

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2015
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

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

Members Absent: Withey

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager
Ellen Johnson, Planner

1. Call to order

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

2. Roll call

Chairman Smunt called roll with five members present. There was a quorum. Ms. Malay arrived at 7:05 p.m.

3. Approval of the agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

4. Presentation of minutes of the February 18, 2015 meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes. Mr. Pretz abstained.

5. COA: 214 S. 3rd St. (sign)

Mike Hoffer, Aubrey Signs, was present. He explained they plan to remove the existing sign and replace it with a post and panel sign.

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

6. COA: 15 S. 3rd St. (porch repair)

Bob McDowell, McDowell Inc., was present. He explained the proposal is to replace the rail and baluster and remove the pavers at the southern entrance and add a concrete landing. The materials will be wood and will match the existing rail system.

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

7. COA: 308 Walnut St. (porch repair)

Bob McDowell, McDowell Inc., was present. He said the proposal is to rebuild the entire porch from the existing roof down, including replacing the ceiling and the beam trim. A tongue and groove ceiling and floor will be installed, to match the existing. The door will also be replaced. Mr. McDowell provided a picture of the proposed fiberglass door.

Mr. Norris told the applicant about the possibility of the Building Code requiring a 42 inch rail. Chairman Smunt said the Commission would prefer the lower 36 inch rail that is proposed. Mr. Norris said on another house that required a 42 inch rail, they kept the rail system at 36 inches and added a horizontal rod at 42 inches to satisfy code requirements.

Mr. Norris asked about the gutter and downspout. Mr. McDowell confirmed they will be replaced and will match the existing.

Chairman Smunt asked if the door is original. Mr. McDowell said he thinks it has been replaced. There are issues with the door related to energy loss and security; the lack of glass is a safety concern and a security camera currently needs to be used.

A motion was made by Ms. Malay and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA, contingent upon using a 36 inch railing and use of a horizontal pipe rail if a higher rail is required.

8. COA & Façade Improvement Grant: 111 E. Main St. (renovate storefront)

Cheryl and Doug Denz, applicants and building owners, were present. Ms. Denz explained the proposal is to rebuild the bottom half of the storefront because it is rotting. Brick will be used under the windows and the original cast iron columns on either side of the storefront will be restored.

Chairman Smunt said the Commission reviewed the concept plan for this project in the past. He asked about the proposed material for the corner between the entryway and the front windows. The Commission had discussed the use of dryvit vs. fiber cement for that area.

Mr. Denz said he spoke with the contractor, who suggested using dryvit for that area in the interest of durability and maintenance.

Chairman Smunt said he disagrees because it is a high-traffic area and the dryvit will be susceptible to damage. Fiberboard is very durable.

Mr. Denz said the underlying material at that location will not be Styrofoam, it will be some sort of board. The dryvit will be wrapped around that corner, into the entryway. That way it will not be open to another transition point where moisture could infiltrate.

Commissioners expressed concern for penetrating the dryvit to hang the lights and sign. Chairman Smunt said maintenance will be important and it will be important to seal the sign anchors and light conduits where they penetrate the dryvit.

Ms. Malay asked for information about the proposed dryvit system to make sure the system is at least the same system that was used on the upper portion of the building. Mr. Denz said the dryvit system will be comparable to what was installed on the rest of the building in 2008. He said the goal is for the project to be a permanent fix to the building.

Chairman Smunt said fiber cement would be more durable than dryvit for the corner between the entryway and windows.

Mr. Denz asked how they would transition from the inside wall to that corner using different materials; dryvit will be used in the entryway and around the door.

Chairman Smunt suggested using the same fiber cement material for the door trim.

Mr. Bobowiec suggested using fiber cement as the underlayment for the entire entrance area and skim coating it with stucco to blend with the dryvit. He suggested matching the thickness of the fiber cement to the thickness of the Styrofoam.

Mr. Denz was agreeable to the change, and said he would check with his contractor.

A motion was made by Mr. Norris and seconded by Mr. Gibson with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA, contingent upon use of cement fiberboard underlayment at the entrance corner.

A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Mr. Norris with a unanimous voice vote to recommend to City Council approval of the Façade Improvement Grant.

9. Discussion Item: 211 N. Riverside Ave. (Police Station)

Ray Lee, architect, explained that his firm, FGM Architects, is conducting a study on how to improve the working conditions of the Police Station. He asked for the Commission's input on the significance of the current buildings and the property, goals for the area, and style preference for a possible addition or new building.

Mr. Norris said the 10 State St. building is the old Crown Electric manufacturing building. A new front was put on 15-20 years ago. He would not have a problem removing that front, nor would he have issue if the old city garage in the back were demolished. The portion along the river was built in the 1970s. That structure looks sound.

Peter Suhr, Public Works Director, provided some background on the project. He said that when the renovations to the Municipal Center were done, it was recognized that a lot of the same issues were found on the police facility, including issues with the roof, parapet, brickwork, and windows. An existing conditions study was completed for the exterior, which found that over \$1 million worth of renovations would be needed over the next 5 years to get the building "up to code" and weather-tight. Prior to spending that money, Public Works thought this would be an opportune time to look at the functions within the facility itself. The Police Department shared operational concerns and deficiencies due to the fact that the facility constitutes seven buildings constructed over time which have been adapted into a police facility. The architectural firm has been hired to analyze the existing conditions and space needs for the Police Department, and prepare a master plan. Possibilities for the master plan include a weatherization project for the exterior, removing and replacing a portion of the facility or the entire facility, constructing a new building next to the existing facility and reusing the existing facility, or move the police facility completely off-site. The architects want to learn what is important to the Commission at a preliminary phase.

