

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST CHARLES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY MAY 2, 2012  
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

**Members Present:** Chairman Smunt, Bobowiec, Norris, Prestidge, Pretz, Weals

**Members Absent:** Withey

**Also Present:** Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager

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**1. Call to order:**

Chairman Smunt called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

**2. Roll call:**

Chairman Smunt called roll with 6-four members present and 1-one member absent. There was a quorum.

**3. Approval of the agenda:**

The agenda was amended by adding the following items:

- 7a) Historic District Bus Tour during the Fine Arts Show
- 7b) Façade Improvement Grant for 117 W. Main Street

**A motion was made by Mr. Pretz and seconded by Mr. Bobowiec, with a unanimous voice vote to approve the agenda as amended.**

**4. Presentation of minutes from April 18, 2012 meeting:**

**A motion was made by Mr. Prestidge and seconded by Mr. Pretz, with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes from the April 18, 2012 meeting as presented.**

**5. Mail Order Homes Project**

Rebecca Hunter, mail order/kit home expert, was in attendance. Ms. Hunter presented information on how to conduct a survey of mail order homes. Ms. Hunter discussed the experience with the survey work she completed in Elgin. She provided a handout of apparent mail order homes in St. Charles. Ms. Hunter confirmed that she informally observed these

houses and she has not systematically covered all neighborhoods in St. Charles that were built during the mail order period (roughly 1906-1940). She suggested that the visual survey be done by an expert who has access to all catalogue drawings.

The Commission discussed whether or not it would be more efficient to have Ms. Hunter work from the existing Architectural Surveys. Ms. Hunter noted she would still need to follow up and visit some properties to make a visual confirmation. The Commission discussed whether or not the initial mail order homes survey should first focus on the surveyed areas of the City. It was noted that concentrations have been noted outside of these areas, specifically on the East Side, along South 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenues and the Potowattomie Area, and on the West Side, possibly on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Streets south of Prairie and South 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> Streets, immediately south of Main St.

Ms. Hunter discussed reviewing the grantor-grantee books on the Kane County Recorder's website. She stated that she would be able to train the Commission members on how to do this in about an hour. She suggested possibly finding an intern who could make this a master's project in preservation or history. The Commission discussed reaching out to local educational institutions to advertise the project. The Commission also discussed scheduling a session to review the Recorder's records with Ms. Hunter. Mr. Colby could arrange to have laptops set up for the Commission members to use.

The Commission discussed the cost of Ms. Hunter's service. Ms. Hunter said her standard rate is very low at \$50 per hour. She noted she gains benefit from the information that is gathered. She suggested that a comprehensive visual survey of St. Charles would be approximately 15 hours. The Commission discussed whether the visual survey should be done before searching the Recorder's records. Ms. Hunter suggested it may be more beneficial to do the Recorder's search first, although either way, there will need to be verification made by rechecking the house.

Ms. Hunter discussed training the Commission members on the physical verification process of viewing a house and looking for evidence inside. Chairman Smunt noted that a neighbor of his is in the process of acquiring a mail order house on Illinois Street, and it may be possible for the Commission to view the house along with Ms. Hunter to learn how to find evidence.

The Commission discussed the overall budget for the project. Mr. Colby stated that the overall project should be in the range of no more than \$2,000. There will need to be a review of the budget expenditure, to determine if it can be spent from budgeted funds or whether City Council approval would be required. There was a discussion about doing a phased approach.

The Commission thanked Ms. Hunter for attending. Ms. Hunter said she was excited about the project and thanked the Commission. Mr. Colby will follow up with a scope of work and provide this to Ms. Hunter in the next two weeks.

## **6. Election of Officers**

**A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Mr. Prestidge, with a unanimous voice vote, to have a white ballot vote for officer positions.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Pretz and seconded by Mr. Norris, with a unanimous voice vote to nominate Dr. Steven Smunt for Chairman.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Pretz and seconded by Ms. Weals, with a unanimous voice vote to nominate Fred Norris for Vice Chairman.**

**7. Additional business:**

**7a)** St. Charles Fine Art Show Tour. Chairman Smunt passed around the map and information binder prepared for the Fine Arts Show Tour. He noted the information was pulled from the summaries and other information on the Library's Historic Buildings website.

**7b)** Mr. Colby stated that the owner of 117 W. Main Street, the Szechwan building, has inquired about a Façade Improvement Grant to replace the entire first floor Main Street storefront, possibly for a single tenant. He indicated two doors would remain, one to access the second floor stairwell and one to enter the first floor space. The owner is trying to track down historic photos of the building façades, but most photos do not show these buildings in enough detail to see how the storefront was arranged. Mr. Colby stated he advised the applicant that it would be preferred to provide a visual break between the two facades. The Commission recommended use of storefront design that is more typically of the era of the original building. Suggestions were offered as good examples to follow, including the Homebrew Shop at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main St, McNally's at 109 W. Main, and the former Parkside Liquors, 320 W. Main St. The Commission also discussed the western entrance and ideas for removing the arch element, which is inconsistent with the building architecture.

**8. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday May 16, 2012 at 7:00pm in the Committee Room.**

**9. Adjournment:**

**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dr. Steven Smunt, Chairman  
St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission

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