

Heritage Preservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 21, 2019

1. Call to Order

Rein called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the First Floor Public Meeting Room, City Hall, 208 NW First Avenue, Faribault, Minnesota.

Members Present: Lyn Rein, Ron Dwyer, Lee Nordmeyer and Karl Vohs

Members Absent: Julie Schiffer

Staff Present: Kim Clausen, Community Development Coordinator

Others Present: Deanna Kuennen, Community and Economic Development Director; Todd Nelson, Property Owner

2. Minutes

A. Minutes of September 16, 2019 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Vohs and seconded by Nordmeyer to approve the September 16, 2019 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

3. General Heritage Preservation Items

A. Citizen Comment Period – None

4. Design Reviews

A. 112 Central Avenue – Rear Façade Renovations

The property owner is proposing to remove the existing batten-board siding from the rear façade and replace it with gray Allura fiber cement stucco panel siding and install white aluminum trim and fascia. The existing concrete block on the bottom half of the façade will be painted to match the siding. According to Nelson, the existing siding is actually painted plywood. Commissioners noted this façade is very private, as it faces a fence, and there is no visual access to the public. They agreed the proposed changes are acceptable and improve the look of the rear façade.

A motion was made by Dwyer and seconded by Vohs to approve the project as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Nelson also noted that he recently purchased the Masonic Building at 230 Central Avenue. He plans to add residential rental units on the 2nd and 3rd floors, which will require adding new windows to the façade. The HPC advised Nelson to work with the Building Official and other Community Development Staff to develop proposed plans for HPC review.

5. Items of Discussion

A. Downtown Property Maintenance Program

Kuennen gave an update on the recent Downtown Property Maintenance Sweep. This is the first time inspectors were able to access commercial spaces for fire code inspections without the owner pulling a building permit. Sixty percent (60%) of buildings had violations, with 79 violations for property maintenance and 141 violations for fire code issues. The highest number of property maintenance violations were for "protective treatment", which includes things like peeling paint and tuckpointing. The highest number of fire code violations were things like exit lights, fire extinguishers and electrical hazards. Many of the violations have been corrected, but staff is still

working with property owners to correct the remaining violations. There are various reasons for the continuing violations, including no-shows, back-ordered parts, lack of contractors and funding problems.

The inspector position is currently vacant due to a resignation, and the City Council does not want to continue the program or expand it to the rest of the City. They are choosing to go back to a complaint-based system, not proactive inspections.

Commissioners asked what role the HPC can play in addressing this issue. Kuennen suggested an annual photographic database to monitor the condition of buildings over time and updating the City's Preservation Plan. Dwyer noted that as a downtown property owner, inspection items are easier to take when they are related to health and safety. The HPC needs to help people understand the importance of the district overall.

Several inspector options were discussed, including interns, contract employees, sharing an inspector with another community, and a part-time and/or seasonal position. Vohs asked what needs to be done to avoid another situation like 27 3rd St NW? Kuennen noted that prior to 2014, the City prosecutor would not prosecute property maintenance cases. The City switched prosecutors and they are willing to prosecute these cases. However, the court process is long, complex, costly and unpredictable because they get thrown out for technicalities. The penalties are not effective, and don't always result in compliance.

In addition, the Fire Inspection program wasn't around, so if a property had no rental units and no problems visible from the exterior, inspectors had no authority to inspect. The City Council discussed an abandoned building ordinance two weeks ago and decided not to pursue it.

A motion was made by Vohs and seconded by Dwyer to encourage the City Council to continue the Property Maintenance and Fire Inspection Program. Alternatives to hiring a new full-time employee could include interns, contract employees, sharing an inspector with another community, and a part-time and/or seasonal position. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Rein and seconded by Nordmeyer to ask the EDA to consider including mechanical systems, alarm systems, fire suppression and detection systems in its downtown rehabilitation program in order to protect the City's historic assets. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Special Meeting

Staff presented a request for a special meeting from John Sheesley, to do a design review for proposed improvements to the rear of 313 Central Avenue. The HPC agreed by consensus that if he submits drawings and product specifications they will meet on October 28, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. for a special meeting.

6. Adjourn

A motion was made by Vohs and seconded by Dwyer to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Clausen
Community Development Coordinator

Lyn Rein, Chairperson