Chairman Smunt asked Commissioners to address the questions the architect provided. He said this was an industrial area of town. The 10 State St. portion is the only building that remains from that period. That building has been dramatically altered to the point that we do not consider it significant or contributing architecture. There is no architectural significance in the police complex, at least not enough to try to prevent a demolition.

Mr. Pretz said there could be significance, if the 10 State St. building were brought back.

Chairman Smunt said the dominant era of construction in the Historic District was from about 1850 to 1930. Styles that existed in that timeframe tend to be more favorable for new construction. If the complex is torn down and replaced, the community wants to see buildings positioned away from the river wherever possible. This is supported in the River Corridor and Downtown Strategy plans. Many community members think the newest section of the police

complex is too close to the river and that the area should include more open space. He suggested a new station go up in elevation rather than spreading out. He said the Commission does not have a specific goal for this property but that the overall goal for the Historic District is that originality be preserved whenever possible and new construction be compatible to existing surrounding structures. There are not many old structures surrounding the site. The Municipal Building is Art Moderne and the old City Building is Romanesque, although the campus to the north is open to contemporary design.

Mr. Pretz suggested taking cues from the First Street redevelopment project which is incorporating a manufacturing building type design.

Ms. Malay said the original police station tells a story of how the town developed. It is rated non-contributing, but some people would question that. On the other hand, there has been talk about moving the Police Department out completely. The area would be a great location for a restaurant. She stated that she would be open to demolishing the structures, but would need to see what would be going in their place. A new facility would need to have the flavor of the surrounding area and be respectable to it. She said that if the complex is demolished, development should be pushed off of the river to provide more pedestrian friendly open space.

Mr. Gibson said the scale is different on this side of the river than the other. The scale and bulk would be issues for a new building. He would support moving development back from the river, although the existing building does not have a bad profile. He suggested taking hints from the First Street development, which imagined how an old warehouse building would look if it evolved into office space today.

Mr. Norris said the river walk is very important, as is the Freedom Shrine where the town gathers for Memorial Day. He said the California-style 1970s building is significant. It could have another use, such as some sort of public building, which could tie into the festivals.

Mr. Pretz said he does not view the complex as necessarily historical. He would not have a problem if the Police Department relocates to another area. He would prefer not having buildings along the water and having plenty of green space. He said if the building is demolished and replaced, it should be pushed back from the river, pleasing to the surrounding architecture, and maybe more period in its look.

Mr. Lee thanked the Commission for their feedback and said they will be back as the project progresses.

10. Discussion Item: 606 Cedar St.

Sandy Mulvey, potential purchaser, said she got feedback from contractors since the last time she met with the Commission. One contractor suggested the house be torn down. Both stated the foundation on the addition is decrepit and needs to be demolished. The sleeping berths are in the area with the poor foundation. She proposed documenting the berths and/or bringing them to the museum.

Mr. Pretz clarified that the front portion of the house will be preserved while the addition will be removed and a new addition will be built in its place. Ms. Mulvey confirmed. Mr. Pretz said she would need to have an architect blend the addition in an appropriate way. An addition can look like an addition, but needs to blend appropriately. He said there is no certification that what is thought to be sleeping quarters were for sure used that way.

Ms. Malay said if we are going to allow the addition to be demolished, the sleeping berths should be removed and reconstructed. Preservation of that must happen, not just documentation.

Chairman Smunt suggested moving the components of the foundation that are part of the sleeping area to Langum Park.

Mr. Bobowiec suggested dating the wood to document the validity of the berths. Ms. Malay said we could get the material and do the dating from there.

Ms. Mulvey asked how old the addition is. Ms. Malay said she guesses the first floor of the addition is from the 1840s. The second floor was added later.

Mr. Gibson said if it is documented that the space was used for those purposes, preserving it through archaeology would clear the space for a new addition. The berths would need to be taken out in a way that they could be reconstructed and preserved.

Ms. Malay said we could do something at Langum Park, since that is where the Underground Railroad history is. She said it would be better to remove the berths and then have the wood tested.

Chairman Smunt said that Garfield Farm has gotten NIU involved in locating the original log cabin. NIU might be interested in helping with this project as well.

Ms. Malay said so many of St. Charles' founding fathers were in the anti-slavery society. No other houses that have sleeping berths have been found. There is no absolute proof, but the African Scientific Research Institute did some archaeological work in there and they felt very

strongly it was sleeping berths for the Underground Railroad, especially because it was Gideon Young's house.

Commissioners told Ms. Mulvey about the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's Property Tax Assessment Freeze program for historic rehabilitation.

Chairman Smunt suggested she work with an architect rather than a builder whose interest may not be in line with hers or the Commission's. Ms. Malay suggested making sure her main contractor is sympathetic to older homes.

Ms. Malay said she would start with the African Scientific Research Institute to see if they are interested in helping out with the sleeping berths.

11. Landmark Nominations for Camp Kane & Jones Law Office (northeast corner of Riverside Ave. & Devereaux Way)

Mr. Pretz said Stevens S. Jones was Mr. Jones' real name. He said the person who did research for a Preservation Partners award to the City confirmed this.

Mr. Colby said the legal description has been updated and basically includes everything from the west of the Public Works facility.

A motion was made by Mr. Gibson and seconded by Mr. Pretz with a unanimous voice vote to set a public hearing date for the Landmark Nominations.

Mr. Colby said the public hearing will be April 1.

12. Additional Business

a. Mobile Tour App Project

Chairman Smunt said the Heritage Center may be interested. He will be meeting with them to find out what they would like to do.

Mr. Gibson said he was at a focus group for the City's Strategic Plan and said one of the things the City needs to focus on in the next 5-10 years is heritage tourism. Mr. Pretz said he said the same thing.

b. Landmarks Research

There were no updates.

13. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 7:00 pm in the Committee Room.

14. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.