MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2017
COMMITTEE ROOM

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

Members Absent: Pretz

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager

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1. **Call to order**

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

2. **Roll call**

Mr. Colby called roll with six members present. There was a quorum.

3. **Approval of Agenda**

No changes were made to the agenda.

4. **Presentation of minutes of the March 1, 2017 meeting**

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

5. **COA: 405 Illinois Ave. (sign)**

The proposal is for the refacing of an existing wood panel sign. The proposed sign will retain the existing dimensions, but will have new aluminum panel faces installed.

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

6. **COA: 228 W. Main St. & 8 N. 3rd St. (signs)**

Dove and Mr. Thiselton, the petitioners, were present.

The proposal is for awnings and wall signs for two separate businesses. Ms. Thiselton stated she will be using the existing awning frames, but she was unsure of the material that was going to be

used to make the new awnings. She believes it is canvas. Chairman Norris said the awnings in the downtown area are typically made of canvas. Ms. Malay mentioned several businesses use a product called Sunbrella.

An existing wall sign panel will be used to hold separate signs for the petitioner's two businesses. Mr. Colby noted they need to determine how much of the panel's square footage will be allowed for each business based on their frontage measurements, and whether or not these will be removable panels. Mr. Colby said signs are no longer grandfathered. He said the existing panel is a feature on the building, but it doesn't provide any additional signage above what would be allowed by the current code.

Ms. Thiselton said she is considering putting a hinged frame around the panel that would lift up and down and be fastened with latches. This would provide a secure way to display their temporary event banners and keep them from being blown away by the wind. Chairman Norris asked Staff if banners were permitted by City ordinance. Mr. Colby said if they consider the banners to be part of the permanent sign than it would be similar to having removable letters on a sign. Mr. Thiselton explained the top two-thirds of the sign panel would stay in place; the bottom third would be interchangeable. He said these would be as close to being permanent as possible, while still being removable. Mr. Bobowiec asked if the removable panel will be made of banner material. Ms. Thiselton said it would consist of a matte vinyl material, but she could change that to whatever the Commission required.

Chairman Norris asked for the Commissioners thoughts on the "flip up and change" design. Dr. Smunt said they could also try doing something that screws on and off and suggested using a bolt that screws into a threaded receptacle to avoid having to drill holes each time the sign is changed. Chairman Norris said banners usually go through a permit process so this is something new for the Commission. Mr. Colby indicated the Commission would be approving a panel that could be replaced with other advertisements. It would be a semi-permanent installation with a banner that would be physically attached in place. Chairman Norris expressed concern over not having approval of the content of the banner each time it is changed. Mr. Bobowiec suggested adding guidelines with their approval. Mr. Kessler asked if the Commission's concerns are for the material and the content, or just the material. Chairman Norris said it is both.

Ms. Thiselton provided additional information on the materials being used. She stated the top portion of the panel will be made out of dibond. It will be thick plastic with thin aluminum lamination on both sides. The graphic will be printed on vinyl and applied to dibond. Mr. Kessler asked if this could be done to the bottom panels as well. Ms. Thiselton said she plans on changing the bottom panels every two to three weeks and would prefer not to incur significant costs with changing those banners.

Mr. Gibson said the proposal seems to be more of a concept than a final design. He noted the petitioner did not state how they would fasten the banner and if that would even hold. He also stated the corner where they are located experiences some questionable behavior in the early morning hours and they may have to deal with potential graffiti damage. He mentioned they may want to consider adding Plexiglas in front of the sign. Mr. Gibson would prefer to see how

these items are going to be addressed before he approves the proposal. Mr. Bobowiec felt they might be better off using the Plexiglas. This would allow them to print the temporary sign on paper and slide it behind the glass. Mr. Gibson felt they had enough details on the materials being used for the top portion of the panel and he would be fine giving approval for that portion. However, he still considered the bottom portion of the panel a concept and felt the final plan may look completely different from what they are discussing at this time. Ms. Malay agreed and suggested giving a modified approval.

The Commissioners discussed the awnings for 228 W. Main Street. The materials are the same as the ones for 8 N. 3rd Street.

The petitioner will need to return for approval of the removable signage panel.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA with the following conditions: (a) awnings to be made out of canvas using existing frames; (b) permanent signage using aluminum panels.

