

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2014
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

Members Present: Chairman Smunt, Bobowiec, Gibson, Malay, Pretz, Withey,

Members Absent: Norris

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager

1. Call to order:

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

2. Roll call:

Chairman Smunt called roll with six members present. There was a quorum.

3. Approval of the agenda:

The following items were added under additional business:

- 9a. Exceptions to the Building Code regarding railing heights on historical buildings
- 9b. Demonstration of website/app

4. Presentation of minutes from May 7, 2014 meeting.

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

5. COA: 318 S. 5th St. (gazebo)

Mr. Colby stated the COA is a request to rebuild an existing gazebo that was damaged over the winter. Noe Martinez, contractor, was present. He stated that the entire structure from the platform up would be rebuilt with cedar as shown in the attached drawings.

Chairman Smunt noted that the photo provides a good representation of a similar structure. He noted the gazebo is not very visible from the street in any direction.

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

6. COA: 117 E. Main St.

Mr. Colby stated the Commission previously recommended approval of a Façade Improvement Grant for the project, but requested the applicant return with a design for the storefront paneling. He stated the grant had been approved by the City Council.

Michael Hayden, applicant, was present. He provided drawings showing the proposed storefront panel design. Chairman Smunt noted the proposed crown cornice was an important design detail to provide a finished look for the storefront. It was noted the design around the adjacent door to the basement would not be changed in any way. The Commission did not have any concerns with the overall design.

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

Mr. Colby will find out what elements require a building permit. The Commission discussed that the contractor will know best in which order to complete the project.

7. COA: 201 S. 2nd St.

Mr. Colby stated the applicant was not present so this item could be tabled. He said the proposal was to replace siding on the canopy at Kevin's Service Station.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Withey with a unanimous voice vote to table the COA.

8. COA: 100 W. Main St. (façade improvement project)

Mr. Colby stated the City Council has approved a façade grant for this project and included a condition that the owner and contractor appear before the Commission to have a COA approved for the work on the window glazing and the construction methods. He noted the contractor, Jay Trapp, and a representative of the Hotel Baker, Jose Lavariega, were present.

Chairman Smunt recalled the City paid for grant money to repair the windows perhaps 5 to 10 years ago, although he isn't sure exactly how long ago, and it seems the work hasn't held up as long as expected. He questioned if there was an underlying cause for the glazing compound failure. He suspected it could be excessive condensation on the glass, with moisture collecting on bottom rail, freezing, and causing glazing failure.

Mr. Lavariega said the windows haven't been worked on in at least 10 years. Ms. Malay recalled it may have last been done when the hotel was renovated around 15 years ago.

Mr. Trapp said the glazing failure is a common issue on this type of old window. They will be using commercial grade glazing. He noted the south elevation appears to be in worse condition.

Mr. Lavariega confirmed there are interior storm windows and there is not excessive condensation visible. He said there is no glazing deterioration on the inside of the glass; the deterioration is on the outside only.

Mr. Trapp said products have improved and Sherwin Williams has offered a 5 year warranty on a commercial grade primer and paint, and he is offering a 2 year warranty on labor. He said the primer is oil based but the top coat is not, but is formulated to meet regulations and work in this type of application.

Chairman Smunt said the contractor could consider using clear silicone caulk to stop condensation from popping the compound off, if a problem is observed. Mr. Trapp said he is willing to do this, as it is minimal cost, as the major cost is prepping the surface for repainting. He noted his cost estimate has gone up 5% since last year. Mr. Colby said this shouldn't be an issued as the grant amount was rounded up to account for potential window pane replacement.

A motion was made by Mr. Withey and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA.

Mr. Trapp asked about whether a permit would be required for the work or how to go about requesting use of the sidewalk for the work. Mr. Colby stated he would check with the Building Division and follow up with the applicant.

9. COA: 20 N. 5th Ave.

Mr. Colby stated the proposal is to replace an existing exterior staircase on an existing rear deck. The existing deck and deck railing would not be modified in any way. Mr. Colby displayed a picture of the stairs and deck.

Chairman Smunt said if the proposal was to replace the entire stair and deck system, then the Commission would require a more appropriate design to be used. However, since only the stairs will be replaced, the Commission can be flexible to allow a similar design to what exists today. Ms. Malay commented that it was unclear if the spindles would attach to the treads and stringers. She noted this is not the proper construction method and a lower rail should be used. The Commission agreed.

A motion was made by Mr. Withey and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA, with a condition that the spindles be connected to a lower rail and not the treads or stringer.

10. Additional Business

a. Building Code

Chairman Smunt brought an article from Old House Journal about a project in Elgin where railings lower than current code requirements were allowed on the construction of an accurate Italianate style porch. The article noted that Elgin allowed this under a section of the International Building Code, which St. Charles has also adopted.

Mr. Colby noted that there is a section in Building Code that allows for exceptions for “historic buildings” which would include structures in the Historic District, since St. Charles is a Certified Local Government. He read the code text which states that the code shall not be mandatory for historic buildings when projects are judged by the building official to not constitute a distinct life safety hazard.

The Commission discussed they should remain aware that this provision exists and that if necessary, can request certain code requirements not be mandated for a specific situation.

b. Demonstration of the website/app

Mr. Gibson demonstrated a mobile-enabled website he built based on the existing map of the historic districts and landmarks that was assembled by the library with the Commission’s information. He said a mobile-enabled website would allow a smart phone or Ipad device to access the site and use GPS to find your location on a map. He also demonstrated the directions function and the potential to post links to suggested walking tour routes. Mr. Gibson said the data needs to be corrected to get more accurate locations for each building.

Ms. Malay said she has been talking to community members including the Park District foundation and a few aldermen who think it would be great to have a citywide app that would link information of the Visitor’s Bureau, Partnership, etc. and shopping/entertainment/tourist locations. She referenced the Springfield website, which functions like an app, but provides links to different types of services. Mr. Pretz said starting on a smaller scale would help promote the concept to other groups. Ms. Malay mentioned there are also tourism grants that could bring additional funding.

Chairman Smunt said the tourism bureau focuses mainly on getting people to stay in a hotel, which he thinks is too narrow. He said they need to clarify their mission. Mr. Bobowiec agreed and said other agrees as well. Mr. Colby asked if the Visitor’s Bureau has expressed in interest in this concept.

Mr. Gibson said starting with standardizing the data is the first step. He said for the Commission's purposes, a mobile enabled website optimized for a smart phone might be simpler, as you would not have issues with operation system compatibility as the site would meet web standards. Ms. Malay agreed but said the app should still be the goal.

The Commission discussed who would take the leadership of running the app and potential issues due to the City promoting specific businesses. They discussed pursuing the mobile enabled website as an initial project.

Ms. Malay mentioned the Farnsworth Foundation is presenting information about the project tomorrow evening at 6:30 pm in the Committee Room.

Mr. Colby passed around an article submitted by Mr. Pretz about Geneva's walking tours.

11. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at 7:00pm in the Committee Room.

12. Adjournment:

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