

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes

May 12, 2009

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

Members Present: Chris Wright, Vice Chair (Acting Chair); Peter Carroll; Tony Holewinski; Josh Willson

Members Excused: Katie Jacobs, Michael Dunn

Members Absent: Claire Milne

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

Guests: Pam O'Connor; Linda Bennett; Norman Jung; Curt Aardema

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Dunn advised that they would not be present at the May meeting. Ms. Milne may arrive later in the meeting.

The absences of Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Dunn were approved by unanimous voice vote.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (May 12, 2009)

Mr. Wright advised that the work plan assignments are as follows: Designation, Jacobs; Communications, Milne; Partnership Development, Willson; Preservation Month Holewinski; Iannelli Fountain, Carroll; Operations (not budget), Wright.

IV. MINUTES (April 14, 2009) (Item B)

Ms. Bennett referred to page 9 under budget. The minutes should indicate there was nothing to report. Page 10, regarding the reconnaissance survey, the minutes should state that the survey was delayed due to budgetary constraints.

Mr. Carroll, supported by Mr. Willson, moved approval of the April 14, 2009 HPC Minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

V. Introduction of Guests

Ms. Bennett, Ms. O'Connor and Mr. Jung were guests at the May 12th HPC meeting. Curt Aardema arrived later in the meeting (see page 3)

VI. Citizen Comments on NON-Agenda items.

Ms. O'Connor stated that during her morning walk, she was approached by a neighbor who advised that the house at 112 W. Lovell behind the McNair Building was demolished. This property was on the DDRC (Downtown Design Review Committee) agenda twice.

Ms. Ferraro advised that the DDRC meets weekly. There were no representatives from this property at the DDRC meeting the first time it was on the agenda, and no decisions were made at that time. Comments made at the meeting were conveyed to the owner of the property. The owner attended the second meeting, and the request was not opposed at that meeting. The building was demolished to provide parking space for the building next door as part of residential development plans for the property and the Peregrine Towers.

Ms. O'Connor stated that she was not in attendance at the DDRC meetings, but she would like to go on record as being opposed to the demolition of the house behind the McNair Building. Mr. Wright has been attending the DDRC meetings intermittently for the last couple of years. Ms. O'Connor talked with the City Clerk about the way the DDRC operates. The Clerk will ask the City Attorney for an opinion as to whether or not the DDRC is a public body, and if they need to have a public comment period on their agenda.

Ms. Ferraro suggested the possibility of pursuing a city-wide demolition board. Ms. O'Connor commented that a demolition board would provide an opportunity for public comment if the board is a public body. Ms. Ferraro advised that the DDRC meetings are announced on Thursdays and they occur the following Tuesday, so there is no time to provide meeting notices according to the usual procedure (meeting notices are normally mailed two weeks prior to a public hearing). The Site Plan Review meetings are also not considered to be public meetings

Ms. O'Connor mentioned that two members of the public are appointed to the DDRC, which may be a reason for the attorney's office to determine that the DDRC is a public body. Ms. O'Connor was supportive of having a demolition board or demolition ordinance; there should be an opportunity for the public to comment. She quoted Blair Kamin, the architecture critic for the Chicago Tribune who stated, "The skyline belongs to everybody." Ms. O'Connor commented that there at least 100 parking spaces within one and a half blocks of the McNair Building.

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Ms. Ferraro suggested talking with the property owners about the benefit of having underground parking or parking in the building, but there needs to be a process for enforcing those options.

Mr. Jung inquired as to who owns the parcel on which the demolished house was located. Ms. Ferraro advised that Tom Huff owns the property.

Ms. O'Connor commented that if the one body who hears Mr. Huff's application is closed to public comment, the options are limited. Ms. Ferraro advised that the HDC has the option of denying a request for demolition, and there has been discussion recently about updated the noticing procedures for that board. It was suggested that notices be sent regarding demolition requests for buildings in the historic district that are bigger than a two car garage.

Ms. O'Connor suggested providing public notices on a weekly basis regarding the DDRC meetings. The meeting announcements could be made at the City Commission meetings, and the DDRC meetings could be cancelled as needed. Ms. Ferraro advised that the City Commission meets every other week. Ms. O'Connor suggested that meeting notices for the DDRC could be posted in public areas on a weekly basis, rather than being announced at City Commission meetings. Buildings in downtown Kalamazoo should not be torn down for parking.

