

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2011
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

Present: Chairman Smunt, Bobowiec, Norris, Prestidge, Pretz, Withey

Absent: Weals

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager

1. Call to order.

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

2. Approval of agenda.

There were no additions.

3. Presentation of minutes of the October 19, 2011 meeting.

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

4. Presentation on CLG Conference

Chairman Smunt discussed the CLG Conference held in Galesburg on October 27 and 28 and the seminars given by Donovan Rykepma. Mr. Rypkema discussed economics, sustainability, and historic preservation for downtown revitalization, which St. Charles has made progress on. Mr. Colby commented that Mr. Rypkema also discussed preservation incentives from an economics perspective and that his second lecture can be viewed online.

Chairman Smunt noted the talk given on the second day by Phil Thomasson was about developing a Preservation Plan. He stated that the City's new Comprehensive Plan will address main issues of historic preservation and the Commission can develop a separate preservation plan that goes into more detail. He stated that feedback during workshops has highlighted an interest for the Comprehensive Plan to focus on maintaining historic character.

Chairman Smunt reviewed handouts from the seminar about Preservation Plans, noting that the City has made a lot of progress on assembling the components. The Commission discussed the concept of a Conservation District, which may control building demolitions, additions and building scale. Mr. Norris questioned if the teardown trend is

continuing, and whether countering the McMansion trend should still be a focus. Chairman Smunt stated the focus can still be on economics and sustainability of preservation and identifying unprotected historic resources. Mr. Bobowiec suggested pursuing a Conservation District for the older parts of town. Mr. Colby stated the City's Traditional Residential Districts are the pre-World War II neighborhoods which could be included in a Conservation District. Mr. Pretz questioned the process involved for designation. Mr. Colby stated the district would need to be established by ordinance but that he didn't know the legal process for doing so. He suggested that the Comprehensive Plan will start to identify these ideas and that the ideas be presented as recommendations that the City Council can consider and endorse before any action is taken.

5. Work Plan Discussion

Chairman Smunt stated that the Work Plan for next fiscal year should follow with the steps involved for creating a Preservation Plan and also the five purposes identified in the historic preservation ordinance. He suggested that the Commission should only pursue projects that fit within this framework. For example, he suggested a historic house tour may not fit the direct purpose of the ordinance, but the Commission can supplement or provide information for an outside organization. Mr. Bobowiec discussed producing walking tour maps and that he felt this was a good direction to fit within the ordinance.

Mr. Norris mentioned that residential building permit activity has dropped and suggested the Commission focus on more basic preservation initiatives, such as a workshop on rebuilding window sills. He felt this would be more relevant.

The Commission reviewed the Work Plan sections:

Newsletter Articles and Design Guidelines: Mr. Colby stated the City newsletter is now a monthly electronic newsletter and it may not have the same visibility as it used to. Mr. Bobowiec stated that the City needs to market the website and the availability of the newsletter. The Commission discussed continuing to promote the landmarks in the newsletter. Chairman Smunt noted that Mr. Colby assembled a binder with information on each landmark, which can go on the website. The Commission expressed frustration that the website has not been updated. Mr. Bobowiec asked how the Design Guidelines can be promoted without the paper newsletter. The Commission discussed distributing the document in a paper copy or disk to all homeowners in the historic district, or using email or a postcard to make them aware that the document is available. Mr. Bobowiec suggested distributing the document in the Building Department when homeowners come in for permits. The Commission discussed putting together a landmarks calendar to sell. The Commission agreed to keep the landmarks feature in the newsletter, but not keep it on the work plan. Mr. Bobowiec offered to assist with assembling the landmarks binders.

Chairman Smunt discussed that the Downtown Partnership is interested in updating the Downtown Design Guidelines document, which is outdated. He suggested an ad-hoc committee with two commission members plus representatives of the partnership meet to

discuss revisions to the document. The Commission questioned if this document will overlap with the Residential Design Guidelines. Chairman Smunt noted that some issues, such as signs and awnings, are specific to commercial buildings in the downtown. Mr. Norris suggested using text from the Residential Design Guidelines for certain topics. Mr. Bobowiec recommended incorporating input on zoning requirements in the document. He noted the document is very generic. Mr. Colby stated that some of the document is redundant now, but there is very little on sign design/location in the Zoning Ordinance, in particular something graphical. Mr. Bobowiec suggested before and after photos/documentation on major façade rehabilitations, such as the Parkside Liquors building, which is ongoing. Mr. Norris suggested not duplicating anything from the residential design guidelines. Chairman Smunt stated the document does not discuss sign types/materials/styles/lighting other than a traditional painted/wood panel sign. The appropriate sign may differ based on the age of a building. He suggesting including examples of good and bad signs.

Chairman Smunt said the Partnership wants the document updated for the purpose of their sign/awning/lighting grant program. Mr. Colby noted the document is also used for review of Façade Improvement Grants. Mr. Norris suggested promoting the document specifically for grant applicants. Mr. Withey felt that most sign/awning contractors probably don't review this document and questioned if it will be used. Mr. Colby noted that he is often contacted for information on sign restrictions in the historic district.

Landmarking: Mr. Bobowiec mentioned Kevin Penzato, at the corner of 6th and State Streets, who is interested in landmarking and has an application form. The Commission discussed that all of the owners on the list expressed interest but have not followed through on filing the nomination. The Commission discussed making contact with the owners again, in the form of a call, postcard or letter. Mr. Colby said more research information is now available online, particularly for prominent past owners, but many of the detailed records still require physical research. The Commission decided to leave this list as is on the Work Plan.

Landmark site brochure/maps: The Commission discussed distributing the landmarks binders to elementary schools, the library and heritage center. Mr. Colby mentioned assembling the binder takes supplies and some effort but that the Commission can assist. Chairman Smunt suggested the binders can be completed before the end of the fiscal year in April, so this could be omitted from next year's list.

Mail Order Homes: Mr. Prestidge asked if the window display generated interest. Mr. Colby stated some information was gathered on certain homes but there were no additional homes added to the list. Chairman Smunt suggested hiring Rebecca Hunter to complete a survey in St. Charles, possibly in a smaller area. He also mentioned combining this with an architectural survey of the Pottowattomie Park neighborhood. Chairman Smunt concluded it was best to wrap up the mail order project next year before doing any more architectural surveys. Mr. Colby was not aware of the cost for Ms. Hunter to complete a survey, but if this is reasonable it could be budgeted.

Website: The Commission discussed that this will be removed as there is nothing more for the Commission to do. The information has been assembled.

Mr. Norris discussed using the Main Street display window to display landmarks and advertise historic preservation materials available from the City.

6. Downtown Design Guidelines Discussion

This was discussed under item 5.

7. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 7:00 P.M. in the Committee Room.

8. Additional Business

416 N. 2nd Avenue: Mr. Colby noted that the Building and Code Enforcement Division is attempting to serve the owner with a notice of violation, but the property is owned by a trust and the notice could not be delivered to the address of the owner. Mr. Pretz indicated that the owner lives at the house. Mr. Colby stated the owner will have to file for permit for the door replacement, which would then be reviewed by the Commission.

Mr. Pretz discussed that the Preservation Partners stone house tour was very successful. Chairman Smunt asked if they would be interested in doing a house tour of St. Charles landmarks. Mr. Pretz stated next year's tour is already in the planning stages and that it takes some time and effort to work with building owners.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.