

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: April 2, 2008

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Scott Dossett

MEMBERS ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager; Rebecca Bird, Community Development Associate; Tony Weck, Recording Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Howard Wakeland, Suzanne Bissonnette, Crystal Whitters, Carolyn Andrews, Sal Villardita, Ed Lelo, Dennis Latto, Linda Lorenz, Brian Adams, Ilona Matkovszki, Kevin Kramer, Marc Rogers, Phyllis Williams, Carolyn Baxley, Georgia Morgan, Dennis Roberts, Caroline Thrun, Kim Haire, Rebecca Chan, Chris Stohr, Carl Long

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 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

Ms. Stuart moved that the minutes of the March 5, 2008 meeting be approved as presented. Ms. Lipes seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Presented to the Commission were the following communications: an e-mail message from Carolyn Baxley to Alice Novak against demolition of 809 W. Main Street; and an e-mail message from Sarah McEvoy and Huseyin Sehitoglu to Alice Novak, Rebecca Bird and Robert Myers against demolition of 809 W Main Street and in favor of historic landmark designation of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel.

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Carl Long, a property owner in the West Main Street Historic District addressed the Commission. Mr. Long stated that he did not feel that the house at 809 West Main Street fit in with the rest of the historic district due to its poor state of repair and he urged the Commission to approve the application to demolish the house so it can be replaced.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

- **Historic Preservation Commission Bylaws revision**

Rebecca Bird presented a staff report on the proposed revised bylaws. The current draft incorporates changes requested by Commissioners at the last meeting. Following questions, staff offered to take these comments into consideration and confer with City legal staff for further wording changes.

Mr. Zangerl made a motion to defer approval of the revised bylaws to the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shepard. A voice vote was taken. With all Commissioners in favor, approval of the revised bylaws was deferred to the next meeting.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

- **Case #HP-2008-COA-01, 809 West Main Street: Certificate of Appropriateness to Demolish a circa 1905 I-house, Howard Wakeland, Applicant.**

Ms. Novak officially opened the public hearing. Ms. Bird presented the staff report to the Commission and read staff's recommendation, which was that the Commission deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for this case, but that staff reserved the option to alter its recommendation should evidence be presented at the public hearing warranting such.

Following the staff report, the applicant, Howard Wakeland, presented his application to the Commission. Mr. Wakeland explained his reasons for wishing to demolish the house, stating that it was in a very poor state of repair. The floors on the first floor sag and are supported in the basement by tree trunks set into the dirt floor. The foundation is in very bad condition, is bowed in several places, and needs to be replaced. The electrical system is outdated and needs to be upgraded. Mr.

Wakeland explained that the rental house he owned next door burned due to carelessness of his tenants, this is a reminder that safety should be the primary consideration. The house at 809 W Main is not historic and needs to be replaced to make it safe and a desirable place to rent.

Mr. Wakeland provided plans for a new single-family house he would like to build in its place. The new house would have the same height and width as the existing house and would likewise mimic the proportions of the existing house in every way. If the Historic Preservation Commission would like to have the same roof dormer built on the new house as exists on the current one then he would be willing to do so. The community and City Council are concerned about “green construction” and saving energy. A new house would have proper insulation, efficient heating and cooling, new doors and windows, and tight construction making it much more energy efficient. Following Mr. Wakeland’s presentation, questions from the Commission to the applicant were addressed.

Ms. Novak next invited any audience member who wished to speak as a proponent of the application for Certificate of Appropriateness to address the Commission. No one chose to speak.

Ms. Novak next invited anyone who wished to speak as an opponent to the application to address the Commission. Carolyn Baxley encouraged the Commission to support City staff’s recommendation on this case. She stated that she has lived on West Main Street for a number of years and is pleased to see the attention being paid to historic properties in the area. It was her thought that the house might be older than the stated date of 1904. She felt that Mr. Wakeland’s reasons for wanting to demolish the house at 809 West Main Street were a “litany of deferred maintenance” and that poor condition due to owner neglect is a poor excuse to demolish a house, especially when a house retains a high degree of historic integrity even though it is designated as noncontributing.

