



MINUTES
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OF BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS
SPECIAL MEETING
Bloomington Police Department
305 S. East Street, Bloomington IL
Second Floor - Osborn Room
TUESDAY, September 14, 2021 5:00 P.M.

Prior to 15 minutes before the start of the meeting, 1) those persons wishing to provide public comment or testify at the meeting registered at www.cityblm.org/register, and/or 2) those persons wishing to provide written comment emailed their comments to publiccomment@cityblm.org.

The Historical Preservation Commission convened in Special Session in person with City Planner Glen Wetterow, Assistant Director Kimberly Smith, and Assistant City Attorney George Boyle present in the Osborn Room at 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 14, 2021.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Scharnett.

ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Mr. Paul Scharnett	Chair	Present
Mr. Greg Koos	Vice Chair	Present
Mr. Bobby Castillo	Commissioner	Absent
Ms. Georgene Chissell	Commissioner	Absent
Ms. Sherry Graehling	Commissioner	Present
Ms. Dawn Peters	Commissioner	Present
Mr. George Boyle	Assistant Corporate Counsel	Present
Ms. Kimberly Smith	Assistant Economic & Community Development Director	Present
Mr. Glen Wetterow	City Planner	Present

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

MINUTES

No minutes were available for this meeting. The minutes from the previous meeting will be reviewed and approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

REGULAR AGENDA

A. BHP-26-21 Public hearing, review, and action on a demolition permit submitted by Holy Trinity Catholic Church, requesting the demolition of a former service station at 802 N Main St. (Ward 6)

Father Jeffery Stirniman (711 N. Main St) spoke on behalf of the petitioner. Father Stirniman reiterated that Holy Trinity Catholic Church did not purchase the property/building until 2019. Father Stirniman stated the Church purchased the property because of their need for additional parking. The previous owner of the property and Illinois Wesleyan had been letting the parishioners park on their properties for decades. The Church had wanted to buy the property for some time but did not have the funds to do so. The Church seized upon the opportunity to buy the property when funds became available from a generous donor in the amount needed to buy the property. The Church always intended to demo the building as the purpose of purchasing the property was to provide as additional parking for the parishioners.

Father Stirniman provided the Historic Preservation Commission with a document that outlined six (6) main points as to why the Church felt the building needed to be demolished.

The first point addressed the on-going safety issue for the parishioners as well as visitors who have to cross North Main Street after having parked on the east side of the very traffic-busy North Main Street due to the limited parking in the newly acquired parking lot. The building is non-functional and if the building is razed it would afford the Church more parking spaces on the lot which would provide the parishioners a closer and safer proximity to the Church.

The second point highlighted the dilapidated nature of the service station. According to Father Stirniman the gas station has been sitting idle for eight years. Holy Trinity has owned the property for the last two years.

The third point addressed the parish's concern that the dwelling could potentially become utilized by transient individuals and concern the property could be vandalized. Father Stirniman highlighted how transients could easily break into the building and utilize the restrooms and other utilities within the building.

The fourth point focused on how the service station has become an eye-sore and would require an inordinate amount of money to restore or repurpose.

The fifth point emphasized that the parish did not have a purpose for the building and thus could not envision a reason to repurpose the building. Father Stirniman stated the Church has plenty of room within its existing facilities to accommodate its current and future needs.

The sixth and final point Father Stirniman made was to suggest a monument, plaque or some other reminder of the building and its tie to Route 66. Father Stirniman emphasized that he is an avid historian himself and collects old coins. In fact, he came across and acquired a commemorated silver coin for Route 66. It listed all the states the route ran through.

Chairman Scharnett thanked Father Stirniman for his presentation and asked the Commission if they had any questions for the petitioner.

Ms. Graehling asked Father Stirniman if the Church had considered donating the building to someone who would relocate it. This would be an ideal scenario as the Church would be rid of the building, but the building would be saved from demolition. Commissioner Graehling mentioned how a stone home had previously been moved in such a fashion. Father Stirniman stated the parish was not opposed to this idea but did not know of any interested parties and did not know how practical this would be. Chairman Scharnett noted that moving this building would be extremely difficult to do because of the design of the building, specifically noting the spacing between the service bays. Chairman Scharnett stated the process would likely be more to disassembling the structure and reassembling than just move it as a whole, which makes the process much more difficult and expensive.

Mr. Koos stated that he would be recusing himself from voting on the case as he had provided some historical information on the property to the Commission.

Chairman Scharnett then noted that Mr. Koos had to recuse himself then the Commission would not have quorum. Mr. George Boyle suggested that Chairman Scharnett asked the audience and petitioner if there were any objections to the information presented by Mr. Koos. If there were none then quorum could be maintained as Mr. Koos would not need to recuse himself. Chairman Scharnett then asked the audience and petitioner and there were no objections from the audience or the petitioner. Chairman Scharnett offered Mr. Koos an invitation to not recuse himself and Mr. Koos accepted this invitation.

