

City of Excelsior
Heritage Preservation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, June 22, 2010

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

Commissioners Present: Barnard, Howell, Meyer, Mueller, and Chair Sanders

Commissioners Absent: Reid, Roden

Also Present: City Planner Fuchs, Advisor Caron, Planning
Consultant Richards (arrived at 8:55 p.m.)

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of May 18, 2010

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to approve the minutes as written. Approved unanimously.

Barnard stated that she and Roden had reviewed several final elevation plans for the new Burdick building for conformity with the requirements specified by the Commission at the previous meeting. They determined that the primary plan complied with the conditions specified by the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), but also allowed some limited flexibility on the design of the second floor windows.

3. CITIZEN REPORTS or COMMENTS

None.

4. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a. Recent City Council Actions

City Planner Fuchs reported that the Council had recommended approval of the 2010-2011 pavement program, which was being advertised for bids; that new park benches had been approved for The Commons; that Hennepin County was pursuing the purchase of the Lyman Lumber site on the east side of Water Street for a new library and the City Council had agreed to participate in the property purchase; that a wireless internet option was being considered with surrounding communities; and that the Council had continued the consideration of placing a stop sign at the intersection of 3rd and West Lake Streets to the July 19, 2010 Council meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Second Street — Serifina

Chuck Gross presented the application for a projecting rectangular wood sign and decorative metal bracket to be located adjacent to the entrance door of the business. Fuchs stated that the height of the sign met City codes.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approved the Site Alteration Permit for signage as proposed. Approved unanimously.

b. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 438 Union Place — Excelsior Bay Charters

David Gross presented the application for signage for Excelsior Bay Charters. The laminated sign would be attached to the exterior wall of the rear of the building above the porch roof and would match the size and characteristics of the Deli by the Bay sign proposed to be immediately adjacent.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Howell, to approve the Site Alteration Permit for signage as presented. Approved unanimously.

c. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Second Street — Lillians/Moon Goon

Chuck Gross presented the application for a projecting aluminum sign on a metal bracket. He clarified that the two logos would be combined on one sign, as illustrated, and would be mounted on the southwest side of the building. Fuchs stated that the City sign requirements had been satisfied.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approve the Site Alteration Permit for signage as presented. Approved unanimously.

d. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Second Street — Mojo and Moxie

The Commission reviewed the application for a projecting rectangular wood sign near the entrance door and a rectangular sheet metal sign to be installed on the exterior wall to the left of the door. The permit application also referenced a 24" x 36" oval sign that was not otherwise depicted in the application, and the Commission was not clear on the proposed location of the oval sign.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- d. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Second Street — Mojo and Moxie -
(Continued)

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approve the Site Alteration Permit for signage for the two rectangular signs, but not for the oval sign, due to lack of information regarding the intended location of the sign. Approved unanimously.

- e. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Union Place — Deli by the Bay

The Commission reviewed an application for a rectangular laminate sign to be mounted to the wall above the porch roof, and a menu sign to be attached to the wall on the left side of the business entrance door, as illustrated.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approve the Site Alteration Permit for signage as presented. Approved unanimously.

- f. Site Alteration Permit for New Building at 10 Water Street — Excelsior Hotel

Neil Weber of Weber Architects and Planners, representing the developer Charlie James, presented the Excelsior Hotel proposal for the site. Weber stated that he has made significant alterations to the concept plan that the Commission reviewed last year. He stated that the proposal featured the same premise as the original concept, which is to bring a project of modern construction to Excelsior that is inspired by the spirit of large lake area hotels of the past. The proposal attempts to meet all zoning requirements, with the exception of the height. He believes the height requirement is the only standard that the proposal does not meet.

Weber stated that he has worked on a number of projects in the Lake Minnetonka area, including the building that replaced the razed Wayzata Theatre. He also presented historical photos of the earlier Excelsior House Hotel on the site which burned in 1928.

Weber stated that the site plan features two prominent orientations, toward Lake Street and facing Water Street. The Lake Street elevation is grander, while the Water Street side is intended to reflect the current scale of Water Street with a small retail presence on the first level, articulated bays, and a height that is close to, but still exceeds, the 35 foot height limit. All parking for the project is behind the new building and underground. He is proposing a partial green roof to help control stormwater drainage, and which may make grant money available.

