

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
Minutes  
November 5, 2008

Third Floor Conference Room, City Hall  
241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Chris Wright, Vice Chair (Acting Chair); Claire Milne, Chair;  
Linda Bennett; Peter Carroll; Erin Seaverson

Members Excused: Katie Jacobs, Josh Willson

City Staff: Sharon Ferraro, Historic Preservation Coordinator; Amy Thomas,  
Recording Secretary

Guests: Steve Deisler, Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc. (DKI); Pam O'Connor;  
Norman Jung; Tony Holewinski; Curt Aardema

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF ABSENCES**

Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Willson contacted city staff to advise that they would not be present at the November 5th meeting.

**AGENDA (November 5, 2008)**

Ms. O'Connor requested the addition of an update regarding Where Place Prospers. Ms. Bennett referred to the work plan reports and requested that her name be changed from "Gentry-Bennett" to "Bennett."

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Mr. Carroll, moved approval of the November 5, 2008 Historic Preservation Commission agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**PRESENTATION REGARDING THE DOWNTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.**

Steve Deisler, Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc. (DKI) was for a presentation on the Downtown Comprehensive Plan. The planning process began in February of 2008, and presentations were provided to various community groups to obtain feedback. DKI is partnering with TSI Consulting, Downtown Parking Solutions and LSL Planning Consultants regarding the updates to the plan.

Mr. Deisler advised that the City of Kalamazoo has requested that DKI delay approval of the plan until the city's budgeting process is finalized. The plan will likely be finalized by January or February of 2009. At that point it will be presented to the Planning Commission and the City Commission for endorsement. The Historic Preservation Commission will likely be invited to the Planning

Commission meeting when the plan is presented. Further information about the plan is available at [www.central-city.net](http://www.central-city.net).

### **Minutes (October 14, 2008)**

The October minutes were turned in a couple days before the meeting. A request was made for more time to review the minutes.

**Ms. Seaverson, supported by Mr. Wright, moved to postpone approval of the October HPC minutes until the December HPC meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

### **Citizen Comments**

Ms. O'Connor suggested that the group make a decision on how best to communicate their comments to DKI regarding the proposed Downtown Comprehensive Plan. It would make a bigger impact if a single statement were submitted. The Recording Secretary suggested e-mailing the comments to her so she could compile them into a single document to be submitted to DKI. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would review the comments and have them available for approval by the HPC when the group gathers on Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup> to stuff envelopes for the upcoming fund appeal mailing for the O'Connor Fund at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Mr. Aardema requested an update regarding the Ihling Brothers warehouse building on Factory Street.. Ms. Seaverson stated that one of the options was to put a church in front of the building, with a focus on redevelopment and seed money for businesses to locate there. Ministry with Community may be involved in that process. The owner has a great vision for the building, but he ran out of money. He has done some maintenance and updates to the building, and has done a good job with the changes he's made so far.

### **Correspondence**

Ms. Ferraro advised that she has a new statement from the Kalamazoo Foundation. Ms. O'Connor commented that the statement shows the fund is down 15% through the end of the third quarter. That amounts to \$18,000 and it is anticipated to be down further by the end of the year. Ms. Ferraro advised that the total fund is now \$101,304 but things might start to improve shortly.

### **City**

Ms. Ferraro advised that she submitted the HPC budget to be included in the City of kalamazoo budget for 2009.

### **O'Connor Fund**

Ms. O'Connor reminded the group that they agreed to meet at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at Mr. Willson's house on E. Michigan Ave. to work on the O'Connor Fund mailing. She estimated that it will cost \$1.51 per mailing to send the appeal letter and a copy of "Where Place Prospers" first class.

The total postage for the mailing will be about \$270. Ms. O'Connor removed 50 names from the mailing list so the total for the mailing should be around 170 addresses. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would provide the envelopes for the mailing, Ms. O'Connor will bring the signed letters and provide the postage. Mr. Wright advised that he would bring the pizza.

### **Kalamazoo: Lost and Found**

Ms. O'Connor said the schedule is set for the sponsorship on WMUK radio to promote *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found during the holiday season*. Those segments are scheduled to begin November 6th and run through December 24<sup>th</sup>. On Friday, December 5th, Ms. O'Connor and Ms. Houghton are scheduled to be at a book signing for *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found* at the Kalamazoo Public Library in the Van Deusen Room at the final Art Hop of the year.

Ms. O'Connor stated that The Nature Connection has agreed to carry copies of *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found* in their store in the Epic Center. She advised that she had not yet approached Gazelle Sports about carrying the books. Ms. O'Connor advised that an article regarding her co-author, Lynn Houghton, was in the Wall Street Journal yesterday. The article included a discussion regarding Henderson Castle. The writer for the journal has a son who has participated in the boys' tennis tournament held in Kalamazoo. When the writer was in town, she obtained one of the walking tour brochures for Kalamazoo that were published about 30 years ago.