Brian Adams stated that he and Linda Lorenz researched the house at 809 West Main Street and that based on that research, he concurred with Ms. Baxley that the house may be older than 1904 but that more research needs to be done on it in order to determine a date. He felt that there was potential historic significance that had yet to be uncovered. He noted that the Commission initially felt that this house should have been included in the West Main Street Historic District as a contributing structure but that this was reversed by the City Council. He stated that even though the house has been ruled as noncontributing, it is still an important part of the district. He felt that it was important to do the least amount of damage to this house due to the fact that Main Street is historically an important thoroughfare in Urbana.

Suzanne Bissonnette, a resident of the West Main Street Historic District, conveyed her appreciation to the Commission for the time it had put in to the West Main Street Historic District. She urged the Commission to support City staff’s recommendation regarding the application. She noted that the house at 809 West Main Street is currently in better condition than was the house in which she now lives when first purchased. Her house had been condemned by the City by the time it was purchased but she noted that it was able to be restored. She stated that she and her husband continue that process of restoration in keeping up their historic home. She said that over the 16 years in which she has lived in her current home, it has been her observation that very little maintenance has been performed on the house at 809 West Main. She felt nonetheless that this house is integral to the neighborhood and has historic value despite the fact that it was ruled as noncontributing to the

historic district. She felt that replacing this house with a “green house”, as Mr. Wakeland proposed would be a poor use of resources in terms of demolishing the current structure and hauling it off. Regarding the problems with the house Mr. Wakeland noted in his petition (such as sagging floors and an inefficient heating system), she could recommend contractors who could remedy these problems. In light of the fact that her own house has had solar panels installed, she also noted that it is possible to live in an old house and still be energy efficient. She noted that the duplexes built by Mr. Wakeland at 807 West Main Street are “enormous” and that they interfere with the historic character of the neighborhood. She hoped that if the Commission did grant the Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of 809, the structure that would replace it would at least maintain the same footprint as the current structure and she felt that renovation would be a much better use of resources than demolition.

Phyllis Williams, also a resident of the West Main Street Historic District, stated that everything that Mr. Wakeland had said would have to be done to the house at 809 West Main has had to be done to her own house. She said that these types of repairs and renovations are simply part of owning an old house. She urged the Commission not to “reward deferred maintenance” by granting the request for Certificate of Appropriateness.

Linda Lorenz stated as an example of the maintenance required in an old home that her house dated from 1914 and that it had been rewired and that it had a new roof. She urged the Commission not to allow demolition of 809 West Main Street, stating that maintenance is part of owning an older home and that those who own such homes “know what they’re getting into” in terms of the extra maintenance and expense they require.

Ilona Matkovszki asked the Commission to deny the application for Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of 809 West Main Street. She said that the problems with the house as noted by Mr. Wakeland in his application were the types of problems that are typical to old houses, especially when they are not maintained. She felt that the present condition of 809 West Main is a typical case of lack of maintenance, which is now used as reason to demolish the structure. She stated she had encountered this type of reasoning in the past and that she would like to do away with it as a valid reason for demolition. She further noted that Mr. Wakeland stated in his application his belief that the house had become dangerous due to its age. She did not believe that structures become dangerous due to age but because of lack of maintenance. She was concerned that if the existing house at 809 were to be demolished, its replacement would follow the same example set by Mr. Wakeland’s other new structures in the area, which would serve to degrade the historic integrity of the district.

Ms. Novak then opened the public hearing to any opponents of the application who wished to ask questions of the applicant. No one chose to do so.

With no further questions or comments from the audience or applicant, the Commission discussed the case.

Mr. Zangerl made a motion that the Commission deny the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the house at 809 West Main Street with the following determinations: (1) that the structure is original to the time period of the historic district in which it stands; (2) that

the structure maintains good integrity, including later siding which has now achieved significance; and (3) the City's written staff report. Mr. Zangerl clarified that his motion furthermore was based on the determination that the following aspects of the existing house help to convey a sense of historical time and place: scale and massing; setbacks and placement; asbestos siding; placement of window and door openings; window sizes and shapes; window and door trim; historic building materials and techniques; and the placement of the front porch and its relationship to the building. Ms. Lipes seconded the motion. With no further discussion, Ms. Novak asked for a roll call. The votes were as follows:

Cahill – yes	Mr. Shepard – yes
Lipes – yes	Ms. Stuart – yes
Novak – yes	Mr. Zangerl – yes

With six “yes” votes and zero “no” votes, the Commission denied the application for Certificate of Appropriateness unanimously. Ms. Novak then officially closed the public hearing for Case #HP-2008-COA-01.

