

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**DATE:** April 1, 2015

**APPROVED**

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

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Scott Dossett, Matt Metcalf, Alice Novak, David Seyler, Trent Shepard, Kim Smith

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Gina Pagliuso

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jeff Engstrom, Interim Planning Manager; Kevin Garcia, Planner II; Maximillian Mahalek, Planning Intern

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Amy Liv

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

Chair Novak called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 December 3, 2014 Historic Preservation Commission regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard proposed the following changes:

- Page 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph to the Bottom of the Page: change “*constructed*” to “*designed*” in the first and second lines of the paragraph.
- Page 5, Last Paragraph: change “*incoming*” to “*income*” in the third line of the paragraph
- Page 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph: add “*out*” between “pointed” and “that” in the first line so that it reads as such, “Mr. Engstrom pointed out that for a landmark nomination ...”.
- Page 6, 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: change “*incoming*” to “*income*” in the third line of the paragraph
- Page 6, 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: change “*they*” to “*the new owner*” in the last line of the paragraph
- Page 6, 7<sup>th</sup> Paragraph: change “*are*” to “*is*” in the third line of the paragraph

- Page 6, 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph from the Bottom of the Page: First sentence should be reconstructed as such, “*Mr. Metcalf stated that the 1963 addition is in harmony with the original structure.*”
- Page 7, 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph: add “*Chi*” between “*Rho*” and “*House*” in the last line so that it reads as such, “*When you compare it to the Alpha Rho Chi House that Royer ....*”.
- Page 7, 7<sup>th</sup> Paragraph: change “*clonical*” to “*conical*” in the third line of the paragraph

Mr. Dossett made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously as corrected.

#### **4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

#### **5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

There was none.

#### **6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

#### **7. OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

#### **8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

#### **9. NEW BUSINESS**

There was none.

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

**HP-2015-COA-01 – The Colvin House located at 604 West Pennsylvania Avenue. A Certificate of Appropriateness was requested to repair the piers on the front porch. The request was administratively approved on March 20, 2015.**

Jeff Engstrom, Interim Planning Manager, gave a brief update. He stated that City staff received an application to replace the bricks on the front stoop, which was reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator and Chair Novak. Chair Novak added that the owner is about done with the project. There was a problem with the bricks and the entryway was beginning to collapse.

## **204 West Main Street Demolition**

Mr. Dossett mentioned that this property was demolished leaving a tooth gap in the block. He had the understanding that the owner was going to try to preserve the façade but was unable to. While Downtown Urbana is not a historic district, he expressed concern about there not being any review for Downtown Urbana in terms of the building fronts.

Mr. Engstrom replied by saying that the original plan was for the owner to preserve the façade; however, when demolition approached the façade, the engineer of the project decided that removing the roof made the façade structurally unsound. As a result, they demolished the façade as well.

The owner, Matt Cho, went to City Council to seek approval for an amendment to the Development Agreement for this property. The amendment was approved and includes the requirement that he replace the façade with something that is in character with the rest of the Downtown Urbana in this block. Although the language in the amendment does not specify any architectural features, it does give the City power to review what the façade will look like. Mr. Cho has not submitted a design for the façade as of yet.

With regards to the Greater Downtown Design Review District, City staff is making progress. Staff is researching design review districts in other cities and taking a photo survey of the existing buildings in Downtown Urbana noting the different architectural features that are common. The district review will definitely have some design elements in it; however, City staff is not sure if it will be a form-based code, a hybrid or an overlay district. City staff is hoping by the end of summer they will have something to implement.

Mr. Dossett asked if City staff has learned anything about the feasibility of doing behind the façade removals. He was disappointed to see the façade removed. He wondered if we know enough about the character of the old, inter-laced brick buildings to really be able to predict whether this is a reasonable approach to take in terms of adaptive reuse. Mr. Engstrom stated that hopefully in the future, a downtown property owner will be able to preserve the entire building for any future reuses. He did not believe there would be any more demolitions of this type that leave the front facades only.