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

Mr. Gibson said he discussed the George's project with the Downtown Partnership. There was no action taken.

Ms. Malay mentioned the letter she was working on regarding the demolition of the structure at the former George's site. She said the Façade Improvement Grant Amendment was passed by Council so it shows they support historic preservation. She felt if they took further action now, it might hurt the Commission. She recommended monitoring the situation and being prepared if they need to be.

Chairman Norris asked for the status of the letter. Ms. Malay said it is drafted, but suggested not doing anything with it at this time. Dr. Smunt felt she should bring the letter before the Commission since that was the decision made at the last meeting. The intent was for the Commission to review the letter before it was presented to the Council. He felt unilateral action should not be taken until all Commissioners have had a chance to read and review the draft. He said they should make a collective decision on what the next steps should be.

Mr. Bobowiec said he spoke with two people who were also at the same meeting Mr. Pretz attended and neither felt there was any urgency for anyone to take further action with the City Council. He said it was clear to these two individuals that the Government Services Committee decided to go with option 3 (putting the building up for sale) and instructed Peter Suhr, Director of Public Works, to put together a marketing campaign to present to them. Mr. Bobowiec felt there was plenty of time to look into this. Ms. Malay said she also spoke to Mr. Suhr who felt the same way.

Dr. Smunt said he was only referring to the decision that was made at the last meeting to draft their "position" letter for review at this meeting. He felt they should at least review it, and any

further action could be tabled for as long as they want to. Mr. Bobowiec was in agreement. Mr. Kessler said if they decide to proceed with reading the finished letter before the Council, he felt it should be read by a senior member of the commission versus him, as was mentioned at the previous meeting.

Mr. Colby stated the Government Services Committee was made aware of the Commission's position. He said it might be useful to have a commissioner attend the next Government Services meeting to see what transpires in regards to their discussion on this topic. He felt it would give the Commission a better idea of what the Council's intent is going forward and they could then plan their next steps accordingly.

Dr. Smunt said a summary of the Commission's position so far may be all that they need to prepare. Mr. Kessler said it shouldn't be a surprise to the Council what the Commission's position is. Mr. Gibson said there are some aldermen who know very little about what is done by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Ms. Malay said there are certain steps the City needs to follow and all that would give the Commissioners additional time to prepare their next steps.

Dr. Smunt mentioned water drainage improvements need to be done to the alley and they should push for that work to be done now.

Ms. Malay asked how the City could allow the building to get into the condition it is in. She said if the City is going to purchase buildings in the historic district, they should budget for them. She felt the City should be setting the tone for how they want things done. Chairman Norris said this appears to be another topic away from the specific building they are discussing now.

Chairman Norris asked if anyone would be able to attend the March 27th Government Services Committee meeting. Ms. Malay and Mr. Bobowiec said they could attend.

The Commission will discuss the draft letter at the next meeting.

Chairman Norris asked Staff if there were any other updates. Mr. Colby stated the Façade Program amendments were presented and recommended for approval, including the residential program.

Chairman Norris asked if there would be any benefit in updating the downtown survey pages. Dr. Smunt suggested doing an 8-10 block section at a time. Mr. Colby said they could work off the existing surveys and use Google Maps to pick the ones they want to change. He asked if they want all new pictures. Dr. Smunt felt they should identify the structures that had dramatic changes and only update those pages. Chairman Norris asked if the Commission had the authority to make changes, or if they would need Council approval. Mr. Colby said the Commission should have the ability to at least update the information. Dr. Smunt said they need to state the basis for their findings. Chairman Norris asked Mr. Colby to prepare a document that could be attached to the survey with the Commission's findings. Dr. Smunt said the minutes of

the meeting will include their findings. Ms. Malay mentioned using the notes section of the survey page to reflect the reasons for changes. The Commissioner's decided to begin the review with the NE quadrant, followed by the SE quadrant, and then the SW one.

Mr. Kessler asked for clarification on the Pottawattamie and History Museum tour. Mr. Gibson said the April 22nd History Museum tour no longer exists due to lack of funding for the trolley. Mr. Colby said they have not yet determined the date for the Pottawattamie tour, would be waiting until after the new Council members are seated.

8. **Meeting Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, April 5, 2017 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.**

9. **Public Comment**

10. **Adjournment**

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