



MINUTES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION - REGULAR SESSION THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024, 5:00 PM

The Historic Preservation Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Scharnett and convened in regular session at 5:00 PM, November 21, 2024.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Greg Koos	Commissioner	Present
Paul Scharnett	Commission Vice Chair	Present
Sarah Lindenbaum	Commission Chair	Absent
Dawn Peters	Commissioner	Absent (Arrived at 5:05 PM)
Mark Adams	Commissioner	Present (Left at 6:05 PM)
Emma Meyer	Commissioner	Present
John Elterich	Commissioner	Present

City Staff present included Kelly Pfiefer, Director of Development Services; Jon Branham, City Planner; Alissa Pemberton, City Planner; John Myers, Assistant City Planner; Laura Keeran, Stevenson Fellow; Samantah Mlot, Economic Development Advocate.

Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

Consent Agenda

Items listed on the Consent Agenda are approved with one motion; Items pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion are listed and voted on separately.

Item 4.A. Review and approval of the minutes of the September 19, 2024, regular meeting of the Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission.

Commissioner Koos stated that he will abstain from the vote, because he was not present at the October Historic Preservation Commission meeting.

Commissioner Elterich stated his name was misspelled in multiple times throughout the draft minutes. Ms. Pemberton responded Staff will correct the mistakes.

Commissioner Elterich made a motion, seconded by Commission Vice Chair Scharnett, to approve the consent agenda as amended.

AYES: Scharnett; Elterich; Meyer; Adams

ABSTAIN: Koos

Motion passed (viva voce).

MEETING MINUTES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – REGULAR SESSION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024, 5:00 PM

Commissioner Peters arrived at 5:05 PM.

Regular Agenda

The following item was presented:

Item 5.A. **BHP-36-24** - Consideration, review, and action on a request submitted by the Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission for **Demolition Review**, as required by § 44-1711 of the Bloomington City Code, for a structure located on the property commonly known as 604 IAA Drive, PIN 14-35-377-022.

Ms. Pemberton presented the staff report. She stated the A-Frame structure was built in the 1960s and designed for restaurant use. The structure saw a variety of uses throughout its history, most recently being used as a title loan establishment, which closed several years ago. She noted the current property owner attempted to use the structure for a restaurant use, however the structure type is very restrictive and makes reuse costly and difficult. Ms. Pemberton stated Chair Lindenbaum's preliminary review found the structure is potentially significant, because of its period architecture and cultural significance. Staff found that the structure is locally unique but does not rise to a level of specialty that merits designation.

Vice Chair Scharnett asked when the building was constructed. Ms. Pemberton responded 1968.

Vice Chair Scharnett opened the public hearing.

Nicolas Canchola (property owner) stated he believes it is best to tear down and start with a new building. He noted the surrounding area would benefit with a new commercial building.

Vice Chair Scharnett asked about other potential uses to occupy the building. Mr. Canchola responded that the building is very old and cannot support their goals. He stated he discussed with different contractors, and they concluded the structure is not able to support the heavy equipment needed for their proposed use.

Ms. Pemberton clarified they purchased the property to move their existing restaurant from the nearby location on Empire.

Commissioner Koos inquired about the occupancy of the restaurant. Mr. Canchola responded that they anticipate under 100 people. He noted the business model has shifted with the increase in DoorDash and to go orders.

Commissioner Meyer inquired about an addition to allow reuse. Ms. Pemberton stated staff can discuss after the public hearing. Mr. Canchola had no additional testimony to provide.

Vice Chair Scharnett closed the public hearing.

Ms. Pemberton stated that there is really no room on the site for an addition. Almost any decent sized addition would trigger stormwater detention requirements, which would take

up more space, then make meeting off-street parking requirements difficult, or would require it to be buried which would result in a level of expense that would kill the project.