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f. Site Alteration Permit for New Building at 10 Water Street — Excelsior Hotel -
(Continued)

Weber stated that he had tried to make the design less industrial and more residential in feeling, reflecting comments received on the concept plan.

The plan calls for LED accent lights adjacent to each balcony, but not so bright as to illuminate the face of the building. The most prominent feature of the design is the decorative turret or cupola to anchor the corner elevation. The proposed structure would be 55.83 feet at its highest point at the northwest corner of the site. The top level features a flat roof, rather than a pitched roof, which reduces the height slightly.

Weber showed illustrations of how the view aisle at the Water and Lake Street corner is able to maintain some of the site lines to the Port area by stepping back the building at the corner and creating a plaza.

Weber stated that they are not asking for any tax increment financing (TIF) for the project. If the City seeks to capture TIF funds, the City might be able to collect approximately \$1 million in TIF funds for use at the Port area. All sidewalk elements along the project streetscape will feature boulevard trees and lighting to match City standards.

Barnard pointed out that there is no color illustration showing the predominant features on the simulated photographic views from Water Street, so it is difficult to assess what will be most noticeable when color is added to the building currently shown in monochromatic tan color. Weber stated that it is difficult to present the building detail when the colors are darker. He stated that they are currently considering a reddish brick with more tan coloration, but have not made a final decision. They are also evaluating three colors of cast stone for the exterior banding and details. They would like to erect several walls on site before making a final materials selection. He noted that the brick would be standard modular size and may feature a tooled mortar joint. They would like to experiment with the mortar color to try and match the cast stone.

The Commission asked about the roof materials and what color copper was envisioned, since the material changes color as it ages. Weber stated that they are considering pre-patinaed copper to capture a green color. Commissioner Barnard asked whether a bronze material might make the large roof structure recede more from view. Weber stated that they could consider that.

The Commission also noted that there will be no retaining wall along the Lake Street sidewalk as depicted on the illustration, since there is no room, but there

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f. Site Alteration Permit for New Building at 10 Water Street — Excelsior Hotel -
(Continued)

would still be a seven foot retaining wall directly along the sidewalk, which had been raised as a concern at the concept review.

Weber also showed a plan of how the new building could be converted to condominiums and still meet applicable City parking requirements. He stated that there are no plans to have garage doors over the underground parking level entrances, but if they are added they would not be very visible from the street.

Weber stated that all windows are proposed to be wood with metal clad. The design will feature arched doors with reveals on the main level, with the door areas set back from the brick face, and the upper stories will have french doors leading to a balcony for each unit. The parking area will use bollard lighting to avoid the glare associated with overhead lightpoles. All site plants will be in pots, except along the sidewalks, which will have boulevard trees with metal grates.

Meyer clarified that the previous Pizza Hut building would not have become hazardous if it had been heated and maintained. Weber agreed, but noted that it would have been demolished for the project in any case.

There was no consensus among the Commissioners on the compatibility of the proposed building's mass and scale with the Downtown Historic District and concerns were expressed regarding the height of the building. Commissioners commended Weber for the amount of thought that went into trying to manage the mass and scale of the structure.

The Commission also expressed concerns regarding the corner turret style, which does not reflect any element within the existing community and conveys a Disney castle-like feel. If intended as a Queen Anne type element, the style of the turret does not relate to the structure, since there are no other obvious Victorian elements to the building. While the building does not look as massive as the prior concept, the Commission discussed that it would still set a precedent in the downtown district for height, and the proposed fourth level makes the building more than 20 feet above the current height limit.

Commissioner Barnard stated that she was still concerned with the proposed seven foot high wall along the narrow Lake Street sidewalk. Weber confirmed that the wall would be made of natural field stone.

Commissioner Howell asked if there is precedent in Excelsior for extensive use of copper architectural elements.

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f. Site Alteration Permit for New Building at 10 Water Street — Excelsior Hotel -
(Continued)

Commissioner Meyer questioned whether the noise from mechanicals would be heard. Weber stated that the mechanicals for the building will be totally enclosed on the roof and all sound directed upwards.