Ms. Ferraro advised that there was no official public comment regarding the Upjohn Tower. However, an article about the tower was published in the newspaper. Ms. O'Connor stated that she attended a Committee of the Whole meeting (City Commission) to talk about the tower, and that provided an opportunity for public comment. Ms. Ferraro advised that the Committee of the Whole meeting is not the same as having a public hearing, and having an opportunity to vote and make a determination based on the comments at the public hearing. Ms. O'Connor stated that a vote was taken at the Committee of the Whole meeting to hold off the demolition. Discussion occurred later about the demolition ordinance not being sufficient to stop the demolition.

(7:19 p.m. – Mr. Aardema arrived.)

Ms. O'Connor advised that she would report back to the HPC with information she receives from the City Clerk. She also advised that she might write a letter to the editor of the Kalamazoo Gazette from the perspective of sustainability.

Mr. Jung commented that if the new parking area will be provided to residents of the condominiums, how will it be structured so other people don't park there. Ms. Ferraro stated that a gate will be installed which requires a security card to access the parking lot. Mr. Jung inquired as to what type of structure would be built on the parcel. Ms. Ferraro advised that the DDRC requested a fence that would be taller than five feet, which would be more appropriate with the street wall of the adjacent buildings. The gate should be transparent, but the details have not yet been finalized.

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Mr. Wright advised that he sent information about the McNair Building to the DDRC members before the request was reviewed by that board the first time. He provided the same information to the HPC at the May 2009 meeting. The handout included excerpts from the DDRC guidelines. The DDRC guidelines seem to have little authority over issues regarding demolition.

Ms. O'Connor commented that the DDRC has guidelines rather than standards. Ms. Ferraro advised that the issue of guidelines versus standards will be reviewed by the DDA (Downtown Development Authority) later in May. If the updated guidelines/standards are ready in time, they will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in June or July. Thereafter, the document should proceed to the City Commission for final approval, at which point the guidelines will become standards. Standards are intended to have more authority than guidelines. Ms. Ferraro advised that most of the language regarding demolition has been removed from the guidelines. The language that remains refers to recommending against demolition as a way of dealing with requests.

Ms. Ferraro commented that if the DDRC denied Mr. Huff's request, the matter would have proceeded to Site Plan Review. If the Site Plan Review Committee denied the request, it would have proceeded to the Planning Commission, which would have provided an opportunity for a public hearing. Ms. Ferraro advised that the Planning Commission would have likely approved the request. Ms. O'Connor suggested that denial of the request by the DDRC and Site Plan Review Committee in order to bring the matter to the Planning Commission for a public hearing may have been appropriate in this instance.

A public body with bylaws and opportunity for public comment would be beneficial for dealing with controversial issues such as demolition. This would create an opportunity for the public's concerns to be addressed by the board. It was suggested that the DDRC either be abolished or given the authority to render a binding decision.

Mr. Wright stated that he sent a letter to Keith Hernandez, City Planner for the City of Kalamazoo, requesting an update about the demolition ordinance. Mr. Hernandez advised that a demolition ordinance is not a priority at this point. Mr. Wright mentioned that it has been four years since the request was first made by the HPC for a demolition ordinance. Ms. O'Connor stated that a demolition ordinance should be a priority for the HPC. She suggested that it be added to the work plan for 2009.

Discussion followed with regard to the delays at the City Attorney's office regarding the demolition ordinance. Ms. Ferraro stated that she has had discussions with staff from Community Planning and Development and the City Attorney's office regarding possible ways to implement the demolition ordinance. The City Attorney's office is reviewing what other city's do with regard to demolition issues in order to determine what will be the most effective way to deal with this matter.

Ms. O'Connor stated that she sent information the Director of Community Planning and Development several years ago, but no progress has been made with the demolition ordinance. Ms. Bennett suggested that someone attend the City Commission meetings and request a demolition ordinance. Mr. Aardema indicated that he would be willing to attend the City Commission meetings to speak on behalf of the HPC.

Ms. Ferraro stated that when Preservation Month is over, she will pursue the possibility of a demolition ordinance. It would be helpful to integrate a demolition ordinance into the city's Master Plan, which is being updated this year. Public hearings will be held in conjunction with the Master Plan updates, which will provide opportunities for the HPC to voice their opinions about the need for a demolition ordinance. Ms. Ferraro made a presentation at the Planning Commission retreat regarding the need for a demolition ordinance.

VII. Correspondence

Ms. Ferraro advised that the City of Kalamazoo was awarded \$35,171 to conduct a window repair workshop. The grant award for the workshop will be on the June 1st City Commission agenda for approval.

Signs have been placed in front of the house where the Great Unveiling will take place. The asbestos siding will be removed. Four more property owners have volunteered their houses for next year's unveiling. The house located at 1010 S. Park will be a rehab project (not an unveiling).