Ms. O'Connor stated that she spoke with someone at the Convention and Visitors Bureau. He said he would show the sample copy to the committee who would make the decision about carrying the book. She also spoke with the owner of Milan (in the old Style Shop building), which is a beauty shop/barber shop that also sells giftware. The owner advised that he owns *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found* and that he would talk to his business partner about selling it in the store. Kazoo Books has sold a couple of the books on the Internet. However, they have not contacted Ms. O'Connor for an inventory. They are supposed to be getting an extra 10% for Internet sales.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she would speak with the owner of Irving's Market about carrying the book. Mr. Wright stated that he would talk with someone at Water Street Coffee Joint to find out if they would be interesting in selling *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found*.

### **Work Plan**

Mr. Wright stated that he received an e-mail from Alan Levy about the work plan. Ms. Ferraro advised that he has quoted a price of \$2,450 for a new work plan facilitation quote. Last year he charged \$2,052.90 for work plan services. These funds came out of the public education expenses. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that this would represent a quarter of the HPC's budget for next year. Ms. O'Connor advised that she sold 16 books to Rio today; that will generate another \$600 in income, which will help offset the cost of the consulting fees.

Ms. Seaverson commented that the work plan helps the group stay focused. Ms. O'Connor suggested a two-year plan or a three-year plan.

**Ms. Bennett, supported by Mr. Wright, moved approval for expenditure of the \$2,450 to hire Alan Levy to conduct a work plan facilitation meeting on February 7, 2009. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

### **Work Plan Reports**

Ms. O'Connor advised that she had been asked to talk with Mike Jackson to get an alternate price if he arrived on a day other than Thursday to speak as part of the planned Preservation Month series. He quoted \$1,000 plus transportation for any other day of the week. For Thursday he would charge \$1,500, including transportation. Therefore, it will probably wind up costing about the same. Mr. Jackson would prefer to arrive in Kalamazoo on a Thursday.

Ms. Seaverson advised that she did the preservation report and sent it via e-mail. She had nothing further to report. None of the other members had anything to report regarding the work plans.

Ms. Seaverson inquired as to the partnership relationship with the Gazette. Ms. Milne stated that the Gazette has been featuring owners of old houses every Sunday.

### **OLD AND NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Ianelli Fountain**

Ms. Ferraro stated that she spoke with Bill Scott about the fountain. She is not expecting a response from him until after the election. The HPC budget is part of the budget to be approved in January.

#### **Kalamazoo: Lost and Found**

Ms. O'Connor stated that WMUK is charging \$1,250 for the 45 or 50 spots advertising *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found*. The ads have been placed and a motion to approve the expense is needed.

**Ms. Bennett, supported by Mr. Wright, moved approval of the expenditure of \$1,250 to WMUK to advertise *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found*. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

#### **WMU Campus Planning Report**

Mr. Wright and Mr. Aardema attended two different public sessions. Mr. Wright advised that he sent the HPC some information about East Campus. Ms. Bennett inquired as to the main thrust of the Campus Plan and Mr. Aardema advised that consideration is being given to opening it up. Mr. Wright mentioned that there was discussion in the old plan of putting a bridge over Stadium Drive. Ms. Seaverson advised that there had also been discussion of putting a bridge over Oakland Drive. The bridge over Stadium Drive would be for vehicular traffic. Mr. Wright stated that buildings cannot be constructed over Michigan Avenue where it deadends on campus because of the utilities; fiber optics, etc. under the street. The new buildings had to be built around it. Many plantings near the location of the roundabout make the area confusing and unsafe.

Mr. Wright mentioned that there was a discussion about planning more dorms, the streetscape on Oakland Drive and the importance of keeping the trees there. There was also a discussion about the possibility of developing land to the south of the hospital; it was mapped out four years ago. Discussion followed with regard to the possibility of this happening. Ms. Ferraro advised that WMU can't take over the hospital on Oakland Drive because it is an active state hospital. Ms. Ferraro advised that it depends on what the state mental health system wants to do. The current hospital is not full and could probably accommodate another 100 patients. Not all of the buildings on the property are currently being used. Pheasant Ridge, the building behind the main facility, is a maintenance building that is mostly vacant. Three quarters of the existing hospital is in use but there is room for expansion.

Mr. Wright inquired if there has been communication with the City of Kalamazoo and WMU. Ms. Ferraro advised that the Board of Education is not required to have such a communication. Ms. Bennett suggested that the new President of WMU might be more amenable to a discussion. Mr. Wright stated that the President was not at the meeting he attended; there were about twelve people in attendance at that meeting..

Mr. Aardema stated that there were about 50 people at the meeting he attended. There is information regarding the campus plan available from as far back as 1903. The WMU website provides more information about the plan. Mr. Wright mentioned that someone at the meeting suggested constructing a new building on campus every year; they also referred to East Campus and Sangren Hall. Mr. Aardema advised that he heard an estimate of \$60,000,000 to restore Sangren Hall, which is 60% of the cost of the East Campus project.

