

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF ST. CHARLES**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2016**  
**COMMITTEE ROOM**

**Members Present:** Chairman Norris, Bobowiec, Malay, Smunt, Pretz, Gibson

**Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager  
Ellen Johnson, Planner

---

**1. Call to order**

Chairman Norris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. Roll call**

Ms. Johnson called roll with six members present. There was a quorum.

**3. Approval of agenda**

Mr. Pretz added item 8d. Elgin Historic Tour.

Chairman Norris added item 8e. Downtown Partnership.

**4. Presentation of minutes of the September 21, 2016 meeting**

Dr. Smunt noted a correction on page 4, item c. “Shirt” should be changed to “skirt”.

**A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes as corrected.**

**5. COA: 322 Illinois St. (garage)**

Diana Garcia, property owner, and the contractor from Danley Garage World were present.

Ms. Malay noted the Commission reviewed a window proposal for this property a few years ago and also looked at the garage at that time. It was in rough shape.

Dr. Smunt asked if the foundation was failing. Ms. Garcia said the garage sits on there and has rotted away.

Mr. Pretz asked if they could look at a picture of the house to see if the style of the garage matched the home. Mr. Bobowiec noted it didn’t match at all. However, Dr. Smunt said it

matches the neighbor's garage and the Commission approved that one a few years ago. He said he would recommend approving the use of wood siding or cement board siding versus vinyl. None of the surrounding structures have vinyl and he felt it would be wrong to introduce it into an area where the homeowners have invested a great deal of money in preserving their wood siding.

Chairman Norris asked if the homeowners would consider using a wood or cement board siding. Mr. Pretz said they were concerned with this garage blending in with the other structures in the area. Ms. Malay noted this is what the Commission has asked of everyone that has come through the Commission from that area. Ms. Garcia expressed concern over the cost of using different materials.

Mr. Pretz stated he was in favor of removing the old garage.

Dr. Smunt advised the homeowners he would prefer to see them use "like-in-kind" materials. He noted cement board siding is a substitute wood product and the only one the Commission has been supporting. He said vinyl clearly does not look like wood siding. Ms. Garcia stated there is some vinyl that looks like wood. The contractor said from a distance you would not be able to tell which material it was. Dr. Smunt noted the garage is visible from multiple angles.

Ms. Garcia said an alternative is to remove the garage and not put up anything else. She has already paid twice to have the current garage's structure redone only to see it flood and decay. She said she has done her part several times in trying to maintain the garage. The home will no longer be rented out so she will invest in it, but only if it's affordable to do so.

Ms. Malay suggested salvaging some of the existing wood siding. Ms. Garcia said it's rotting. The contractor said that wasn't a feasible option.

The contractor asked the Commission to consider two approvals now; one to demolish the garage, and the other to reconstruct using cement board siding.

If they pursue demolition, Mr. Gibson suggested putting the slab back so they would be ready to put up a garage in the future, but provide a parking space now.

**A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA with the following contingencies:**

- 1) Full garage using cement board or wood siding**
- 2) Demolition only**
- 3) Demolition with slab**

**6. COA: 11 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. (signs)**

Mike Hoffer, representative from Aubrey Signs, was present.

Mr. Hoffer stated the existing signs will be removed and two new signs made of aluminum composite will be added. The one on the east elevation will be centered on the building, and the one on the south elevation will be moved over slightly to increase visibility. There will also be a double-sided projecting sign which will be hung on the corner of the building.

**A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA as presented.**

**7. COA: 162 S. 1<sup>ST</sup> St. (sign)**

Marcin Wolak of Comet Neon, the petitioner, and Mario Grado, the business owner of Vintage 53, were present.

Mr. Wolak presented the proposal. The sign is 10 feet long by 28 inches high and will consist of a routed panel which will be illuminated around the entire edge of the panel.

**A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA as presented.**

**8. Additional Business from Commissioners or Staff**

**a. 2016 Projects**

**i. City Council Tour**

Mr. Colby presented a map that was put together based on the last discussion which shows the chosen tour stops. Ms. Johnson noted it includes a few details of each stop along with a before picture. Ms. Malay suggested adding the after pictures for those who are not able to make the tour. Dr. Smunt noted doing so would allow the brochure to be used as an educational piece for anyone interested in learning about the positive effect of historical preservation.

Mr. Bobowiec asked if they picked a date yet for the tour. Dr. Smunt said late fall is a good time because the leaves are coming off trees making it easier to see some of the homes. Mr. Colby said he would initiate the discussion to determine a date.

Mr. Gibson said he would like to include as many Commissioners as possible. Mr. Pretz was concerned with the limited timeframe for the presentation. He felt it would be best to have one designated speaker with a very precise plan so as not to go off topic and lose the purpose behind the tour. Ms. Malay suggested scripting the presentation. Mr. Gibson noted it may seem like a stage show if they have more than one presenter. Dr. Smunt said they could have one moderator who could turn over the presentation at certain points to one of the other Commissioners who may have strong knowledge about a certain type of architecture.