Vice Chair Sharnett inquired about the maximum lot coverage for the site. Mr. Branham responded there is not a maximum lot coverage, but given setbacks, landscaping, and other requirements, using the site to its highest and best use is difficult with the current building.

Vice Chair Scharnett explained restaurant planning can be difficult and elaborated on some of the Building Coder requirements. Mr. Canchola provided a high-level overview of the new proposed site design.

Commissioner Meyer inquired about structural issues with the building. Mr. Canchola stated he does not think it is safe for use and definitely can't handle the increased weight of the roof-mounted equipment needs to be upgraded.

Vice Chair Scharnett asked the Commission to review each of the criteria for designation.

The Commission found that the structure has some merit based on the following: Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, County of McLean, State of Illinois, or the United States of America (the Nation); Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant; Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative; and Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature.

During the Commission discussion they discussed the structure as moderately significant but not fitting the Route 66 esthetic, and its branded design as common. In terms of suitability for restoration, the building is not in great shape and would be difficult to restore. The Commission discussed how to commemorate the local uniqueness of the red roof that the community is used to seeing. At minimum the building should be documented, and copies of photographs and documents should be provided to the History Museum.

Commissioner Peters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Elterich, to find that the building is moderately significant, based on criteria its historical and cultural significance for the City, the design, its architectural significance, structural design, and unique location, but is not suitable for preservation or restoration.

Roll call.

AYES: Scharnett; Koos; Peters; Elterich; Meyer; Adams

Motion passed.

Commissioner Peters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to not oppose the Demolition required for the structure located on the property at 604 IAA Drive, with the condition that the structure is documented, as discussed.

Roll call.

AYES: Scharnett; Koos; Peters; Elterich; Meyer; Adams

Motion passed.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.B. Discussion of grant and incentive possibilities for Downtown Bloomington, including asbestos remediation and fire suppression sprinkler systems, as requested by Vice-Chair Scharnett.

Ms. Pemberton stated she expanded this discussion topic, because there are several items that need to be discussed together. She noted vacancy issues and accessibility issues. She noted the streetscape phasing plan and described the work that they will be doing.

Mr. Myers described the “Downtown Dashboard” that Planning Staff and Building Safety have been working on. He stated that this dashboard looks at the water service lines, existing fire suppression systems, and existing uses to identify potential opportunities for upsizing water supply lines to support redevelopment that may require sprinkling. He noted the dashboard only looks at Phase 1 of the Streetscape Plan so far, but Staff is working on including all of downtown. Some of the key takeaways from this first analysis are that 81% of building with residential units do not have fire suppression and many of the service line sizes do not have the capacity to support fire suppression systems.

Vice Chair Scharnett provided background on why he brought this up as a discussion item. He stated other communities have been providing grants for property owners to revitalize downtown. He noted that Building Code will require fire suppression systems. Mr. Myers noted that there is Federal Fire Sprinkler Tax Incentive program that Ms. Pemberton forwarded to the Commission members.

Commissioner Koos asked if there are any buildings with up-to-date fire suppression systems. Mr. Myers he was not aware, specifically, but that they are cataloged in the GIS viewer. He added that likely less than 25% of buildings have fire suppression systems.

Vice Chair Scharnett stated that he brought this conversation to the Commission because past projects have stated that the Historic Preservation Commission does not provide enough of an incentive. He added, in his professional experience, many downtown business owners cannot find the funding for retrofitting and reuse of their buildings due to new codes and requirements. He noted that this particularly affects smaller developments and projects.

Vice Chair Scharnett shared emails and comments from downtown business owners, which reiterated the difficulty to redevelop downtown due to funding issues (Exhibits A & B).

Ms. Pemberton explained the vacancy information on the map, noting the partially vacant properties are typically vacant above the first floor.

Ms. Pemberton stated the biggest hurdle will likely be identifying funding sources for incentives. Noting the Rust Grant, as written, could be used to funding asbestos, fire suppression, and other similar projects, but demand is already above funding availability.