Commissioners discussed the outdoor roof area as a place for large groups to congregate. Some Commissioners noted that an outdoor roof area overlooking the lake might not present the same noise issues that might be a concern elsewhere in the downtown, because the area near the Port is not predominantly residential and the noise and activity level is already greater near the Port area.

Commissioners questioned the precedent of using cast stone on the face of the building for the turret, balconies, and banding, since in the past natural stone has been required in the downtown district. Weber stated that it would be difficult to do the extensive carving in natural stone that would be required for the project. He stated that the cast stone is not an inexpensive material choice and it would not look like concrete.

Several Commissioners stated that they would prefer the elimination of the ballroom area above the cornice and incorporating these functions within the structure to reduce the mass and scale to be more compatible with the downtown. Weber noted that this proposal is not a large building from an urban perspective and also pointed to the proposed setback at the corner to show that the site is not being overbuilt. Other Commissioners stated that the Water Street elevation is the most important and the absence of a visible fourth level on Water Street is a key consideration for evaluating compatibility, and also noted that the Lake Street elevation could be more massive.

The Commission determined that it would need more information from the applicant to take action on the permit application. The Commission requested specific information on the style and materials for windows and doors. It was requested that the applicant consider whether other options might be more compatible for the style of the corner turret element. The Commission asked that the applicant review whether the slight setbacks along Water Street to widen the sidewalks could be continued along the Lake Street side of the building to result in a sidewalk width of 8-10 feet wide.

The Commission confirmed that the plan will have the street trees continue along the perimeter of the building, along with other streetscape elements such as streetlights, benches, and trash receptacles that match existing elements in the downtown area. City Planner Richards stated that he would review the sidewalk

5. NEW BUSINESS

f. Site Alteration Permit for New Building at 10 Water Street — Excelsior Hotel -
(Continued)

width with the applicant. The current plan calls for two hotel wall signs. The Commission stated that any additional signage will need to be approved separately for new tenants.

The Commission expressed a desire for input from the Planning Commission on the issue of height, massing, and scale.

The Commission noted that it doesn't have enough information about the specific architectural details to comment, but noted that the existing depictions of the design seem very elaborate due to the number of details. Weber stated that the objective of the design was to present careful detailing, but not too ornate. The Commission requested that the applicant present more definite samples of proposed materials, colors, and detail on a representative portion of the facade, identifying the brick, banding, doors, windows, railings, and lighting that would appear on the building. The Commission also requested any options that the applicant would consider for a cupola/turret design that might be more compatible with the City.

The Commission requested to see the type of natural field stone that would be used for the retaining walls, and to see the specific window and door materials, colors and details, to the extent not already shown in the plans. In general, the overall palette of brick materials, mortar, and cast stone under consideration seemed acceptable, but the range of materials should be specifically identified. Weber agreed to provide City staff with a list of these materials to City staff. The Commission also requested that the color and appearance of the metal materials on the roof be clarified, and the colors and style of all light fixtures and railings be provided. A plan for accommodating a wider, more pedestrian-friendly sidewalk along Lake Street was also requested.

It was moved by Commissioner Mueller, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to continue consideration of this item to the Commission's next regular meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

g. Demolition by Neglect Ordinance

Barnard presented a draft demolition by neglect ordinance based on some of the ordinances in place in Minnesota and around the country. The Commission discussed a number of potential issues regarding the ordinance, including the process for identifying and assessing demolition by neglect, potential remedies, and economic hardship considerations.

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g. Demolition by Neglect Ordinance - (Continued)

Barnard agreed to make revisions to the draft based on the comments of the Commission and to ask City staff to share the draft ordinance with the City Attorney for review and comment before forwarding it to the Planning Commission for consideration.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnard, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to continue consideration of the demolition by neglect ordinance to the Commission's next regular meeting. Approved unanimously.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. None

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

a. Administrative Approvals

Planner Fuchs described the recent administrative approval of a projecting sign for zelaz located at 287 Water Street. Fuchs distributed illustrations of the approved sign for the Commission's information. Fuchs also discussed possible sign proposals for consolidated signage at 436 Second Street and new signage for The Bungalow at 229 Water Street.

b. 2010 Commission Goals and Objectives

No discussion.

8. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Howell, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to adjourn. Approved unanimously. Adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Barnard
Secretary