

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

Minutes
Heritage Preservation Commission

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Macpherson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bipes, Bolles, Brabec, Finch, Macpherson, Nelson

Commissioners Absent: Chair Schmidt

Also Present: City Planner Smith, Planning Consultant Richards,
Advisor Caron

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Nelson seconded, to approve the agenda with an amendment to allow the new City Planner to introduce himself and discuss his background. Approved unanimously, as amended. Motion carried 6/0.

Smith introduced himself to the Commission and stated that he was from the Linden Hills area of Minneapolis, which is similar in many ways to Excelsior. He has been a city planner for 13 years, most recently with the City of Richfield. He is interested in historic preservation and took courses with historic architects like Bob Mack. He worked in Chaska on the historic preservation ordinance and plan and also worked closely with the HPC. More recently, he has consulted on historic preservation matters.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of December 18, 2013

Commissioner Bolles moved, Commissioner Bipes seconded, to approve the minutes as written. Motion carried 6/0.

b) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of January 28, 2014

Commissioner Bolles submitted a correction to page 4, Item 9(e), that the Planning Commission liaison for the meeting was unassigned.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion carried 6/0.

4. CITIZEN REPORTS or COMMENTS

None.

5. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a) Recent City Council Actions

Richards reported that the Council reviewed a Five Corners traffic study and potential funding approaches for installing roundabouts, approved an allowance for 45 stalls under the parking impact fee at \$1200 for 2014, made advisory commission appointments, reviewed the long term financial plan, and accepted Dan Hannah's resignation from the Planning Commission.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) Site Alteration Permit for Removal of Awnings -- Tonka Building -- 50 Water Street

Smith introduced the proposal of the owner of the Tonka Building to remove the three awnings from the first level corner space of 50 Water Street. He stated that the Heritage II business had recently vacated the space, and the business name was printed on the awning above the corner door. The building dates from 1945, and photographs from the 1950s show no awnings on the building, consistent with its streamline moderne style. The proposal is to remove the existing awnings and brackets and fill in the masonry holes with suitable mortar repairs.

Ron Froehling, representing his father who is the building owner, described his history in Excelsior and his experience with the building. He stated that Primp boutique has been signed to occupy the space, and the business owners do not want any awnings on the display windows. He believes the available options are to replace the awnings, remove all but the bracket plates mounted to the building, or remove everything including the plates.

Macpherson suggested that he may wish to retain the existing awning hardware in case the reinstallation of the awnings is ever desired, since another tenant might want the benefit of awnings and the hardware has been sized for this specific location. Bipes stated that he had viewed the awnings on site and he recommended removal of the awnings due to their deteriorated condition but retention of the brackets for potential repair and reuse.

Finch asked for clarification of the standards to be applied to a request for removal of awnings from a building under the Commission's ordinance. Smith and Caron stated that the ordinance describes appropriate awning size and compatibility standards, but doesn't specifically address the question of awning removal. The appropriateness of removal should be determined under general ordinance standards for removal of historic features, which requires an assessment of whether the awnings are a significant historical or architectural feature of the

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a) Site Alteration Permit for Removal of Awnings -- Tonka Building -- 50 Water Street - *Continued*

building based on its midcentury style or have become a significant feature of the building through later addition.

Bolles stated that he believes that the side awnings should be retained and not removed as they are operable awnings which are a significant feature of the building and of historical interest as they become less common in the district. He also expressed concern that the tenants seeking their removal might be unaware of the effects of heat and light through the display glass on the interior space, and may change their minds later. He stated that he believed that the curved awning over the door with the business name was likely added later and also is not operable, so doesn't have the ability to be rolled up and thus supports its removal.

Nelson expressed concern that the awnings might not fit with the tenants' store brand image and a desire to create a look similar to their other store locations, which may have no awnings. Macpherson asked whether the owner would be permitted to replace or restore the awnings once removed under the ordinance. Caron stated that, in the past, original or existing features of historical interest have been allowed by the HPC to be reinstalled, as long as they were a notable feature during the district's period of significance, which would seem to be the case here.

Bolles also raised a concern about the lack of continuity of the facade of the building if some awnings were removed while others remained. Finch noted that there was already a difference in awning styles along the face of the building.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to grant the Site Alteration Permit to allow removal of the three awnings as requested, but due to the unique nature of the two retractable awnings, requested that the owner retain the existing hardware for potential future reinstallation on the building, which could be allowed administratively if otherwise consistent with City standards, but installation of any other awnings would require prior Commission review and approval. Motion approved 5/1-Bolles opposed.

- b) Schedule Joint Work Session with City Council

Macpherson discussed possible dates for a joint work session with the City Council, and requested feedback on what items should be on the agenda for discussion.

6. NEW BUSINESS

b) Schedule Joint Work Session with City Council - *Continued*

Bolles suggested that installation of historic photos in the new Council Chambers space should be discussed, along with likely costs and number of photos to be displayed. Nelson reported that she has explored 11x17 enlargements with a UV resistant coating that would reduce fading, and has identified a potential supplier at \$100 per photo. She indicated that the Commission would need to know the size of the room to determine framing options and the number of images that could be displayed. Finch suggested that the best approach might be to ask how the HPC can interact with the Council on a visual presentation of historic Excelsior in the new Council Chambers.

It was also suggested that the scenic byways discussion be discussed as a possible goal for 2014 and beyond.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Bipes seconded, proposing a joint meeting on April 7, with further discussion of the agenda for the session at the March HPC meeting. Motion carried 6/0.

Caron reminded the Commission of the goals it had discussed with the Council at the last joint session, which included a funding request for a grant match to support the study of City public sites and structures for potential significance, and the need for title recording of previously designated structures per the ordinance.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Discuss Goals and Objectives for 2014

Macpherson raised the draft letter to the Minnetonka School District that had been distributed but not yet acted on, and suggested that it be added to the next meeting agenda under New Business.

8. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

a) Explore Grant Funds for Oak Hill Cemetery

b) Possibility of Designating Portions of Excelsior Elementary School

c) Scenic Byway

Finch reported on the inaugural Lake Minnetonka scenic byway meeting that he had attended at the request of the Commission. He explained that this was merely an exploratory meeting to discuss the concept of a scenic byway, and the outcome of the meeting was to seek a letter from each affected City Council by May 1 as to whether it wishes to participate

8. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

c) Scenic Byway - *Continued*

in further exploration of the concept and, if so, through whom. The meeting was hosted by Wayzata. The Commission discussed the concept of a byway and whether it will have a historic or some other recreational focus, which has not yet been determined.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Nelson seconded, to recommend to the City Council that it pursue further exploration of the scenic byway concept in response to Wayzata's request for an indication of potential interest. Motion carried 6/0.

d) Designate Liaison for Planning Commission Meeting - March 4, 2014

Finch agreed to attend the meeting.

e) Site Alteration Permits Administratively Approved

None.

f) Next Meeting - Tuesday, March 18/25, 2014

Smith agreed to confirm the date of next meeting and distribute a list of future meeting dates.

The subcommittee on the Bacon Drug/Victors application reported that it met with the applicants on site and approved two appropriate brick choices for the new storefront facade on Second Street. They also confirmed that the light fixtures will be more historic and compatible in appearance, the window panes will be more horizontal in appearance and compatible with a midcentury building, rather than narrow and vertical, and the upper portion of the new storefront facade will use brick detailing (rather than metal) similar to the Excelsior Appliance building.

9. 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