Chairman Scharnett asked if there were any other questions for Father Stirniman. Mr Koos stated he had some.

Mr. Koos stated the building was on market for number of years and asked Father Stirniman if he can speak to selling the building prior to the Church acquiring it? Father Stirniman stated it was the building and the property for clarification. The Church did not have the money when it first came on the market the Church did not want to take out a loan. Elmo had graciously let parishioners park on the property for all these years. The Church had heard there was a potential buyer and wanted to act as quickly as possible. A parishioner gifted the church 600,000 which was roughly the cost to purchase the property. The Church then quickly purchased the property.

Mr. Koos had a question for staff related the uses permitted in the current zoning. Mr. Koos asked if any kind of commercial use would be allowed. Mr. Wetterow stated the commercial uses would be limited to those that are permitted in the B-1 zoning and those that would require a Special Use. Mr. Wetterow stated he didn't want to go into more detail as it is best for a specific use to be identified as it can then be evaluated in terms of whether it is permitted or not. Chairman Scharnett added there is residential district across the street which will impact the uses that could be permitted on the property. Chairman Scharnett noted that additional setbacks and screening would also likely be needed. Mr. Wetterow stated there are a number of factors that would need to be considered.

Chairman Scharnett refocused the discussion by reminding the Commission that their job is to determine if the building is historically significant or not. So, the Commission will restrain their

comments. The Commission needs to make their ruling so that the petitioner can continue on with this demolition process.

Chairman Scharnett asked if there were any additional questions for Father Stirniman. There were none. Chairman Scharnett thanked the petitioner for speaking and the petitioner thanked the Commission for holding the special meeting to hear the case.

Chairman Scharnett asked if there was anyone else that wanted to speak for or against the case. There were none. Chairman Scharnett closed the public testimony portion of the hearing and moved forward with discussion with the Commission.

Chairman Scharnett stated that based upon the information presented by the petitioner and Mr. Koos, the building is no longer in its original form. It was significantly changed in the 1980s and he feels that at one time it may have had some significance, the significance has been stripped or completely modified and as it stands is just a concrete block building with some 1980s styling on it. While it won't be long until the 1980s is 50 years old, the styling is not old enough to be significant. Chairman Scharnett stated there is family history associated with the property, but in terms of economic development and the best and highest use that is outside of the purview of the Commission. The Commission is looking at the facts before them, is this historical significant or not. Chairman Scharnett stated he would put this to the Commission that at one point it was significant but has lost this significance. Chairman Scharnett asked for the Commission's thoughts.

Mr. Koos stated that from a historic viewpoint, significance has a 50 year horizon and the 1980s remodel is outside of that 50 year rule of thumb. Mr. Koos stated the site is historic and the Route 66 Hall of Fame recognition is more of a recognition of the Quinn family who owned and operated the business on the property than it was the building itself. Mr. Koos feels this recognition of this story could be perpetuated with the aid of the Illinois Historic Byways. This is federally funded Route 66 tourism activity based out of Springfield, IL. It is separate from the Illinois Route 66 organization and has a historic marker program for Route 66 locations. Mr. Koos suggests that commemoration of the Quinn family and their service to the community and travelers along historic Route 66 could be told through the utilization of these very nice-looking historic markers (roadside marker). The markers have reading panels that allow individuals to learn more about the location. The site then becomes an official stop on the recommended tour by the Byways Organization. Chairman Scharnett was supportive of this idea as the location has history to be remembered and a commemorative plaque would be nice.

Mr. Koos clarified it is not a plaque, but is a trail panel and went into some detail as to how the markers generally look.

Father Stirniman asked Mr. Koos about the funding mechanism (federal or state funds) behind the marker. Mr. Koos stated he believes the program works based on matching funds.

Father Stirniman stated that the Church was already looking into doing recognition of the historical nature of the site and already had a location (southeast corner) on the property picked out, so this roadside marker would be great to put in that location. This site could serve as a capstone (northern anchor) to the downtown revitalization project the City is currently working on.

Chairman Scharnett as if the Commission was ready to make a motion on finding if this is historically significant or not. Mr. Koos moved that the building is found to not have historical architectural significance. Chairman asked for a second on the motion or asked if there is any additional discussion.