Commissioner Peters asked if there are any non-city grants that would be available for business owners. Ms. Pemberton responded that the City could administer any grants acquired, however, the Commission would need to identify and draft these opportunities.

Commissioner Koos stated there are similar issues with historic residential structures and we need to include our S-4 properties in the discussion.

Vice Chair Scharnett noted there are many ways to make a building compliant, but the addition of sprinkler systems is one of the fastest ways to compliance. He stated, overall, fire suppression is the number one priority, with asbestos being a close second because, in order to address internal infrastructure for water/sewer/sprinklers, you frequently encounter asbestos you have to address rather than compartmentalize.

Commissioner Koos inquired about the possibility of trading streetscape funds for the improvements of life safety aspects in structures. Ms. Pemberton responded that a large part of the Streetscape Plan is addressing existing infrastructure systems, including vault removal and the potential increase in water supply line capacity, that will result in improvements to building condition and life safety. Ms. Pfiefer added that the project is focused on work in public right-of-way and the funds could not be used for private property.

Vice Chair Scharnett inquired about the process to request additional funds. Ms. Pfiefer stated the City is projecting a large deficit and it is unlikely additional funds will be allocated.

Commissioner Koos asked why the responsibility to review and fund this work falls onto the Historic Preservation Commission, because a healthy downtown has a significant impact on the tax base and property values. Vice Chair Scharnett responded that if buildings are unoccupied, they are unable to work on preservation and restoration work on those building. Commissioner Koos noted that if we want more funding, we need to provide a larger context and help administration understand the implications of building condition to the tax base.

Ms. Pemberton inquired about changes that need occur to address the issues being discussed. Vice Chair Scharnett stated new residences inside historic buildings just can't be built without sprinklers; other modifications that would be required to meet the points-based compliance pathway would be more costly and complex. Life safety aspects of the Building Code are there for a reason and changing wouldn't be possible or recommended, but the Commission and the City need to be thinking about how to fund and address improvements long-term, because many of the downtown structures that are not formally vacant are significantly underutilized and will require improvements to life safety codes to remain usable and financially viable in the future.

Ms. Pemberton made an appeal to the Commission for assistance in identifying and applying for funding, from external sources, for the work they have identified as necessary. The Commission discussed alternate sources of funding and cost reduction that may be available. Commissioner Koos stated there may be an opportunity to gain a small grant from Landmarks Illinois to conduct a study to identify additional funding sources and evaluate the larger issue. He stated he will contact Landmark Illinois.

Ms. Pemberton provided information for the Developer-focused training on historic property processes, begin planned in collaboration with Normal. She stated she hopes the training can take place in the spring.

Commissioner Koos inquired about the Rust Grant Guidelines. He asked if they need to be changed to accommodate the recent discussion. Ms. Pemberton responded the guidelines do not need to change and the projects discussed could already be interpreted as allowed.

Commissioner Adams left at 6:05 PM.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.C. Discussion of process and priorities for identifying and surveying City-Owned Historic Structures, as requested by Chair Lindenbaum.

Vice Chair Scharnett requested a motion to table this discussion item until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Commissioner Elterich made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Koos, to table Item 5.C. Discussion of process and priorities for identifying and surveying City-Owned Historic Structures, as requested by Chair Lindenbaum, until the next regular meeting.

Roll call.

AYES: Scharnett; Koos; Peters; Elterich; Meyer

Motion passed.

New Business

Commissioner Koos recommended the Commission members become members of Landmarks Illinois. He requested staff include the information in the next meeting packet.

Adjournment

Commissioner Peters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Elterich, to adjourn the meeting.

AYES: Scharnett; Koos; Peters; Elterich; Meyer

Motion passed (viva voce).

The Meeting Adjourned at 6:19 PM.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Paul Scharnett

Paul Scharnett, Vice Chair

Alissa Pemberton

Alissa Pemberton, Staff Liaison