

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

June 16, 2015

7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Brabec, Carlson, Finch, Macpherson, Nelson and Schmidt

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Smith and Advisor Caron

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of May 19, 2015

Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to approve the Minutes as presented. Motion carried 6/0.

b) Heritage Preservation Commission Special Meeting of June 8, 2015

It was noted that the vote described in the minutes as 7/0 should have been 6/0.

Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to approve the Minutes as corrected. Motion carried 6/0.

4. CITIZEN REPORTS OR COMMENTS

None.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a) Site Alteration Permit - 305 Water Street (HPC No. 15-08)

Smith presented the staff report regarding the proposed new signage for the ELMHS museum at the Excelsior Depot. The staff report reviewed the sign details and concluded that the proposed signage did not obscure any architectural detail or clutter the appearance of the building, and was generally compatible with the style of the building. Staff recommended approval of the application.

Kathy Endres appeared on behalf of the ELMHS and clarified that the sign dimensions are 14"x46" and noted that the photo presented actually shows signs that are not currently on the building. Carlson asked if the sign would be metal. Endres stated that the old sign was wood and the new replacement sign will be metal.

Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Finch seconded, to approve the Site Alteration Permit with the dimensions as amended in accordance with the findings contained in the staff report. Motion carried 6/0.

b) Contributing vs. Non-Contributing Structures in the Excelsior Downtown Historic District (HPC No. 14-09)

Macpherson stated that this item should probably be tabled, to be discussed in connection with the draft preservation ordinance. Finch suggested that it might be appropriate to instead discuss the HPC response to rooftop additions and outdoor patios under the moratorium, since Macpherson, Schmidt and others had presented to the Council that it might take some period of time to complete the new ordinance and didn't want to rush that process. Finch and Carlson were in attendance at the Council meeting also.

Schmidt stated that he would like to discuss the SHPO opinion that 23 of the buildings in the district should be deemed non-contributing. Staff clarified that it is recommending that all Hess Roise recommended contributing structures should be retained as contributing to the district. Schmidt believes there are three other elements that need to be addressed-- rooftop additions, the Planning Commission and HPC design review process, and the preservation ordinance changes.

Finch read from his statement to the City Council about changes to the ordinances, and stated that the Council had decided that the ordinance revisions could be pursued on different schedules, but requested that the issues of rooftop additions and patios be dealt with before the moratorium expires. Carlson clarified that the City was under no deadline to get back to SHPO on its contributing structure response.

Commissioner Finch moved, Carlson seconded, to clarify the two issues of rooftop additions and patios in the context of the existing historic preservation ordinance. Approved 6/0.

The Commission asked whether there was guidance on these issues from the Steering Committee discussions. Smith stated that the group was strongly leaning towards recommending that no rooftop additions be allowed. Macpherson stated that no formal vote had been taken. Smith stated that the emerging consensus of the group is not to allow such additions in the historic district.

Nelson asked about the Steering Committee's rationale for this position. Smith stated that the reasoning is to protect the historic skyline and also to not obscure side windows, ghost signs, and other historic features of the downtown. This approach would also be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior guidelines. Nelson stated that the City should do its due diligence, and to articulate an appropriate guideline for Excelsior. Schmidt stated that he continues to believe that the Secretary's guidelines are susceptible to different interpretations.

Macpherson said that he believes there should be no rooftop additions on existing buildings in the historic district. Nelson asked about the legal implications of this decision. Smith said that the City Attorney believes that this would be within the City's legal authority.

Finch suggested that the desired provision could be added to Section 62-3, New Construction, under Building Elements. Caron suggested that, if this standard is applicable to the downtown historic district only, it could alternatively be added to the Section that is limited to the district, Section 62-6. The provision should address whether it applies to contributing or non-contributing structures. Finch and Macpherson suggested that the standard should apply to both types of structures if the objective is to try and maintain the existing skyline profile.

It was discussed that this should be stated as a principle, not a guideline, to the effect that no rooftop additions are allowed within the historic district. Carlson suggested deleting the words "additional guidelines" and including a statement that "No rooftop additions shall be allowed within the historic district". Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to adopt the proposed ordinance change. Motion carried 6/0.

Macpherson stated that the discussion at the Steering Committee regarding rooftop patios is that such patios not be allowed on a public street, only in the rear of the building. In 3 of the 4 existing rooftop decks or patios in the district, the patios are original to the design of the building, and the one over the coin shop on Second Street is the only one visible from the public street in front. Smith stated that this one would be grandfathered. Macpherson questioned whether the new provision on rooftop additions might not also include patio additions.

The Commission discussed whether rooftop patios in the historic district should be prohibited or restricted. Finch stated that he is concerned about maintaining the delicate balance within the historic district. Schmidt stated that he believes that the City's cup is full regarding downtown activity. Brabec stated that Excelsior should stay trendy and current and not become a rowdy college-type town. Carlson would prefer to add any additional seating on the sidewalks, rather than on rooftops, which is a more historically compatible use.

Nelson stated that the ordinance language should prohibit rooftop patios in the district. Finch said there is a need to provide more definition. He noted that an addition is defined as a permanent structure increasing the interior size or capacity of the structure, so language prohibiting any addition or alteration which increases the square footage in the structure or alters its size, height, contours or outline should be considered. The Commission determined that it should also recommend that the zoning code be amended to deal specifically with rooftop patios, since the HPC aspect is only one element of the issue.

Brabec stated that she believes there should be no public spaces on rooftops. Schmidt stated that he does not believe that rooftop patios are within the HPC's jurisdiction to restrict. Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Finch seconded, to request that staff draft language prohibiting rooftop patios, porches and decks in the historic district for review at the next meeting. Finch stated that staff should look to existing zoning code definitions to make sure that all visual elements that could accommodate rooftop patios be included, such as no railings, glass panels, lighting, parapet walls, etc. Motion carried 6/0.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Draft Historic Preservation Ordinance and Design Manual

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Carlson seconded, to continue discussion of this item to the next meeting. Motion carried 6/0.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

- a) Site Alteration Permits Approved Administratively

None.

8. MISCELLANEOUS / COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

- a) Recent City Council Actions

Smith stated that in the PUD ordinance review, the City Attorney had recommended two steps in the process to complete the reviews in the statutory 120 day period. The Council

decided to get input from the advisory commissions on this issue. The Council also discussed lot combinations, which are discouraged in residential areas by existing City policies. An ordinance that allows the City to deny combinations if they reduce the number of single family homes is under review and staff will be researching the impact further in the context of existing lot sizes. Teri Haugland resigned from the HPC for personal reasons and the deadline for new applicants is tomorrow at 4:00, with a new form required. Mary Jo Fulkerson also resigned from the Council, and a replacement will be chosen. The proposed boundary of the downtown historic district is still pending with the Council.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brabec moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.
Motion carried 6/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron
Recording Secretary