VIII. Financial Report

a. City (NO CHANGE FROM LAST MONTH) (Item C)

Ms. Ferraro advised that some items have been submitted but they were not cleared at the time the report was written.

Ms. Bennett advised that the additional expenses total \$400.

Mr. Wright submitted a receipt for approximately \$126 to Ms. Ferraro for snacks for the Blue Vinyl presentation and the MHPN. She requested that Mr. Wright submit a copy of his registration for the conference. That expense has already been allotted.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she submitted the bill from Alan Levy, but the funds have not been provided yet. Also, the contribution from Friends of East Campus (FOEC) has not shown up yet. Mr. Willson advised that those funds should arrive next week. She received the contribution from the Nature Center and Southwest Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. Letters have been sent to organizations who advised that they would like to contribute to Preservation Month events as a reminder of their commitment. The organizations and the amounts they pledged

are as follows: Southwest Michigan Sustainable Business Forum - \$250; AIA - \$200; FOEC, \$500.

b. O'Connor Fund (O'Connor) (Item D)

Ms. O'Connor advised that the contribution she made to the O'Connor fund will be matched by the Pfizer Foundation at a ratio of 50 cents on the dollar, instead of dollar for dollar, as it was last year. The O'Connor quarterly report from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation is as follows:

- The O'Connor Fund received \$650 in gifts in the 1st quarter.
- The fund value is down substantially from the previously quarter.
- The O'Connor Fund lost another \$8,222.00, for an ending fund value for the 1st quarter of \$81,023.09.
- The all time high (2nd quarter of 2007) was \$121,167.85, which translates to a 33% loss for the O'Connor Fund.

Contributions to the O'Connor Fund can be made at <http://www.kalfound.org/page 25612.cfm>. Use the pull down list to get to "Other Fund" and type in "O'Connor Fund for Historic Preservation."

c. Kalamazoo: Lost and Found book project (O'Connor) (Item D)

Ms. O'Connor advised that there have been no changes to this report since the last meeting.

IX. Action and Discussion Items

a. Work Plan Reports from Team Leaders.

i. Designation (D) – Jacobs.

Ms. Ferraro stated that Ms. Jacobs provided a copy of the report to her, and there have been no changes since the last meeting. This will likely be the case with most of the reports since the HPC members have been concentrating their efforts on Preservation Month activities.

ii. Communication (C) – Milne

No report.

iii. Partnership Development (PD) – Willson

No report.

iv. Preservation Month (PM) – Holewinski

Ms. Ferraro suggested choosing someone to attend the City Commission meeting to accept the proclamation from the Mayor and say a few words. Mayor Hopewell has agreed to attend the preservation awards and present the award for the barrier-free ramp behind city hall. During the presentation at the City Commission meeting, the presenter could extend an invitation to attend the Preservation Awards, which will be held on May 20th. Mr. Carroll volunteered to give the presentation to the City Commission. He will be provided with a written statement to read at the meeting. The agenda should be available by Wednesday.

v. Iannelli Fountain (IF) – Carroll

Mr. Carroll provided a handout showing a proposed timeline regarding the Iannelli Fountain. The subcommittee decided that the timeline for the fountain project should be extended to 2015. A projected timeline was distributed showing the funds to be raised, the restoration to be done and the exhibit regarding the fountain. Grant proposals will be submitted to foundations this year, and a private fund raising effort will commence.

There will be a depository with the city for funds collected. The cover for the fountain should be completed this year. The application for the historic marker should be submitted in 2010.

Ms. O'Connor suggested that she and Mr. Jung be added to the spreadsheet in order to track progress on the duties they have been assigned.

Ms. O'Connor stated that she has given some thought to the National Register Designation for the fountain, and she has an appointment next month to talk with Bob Christensen about the designation. A specific date for the meeting has not been set. The designation may not be as difficult as she had previously thought, because the fountain was a WPA (Works Progress Administration) project, which was a national program.

Mr. Carroll stated that he would report through the Excel spreadsheet to the HPC. There will be a meeting at Mr. Carroll's house on May 27th at 7 p.m. regarding the Iannelli Fountain.

vi. Budget/Operations (B) – Wright

Mr. Bennett advised that she had nothing further to report, other than what was already discussed.

X. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

a. Support for \$300-\$400 for David Jameson to visit Kalamazoo and prepare for the Iannelli exhibit.

Mr. Willson, supported by Mr. Wright, moved to allow \$300 to \$400 for David Jameson's visit to Kalamazoo to prepare for the Iannelli exhibit. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. O'Connor advised that Mr. Jameson will take the train to Kalamazoo; he doesn't drive. It was estimated that the round trip train ride from Chicago will cost approximately \$40. Mr. Jameson will be staying at the Kalamazoo House next to the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (KIA). He will likely be in Kalamazoo for only one night so the cost for his stay at the bed and breakfast will be under \$200.

