

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
City Hall/Court House, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West, Lower Level - Room 40,**

May 14, 2015

Present: Barbara Bezat, Robert Ferguson, Michael Justin, Matt Hill, Renee Hutter Barnes, Matt Mazanec, Amy Meller, David Riehle, Steve Trimble, Diane Trout-Oertel
Absent: Richard Dana, (excused), Bill Lightner (excused), David Wagner (excused)
Staff Present: Amy Spong, Christine Boulware, Fred Counts

BUSINESS MEETING/PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW

I. Call to Order: 5:10 pm

II. Approval of the Agenda: The order of the agenda was rearranged to allow Old Business Item VI.A. to be presented before the Pre-Application Review. Commissioner Mazanec motioned to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Justin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Conflicts of Interest: Commissioner Hutter Barnes indicated that she is a MNDOT employee and would recuse herself for the Old Business item regarding the I-94 Widening and proposed sound wall.

IV. New Business

A. Presentation by Kristen Zschomler, MNDOT Cultural Resources Staff, regarding Section 106 and NEPA processes related to historic resources.

Ms. Zschomler provided a handout and PowerPoint presentation to accompany the overview of both Section 106 and NEPA processes. A few commissioners asked questions and comments regarding processes and HPC review of transportation projects.

V. Pre-Application Review

A. 2390-2400 University Avenue West, University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District, by Exeter Group LLC, for a preliminary review to partially demolish the roof of the L-shaped building and then construct five stories of housing onto the roof of the existing building. (Spong, 266-6714)

Staff read the description of the proposed project and provided preliminary findings. Staff added that this property is contributing to the University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District, which is certified by the National Park Service for meeting the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Certification as a contributing resource allows for developers to access both Federal and State Historic Tax Credits. If the proposed addition moves forward, the building status as contributing will most likely be changed to non-contributing and future use of tax credits would then not be possible.

Commissioner Riehle asked for clarification about the location of the addition and setbacks and the current use of the building. Staff indicated that Loomis Armored Car vacated the building recently for a move to the East Side.

Tom Nelson with Exeter Group, the developer proposing the project, was present along with Mike Krych, architect for BKV Group to discuss the proposal. Mr. Nelson explained that while rehabilitating the C & E Building, they purchased the neighboring buildings to make the process easier. He added that they have marketed the space for sale or lease for the past few years and while the light rail is an asset to the community, in this case it has eliminated the parking and shrunk the sidewalk, which is bad for mid-block retail. He proposed this plan to breathe new life into the district and comply with the guidelines, as it is no longer a trucking district, but a transit oriented district with up-and-coming residential development. He clarified that his group did not go to the City seeking funds, but that City staff approached them about sponsoring them for funding.

Mr. Krych gave a brief overview of projects his company has done in historic districts and explained some of the details of the proposal adding that the addition is set back to clearly differentiate it from the historic building. He stated they pulled the building back from University Avenue to lessen the impact to the view corridor, but it is apparent at the intersection. The exterior is metal panels and cement-fiber board; the windows and patterning is simplified and of a different style than those on other buildings. Their material color palette is earth tone to relate with historic materials in the district.

Commissioner Riehle requested clarification about the footprint of the building and setbacks.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel commended BKV on their effort to meet the challenge of the project, but Preservation Brief 14 makes it clear that additions should not dwarf the historic building. The setback along Raymond should be greater as the view corridor is significantly problematic.

Commissioner Meller stated concern about the Raymond Corridor, pointing out that the immediate buildings are not taller than three-stories. She asked why they were proposing five stories and not a lower height more compatible with the adjacent buildings. Mr. Nelson stated they needed more units to justify the cost of the construction since they are not seeking tax credits.

Commissioner Riehle asked what gives them confidence they can fill the number of units they are planning. Mr. Nelson replied their project next door is performing to expectations with near 100% occupancy. Also next door is historic rehabilitation and the proposed is new construction, they want a variety of product types to offer. The markets studies also give them confidence. Commissioner Riehle asked if they plan to retain ownership if the project is built. Mr. Nelson replied that his firm both retains and sells buildings and they have outside groups of investors. They would need to evaluate their return, but right now they are holding onto the C & E building for the five-year recapture.

Commissioner Meller noted the material selections and intent to relate design to the C & E building and asked if they could instead relate it to the General Motors Trucking Company building where it is proposed instead of a building it is not associated with. Mr. Krych stated that keeping with a simplified form, the proposed design made sense.

