

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2015
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

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

Members Absent: Norris, Withey

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager
Ellen Johnson, Planner
Chris Sanchez, Recording Secretary

1. Call to order

Chairman Smunt called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Roll call

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

3. Approval of the agenda

Chairman Smunt added a discussion item regarding the Historic Bus Tour. Item was included as C under Additional Business.

4. Presentation of minutes of the June 3, 2015 meeting

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

5. COA: 1 W. Illinois St. (sign)

Mr. Colby said the proposal is for a laminated wall sign that reads Bombshell Blowout Boutique to be mounted to an existing sign panel. He stated this is a wall sign that may already be up. He said the sign is the same shape as the previous sign.

Chairman Smunt asked if there was ever a previous sign panel. Mr. Pretz said it appears there is a frame of an old sign under the “Bombshell” wording. Ms. Malay recalled seeing signs posted from a previous tenant. Chairman Smunt thought there were sign panels made for every unit when they rehabbed the building, and they may have been removed over the years as names changed.

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

Meredith Murphy, applicant, arrived after the vote was taken.

6. COA: 113 S. 4th St. (fence)

Mr. Pretz asked if this is a replacement for the fence between the two properties. He stated the fence on the right side of the house is falling down and he thought this request might be to replace that fence.

Chairman Smunt went over the specifics of the proposal. He said a 44 ft. section will be put up along the west edge of the lot leading up to the garage, and a 36 ft. section will be on the north edge. The tallest part, consisting of a 6 ft. dog ear style fence, will be along the back.

Ms. Malay expressed concern over visibility from the street. Chairman Smunt explained the two 3 ft. picket fence sections will be visible from the street, and the 6 ft. fence will be set way back on the lot line allowing for privacy. He had no concerns with this placement.

Chairman Smunt said the homeowner is placing the picket fence from the garage to the house and using the garage as a component of the fence.

Mr. Colby stated the fence that Mr. Pretz is concerned about may not belong to the applicant.

Mr. Gibson said it appears the homeowner will have two 3 ft. picket fences, one on each side of the house, and a gate. Chairman Smunt confirmed those will face the street and everything else will be in the rear of the lot.

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

7. COA: 104 S. 3rd Ave. (windows)

Mr. Colby stated this proposal is to replace the double-hung, wood windows and aluminum storms with double-hung, vinyl windows. He said some windows are boarded up and damaged due to a house fire. The proposal would only impact the double-hung windows, not any others on the house.

Chairman Smunt referred to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. He said that every effort should be made to preserve material that is not deteriorated beyond salvage; replacement of any historical material should like-in-kind. He said if dealing with material that

has not deteriorated beyond the 50% point, it should be restored and rehabbed, and the replacement windows should match the existing style and materials. Chairman Smunt suggested the property owner be advised in order to be in compliance with the ordinance and guidelines, he should only replace damaged windows with wood, double-hung ones. He stated the owner must provide evidence to show the windows are deteriorating and non-salvageable.

Mr. Bobowiec commented that he would be okay with the homeowner replacing all the windows as long as they are wood.

Ms. Malay believes the casements were replaced before. Chairman Smunt felt that was a different home. He does not remember ever reviewing this house.

Chairman Smunt reiterated need for evidence to show extensive deterioration beyond a salvageable point in order to support the proposal. He said it does not comply with the ordinance.

Ms. Malay stated the survey shows the house is rated in excellent condition and the fire only damaged a few windows. She does not see any grounds for approval.

Mr. Colby stated at least one of the windows was destroyed. Mr. Pretz said that one should be a like-in-kind replacement. He stated the owner needs hard facts to prove the windows are beyond repair.

Ms. Malay questioned why the owner was not present. Mr. Colby said he intended to be there.

Chairman Smunt referred to the following items of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as to why the proposal is not in keeping with the guidelines:

- Item 3b: The distinguishing original qualities or historic character of a building, structure or site, and its environment, shall be retained and preserved. The removal or alteration of any historic materials or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
- Item 3e: Distinctive stylistic features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of skilled craftsmanship, which characterizes a building, structure, or site, shall be preserved.
- Item 3f: Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than be replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, [such as a wood, double-hung window], the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

Chairman Smunt stated the last item would refer to the windows that were damaged beyond repair from the fire.

Chairman Smunt stated the proposal is not in compliance with the ordinance and guidelines due to the items noted above, and recommended the Commission not approve this project without the owner providing enough information to overrule the Commission's criteria.

Commissioners discussed whether they should vote on or table this item. Mr. Colby advised that the owner did intend to come to meeting. He stated the owner asked if this item could still be presented without his presence and he told the owner he can present the information provided.

Chairman Smunt said tabling the item would allow the owner to hear the Commission's point of view, and why they do not feel it is appropriate. He said it gives the owner an opportunity to return with an amended COA, and if he does not, they can recommend denial. He said tabling the item provides the Commission an opportunity to educate the owner on historic preservation and share their concerns. Mr. Bobowiec said the owner needs their feedback, but vinyl would not have been passed.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to table the COA as presented. Mr. Pretz abstained.

