

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: February 13, 2013
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PRESENT: Carolyn Larson, Robert Sebo, Merle Hanson, Susan Briggs, Shaune Burke and Lynn Englund
ABSENT: Mary Edel Beyer and Wes Hamilton
STAFF PRESENT: Mark Moeller

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Sebo. The minutes from Commission meetings of December 12, 2012 and January 9, 2013, were reviewed and upon motion by Commissioner Larson, and second by Commissioner Englund, were unanimously approved as submitted.

Discussion – LeVee Park Upgrade

Mark Moeller, City Planner, noted that given expression of recent Commission interest, this item had been placed on this afternoon's agenda for discussion. He stated that the City's new Mayor, Mark Peterson, had created a committee to look at ways of reviving/upgrading LeVee Park. Although these efforts had been attempted on a number of occasions throughout the years, none of those efforts included implementation budgets. As a result, little had been accomplished in terms of those previous efforts.

Mr. Moeller explained that the current Committee is co-chaired by Eric Sorensen and Frank Pomeroy. Although a number of ideas are expected to surface during upcoming meetings of the Committee, the purpose of referring it to the Commission this afternoon was to simply define any preliminary concerns that the Commission may have of the process.

Chairman Sebo stated that he had been involved with a previous planning committee relative to the LeVee Park area and expressed frustration that that Committee had spent a significant amount of time in developing certain recommendations, only to have a new Committee created.

Commissioner Burke emphasized that given the parks primary flood control function, all historic attributes related to the original park had been removed.

Given a recent discussion with Frank Pomeroy, Mr. Moeller noted that a focus of the Committee reuse of the park would be to stimulate through sponsored events and activities.

Commissioner Englund suggested that upgrades incorporate historical lighting throughout the area and include more color, possibly in the form of flags or banners.

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Mr. Moeller emphasized that any form of park reconstruction activity will need to recognize existing functional elements of the park including the flood wall, a number City wells, and an established rail line that visually serves to bisect the park from the core downtown area. He further noted that efforts were underway to possibly look at retaining some professional assistance through the University of Minnesota to help in planning efforts. Professional assistance was something that was not part of previous planning efforts.

Following further discussion, the consensus of the Commission was that although it supported upgrade and reuse efforts of the park, all needed to recognize that the "original" historic character of the park as a passive area has been replaced by more functional designation. However, with proper planning, it would be conceivable to introduce limited historic character through lighting, surfacing and proper landscaping materials.

Chairman Sebo suggested that the Commission not do anything further with this until plans start to evolve.

CLG Grant Opportunities

Mr. Moeller stated that, although not planned for this year, he had been contacted by the State Historic Preservation Office with a heads up to the fact that a balance remained in 2013 Certified Local Government Grant Funding opportunities. Given that notice, he had been in contact with SHPO and City staff relative to a potential C.L.G. Grant project. Given those discussions, he was suggesting that the City retain the services of qualified professional to prepare a National Register Form for the now vacated UBC building located at 125 West Fifth Street. He stated that an historic evaluation of the property had been prepared as part of historic study done by MnDOT for the Bridge Relocation Project. Given this evaluation, it appeared that the structure may qualify for listing on the national register. He noted however that the evaluation had not yet been certified by SHPO. He further stated that he had heard that the present property owner would have no problem with the designation and may even favor it. Again, this fact had not been fully certified. However, should an effort be made to consider developing a National Register Nomination Form for this site, the property owner would be notified.

Commissioner Englund suggested that funding be secured to preserve and protect the Masonic Temple backdrops. Mr. Moeller explained that, at present, efforts were being made to replace the roof on the Masonic Temple structure. Chad Ubl, Community Services Director, is coordinating this effort.

In response to a question Mr. Moeller stated that the Commission could pursue both National Register and Local Designation Nomination Forms for the UBC property. However, without a discussion with the current owner, he would be reluctant to pursue local designation at this point.

Commissioner Sebo stated that, given recent press, the school board was considering the concept of abandoning all elementary schools in favor of construction of one large one. He stated that when National Register Nomination Forms were approved for W-K, Central, Madison, and Jefferson Schools, the Commission had agreed not to promote the Local Designation Process with its understanding that the district would continue to own and

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manage current buildings. Given his feeling that this latest proposal was a game changer he suggested that the City retain the services of a consultant to prepare Local Nomination Forms for the four schools. Although the Commission may choose to do nothing with those forms for the time being, he felt it would be advisable to have them available in the event that buildings become threatened in some way. The consensus of those present was that the preparation of Local Forms may be advisable.

Mr. Moeller stated that given discussion occurring this afternoon of this subject, he would again contact SHPO for additional input. Since grant applications are due by the first of March, a plan of action would need to be prepared quickly. Additionally, he would provide an update of this issue at the Commission's next meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.



Mark Moeller
City Planner