- **Case #HP-2008-COA-02, 814 West Main Street: Certificate of Appropriateness for Proposed Changes to Driveway, Doors, and Exterior Staircase, Daniel Folk, Applicant.**

Ms. Novak officially opened the public hearing. Ms. Bird presented the staff report to the Commission and read staff’s recommendation, which was that the Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Following the staff report, the applicant, Daniel Folk, was invited to present his case to the Commission. Mr. Folk gave details of the changes he wished to make to the house and driveway at 814 West Main Street. Questions from the Commission to the applicant were then addressed.

Ms. Novak then invited any audience member who wished to speak as a proponent of the application for Certificate of Appropriateness to address the Commission. Speaking as proponents of the application were Phyllis Williams and Suzanne Bissonnette.

Ms. Novak then invited any audience member who wished to speak as an opponent to the application to address the Commission. No one spoke in opposition.

With no further questions or comments from the audience or applicant, the Commission discussed the case.

Mr. Zangerl made a motion that the Commission approve the application for Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed changes to the house and driveway at 814 West Main Street. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. There was further discussion of the case by the Commission, after which Ms. Novak asked for a roll call. The votes were as follows:

Cahill – yes	Shepard – yes
Lipes – yes	Stuart – yes
Novak – yes	Zangerl – yes

With six “yes” votes and zero “no” votes, the Commission approved the application for Certificate of Appropriateness unanimously. Ms. Novak then officially closed the public hearing for Case #HP-2008-COA-02.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- **Case #HP-2008-L-01, 209 South Broadway Avenue (Urbana-Lincoln Hotel), Preliminary Determination for a Historic Landmark Nomination, Brian Adams, Applicant.**

Ms. Bird presented the staff report for this case to the Commission, noting during her presentation that the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel was in the process of being sold to a new owner. She read staff’s recommendation, which was that the Commission find that the property in question qualifies for designation as a local historic landmark based on criteria a, b, c, d, and e of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Novak noted that it was the task of the Commission at this meeting to make a preliminary determination as to the eligibility of the subject property for designation as a local historic landmark. Questions from the Commission were then addressed.

Ms. Novak noted that even though any public hearing wouldn’t take place until a future meeting, she asked if the representative of the hotel’s buyer, who was present in the audience, if he had any comments or questions. He did not.

Commissioners further discussed the case, after which Mr. Cahill made a motion that the Commission find that the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel qualifies for designation as a local historic landmark under criteria a, b, c, d, and e of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance as based on the staff report. Mr. Zangerl seconded the motion.

With no further discussion, Ms. Novak asked for a voice vote. All Commissioners present signified by saying “aye”. None were opposed. The motion carried and Case #HP-2008-L-01 was forwarded to a public hearing, to be held at the next Historic Preservation Commission meeting on May 7, 2008.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Ms. Novak presented to the Commission an article regarding a new bell tower planned on the University of Illinois campus near the site of the Mumford House. Ms. Novak also presented an article entitled, *The Ten Most Endangered Historic Places*, and reported that no progress had been made since the last meeting on the matter of the Mumford House and Barn.

11. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Bird reported that City staff was in receipt of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace rain gutters and downspouts at #1 Buena Vista Court. She noted that the plans for the replacement gutters/downspouts would be made of copper which would match the existing copper coping along the top of the house's parapet. This case will be presented to the Commission at the next meeting.

Ms. Bird also reported that City staff had recently administratively approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Historic Lincoln Hotel to install an awning as a temporary measure to prevent further water damage to the hotel's west entrance. A Certificate of Appropriateness had also been administratively approved for radon mitigation equipment at #1 Buena Vista Court, as well as a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a fence at #1 Buena Vista Court.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Lipes announced that the University of Illinois' Society of Architectural Historians would be hosting architect James Kienle on Wednesday, April 9th at 5:30 p.m. in Room 302 of the Architecture Building. She stated that Mr. Kindly's presentation would be on the subject of infill in historic areas.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Zangerl moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. All Commissioners present were in favor, none opposed, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP
Planning Division Manager