

Heritage Preservation Commission
January 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Web-Ex Meeting Format

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, the HPC members participated through video conference from home. The meeting was held as a Special Meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.021 in response to the Covid-19 emergency.

Call to Order and Roll Call

President Ken Buehler called to order the meeting of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) at 12:04 p.m. on Monday, January 10, 2022.

Attendance: (Via WebEx video conferencing – all votes conducted via roll call)

Attending: Ken Buehler, Stacey DeRoche, Jessica Fortney, Brandon Hartung (experienced technical difficulties), Jess Mccullough, Mike Poupore (experienced technical difficulties), and Sarah Wisdorf

Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Steven Robertson and Cindy Stafford

Public Hearings

None at this time.

Consideration of Minutes

December 13, 2021 Regular HPC Meeting

MOTION/Second: Wisdorf/Fortney approved the minutes (Commissioners Hartung and Poupore missed the vote.)

VOTE: (5-0)

Communications

None at this time.

Report of Final Disposition of Matters Previously Before the Commission –

PL 21-103 Historic Construction/Demolition Permit for 506 W. Michigan St (Depot) – The Concurrent Use Permit (CUP) will go before the planning commission tomorrow night. This doesn't impact design issues, which will come back to the HPC in February for approval.

Consideration of Matters Regarding Commission Action

PL21-161 Downtown Commercial Historic Design Guidelines – Being reviewed by SHPO.

2022 Preservation Conference – Steven Robertson noted the conference would be September 14, 15, 16 (wed, thur, fri). SHPO would prefer an in-person conference versus a virtual conference, but that decision cannot be made until later this year (around May). SHPO staff need to get direction from their supervisors related to COVID (to weigh the pros and cons of in person meetings), and that cannot happen till later this spring. Understandable this does not leave a lot of time for planning. They think they have a main speaker already lined up, Anton Trier from Bemidji State. They would like us to submit a new grant application, but this time ask for less money (less than \$45,000). Stacey DeRoche noted the Depot has their 100th anniversary celebration on the 17th. She thinks the conference's Wednesday kick-off could be held at the Depot. Jessica Fortney noted that SHPO takes on a lot of the details on their own. The HPC and staff would be on-site representatives.

New Business

Commissioner DeRoche found out on facebook about plans for a new parking lot in the downtown historical district. How can this be proposed without being brought to the HPC first? Chair Buehler noted this includes the former Chinese Dragon on the lower side of Superior Street. The original plans called for using the façade for a new boutique hotel. Mayor Ness had an idea to build a library here, years ago. There isn't much information on the proposed parking lot. Robertson noted the HPC would see a new construction or demo permit, if it was locally nominated. Currently it is a contributing building in a historic district, but not nominated itself. The HPC doesn't have the power to deny demo. Robertson noted this is a national district and an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is not needed. Chair Buehler asked if SHPO could be informed, and asked staff to confirm. DeRoche stated taking a building down creates a large gap in the historic district, which is problematic. Mike Poupore agrees it is problematic. Fortney asked why this isn't a priority before it goes to permitting. Where are the hiccups in the system? The gaps should be closed. Commissioner Sarah Wisdorf noted the gap is the interpretation of what is historically nominated. The way to close the gap is to start nominating national nominations to make them locally designated. Robertson stated this district is in limbo and has no clear line of protection. Wisdorf noted passing the downtown historic guidelines would help enforcement. Chair Buehler noted the upcoming guideline passage may have spurred action before it goes into effect. He asked if the HPC has control over what happens to a participating structure. He understands what staff and the city think, but would like a second opinion for SHPO. Commissioner DeRoche using the passage of the upcoming design guidelines as an impetus is unethical. Commissioner Fortney agrees any movement ahead of time is unethical. Wisdorf noted they are following current guidelines. Chair Buehler would like to sure the HPC's role is spelled out definitively.

MOTION/Second: Poupore/DeRoche inquire with SHPO for an EAW review before demo moves forward (Hartung could not vote due to technical difficulties)

VOTE: (5-1, Wisdorf Opposed)


Other Business – N/A

Reports of Officers, Staff and Committees

Wisdorf gave an overview of the planning commission's upcoming items. The pc will vote on the CUP for the Depot tomorrow night. This won't affect the scope and design of the modifications being prosed. She will relay HPC's design concerns, but noted the pc is focusing and voting on strictly the right of way issue.

Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

Respectfully,

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Adam Fulton – Deputy Director
 Department of Planning and Economic Development