

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF ST. CHARLES**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2017**  
**COMMITTEE ROOM**

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

**Members Absent:** None

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

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**1. Call to order**

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

**2. Roll call**

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

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Norris added item 9b. 107-109 E. Main St. (George's)

**4. Presentation of minutes of the February 15, 2017 meeting**

**A motion was made by Dr. Smunt and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes as presented.**

**5. COA: 201-203 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. (door and windows)**

Tom Staroske, the petitioner, was present.

Mr. Staroske said he is proposing to install a metal door and two vinyl windows on the east elevation using openings that previously existed.

Dr. Smunt said he would like to see the use of compatible materials and would prefer a metal window frame versus a vinyl one.

**A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA, with a condition that aluminum or aluminum clad, double-hung windows be used.**

**6. COA: 211 Walnut Ave. (window replacement)**

Thomas Sieck, the petitioner, was present. He said he is proposing replacing an existing window with a new aluminum clad window. He noted the current sills are all rotted. The window is on the east side of the house, near the rear.

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

**7. COA: 104 E. Main St. (sign)**

Pete Zaikowski, the petitioner and owner of Crazy Fox, was present.

Mr. Zaikowski said he would like to install a two-sided projecting sign on the front of the building. The sign is made out of canvas vinyl supported by two poles.

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

**8. COA: 103 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. (fence)**

Mr. Colby stated this item was expected to be on the agenda, but Staff did not receive any information on it. The homeowner was not present.

**A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to table the item.**

**9. Additional Business and Observations from Commissioners or Staff**

**a. Façade Improvement Grant Program Amendments**

Mr. Colby presented an updated program description. He noted the proposal includes expanding the program to include single-family residential buildings.

Under the current qualifications, priority is given to properties located within the downtown Special Service Area (SSA 1B), followed by those located within the Central Historic District but not within SSA 1B. The proposal would take away the SSA priority because the program is no longer funded with SSA funds; it is funded through the City's general fund. The intention is to gear the program towards historic preservation projects that may be in downtown, or properties outside the downtown area that are still subject to historic preservation requirements. This would allow equal treatment of commercial and multi-family residential properties.

The proposal also includes an increase in the minimum project cost from \$1,000 to \$2,500. The reasoning behind this is due to the time involved in processing and approving the project, and to make sure the funds are spent on improvement projects that have a greater impact. Sign-only

projects would become ineligible. This is because the Downtown Partnership has a much less complex grant process in place that includes funding for sign projects.

Based on the Council's direction, routine maintenance work would be reimbursed at 25% and any new work, new enhancements or work involving historic preservation practices would still be covered at 50% reimbursement.

The program would be expanded to create a single-family residential program designed specifically for historic preservation projects. It would be available for significant or contributing buildings in the historic district. If the work being done would raise the rating of a non-contributing building, it would also qualify for grant funds. The suggested minimum cost for this part of the program is \$1,000, with a maximum grant of \$5,000. Currently there is \$10,000 budgeted for this program in the draft budget.

Mr. Pretz asked what the timeframe is for receiving the maximum grant amount for residential funding. Mr. Colby said it is per grant, per year. The Commissioners felt it might be best to space the eligibility period to more than every year in an effort to make the funds available to more residents. Ms. Malay suggested taking new applicants from May-August and if there are still funds available in September, previous recipients would be eligible to apply again. This would apply for a five year period.

The Commissioners discussed whether or not to give priority to commercial properties in the SSA area. It was decided that priority would be given to those applicants who submit their request prior to the start of the new fiscal year.

Dr. Smunt questioned how additions would be handled. The Commissioners felt free standing additions or new construction should be excluded.

**A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to recommend approval to the City Council of the Façade Improvement Grant Program Amendments, with the changes as discussed by the Commission.**

**b. 107-109 E. Main St. (George's)**

A presentation was made regarding renovation or demolition of this property at the February 27, 2017 Government Services Committee meeting. Mr. Pretz was in attendance and provided an update. He noted the Historic Preservation Commission's recommendations were included in the presentation. His overall impression was the Committee members appeared to be leaning towards demolition of the structure. In addition to preservation and demolition of the building, they also discussed a third option which is putting the building up for sale. They seemed to favor this with a stipulation that they find a buyer within 6 months. If there is no sale within 6 months, the Council will make a final decision as to the next steps at that time. The parameters regarding the sale of the building will be determined within the next 30 days, and the 6 month timeframe will begin after that.

Mr. Pretz recommended having someone from the Commission attend the next Council meeting. He also suggested they prepare a letter to be read at that meeting by one of the Commissioners. The letter should include the reasons why the demolition should not occur. He suggested noting the impact it would have if City-owned property were approved for demolition, but others who do not have that flexibility were told no. He believes this would be opening a flood gate and would hinder future preservation efforts. The City could be faced with a legal disadvantage if they demolished a 100 year old City-owned building, but then decided to not allow someone else to do the same with their building.

Chairman Norris asked if there had been any interest in purchasing the structure in the past. Mr. Colby said he is not aware of it ever having been marketed for sale. Dr. Smunt asked about having someone from Landmarks Illinois come assess the situation and then address the Council from their point of view. He noted perhaps they need input from someone with higher authority.

Mr. Gibson mentioned this topic came up in a conversation he had with one alderman. He noted the alderman expressed concern over what could happen with the load bearing walls if the building was removed. Mr. Gibson said they should stress how this is an existing \$1M liability to the City. If they gave the building to someone for nothing and then subsidized their improvements for \$500,000, the City would still be ahead approximately half a million dollars. In addition, the City would have an existing building instead of a vacant lot with two side walls being held up by iron bars. Mr. Gibson felt this might be another option worth presenting.

Mr. Pretz said it is okay to put it up for sale, but they must convey the Commission does not support demolition of the building if there is no sale after 6 months.

Mr. Colby said the Commission already weighed in on the proposal that was presented at the Government Services Committee meeting, but since the Council introduced another option, the Commission has an opportunity to respond to that.

The Commissioners agreed on pursuing putting together a letter to be read at the Council meeting. Ms. Malay volunteered to draft the letter.

Mr. Gibson asked if he should share the Commission's notes with the Downtown Partnership in an effort to alert them as to what is happening. Chairman Norris suggested he follow-through on this.

### **c. Introduction**

Dr. Smunt introduced David Pietryla, candidate for 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman.

**10. Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.**

**11. Public Comment**

**12. Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.