

City of Excelsior  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

December 22, 2015

7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Anderson, Macpherson, Nelson, Schmidt, Brabec (joined at 7:05)

Commissioners Absent: Finch, Salita

Also Present: City Planner Smith, Advisor Caron, Mayor Gaylord, Consultant Zahn

3. OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Gaylord administered the oath of office to new Commissioner Scott Anderson.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of November 24, 2015

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Nelson seconded, to approve the Minutes as presented. Motion carried 4/0.

5. CITIZEN REPORTS OR COMMENTS

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) Site Alteration Permit - 409 Second Street (HPC No. 15-17)

Smith stated that the applicant has proposed to replace its awnings featuring the Beacon Bank logos with new awnings featuring the logo of the bank's new owner, Alerus. Smith stated that he was concerned about the new awnings concealing architectural detail on the building and, when replaced, believes that the awnings should be at a lower elevation to reveal **the façade's** original detailing. The sign company performing the work has indicated that this change can be done and the new awnings will be mounted in the mortar and not the brick face. Randy Herman of SignSource was in attendance and confirmed that the requested changes were feasible. Anderson asked whether the awnings were functional. Smith stated that they were not really functional today, and primarily served as business signage, though he noted that historically, the name of the business would be located on the valance, not the face of the awning, especially when the awning is retractable, and the new draft design standards would require this treatment.

Commissioners questioned whether it might be possible to pursue a wall sign rather than the awnings. Herman stated that he had spoken with Alerus about the possibility of installing a wall sign instead of the awnings and their focus right now is on ensuring that the merger transaction goes well, and they desire to put up the awnings for now while exploring the possibility of a wall sign option in the future. The awnings might also provide some solar protection for those working behind the storefront windows, which would need to be factored into any decision. Schmidt stated that the findings should specify that the new awnings would have the identical color of the existing awnings.

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Anderson seconded, to grant the Site Alteration Permit with the conditions and findings presented in the staff report, with the new awnings to be in an identical color to the existing awnings and attached to the mortar and not through the brick face, and the Commission encourages consideration by the owner of replacing the awnings with a wall sign in the future. Motion carried 5/0.

b) Site Alteration Permit – 321 Third Street (HPC No. 15-18)

Smith stated that owner Sheila Holloran is seeking to make changes to the Beehive building, which is an individually designated structure not in the downtown historic district. The building currently houses 4 living units, and Holloran is proposing to convert it to 3 units.

The proposal would involve removing the rear addition, and replacing it with a new addition with a porch and deck, removing the shutters and dentil molding detail on the front of the building, removing the entry door and replacing all windows, adding a screen porch and bricking in two existing side windows, adding a detached garage and also adding a deck. The proposed materials for the new addition are corrugated steel and lap siding. Smith noted that the proposal does not meet the city's zoning setbacks.

The staff report notes that the dentil cornices on the front facade should remain, as these architectural features have been in place since at least 1956, the chimney should be retained, all double-hung window openings should be retained, and the existing wood windows should be preserved, but the proposed removal of the shutters is permitted, since these were added later and were not designed for the building. In terms of the overall compatibility of the addition, staff concluded that the porches and decks have been kept to the rear of the building, making them less obtrusive, the modern industrial materials do not detract from the historic structure, and the predominant roof shape which is flat has been retained, all of which are consistent with the character of the historic building. The new rear picture windows, however, are not compatible with the historic building. While the new addition is differentiated from the historic building, it is incompatible as proposed, since the difference in character of the new construction should not be so stark as to detract from the historic building. Smith recommended that the application be continued to the January meeting to give the applicant time to address the windows, setback, chimney and other issues.

Schmidt asked whether the staff report had been shared with the applicant. Smith indicated that it had. Macpherson stated that he has a concern with the proposed removal of the cornice detail on the front and he noted that painting of masonry as proposed is not acceptable under the guidelines. He was not concerned with the removal of the shutters that are more recent in origin and therefore can be removed consistent with the ordinance guidelines. He also expressed a concern with the window proportions on the rear addition.