In terms of the integrity of our building stock, City staff has not completed a detailed survey of all of the downtown buildings. City staff is researching grants to find one that would cover the cost of doing such a survey. Other towns that have completed this type of detailed survey have found that some of their downtown buildings need to be demolished. This is not something that the City of Urbana wants to happen so City staff has tried to be proactive about preserving the buildings.

Mr. Metcalf inquired as to whether engineers had studied the façade prior to the wrecking ball coming in. Mr. Engstrom stated that his understanding is that engineers did a preliminary study before they started the demolition of the entire building. From the outside, the front façade looked okay. The engineers were unable to look at the façade from the inside. So when the walls came down and the engineers were able to examine it is when they found the structural condition.

Ms. Smith asked if they saved the metal trim from around the windows on the second floor. Mr. Engstrom replied that he would ask the owner.

Mr. Shepard questioned if there was a demolition permit. Mr. Engstrom believed it would have required a demolition permit. Mr. Shepard asked if the Historic Preservation Commission would have received a notice for a demolition delay. Chair Novak replied no. They do not receive notices for demolitions in commercial districts or TIF (Tax Increment Finance) Districts unless they are on the mailing list. There was not a delay on these buildings as per the Demolition Delay Ordinance.

Mr. Shepard asked if the public was notified of the demolition in any way. He vaguely recalled reading something about it in the newspaper. Mr. Engstrom stated that this project received a Development Agreement and some financial assistance through TIF for redevelopment of the site, so there were public hearings and articles in the newspaper.

Mr. Dossett felt it is still a good place to go look at. It is like a micro-lab of buildings materials. It shows how complicated some of the buildings can be.

Ms. Smith wondered who would be responsible for repairing the Corson's wall which is an interior wall. Mr. Engstrom believed it would be Mr. Cho's responsibility.

The Historic Preservation Commission members talked about what the building looked like on the outside prior to being demolished. Mr. Engstrom pulled up a Main Street view of the building on the monitors.

Mr. Metcalf wondered what they could do to prevent this from happening again because he valued the historic sense of place in Urbana and would like to see it preserved. He doesn't want Downtown Urbana to start looking like the City of Champaign's downtown area.

Kevin Garcia, Planner II, read a part of the memo dated January 8, 2014 (typo should be 2015) that was submitted to City Council for the Development Agreement on how the demolition proceeded. Mr. Engstrom added that the engineer's report is available on the City of Urbana's website.

## **11. STAFF REPORT**

### **Certified Local Government (CLG) Report FY 2013-2014**

Kevin Garcia, Planner II, presented a summarization of the annual report for Fiscal Year 2013-2014. He noted that he has not sent the report to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) yet.

Ms. Novak stated that one of the requirements for being a Certified Local Government is that the Commission meets four times a year. She expressed concern because the Commission only met one time. Does IHPA count the number of meetings per calendar year or by fiscal year? Mr. Engstrom believed it was by calendar year. Ms. Novak suggested adding language to point out that the Commission met an "x" number of times over the calendar year.

Ms. Novak also stated that the Commission is really good about monitoring of historic properties. There may not always be an item listed officially on the agendas; however, the Commission members usually talk about at least one of the properties. Therefore, she felt that some language should be added and suggested that City staff look back through the minutes of meetings that were held during that time frame.

Mr. Shepard asked Mr. Seyler if he was still installing plaques on historic landmarks. Mr. Seyler replied yes; however, he is currently waiting on City staff to order the rest. Maximillian Mahalek, Planning Intern, stated that he is researching this. It appears that a previous staff member wrote down that the plaques had been ordered when in fact they had not been ordered. City staff has been in communication with the property owners of the two landmarks on Elm Street to see when they would like the City to have the plaques installed, and the owners wanted to wait until all the improvements have been made.

Mr. Shepard asked how long it takes for an administrative decision to be made once a Certificate of Appropriateness application is submitted. Chair Novak said that it is just a matter of a few days.

### **CLG Grant for Interactive Web Maps**

Mr. Garcia mentioned that City staff initially was planning to submit a CLG Grant request to be able to perform a structural integrity study for Downtown Urbana. However, after talking with other communities who have performed such a study, City staff was informed that some of the buildings in those communities were in need of being demolished. The IHPA also informed City staff that if the City wanted to do a study of this type for an entire area, then we would have to talk to a structural engineer of which there are a handful in the State of Illinois that would be able to do what the City is looking to do.