Chairman Norris asked if there was any update on the cost aspect of doing a survey. Mr. Colby advised they looked at cost estimates for recent grants projects within the state and found the amounts varied greatly, depending on the depth of research conducted. Dr. Smunt suggested having a range of costs available in case they are asked about it. Ms. Malay said they should approach it by providing general information and letting them know the Commission would like to potentially do a survey and asking if they would support it.

Mr. Gibson said they should explain what a historic district is; how it improved the downtown area; and what happens when projects doesn't follow guidelines.

Ms. Malay asked if they could find out how many COA's have been issued. She noted it might be a good idea to include a summary of all the Commission's accomplishments and how many of these have come before the Council. They decided to include "fun facts" at the end of the booklet.

## **ii. Survey of Pottawatomie Area**

Discussion was held within the previous agenda item.

## **iii. Residential Design Guidelines update – Ch. 2.1**

Mr. Colby provided a revised version showing the reformatted tables done by Mr. Gibson. Dr. Smunt noted the first page looked really good. He said when they did the design guidelines they decided to include as many examples from within St. Charles as possible.

Dr. Smunt noted the picture of the store and house connected shows how disjointed they are and said this would be a great example of what the Commission does not recommend. They discussed a home on Fifth Street that represents proportion incompatibility. Dr. Smunt said that is an example of disharmony of infill and if that were in a historic district they would never have recommended that be done.

The Commission discussed excluding any negative St. Charles examples, and concluded this was the best approach.

Dr. Smunt noted the back section of this chapter needs more pictures. He said he would try to find some for the next meeting.

## **b. Façade Program Amendments**

Mr. Colby noted they received several grant applications earlier this year which were submitted around the same time causing them to exceed the program's budget. They were able to fund all the grants for the year because the Council approved an increase in the budget to cover them. One of the projects was for maintenance and another was for more significant rehab/restoration work. He said this brought up a discussion as to whether or not they should consider structuring the program so more funding would be available for more preservation-type improvements

versus maintenance. The direction from the Council was to make that change. Mr. Colby said he would be working on criteria and will be bringing it before the Commission.

Dr. Smunt felt funding maintenance work encourages people to let their structures deteriorate because they know they will get money to fix it. Mr. Bobowiec suggested awarding grants to new owners who are trying to fix up their place versus those who have neglected their property for years. Mr. Pretz recommended funding maintenance projects at a lesser percentage. Ms. Malay suggested setting a deadline for applications and approving major improvements first and maintenance projects second. Anything that comes in after the deadline will only be considered if there are still funds. Mr. Gibson felt the deadline idea would be good to give the Commission the opportunity to discuss all the applications at once and determine the best way to allocate the funds.

Mr. Gibson asked to clarify the difference in the intended outcome between maintenance and improvement projects. He felt it was the same result. Ms. Malay said a project that has a bigger impact on Main Street should be funded before one with a smaller impact. Mr. Colby noted they may get requests for maintenance projects that in order to meet historic preservation requirements may be more intensive and expensive, so they may want to reward someone with higher funding for doing that kind of project over a less involved maintenance project.

The Commissioners discussed using percentages based on the type of work being done and what type of work would be considered maintenance and what is preservation. Mr. Colby will draft information for the Commission to review at a future meeting.

### **c. Observations**

Mr. Gibson asked if a COA was approved for a home on 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Prairie. He said they removed two-thirds of the roof. Ms. Johnson said they reviewed the permit request at the staff level.

Mr. Pretz commented on a dumpster in a driveway of the blue house between the Italianate and the Queen Anne home at 315 N. Third that has items from work being done inside the home. He felt the Building Department may want to go by there to see if a permit was required for the work they are doing.

Mr. Pretz also noted the window on the door on the Dunham-Hunt house does not look like what was approved. He suggested having an inspector look into that.

Pat Pretz was present and advised the home at 303 N. Third Avenue is being neglected and decaying. She said there are squirrels entering the attic. She asked for that home to be watched. Dr. Smunt said the first approach is to ask the Building Department look into this to see if there are any health and safety violations.

### **d. Elgin Items**

Mr. Pretz advised the Elgin Heritage Commission provides signs for old houses within their historic district that just date and name the home. These are not landmarked houses nor do they provide any architectural significance. He felt it was simply a nice feature that advises people this is an old structure. He noted this may be something the Commission might be interested in doing in the future. Dr. Smunt said it was a nice way to promote the community's history.

Mr. Pretz said the City of Elgin has a grant program for historic landmarked homes. He thought it might be a nice to have a similar program in St. Charles to encourage homeowners of landmarked homes to take care of their properties.

Mr. Colby suggested this idea could be brought up in the façade grant program discussion.

**e. Downtown Partnership**

Chairman Norris confirmed the meetings are held on the second Wednesday. Ms. Malay is not available on those dates, but Mr. Gibson is available to attend.

**9. Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, October 19, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.**

**10. Public Comment**

None

**11. Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.