Brabec stated that she likes the addition, but the **front façade, cornices or windows** should not be changed.

Anderson stated that it is not the HPC's job to say no to projects, and he is trying to preserve the historic fabric and allow for appropriate updating of buildings.

Nelson stated that she likes the juxtaposition of old and modern in the proposal, and this achieves the requirement of differentiation under the standards. Caron clarified that the applicable standard is that the new construction be differentiated but also compatible, and not one or the other. Schmidt stated that he believes that the new addition is not compatible and also not subordinate to the historic building, as required by Preservation Brief 14, page 10. What is visible from the public ways should be simple and unobtrusive and should not overwhelm the historic building, and the use of colors and materials should be harmonious. Macpherson stated that the porch elevation that is visible from the front should be made more compatible when viewed from the south. The design concept appears to be two different buildings abutting each other, and he believes that the design could be made to work and could perhaps be made to relate to the midcentury modern character of the adjacent city hall building.

Ben Awes, architect with City Desk Studio, stated that he seeks to bring a contemporary design to the historic building and believes that the design should be contextual. He is not a historic preservationist but has worked on adaptive reuse projects in Minneapolis. The cornice detail on the front is pressed metal and warped and he would like to replace it if it is not original, and the double-hung windows are at the end of their service life and he would like to replace all of them. He would also like to brick up one set of windows for the sake of the overall design, but is open to other options. The exact size of the rear picture windows is not a critical factor to the design, but the overall composition, scale and proportion are important to convey vibrancy.

Macpherson stated that the new windows on the addition should at least match the proportion of the original window openings, and should also match the proportion of the side windows, which are not proportionate in the drawing. He believes that the cornice molding has gained historic importance even if not original. Anderson asked whether the upper deck would be visible from the street. Ames stated that it is an existing element and will not be visible. Schmidt questioned whether such an extreme modern addition to a traditional historic building is too stark. Macpherson noted that the proposal provides good visual separation between the two parts of the building but should preserve the fabric and details **of the historic façade**.

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Nelson seconded, to continue this item to the next meeting, noting that the application must provide further details on staff issue 1 (garage), eliminate 2 (historic addition windows), and furnish details on 3 (entry door), 4 (basement opening), 5 (original windows), 6 (cornice), 7 (retain NW windows), and options on 8 (chimney). Awes clarified that the existing chimney is not a functioning chimney and runs through the new kitchen floor plan. The Commission requested that the applicant explore options for retaining the chimney above the roofline. Nelson noted that the chimney is not a visible part of the front **façade**. Motion passed 4/1, with Schmidt opposed.

## 7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Draft Design Manual (HPC No. 14-09)

Smith stated that Zahn has been retained by the City to work on residential design standards for designated historic structures. Zahn made edits to the commercial

manual and Smith is placing the draft on the City's website for the public to comment. Zahn will add more illustrations, such as depictions of new construction in the historic district.

Schmidt noted that he had posted storefront illustrations on Pinterest under Douglas Schmidt.

b) Memo on Review of Alterations at the Commons

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Brabec, to continue this item to the next meeting. Motion approved 5/0.

8. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

a) Site Alteration Permits Approved Administratively

Congregational Church steeple alterations were administratively approved.

b) Next Planning Commission Meeting – January 11, 2016

c) Next City Council Meeting – January 4, 2016

d) Next HPC Meeting – Tuesday, January 26, 2016

9. MISCELLANEOUS / COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a) Recent City Council Actions

Smith stated that the Council had discussed the historic district boundaries, and the owner of the Hour Glass Cleaners building has hired Marjorie Pearson, who was formerly an employee of Hess Roise and worked on the downtown historic district survey, and intends to fight the proposal to include that building in the district. The matter will be coming back to the Council in the future. The Council also discussed the City Hall building and is considering the sale of the old police station property to fund the renovations. Macpherson mentioned that such a sale and redevelopment of the police station site might impact Oak Hill Cemetery, which is a designated historic site. Smith also stated that the Excelsior Hotel project had been withdrawn by the applicant.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Motion carried 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron  
Recording Secretary