Division Intern; Tony Weck, Recording Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Howard Wakeland, Carl Long, Joyce Wakeland, G.D. Brighton, B.W. Conway, Brian Adams, Randy Kangas, Glenn Stanko, William Price, Dan Folk, Fernando Reyna, Christopher Stohr, Anthony Donato

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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**

With corrections to the minutes of the August 1, 2007 meeting made by Ms. Novak, Ms. Lipes moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the minutes were unanimously approved as amended.

**4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Received by City staff and distributed to the members of the Commission at the meeting were the following communications: an e-mail from Betsey Cronan to Robert Myers supporting the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district; a fax from Phyllis and

Joe Williams to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission, Alice Novak, Chair, in support of the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district; a phone call record in the form of an e-mail from Robert Myers to Tony Weck, the phone call being from Naomi Jakobsson in support of the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district; a letter from William Price and Joan Price to Elizabeth Tyler expressing support of the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district; a document from the law offices of Rawles, O'Byrne, Stanko, Kepley & Jefferson, P.C., authored by Glenn Stanko, attorney for Howard, Joyce and Craig Wakeland, stating opposition to the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a local historic district.

**5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

With regards to the nomination of the 800 block of West Main Street as a historic district, Carl Long, of 105 North Coler Avenue, spoke in opposition to the nomination on behalf of 812 West Main Street, of which he is owner. Randy Kangas, of 804 West Main Street, spoke in support of the nomination. Dan Folk, of 807 West Main Street and the applicant in this case, spoke in support of the nomination. Brian Adams, of 412 West Elm Street, spoke in support of the nomination.

Glenn Stanko spoke on behalf of Howard, Joyce and Craig Wakeland, owners of four properties in this block. Mr. Stanko expressed the Wakelands' opposition to being included in the proposed district. Mr. Stanko summarized the objections detailed in the letter he submitted to the Commission at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Stanko said he was not challenging the creation of a historic district on West Main Street but objected to its proposed boundaries. Properties on the west end of the block, including those owned by his client, Howard Wakeland, should be excluded because they are a noncontributing cluster of properties on the edge of the proposed district and are not needed to make other properties contiguous. He based his findings in part on the 1985 PACA Downtown to Campus historic resource survey. He also commented that including additional properties to the east would have been warranted given historic resources in the 700 block of West Main Street. Howard Wakeland, of 1811A Amber Lane, also spoke in opposition to the nomination.

**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 2007-D-01, Preliminary determination for historic district application, 800 block of West Main Street.**

Robert Myers gave the staff report concerning this case to the Commission. He introduced the case and gave background information on the 800 block of West Main Street, including a brief history of notable past residents of the block and the homes in the proposed district. Mr. Myers reviewed each property individually in the proposed district and gave City staff's determination as to whether each property should be considered conforming or nonconforming in the proposed district. At the time the staff report was written, eleven of the fourteen properties were judged to be contributing to the proposed district. Those recommended as noncontributing included 811, 813, and 816 West Main Street. Since the staff memo was written, 807½ West Main was demolished with a permit applied for before the City received the historic district application, meaning that this is now a vacant lot and should also be considered noncontributing. Mr. Myers noted that the required action by the Commission at this meeting was to make a preliminary determination as to whether or not the proposed district is eligible for designation as a local historic district. After discussion on the matter, Mr. Myers stated City staff's findings on the case, and that the proposed district is eligible for local historic district designation under Sections XII-4.C.1.a and XII-4.C.1.c of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. Specifically, the proposed district was found as:

- Having a significant number of properties which have significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state or community.
- Having a significant number of properties which have association with an important person or event in national, state or local history.
- Having a significant number of properties which are representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retain a high degree of integrity.
- Being an area of sufficient historical integrity to convey a sense of historical time and place.

Mr. Myers noted that the Commission could determine that the nomination met the criteria for designation, that portions of the nomination did not meet the criteria meaning that it would not be further considered, or that the nomination did not meet the criteria. Mr. Myers noted that in light of public input received at this meeting, another option would be to continue this preliminary determination until the next scheduled meeting to allow more time for the Commission to review additional information.