8. Additional Business

a. Mobile Tour App Project

No updates.

Chairman Smunt said it would be great if they could convert their bus tour to a digital, self-guided tour. He said people can then decide if they want to drive or walk it.

Ms. Malay asked if they would have control over the data using historypin.org. Mr. Gibson said there are different levels to that option. If they create a tour, nobody can change that, but other people can make notes about different buildings. Ms. Malay said they need to put together a budget of what it would cost to make this happen so they can apply for a grant.

b. Landmarks Research

No updates.

c. Historic District Trolley Tour

Chairman Smunt said he discussed the tour with the Downtown Partnership, which sponsored the Fine Arts Show that the bus tour was a part of over Memorial Day weekend. The Board of Directors is interested in taking the bus tour due to positive reviews from that event. He said at least 90% of them are very pro-preservation. He suggested the Commission invite Alderman Bessner to a future meeting to discuss the bus tour idea with him. Chairman Smunt stated Sue McDowell has the binder full of information used for the bus tour presentation and he would like to review it. Chairman Smunt and Mr. Pretz discussed going together to pick up the binder and also deliver the landmark information. He said Ms. McDowell suggested they duplicate the binder.

Mr. Gibson spoke with Alderman Bessner and said he was still very positive about doing the tour for the City Council members. However, Mr. Gibson expressed concern that this is getting too big.

Ms. Malay said it would be best to narrow down the initial tour to include just the City Council. She felt it was a good idea to discuss with them why the ordinance is important.

Chairman Smunt suggested giving the Council the ordinance and guidelines in advance.

Ms. Malay stated they might be able to do two tours on the chosen date. She said they could do the first tour for the City Council members and then a second tour for the Downtown Partnership Board.

Mr. Bobowiec noted this tour would open up some “eyes” as to why historic preservation is important.

Chairman Smunt suggested Mr. Gibson follow up with Alderman Bessner. He said the tour would not take place until August or September. Mr. Gibson said it should be limited to two hours. The Commission discussed what day/time this could be done. Mr. Bobowiec stated Alderman Bessner should talk to the Council to sell this idea.

Chairman Smunt said he will pursue this with the Downtown Partnership Board.

d. Geneva

Ms. Malay mentioned seeing a headline that read something like, “Geneva votes to take away landmark ability without owners consent”.

Chairman Smunt said Geneva was proposing needing the consent of 51% of the property owners in a proposed historic district. He felt this would never happen because it is difficult to get 51%

of an electorate to vote in an election; how can they expect to get 51% of people in a proposed district to vote.

Chairman Smunt said the St. Charles Commission never had the landmark ability amended. They currently need 25% of the people within a proposed district to sign on. If 51% of the people within a proposed district were against it, it would stop it. He noted that is the correct way. He said 25% in agreement moves a nomination forward and 51% opposed to a nomination kills it.

Mr. Pretz said at 25% in favor it could at least still move forward and still left a large margin to be able to get 51% against. At 51% in favor, you will not get anything off the table other than a general discussion. Chairman Smunt compared it to the behavior of the electoral process and felt it is unreasonable for any City Council to enact legislation that would require 51% in favor to move forward with any sort of nomination of a proposal.

Chairman Smunt mentioned this is another reason why the historic bus tour for the St. Charles City Council is so important. He felt it was good timing to work off the success of Historic Preservation versus doing damage control later.

Mr. Pretz stated the Geneva History Museum charged \$10 for a historic tour. Commissioners discussed charging options for their tour. Mr. Pretz said it may be too costly for families. Chairman Smunt said it would be more appropriate to charge if interiors of buildings were included.

Ms. Malay questioned whether the tour should include Main Street because the Council may not know the history of the buildings. She felt it might be important because they get involved in façade improvements.

Chairman Smunt indicated it is too difficult to have a bus stop on Main Street in order to talk about specific buildings. Ms. Malay suggested a brief walking tour. Mr. Bobowiec felt the Council may find it fascinating to know what was in the store fronts 100 years ago. Commissioners discussed having a short walking tour of Main Street before boarding the bus to tour the residential areas.

Mr. Gibson mentioned the interest they are generating might help with tour sponsorship in future years.

Chairman Smunt noted this is something that can evolve. They just need manpower.

e. CLG report

Ms. Johnson advised the group that she was working on the annual Certified Local Government report and asked if any members attended any educational events or meetings. She said she needed documentation if they did. Commissioners mentioned a few items that may qualify.

Ms. Malay asked about the next round of CLG grants. Mr. Colby stated they are usually due in November. Ms. Malay said they should consider if they want to apply.

9. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, July 1, 2015 at 7:00 pm in the Council Committee Room.

10. Adjournment

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