Instead, City staff submitted a CLG Grant request to create some interactive web maps to highlight the City's historic properties, districts, and tours. The City was approved for the grant. Mr. Engstrom and Mr. Garcia have been focusing on hiring an intern to begin this project. City staff will accept any ideas that the Historic Preservation Commission members would like to see on such maps.

Chair Novak wondered if there were any sample ideas that the Commission could look at. Mr. Garcia stated that there are not that many samples out there, none of which impressed him. This means that they do not have much to go off of, but it also means that City staff could create something really nice.

Mr. Engstrom explained that one of the main reasons City staff would like to do this project is to have a map that shows all of the City's 100 most-significant properties. The City of Urbana website is not structured to allow this type of map. While there is a list of the 100 most-significant properties in the City of Urbana available on the City's website, a person would have to click on each one to pull up a map of that property. City staff felt it would be good to bring all 100 properties on one map.

Mr. Metcalf inquired about the depth that City staff planned to provide with regards to information for each of the 100 most-significant properties. Were they planning to provide a photo of each property? A brief description? Access to the National Register nomination? Mr. Engstrom replied that currently each property has a webpage on the City's website that includes a photo, a descent description, and links if it is a local landmarks. He did not know if the webpages also included links to the National Register nominations. City staff is hoping through this project that the map would allow a person to click on a property and there would be a pop-up window with a photo and a brief description and a link to the longer description.

Mr. Metcalf asked if there would be opportunities for citizens to contribute their thoughts and historical memories. Mr. Engstrom stated that this is an excellent idea, but it would be for the next level because this grant is only for \$2,450. Mr. Metcalf commented that the proposed interactive map would be a good base to build on if they want to add other things in the future, such as historic districts or even other areas that may not be considered historic yet but may be in the wings. Mr. Garcia agreed.

Mr. Metcalf wondered if the map would be mobile accessible for people doing walking tours. Mr. Garcia stated that it would be easy to get a web map that translates into mobile maps.

Mr. Shepard asked if all of the historic landmarks have a podcast available. Mr. Engstrom said no. There have been a few new landmarks added since the podcasts were started. It was a CLG Grant that the City received to create the podcasts. Mr. Garcia thought they may even be able to provide links on the interactive maps to the podcasts that have already been created.

Mr. Metcalf suggested that City staff consider partnering with the Champaign County archives at the Urbana Free Library. They have a ton of resources, so they may have information, images, biographical accounts, diaries or other things that would encourage people to engage deeply with the historic aspects of our community.

Mr. Shepard suggested that if the City does more podcasts, then they should have Mr. Metcalf reading the texts. Mr. Shepard felt that Mr. Metcalf would do a better job than he did. Chair Novak assured him that he did a fine job.

Mr. Dossett thought the Sanborn maps would be a good element to have as well as part of the interactive maps.

## **12. STUDY SESSION**

There was none.

## **13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Metcalf stated that he recently renewed his Route 66 license plates for the State of Illinois. Anyone who wants to support some of the historic preservation efforts in the state, it is an easy way to do so. Route 66 license plates cost \$40 above the standard plate fee. If you are interested, please check it out on the State of Illinois' website.

Chair Novak pointed out that May has traditionally been known as National Preservation Month. It has been so long since the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission has had an activity. Since they have not been meeting as often, maybe the Commission could figure out a Fall Tour.

Mr. Metcalf suggested doing something that incorporates adaptive reuse. They could look at some of the ways that people have effectively incorporated updates that they want to include in a 20<sup>th</sup> Century house while maintaining the interior and exterior integrity of their historic structure. They could possibly even get citizen submissions for this too. Chair Novak said that this would be a great idea.

Chair Novak mentioned that they could also possibly do a “How to Research Your Own House” project. It has been a long time since they did this for the citizens. This could encourage home owners to write their own historic landmark and district nominations.

#### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, Mr. Dossett moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. With all Commission members in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted,

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Jeff Engstrom, Interim Planning Manager  
Historic Preservation Commission Recording Secretary