Mr. Myers asked if the Commission had any questions. Ms. Lipes asked if 816 W. Main Street was considered non-contributing to the proposed district only because of its age. She stated that this building is over 50 years old and noted that there is a changing view in historic preservation that early ranch houses may be considered historic properties. At the statewide preservation conference which she attended in the summer of 2007, Ms. Lipes noted that mid-century modernism was a large part of the conference and there was a special session on ranch houses and how some of them had been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. She wondered if 816 West Main

Street could be “changed” into a contributing building based on this. Mr. Myers responded that this would be for the Commission to decide. He stated that because this property did not seem to be part of the rest of the block architecturally, it was not considered by City staff to be contributing. Rebecca Bird noted that this property was listed as noncontributing in the historic district application.

Mr. Shepard noted that on page three of the Staff Report it was stated that the State of Illinois survey completed in 1975 found that 803 West Main Street was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. He asked if the survey meant to say that 804 West Main Street was the property that was National Register-eligible, rather than 803, and wondered why 804 was not identified as such. Mr. Myers answered that it was indeed 803 that was identified as eligible. Ms. Novak added that state historic surveys done in the early 1970s were far from comprehensive and that perhaps the reason was that 804 was then in a bad state of repair. Audience member Randy Kangas noted that 803 is known for being once a residence of a past Mayor of Urbana and to a past Chairman of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. For this reason, Mr. Kangas stated, 803 may have been considered more important at the time of the 1975 survey than 804. He further stated that 804 West Main Street had at one time been condemned and was completely restored and thus supported Ms. Novak’s statement.

Ms. Novak sought to confirm that since there are 14 properties included in the nomination, there are respectively 14 property owners. Mr. Myers answered that there are several owners of more than one property. Ms. Novak noted that there were 7 signatures on the petition included in the application that supported the nomination. Mr. Myers confirmed that this number complied with the minimum number of property owners necessary to initiate an application.

Ms. Novak then opened the meeting to discussion of the case amongst members of the Commission. She asked that if any Commissioner was inclined to make a motion at any time, that he or she be very specific with regards to the Commission’s task at hand and that any motion reference the criteria listed on page seven of the staff report.

Mr. Shepard stated that the house at 816 West Main Street looks nothing now like it did when it was originally built, having been added onto and renovated on the exterior since then.

Mr. Cahill noted that he was present when there was a nomination in 2001 for a larger area of the West Main Street neighborhood to become a local historic district. He stated that since that time, there have been four new property owners come to the area, which translates to 35 percent new ownership of area properties. He stated his feeling that there was enough merit to the present nomination to take it to the next level. Though arguments could be made, he said, about which properties to include/exclude and debate was possible on the boundaries of the proposed district, he did not feel that changing the boundaries as proposed would be appropriate.

Mr. Shepard stated that he did not see the value of including 811, 813 and 816 West Main Street in a potential historic district and suggested that the Commission consider excluding them either at this meeting or at the public hearing, were there to be one. Mr. Cahill agreed that a motion could be made either at this meeting or at a public hearing with regards to whether to exclude the aforementioned properties.

Ms. Novak expressed that she was opposed to changing the boundaries of the potential historic district as outlined in the nomination. Her feeling was that historic districts should not be “cookie cutter” or “polka-dot shaped” and that the nomination made a strong case for the boundaries of the proposed district as outlined in the application because part of the significance of West Main Street as a whole is that it was once part of a historic trail that predated Urbana itself. Ms. Novak furthered that since West Main Street is the premier thoroughfare through the oldest part of Urbana, it should remain intact.

Ms. Lipes stated her feeling that the boundaries of the proposed historic district should remain intact and as proposed in the nomination for the time being, and that if the Commission wished to change the boundaries, it could do so when more Commissioners were present to weigh in on the issue.

Mr. Cahill asked of City staff if Mr. Wakeland would be prevented from going forward with any building permits for which he had previously applied while this nomination is under consideration. Mr. Myers answered that there is a provision in the Historic Preservation Ordinance that says that once an application has been submitted, the City cannot issue building permits that would alter or destroy existing buildings or create new ones within a proposed historic district until the historic application is resolved. He further noted that historic districts do not prohibit new construction but any new construction/renovation of any property in a historic district would have to have a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission.