Discussion followed as to which part of the budget this expense would be subtracted from. Mr. Willson suggested that it should come from the general preservation education fund. There is currently \$2,600 in that fund.

Ms. O'Connor stated that Mr. Jameson will likely visit Kalamazoo in August. She will talk with representatives of the KIA prior to that time to determine if the KIA will provide a room for the exhibit, if they will pay to borrow works from two museums, and if they will pay for transportation, insurance and for framing of the pieces, etc. Ms. O'Connor has a list of items to be discussed and a proposed budget regarding those items. Vicki Wright is the main contact person at the KIA regarding the discussion for the Iannelli exhibit. The Board of Directors for the KIA gave their approval to explore the concept of hosting an exhibit of Iannelli's works. Mr. Jameson thinks his book will be published by the time the exhibit is on display. Tim Samuelson, the Cultural Historian for the City of Chicago, is also well-informed regarding Mr. Iannelli's work. There has been discussion about having Mr. Samuelson loan some of his collection to the exhibit.

b. Election of Officers.

Mr. Willson had stated on a previous occasion that he would be willing to take on the duties of Treasurer for the HPC. However, the time constraints associated with his heavy workload would make it difficult to take on additional responsibilities. Mr. Holewinski also advised that he would not have time to take on the duties of Treasurer. The general consensus among the board members was that it would be appropriate to move the election of officers to next month's agenda since only four members of the board were present.

Mr. Wright advised that he would volunteer to serve as Chair of the HPC. He mentioned that his term on the HPC would be over as of March 31, 2010. Mr. Wright suggested that the election of officers should coincide with the new work plan assignments.

Mr. Carroll stated that he would be willing to serve as Vice-Chair of the HPC. Ms. Bennett commented that the Vice Chair should be in training to serve as the Chair next year.

Mr. Holewinski, supported by Mr. Willson, moved to recommend to the City Commission that Chris Wright serve as Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, and that Peter Carroll serve as Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission. The decision to appoint the new Treasurer for the Historic Preservation Commission is postponed until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Carroll inquired if there should be a motion to allow the election of officers for the HPC to coincide with the yearly updates and assignments regarding the work plan. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would check the bylaws for the HPC to determine if that would be feasible. Currently, the bylaws state that the election of officers for the HPC should occur in February. Ms. O'Connor suggested putting the election of officers and the work plan on the February agenda.

XI. COORDINATOR'S REPORTS

a. Site Watch & Issues (Item E)

Ms. Ferraro indicated that she needed information from Ms. Milne regarding the preservation awards scheduled for next Wednesday. Mr. Wright advised that he would follow up with Ms. Milne on that matter. Ms. Ferraro stated that she has a banner from the City Manager's Office regarding the City of Kalamazoo's 125th anniversary celebration that she can display at the awards ceremony. She indicated that if Ms. Milne is running into time constraints with regard to preparation for the preservation awards, other members of the HPC are available to assist.

Mr. Carroll, Mr. Wright, Ms. Ferraro and Mr. Willson advised that they would be available at 4:30 p.m. to set up for the preservation awards on May 20th. The awards presentation begins at 5:30. Mr. Aardema stated that he could help with clean up after the event.

Ms. Ferraro stated that the table covers have been provided, but she still needs tables and chairs. She is planning to have snacks and punch for approximately 50 to 60 people.

Ms. Bennett suggested having *Where Place Prospers* available at the preservation awards.

Ms Ferraro mentioned that she recently worked on the Habitat home being constructed by women. While she was there, she had a discussion with Don Jones, the Director of the Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity, about a possible policy change that would work to rehab existing homes rather than build new. Habitat for Humanity has been working on a rehabilitation project on the north side of Kalamazoo. Ms. Ferraro advised that Mr. Jones is aware that rehabbing houses takes a different skill set than building new houses, so there will be different training for the rehab volunteers

Mr. Aardema referred to an article in the New York Times about Flint, Michigan. Entire blocks of houses are being destroyed in Flint. Mr. Aardema mentioned that KNHS is already rehabbing older homes. Ms. Ferraro stated that KNHS doesn't buy older homes to rehab, they work with home owners to rehab their houses.

Ms. Bennett commented that lead remediation could become an issue when rehabbing older homes. Ms. Ferraro advised that Habitat for Humanity would remediate the houses. The houses won't be restored, but they will be saved.