Mr. Wright advised that someone at the meeting mentioned the city is growing the wrong way to entice students; it should be growing toward campus. Currently, there are few safe access points from campus to the downtown area. The students generally seem to be interested in East Campus, but the university seems more focused on marketing Sangren Hall. They are also discussing closing West Michigan Ave. The university is becoming more of an island rather than becoming more connected to the downtown area.

Ms. Bennett inquired if maintenance of East Campus was discussed at the meeting. Mr. Aardema advised that 75% of the focus was on East Campus at the meeting he attended. However, there are no commitments from WMU for improvements to East Campus. Ms. Ferraro stated that three of the four buildings on the top of the hill are moth-balled; the fourth one houses the archives. The buildings are secure from public access now except for the archives. Ms. O'Connor suggested that Mr. Wright and Mr. Aardema continue to attend the meetings regarding East Campus. Ms. Ferraro commented that the students are intrigued by those buildings and WMU listens to the students.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she has an article from the New York Times regarding deconstructing buildings. The article discussed embodied energy in existing buildings. However, there can be issues with finding a place to store and redistribute the materials after the building has been deconstructed. Ninety percent of a house can be recycled. A local company is planning to do recycling of asphalt roofing. The plaster from the walls can be reground and used as aggregate in concrete. The process can be labor intensive but if the tipping fees are high locally, it is worth the labor to do because you

can save the tipping fees. It is also a great employment technique because it doesn't require highly-skilled labor.

Ms. Bennett mentioned that the consultant Alan Levy advised that the HPC become more politically active. Ms. Ferraro commented that the HPC can't become more politically active. Mr. Carroll suggested that the HPC could provide advice regarding policies and work with the policy makers. There should be incentives for people to invest in historic properties, such as eliminating or lowering fees for permits, etc. Chicago uses such incentives, such as freezing property taxes for a 10-year period, and that has had dramatic results. The HPC should embrace financial perspectives of the people who take care of the urban housing stock. Mr. Carroll commented that people purchase houses that were turned into multi-family rental units and restore them to single-family homes. People who restore these homes feel they are being punished by higher taxes; they need more financial incentives to continue improving historic properties.

Ms. O'Connor advised that she has spoken with the Mayor and the City Manager about providing incentives. So far, there has been little response. Mr. Carroll commented that it should be financially advantageous for people to invest in neighborhoods. Ms. Ferraro mentioned the 30% tax abatement and the new NEZ (Neighborhood Enterprise Zone) should be incentives for making improvements to historic properties.

### **Where Place Prospers**

Ms. O'Connor advised that mailing *Where Place Prospers* first class will cost \$1.51 per mailing. That doesn't include the envelopes or the mailing labels. She will pick up 850 mailing labels for downtown property and business owners from DKI tomorrow. Ms. O'Connor consulted with A-1 Printing to inquire if the mailings could be sent bulk mail without damaging them. She stated that she was not sure of the rate yet but, hopefully, it will be closer to the HPC's budget. Ms. O'Connor stated that she would compose a letter to be included in the mailings. The city has *Where Place Prospers* on its website but it is not the same website address published in the brochure. DKI is preparing a release about the publication to be included in their newsletter, both the hard copy and e-mail versions. Ms. O'Connor suggested providing 250 copies of the publication to DKI to distribute from their office. Ms. Ferraro advised that the number on the list could be reduced by about 200. Discussion followed with regard to how the mailing list could be further reduced. Another mailing party may be necessary to get this project completed. It should be scheduled toward the end of the month since the mailing will not likely be ready until that time. Mr. Wright suggested setting the date for the mailing party by e-mail.

Mr. Aardema requested an update regarding two buildings damaged in recent fires - one in Washington Square and one on the southeast corner of Walnut and Portage Streets. Mr. Jung advised that the building on Walnut and Portage has been demolished. The building probably went up around World War One. The Krafbrau is relocating in the building behind it. Ms. Ferraro stated that Bob Petrick, Building Official from the City of Kalamazoo, advised that the building in Washington Square would likely be repaired. Mr. Aardema commented that this core of buildings is critical to the neighborhood.

**Commissioner Comments**

Ms. Milne advised that there have been discussions at her school about restoring the Hillcrest Elementary School building. The old windows are available and need to be reinstalled. They also want to put the old bell back in service. There is interest in designating the Hillcrest Neighborhood as a historic district. Ms. Ferraro suggested that the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders do the research with a Restore America grant. The kids might be able to help with obtaining the historic designation.

**Adjournment**

**Mr. Carroll, supported by Ms. Bennett, moved to adjourn the November 5, 2008 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Recording Secretary

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Liaison

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
HPC Chair

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_