Ms. Novak noted that in her experience in performing surveys of historic properties, no one ranks such properties as was done in the 1985 PACA survey that was mentioned in relation to the present nomination. She stated that when the State of Illinois does such surveys, they say simply that a property either does or does not contribute to the historical significance of a given area. She further stated that there are also no degrees of contribution to the historical significance of a given area for each property in a State survey. She felt that ranking historic properties on their contribution to historical significance defeated the purpose of a district, which is to provide a cohesiveness to a given area.

With no other comments or questions from the Commission, Ms. Lipes made a motion that the Historic Preservation Commission make a preliminary determination that the proposed historic district is eligible for designation based on it having a significant number of buildings, structures, sites or objects that meet the standards in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance; specifically, that it has significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state or community; that the properties are associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history; that the properties are representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity; and that it is an area containing sufficient historical integrity to convey a sense of historical time and place. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shepard. With no additional discussion, Ms. Novak asked for a roll call. The votes on this motion from the Commission were as follows:

Mr. Cahill – yes

Mr. Shepard – yes

Mr. Dossett – (excused)

Ms. Stuart – (excused)

Ms. Lipes – yes

Mr. Zangerl – (excused)

Ms. Novak – yes

The motion carried unanimously. Ms. Novak noted that this would move the consideration of the proposed historic district on to a public hearing, which would be held on October 3, 2007, the next regular meeting of the Commission.

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

- **Mumford House**

Alice Novak made note of a letter she sent to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to inquire whether the University of Illinois had entered into State Law 707 proceedings for the Mumford House. She requested that the letter be copied to the members of the Commission. She noted that the letter was sent out in July 2007 and that a response had not yet been received. She sent a follow-up email to the Agency, advising them of this meeting and that she would like to be able to convey a response from the State to the Commission. No response had been received as of this meeting. She suggested that a second letter be sent to the director of the Agency and Mr. Shepard suggested that this letter be copied to the State Representative for this area. Mr. Cahill suggested that the letter be copied to both State Representatives and the State Senator for this area.

## **11. STAFF REPORT**

Ms. Bird reported to the Commission that the Windows Workshop held at the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center was very well attended, with 56 attendees in the morning lecture session and 24 in the afternoon. She stated that positive feedback had been received from six people as of this meeting. In the morning, Ms. Bird reported, Jeff Gordon spoke first at the workshop in Bill Rose's stead. Mr. Gordon is a colleague of Mr. Rose's, a research specialist in building technology at the Building Research Council in the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois. Afterward, Bob Yapp gave a presentation explaining why one should rehabilitate historic windows rather than replace them. He gave a demonstration on rehabilitating historic windows, using props, and a list of necessary supplies. The afternoon session included a hands-on workshop where participants were divided into teams which actually took windows out of the walls, evaluated their condition and began work on them. She stated that the Independent Media Center is continuing work on the windows removed during the workshop and would like any volunteer assistance that anyone could offer. Ms. Novak suggested that "thank you" letters be sent to persons such as Mr. Gordon who volunteered his time to help facilitate the workshop.

## **12. STUDY SESSION**

There was none.

**13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The following announcements were made:

Ms. Lipes announced that if anyone is interested in the idea of ranch houses as historic resources the Society of Architectural Historians student organization at the University of Illinois will be giving a lecture on September 20, 2007 at 5:30 p.m., in Room 302 in the Architecture Building. The lecture will include two architects from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency talking on the subject.

Mr. Cahill announced that on the afternoon of Sunday, October 7, 2007, PACA, in conjunction with the Champaign-Urbana Theatre Group is holding a tour of Mount Hope Cemetery. He stated that as visitors walk past historic markers, members of the Theatre Group will act out scenes from the life of the person buried there. More information on times and tickets could be obtained by calling the PACA office at 359-7222, he announced.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Shepard moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cahill seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Submitted,

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Robert Myers, AICP, Planning Division Manager