Commissioner Riehle asked for some information about green roofs. Mr. Nelson gave some examples Mr. Krych explained reasons for installing one.

Commissioner Meller asked if they could put three stories along Raymond to maintain the massing of the existing buildings and then step up toward the C & E building while getting the numbers they need to make it a viable project. Mr. Krych

stated that the proposed plan allows them the number of units they need, if they step the building it will change the shape and orientation and make it less dense.

Commissioner Meller asked if they'd consider a double-loaded corridor on the west side of the building and a single corridor along Raymond. Mr. Krych stated that it wouldn't give them enough building length to get the unit counts they have.

Commissioner Justin asked for explanation of options for the windows. Mr. Krych replied the windows are fixed at the top and the bottom portion are horizontal awning windows and there are awning windows in other parts of the historic district.

Commissioner Hill commended them on their efforts and stated that there are issues with the setback and massing.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel stated that the Preservation Brief many times and specifically advises against a multi-story building on a low one, two or three story building presents a problem for the HPC. When the proposal comes back to the HPC for review, how will the Commission handle this very big problem with this project?

Commissioner Bezat stated she shares Commissioner Trout-Oertel's concerns and that the project overwhelms and dwarves the building that it is being added to. She recognizes their need to have enough units to make the project viable. She commended the work on the Chittenden and Eastman building adding that it still looks like it did historically, but this proposal is a monumental "thing" hovering over the corner. This intersection has the feel of the old streetcar corner. Even with the proposed setback, the project doesn't have compatible massing, scale, or height. This is an overwhelming impact, especially when approaching the intersection from the north on Raymond. Also, don't try to match the Chittenden and Eastman building when your addition is on the General Motors building. She concluded that they don't want to put the neighborhood in the position to lose its National Register Certification.

Commissioner Hill encouraged the commission to give more feedback to give the applicants direction.

Commissioner Meller stated she appreciates the setback from University Avenue but noted her concern for the impact at Raymond Avenue, compatibility with the existing heights at the Raymond node, and needing to relate the design to the General Motors building. She added that she also appreciates that the new materials differentiate the new construction, and suggested looking at color and how the bays on the General Motors building can relate to and guide the design of the addition. The window style doesn't relate to other nearby buildings; she suggested looking at neighboring historic buildings in the district with operable windows like the double-hung on the C & E and simplify the design but keep the proportions. She added that there ways to make the building three-stories at Raymond and then step it up to conform to the massing of the block. This guidance can help make the project more compatible with the district instead of compete with the district so that the historic designation isn't compromised.

Commissioner Riehle stated that awning windows are compatible with commercial and industrial buildings.

VI. Old Business

- A. I-94 Widening and proposed sound wall extension along Mounds Boulevard, Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District**, by MNDOT, to adopt a resolution regarding the sound wall and impacts to the Dayton's Bluff District. (Spong, 266-6714)

At the April business meeting, staff from MNDOT and Public works introduced the project to the HPC. At that time it wasn't known whether the project was within the boundaries of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District. Staff received a map on May 13th that shows the wall located within the boundaries at several locations. Staff provided a draft resolution for consideration and a copy of the May 4th memo that staff sent to Councilmember Finney's office asking that the City Council delay their municipal consent decision. City Council held a public hearing on May 6th and a decision was laid over for the HPC to adopt a resolution. If the sound wall extension proposal moves forward, MNDOT will need to submit an application for review by HPC at a public hearing. Given the preliminary information presented to the HPC, it is anticipated that the sound wall extension will negatively impact the historic and architectural character of the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District.

Commissioner Bezat moved approval of the resolution; Commissioner Riehle seconded the motion. Commissioner Trimble stated support of the motion and had questions about the MNDOT vote process that was addressed by Ellen Biales, Ward 7 Legislative Aide. The motion passed unanimously.

- VII. Approval of Action Minutes:** Commissioner Trout-Oertel moved approval with edits submitted. Commissioner Hutter Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- A.** April 9, 2015 Business Meeting – Commissioner Bezat stated that she was not present. Commissioner Trout-Oertel submitted minor edits and asked for acronyms to be spelled out the first time used.

- B.** April 23, 2015 Public Hearing

VIII. Chair Announcements

- A.** Empire Drive open house
- B.** Heritage Preservation Awards

IX. Staff Announcements

- A.** Staff is busy with Awards planning and needs some help
- B.** Fred Counts was introduced as the new HPC intern

- X. Motion to Adjourn:** 7:03 pm