Mr. Aardema inquired if vinyl siding would be installed on the houses that are rehabbed. Ms. Ferraro stated that would be determined on a case by case basis, depending on what HUD advises.

b. Quarterly report Section 106 reviews (missed in April) (Item F)

Ms. Ferraro stated that she is working to try to save for 924 E. Vine – which is on the potential demolition list. This farm house is on the 1874 plat map. The inside is in decent condition and the foundation is good. Most of the original houses on that side of the road are still there. There are some houses missing on the opposite side of the road.

Ms. Ferraro advised that Janie Albright is rehabilitating a house near O'Duffy's Bar in the Vine Neighborhood. The house would probably have been demolished otherwise; it had been gutted but she is trying to save it. Efforts to close that property to casual entry were also unsuccessful.

Mr. Aardema mentioned that the houses on Bellevue have been taken off the market, but the group of houses on Oakland are still for sale (adjacent to the Dairy Mart on the corner of Oakland and Lovell). Ms. Ferraro advised that five houses on Bellevue have been purchased.

Ms. Ferraro advised that she has been visiting many of the houses for historic reviews to determine their current condition. The historic district survey is ten years old so the information is not up-to-date. Some of the houses have been vandalized, but many of them are unfinished rehabilitation projects. Many of the houses have been gutted, and the windows are boarded, etc. Ms. Ferraro expressed concern that some of the rehab projects may never be completed.

In response to a question from Mr. Aardema, Ms. Ferraro advised that the city no longer does rehab projects, but there are other entities in town that do that type of work. Mr. Aardema suggested that an entire block of houses, such as Bellevue Place, could be rehabbed at one time rather than just working on them piecemeal. Many of those houses are for sale with an average price of \$15,000 each. It might be possible to raise funds to use for rehabbing a group of houses.

Ms. Bennett inquired as to the odds of saving 924 E. Vine. Ms. Ferraro advised that she would do as much as possible to save the house. She stated that federal funds could not be utilized for that demolition, but it might be possible to redirect funds from another part of the budget.

Mr. Willson expressed concern that some of the stimulus funds might go to landlords who wouldn't use the money to repair the properties, but continue to rent them as is. Ms. Ferraro stated that the owners/landlords would be required to sign an agreement if they want to receive federal funding. The agreement might also state that the landlord must rent to low/moderate income individuals. If someone is dealing drugs or not maintaining their property, there is a process in place for taking care of that situation. Kalamazoo has some of the highest standards in Michigan with regard to rental properties.

Mr. Aardema inquired as to how the houses are selected and who does the review. Ms. Ferraro advised that most of properties earmarked for demolition have been on the anti-blight team's list for a long time, and there has been no action to remediate the blight by the owner.

Mr. Aardema referred to a house near Woodward and Paterson. The roof is burned off and someone has taken the time to post a permanent-looking sign on the property. Ms. Ferraro advised that the city received a grant to purchase the metal signs for condemned properties, which suggest calling 911 if there are problems at the property, etc. When there is a fire, the city has to determine who owns the property, and then wait for the insurance claim to be paid, which can take awhile. Mr. Aardema commented that instead of spending money on fire-damaged houses, the city could spend the funds on houses that are in salvageable condition.

Ms. O'Connor suggested that the city could acquire all of the houses on Bellevue Place and do a demonstration project. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that the funds the

city has are earmarked for families and children, and that is not a family-oriented neighborhood (there are no yards).

XII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Willson stated that he heard several favorable comments regarding Ms. Ferraro’s presentation about the Vine Neighborhood. Ms. Ferraro advised that she will provide that presentation again this summer. Ms. O’Connor suggested that the presentation could coincide with the open house in the Vine Neighborhood. Ms. Ferraro suggested having tours that day also.

In response to Mr. Wright’s inquiry, Ms. Ferraro advised that the updated work plan will be included in the HPC packets in the future. Mr. Wright volunteered to provide the updated work plan. Ms. O’Connor mentioned that only two or three things have been crossed out on the work plan, and Ms. Ferraro commented that some of the “cross-outs” have disappeared. Ms. Wright requested that the work plan leaders send an e-mail to him advising which items can be crossed off. He stated that he would send out the revised work plan via e-mail early next month so the HPC can get the work plan reports before the meeting.

Ms. O’Connor requested an update regarding the 100 block of E. Michigan. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would report next month regarding the outcome of the meeting with the Kalamazoo Foundation.

Adjournment

Mr. Willson, supported by Mr. Wright, moved to adjourn the May 12, 2009 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____
(Recording Secretary)

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____
(Staff Liaison)

Approved by: _____ Date: _____
(HPC Chair)