

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

Minutes
Heritage Preservation Commission

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Bipes, Bolles, Brabec, Finch, Nelson, and Chair Schmidt

Commissioners Absent: Macpherson

Also Present: Advisor Caron

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Nelson seconded, to approve the agenda.
Motion carried 6/0.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) None

5. CITIZEN REPORTS or COMMENTS

a) None

6. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a) Recent City Council Actions

No discussion.

Schmidt asked the Commission what could be done to reduce the amount of discussion of project construction details during consideration of future Site Alteration Permit applications. He believed that the discussion of such details was too lengthy during the recent review of the Bacon Drug/Victor's application. He asked for clarification whether review of the manner in which masonry work is to be done is within the HPC's jurisdiction. Caron read the Secretary of the Interior Standards for rehabilitation of masonry, which describe not only the suitability of materials used but also the manner in which the rehabilitation work is to be done. Caron confirmed that it is the responsibility of the Commission to obtain reasonable assurances that historic rehabilitation work is to be done in accordance with the Standards.

Nelson stated that the architect for this project is Julie Snow's firm, a reputable company that has done outstanding work, and therefore in her view

6. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a) Recent City Council Actions - *Continued*

the Commission should have confidence that any restoration work will be done appropriately. Schmidt disagreed, stating that the Commission has a need to verify the appropriateness of the work and to follow standards that are applicable to all projects and are not dependent on who the architect may be. Bolles commented that the architect for a project may not be involved in selecting the subcontractors or oversight of the day-to-day restoration work.

The Commission discussed various options, such as requiring the project architect to be on site during critical work, requiring inspections by a subcommittee of the Commission, or requiring that contractors demonstrate their professional qualifications to perform the work in a manner consistent with the Standards.

Schmidt asked how other cities handle such matters. Caron stated that some cities are large enough to have permanent staff supporting the HPC, such as Minneapolis, but other cities bring in resources as needed or rely on the expertise of the Commission members. Finch noted that a lack of enforcement of project standards has been a problem generally in Excelsior in the past due to limited City staff resources, which drives a desire to include complicated conditions in findings and project approvals. The Commission discussed the possibility of retaining a qualified historical consultant for difficult areas such as masonry restoration.

Nelson stated that there was a need for consistent expectations for applicants, preferably in writing, so that expectations can be easily understood. Since Macpherson and Bolles are the Commission members with special knowledge and expertise in masonry and construction techniques, and the remainder of the Commission are laypeople trying to apply standards in non-technical way, perhaps they should be charged with writing up standards for quality work to be applied in all cases.

Finch stated that the Secretary of the Interior Standards seem adequate to define what constitutes acceptable masonry work, and what is needed is someone who is competent and qualified to inspect the work as it is being done to ensure it is done in accordance with the Standards. Bolles stated that reviewing an actual sample of the masonry work on site is essential to ensuring the quality of the work before it proceeds.

Nelson suggested that a process might be to ask for a sample of the work to be done on site, that a qualified individual retained by the City conduct an onsite inspection for compliance with the Standards, that the selected contractor demonstrate the competence and qualifications to do the specific kind of historical work required, and that the applicant be required to pay for the costs of any inspection.

6. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a) Recent City Council Actions - *Continued*

Schmidt asked for a straw poll to gauge support for this proposed process. Bolles stated that he did not support the process. Other Commissioners were amenable to seeking interviews with qualified historic rehabilitation inspectors for possible recommendation to the City Council and to establish a requirement for onsite inspections of work to support Site Alteration Permit approval. Bolles stated that the Commission should rely on its own expertise, and he believed that the proposal would do the HPC harm by adding this unnecessary layer of administration.

The Commission discussed whether this proposal would obviate the need for subcommittee review of projects, as had been done in the past. The consensus was that the subcommittee on-site review process is a separate tool to be used where further Commission evaluation of site conditions is needed or exploration of options with the applicant is desired outside of the meeting context.

The Commission identified the further need to explore costs, availability and requirements for any inspector. It was moved by Nelson, seconded by Finch, to explore the use of a qualified third party resource as HPC consultant/inspector to add greater consistency to the review process and to increase the quality of historical rehabilitation projects. Approved 5-1, with Bolles opposed on the basis that the process will prove too cumbersome and it would add an unfriendly and costly aspect to the Commission's work which will discourage expansion of the historic district and historic preservation in the City generally.

Nelson agreed to contact the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota to seek a list of potentially qualified candidates. Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to authorize Nelson to seek the list. Motion carried 5/1, with Bolles opposed due to his opposition to the proposal.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a) None

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Discuss Goals and Objectives for 2014

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Bipes seconded, to continue discussion to the next meeting. Motion carried 6/0.

Bolles suggested that the previous goal of installing historic building photos and determining the related costs should be discussed in connection with the remodeling of the existing library as the new City Council chambers.

9. COMMUNICATIONS and REPORT

- a) Report of Commissioner Nelson - Statewide Historic Preservation Conference 2013

Nelson described the SHPO cultural grants program and potential availability of funds for digital conversion and archives. She stated that not many proposed grant projects cross grant categories. Nelson presented three possible grant concepts as options for consideration--a Lake Minnetonka app, expansion of the ELMHS museum, and a Big Island archaeological dig.

Nelson described the expansion of several existing historic app formats to a historic Lake Minnetonka app as her recommended potential grant project. She would like to take the lead in obtaining, inventorying and organizing the content assets of various organizations around the Lake to create a platform for better showcasing the assets via a new app to be created. Nelson stated that she would be willing to begin writing a grant request for this proposal. Commissioners had a number of questions regarding the terms of any grant and the manner in which the project would be conducted. Nelson agreed to look into these aspects further and report back.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to authorize Nelson to explore the app concept and potential grant funding further. Motion carried 6/0.

- b) Exploring Grant Funds for Oak Hill Cemetery
c) Possibility of Designating Portions of Excelsior Elementary School
d) Scenic Byway

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Bolles seconded, to continue these items to the next meeting. Motion carried 6/0.

- e) Designate Liaison for Planning Commission Meeting - February 5, 2014

Bolles agreed to attend.

- f) Site Alteration Permits Administratively Approved

None

- g) Next Meeting - February 25, 2014

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10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Bipes seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. Motion carried 6/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron
Recording Secretary