Ms. Peters asked if architectural significance the same as historical significance. Chairman Scharnett stated that architectural significance is not the same as historical significance which is what is associated with the family. Ms. Peters asked for clarification on motion made by Mr. Koos. Chairman Scharnett stated the building does not have any historical architectural significance, but the site has historical significance. Chairman Scharnett emphasized the focus is on the structure not the site as the issue before the Commission is the demolition of the building. Ms. Peters stated she is struggling with the modifier architectural. Ms. Peters asked if the Commission is determining historical significance or historical architectural significance. Mr. Wetterow interjected that the code only states significance. Ms. Peters suggested modifying the motion to just state significance. Chairman Scharnett stated that significance could be codified in a lot of different ways and his suggestion was to look at the question from the perspective of if this is significant in the short vs long term. Ms. Peters reemphasized her concern is about the modifier. Chairman Scharnett stated he felt the Commission had talked about the site being historically significant, but the building is not what is making the site significant.

Mr. Koos stated the building has lost its architectural integrity and no longer tells the story. Ms. Graehling agreed. Mr. Koos stated this is why he used modified and is not going to change his motion. He feels it is important to underscore that that this is essentially what we are doing here and to have it in the motion reflects the discussion being had.

Mr. Boyle brought up the findings associated with determining significance and asked if finding could be that the site is significant, but the building lost its architectural significance.

Mr. Koos and Chairman Scharnett did not think this is necessary as the motion made by Mr. Koos is sufficient. Chairman Scharnett emphasized that the architectural perspective is what aids in the determination of the significance of the building and the question before the Commission is on the demolition of the building. The architectural significance has been lost. The historical significance has a lot of qualities it can be judged upon in terms of the site, but the focus is on the building.

Ms. Peters wanted to clarify if the motion as stated meets what the Commission has been asked to address. If so, then she is ok with the motion. Chairman Scharnett asked for input from Mr. Boyle. Mr. Boyle stated that unless there are other counter motions this motion is stating it is historically significant then the motion is sufficient to address what is being asked of the Commission. Ms. Peters stated she is fine with the motion. Chairman Scharnett asked if there was a second to the motion made by Mr. Koos. Ms. Peters was still too opposed to the semantics to make the second and that Ms. Graehling would have to make the second. Ms. Graehling was hoping for a situation where the building could have been moved and utilized in some meaningful way. However, this is more difficult than she realized and not an option. She likes the idea of a plaque commemorating the story of what was there. The building itself is beyond repair and no longer has the characteristics that it once had that would tell the story. Chairman Scharnett asked Ms. Graehling if the building had lost its architectural integrity. Ms. Graehling stated she would agree it has lost its architectural integrity.

Chairman Scharnett suggest there might be one other way to phrase the motion, it is not significant based upon its architectural significance. Ms. Graehling would agree with this. Chairman Scharnett asked Mr. Boyle if this is a fair way to view the motion. Mr. Boyle read from the code which stated the Commission was to make a determination based upon significance.

Ms. Peters asked if the Commission was restricted to the two potential motions suggested by staff. Mr. Boyle stated the Commission is not. Mr. Wetterow stated these were suggestions in helping the Commission make a decision on the significance.

Ms. Peters suggested a motion could be made that based upon findings, the HPC has determined the building is not significant. Mr. Boyle stated there would need to be second on the motion made by Mr. Koos or a new motion needs to be made.

Chairman Scharnett stated that based upon the discussion of the board, the building is not worth saving, but the Commission is struggling with the semantics of historically significant.

Chairman Scharnett asked if the Commission had an understanding on the first point of fact, that the building is not architecturally significant. The Commission all agreed with this. Chairman Scharnett asked if the Commission could agree on the second point, that since it is not longer architecturally significant then it is not historically significant. The Commission all agreed with that. Chairman Scharnett then asked if it could be stated in those terms in a motion that the Commission could agree with. The Chairman asked Mr. Koos if he would be willing to amend his motion to state that the building is no longer architecturally significant, so it is no longer historically significant. Mr. Koos said he would be find with amending his motion to state this.

The amended motion made by Mr. Koos was Ms. Peters seconded. The Chairman asked for a roll call vote. Ms. Graehling - Yes, Ms. Peters - Yes, Vice Chair Koos - Yes, Chairman Scharnett - Yes. Motion carries on the vote of 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

No items.

NEW BUSINESS

Work Plan discussion at next meeting. Mr. Koos wanted to note that he thinks the plan is a superb plan and is excited to get working on it. He is already working on how to better identify historic resources west of Main St. There is software that helps aggregate this information. Mr. Koos offering services to prepare National Register Nomination for immigrant thematic nomination of sites associated with historic immigration in West Bloomington and a contiguous architectural district that would meet National Register standards.

On September 27th the Lakota Group presentation will go before City Council for adoption.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Graehling motioned to adjourn. Ms. Peters seconded. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:54 PM.