

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DRAFT

DATE: March 2, 2011

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Alice Novak, David Seyler, Kim Smith, Joan Stolz, Mary Stuart

MEMBERS ABSENT: Scott Dossett, Trent Shepard

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager; Rebecca Bird, Planner I; Sukiya J. Robinson, Recording Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Marie Bohl, Ricardo Diaz, Mike Lehman, Tatyana Safronova

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

Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Chair, Alice Novak, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The 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 December 1, 2010 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting were presented for approval. Ms. Smith moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Stolz seconded the motion. The December 1 minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Ms. Novak informed the audience that they were welcome to speak on any matter at that time but noted there would be a point on the agenda for public input on the Independent Media Center tower specifically. No one in the audience indicated they wished to speak. Ms. Novak proceeded to the next agenda item.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Review and comment on the effects of a special use permit application on a local landmark, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel, 209 S. Broadway Avenue

Ms. Novak introduced this agenda item and asked for the City Staff report.

Ms. Bird presented the staff report to the Commission. The Independent Media Center (IMC) has submitted an application for a Special Use Permit to construct a 100-foot radio transmission tower for their radio station (WRFU) located at 202 S. Broadway. Under Section XII-3.F of the Zoning Ordinance, the Historic Preservation Commission has the power to review and comment upon Special Use Permits for properties contiguous to local historic landmarks and districts. In this case the tower would be located contiguous to the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel, a local historic landmark.

Ms. Bird reported that the process for the application includes three public meetings: the Historic Preservation Commission (March 2, 2011), the Plan Commission (March 10, 2011), and the City Council (March 21, 2011).

The HPC should discuss what effects if any the application would have on the landmark and make any suggestions for reducing those impacts. The HPC's comments will be provided to the Plan Commission and City Council as part of reviewing the application.

Ms. Novak asked IMC representatives address the Commission.

Tatyana Safronova , IMC volunteer; Mike Lehman, IMC President; and Ricardo Diaz, WRFU Project Manager addressed the Commission. Mr. Lehman and Mr. Diaz presented information regarding the application. WRFU is a low power (100 watt) radio station. Their Federal Communications Commission license limits their tower to 100 feet in height. Their current radio tower is mounted on their rooftop and extends to about 60 feet above the ground. The additional 40 feet will allow better coverage of their intended Champaign-Urbana audience, especially in Champaign and in the larger trailer parks on the outskirts of both cities. Placing the tower at another site than their radio station has some distinct drawbacks in reliability. A microwave antenna would have to be installed along with relay stations with a clear line of sight to the tower. Each relay

station and the tower would have to have its own back up power source in case of power failure. The station needs reliability, especially in times of emergency. The tower would have no lights, blinking or otherwise.

Ms. Safronova provided each Commissioner and City staff with a photo simulation showing the existing tower and the proposed tower. The existing roof-mounted tower would be removed once the new tower is installed.

Commission questions to the members of UCIMC were addressed.

The Commission then discussed the case. Following discussion, the Commission stated the following comments and concerns:

1. *Concern over visual impact of a taller tower.* Commissioners Smith, Stuart, and Novak felt that the new tower would have an adverse visual impact on the historic hotel. The chief concern is the substantial height increase above the existing antenna on the roof of the IMC building. Commissioners Stoltz and Seyler felt that the effects of the taller tower would be minimal and not a substantial concern.
2. *Possible precedent.* A concern was discussed that approval of a tall tower downtown might set a precedent for other downtown towers. Chair Novak noted that it would be impossible to predict what might come about in the next decade so this is impossible to predict.
3. *Necessity of tower height.* Commissioner Stuart believes there is insufficient data to support the need to increase the tower height to 100 feet as opposed to a lower height such as 90 or 80 feet to better cover the listening area. Four members of the Commission expressed this concern. Commissioner Seyler felt that it was reasonable to extend the tower to their limit of 100 feet in order to provide better coverage for the community.
4. *Possible alternate sites should be investigated.* Commissioners Smith and Stuart asked that alternative sites outside the downtown should be fully investigated before proposing to construct in the historic downtown.

Ms. Novak asked IMC representatives to become familiar with and comply with the historic covenants placed on the property when the IMC purchased it. The historic covenants require prior approval by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency before any changes to the interior or exterior of the building.

Ms. Bird said she would forward these comments to the Plan Commission and City Council as part of the application process.

With no further discussion, Ms. Novak closed the case.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There were none.

11. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Bird reported on the following:

- **Certificate of Appropriateness (#1 Buena Vista Court).** An application was administratively reviewed and approved. The application was for adding additional awnings to the house.
- **Certificate of Appropriateness (Urbana-Lincoln Hotel).** An application for a wall sign on a noncontributing portion to the hotel was reviewed and approved administratively. The sign will use the hotel's new name, The Urbana Landmark Hotel.
- **A Landmark Application** has been submitted for 404 W. Illinois Street. This is the house that recent research identified as a pre-Civil War home in which Abraham Lincoln stayed in. The application was submitted by the owner and will be presented at the April meeting.
- **Certified Local Government Grant Application** was approved. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has announced it will grant the City of Urbana nearly \$6,000 to create a list of the 100 most significant structures in Urbana. This list can be used to identify significant resources in the community for preservation and education.
- **Eli Halberstadt House Landmark Application.** Mr. Myers reported that the property owner, Canaan Baptist Church, and their attorney, have indicated they are open to the possibility of selling the property. Potential purchasers had toured the property and an offer may be made. The potential purchasers were interested in seeing that the property be preserved and rehabilitated.
- **Statewide Preservation Conference** themed "Old is Our New Green" will take place June 2-4, 2011 in Godfrey, IL at Lewis & Clark Community College. The opening keynote speaker is Jean Carroon, an architect out of Boston, who will speak on "The Power of Preservation." The closing keynote speaker will be Walter Sedovic, architect and CEO from New York, who will present "Sustainability Begins at Home." Mr. Myers reported that a commissioner training track would be offered and that he was keenly interested in local landmark commissioner participation. He hoped the conference would attract a diverse audience of people interested in the preservation field. Ms. Bird stated that funding from IHPA and possibly other funding could be available if any of the Commissioners were interested in attending.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was no study session.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

14. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business Ms. Smith moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Stuart seconded the motion. With all Commission members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Submitted,

Robert Myers, Planning Manager