

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

APRIL 21, 2015

7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Brabec, Carlson, Finch, Haugland, Macpherson, Nelson
(arrived at 7:10) and Schmidt

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Smith and Advisor Caron

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of March 17, 2015

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Haugland seconded, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried 6/0.

4. CITIZEN REPORTS OR COMMENTS

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

a) Site Alteration Permit – 356 Water Street (HPC No. 15-05)

Smith stated that applicant Dan Johnson is requesting approval of four alterations to the carriage house structure on the property. The front door was previously proposed to be either a new or reclaimed door appropriate in style for the structure, and Johnson has now decided to use a reclaimed door as shown in the submission. He also proposes to replace the existing double hung windows with new double hung windows similar to those that were installed in the main structure. He also proposes to remove the gable over the front door that was added in the 1980s and replace it with a shed roof entry as shown in the submission, to be more appropriate in scale and style. He also proposes to add a painted sign on the siding facing Water Street on the primary and carriage house structure for each of the businesses that will occupy the structures.

Smith stated that there are two standards that are relevant to this application. City Staff concluded that the new canopy and reclaimed front door will be compatible with and enhance the original structure, and the distinguishing architectural features consisting of the hip roof, lap siding, and square window above the garage entry are all significant and will be retained. The proposal will also restore the building to its original appearance since the existing window and door openings will be retained. Smith also stated that the proposed new painted signage is not an issue since this is

not a masonry surface, and a benefit to painting signs directly on wood lap siding is that it will eliminate the need to attach a sign through the siding as businesses change. The staff report concludes that the changes are compatible with the character of the structures, with the condition that the applicant will need to obtain a building permit and sign permit.

Carlson asked if the size of the signage is determined by the City's zoning rules, and Smith confirmed that it is.

Schmidt asked about the status of the garage door. Smith reported that the applicant stated that he would use either a reclaimed carriage house door or a new door. Johnson has since decided to use a glass panel door, which was approved by the established subcommittee of Schmidt and Macpherson. Johnson noted that the reclaimed front door is actually a 36 inch wide door which will be installed in the opening, but the existing door was only 32 inches wide.

Johnson said that the sign concept is intended to give the building presence from the street. Commissioners discussed whether it might be possible to further limit the signage size, but determined that it was appropriate.

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Carlson seconded, to approve the site alteration permit with the findings and conditions in the staff report, with the requirement that a sign permit must be obtained prior to commencing the work. Finch asked about the color of the proposed sign on the house. Johnson stated that the background would be black with white letters. Macpherson stated that the signage would be reversible by repainting, so he was not as concerned with the precise colors. Motion carried 7/0.

It was stated that the doors and original windows had been removed and disposed of without City permits. Macpherson noted that procedurally, such work should not have occurred without the applicant securing the necessary permits. He stated that this is an issue for both the applicant and city staff. Johnson stated that he disposed of the windows because they were rotten, but stated that he understood that permits are required before alteration work is undertaken.

b) Site Alteration Permit – 1 Water Street (HPC No. 15-06)

Smith stated that SignSource has prepared an illustration of a replacement sign for the Lake Street side of Haskells Wine and Spirits, which would be a cutout sign that is externally illuminated. He stated that City staff recommends approval of the proposed signage. Schmidt asked about the size of the sign. Smith stated that he had not yet calculated whether the signage met the City's size requirements. The proposed sign is approximately **16 ½ feet long**. Carlson asked about the City's sign lighting requirements. Smith stated that signs cannot be backlit, and cannot shed light beyond the property. Macpherson stated that the style of fixture is also subject to approval, but since this is a non-contributing building, that may not be as great a concern. The proposed sign has four fluorescent lights, each projecting 38 inches from the building and a total of eight brackets. Finch stated that he would like to see a better illustration of the type of light fixtures to be used and would like to know whether the size of the sign is permissible. Nelson suggested that the lighting element could come back before the HPC, allowing the Commission to accept the sign design but reject the lights for lack of sufficient detail.

Finch stated that he did not view the application as complete. Smith stated that he didn't realize that the calculation of sign size was relevant to the HPC's decision. Commissioner Haugland moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to approve the site alteration permit with the findings and conditions in the staff report, with a third

condition that the sign design and lighting design shall be subject to approval by a subcommittee consisting of Commissioners Finch and Carlson before the 45 day period expires under the ordinance standards. Schmidt stated that he believes the Commission's jurisdiction extends only to whether the light fixture is appropriate. Motion carried 7/0.

c) Site Alteration Permit – 441 Second Street (HPC No. 15-07)

Smith stated that applicant Nick Johnson is proposing to replace the wood shakes on the roof of the structure with asphalt shingles. He stated that he has reviewed the applicable standards and believes that all character defining features of the building are being retained. The current shakes were installed in the 1990s, and there is no indication that, when the structure was used as a boarding house, it had wooden shakes. A photograph dating from the 1950s did not show the exact type of shingles used.

Nick Johnson, of 185 Mound Avenue, Excelsior (Tonka Bay), stated that, all things being equal, he would prefer to put on a wood shake roof, but the cost is twice the price of asphalt shingles. He stated that some types of shingles have a texture that mimics cedar shakes. Finch stated that, based on his research, asphalt shingles were first used in 1901, which postdates the structure. Johnson stated that the house was extensively renovated in 1908, and there is no indication whether the roof was wood or asphalt at that time. Macpherson stated that it probably would have used old square asphalt shingles, in a color such as green, red or blue, which were common in the early 1900s. Johnson stated that he is proposing a gray or brown color shingle, inspired by other houses in town of the same period.

Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Finch seconded, to approve the site alteration permit for asphalt shingles with the findings and conditions in the staff report. Macpherson stated that there is no extant historical documentation about the color of the roof, so the applicant should use a color from a palette range that is appropriate to the early 1900s. The applicant stated that he had selected a Heritage Premium lighter gray color (Old English Pewter). Motion carried 7/0.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Revising the Downtown Historic District Boundaries (HPC No. 15-02)

Smith reviewed the background of the Downtown Historic District Boundaries originally established in 1998. The historical architecture firm of Hess Roise made a recommendation in 2002 to reduce the district boundaries to address concerns raised by SHPO regarding the original boundaries. The HPC recommended and the City Council approved the revised boundaries, but the City never heard back from SHPO on whether the revised boundaries addressed its concerns, so the revised boundaries were not implemented by staff. The HPC later elected to review the district boundaries the next time there was a reason to revisit the boundaries and to accommodate changes that had occurred in the intervening time period. With the new historic preservation ordinance and HPC design standards undergoing revision, staff decided it would be timely to review the boundaries as well. The green areas are proposed by staff to be removed from the district, and the yellow areas are proposed to be newly included.

Staff reviewed each site to be removed and included, as described in the staff report. 478 Second Street and 474 Second Street both were recommended for inclusion by Hess Roise, and staff believes these structures meet the relevant designation criteria. Staff also recommends including 426 Lake Street, which was built in 1965. He noted that the period of significance changes over time, and this structure is now

50 years old, eligible for inclusion, and staff believes it meets the designation criteria. Smith stated that the proposed district boundaries would next go to SHPO, the Planning Commission and the City Council for review.

Finch stated that this is intended to be a downtown district, not a strictly commercial district, and therefore is concerned about removing non-commercial structures. Smith stated that protection is already available for individually designated sites and these need not be included in the district. Finch stated that he was comfortable removing the George Street properties that were demolished for the Oppidan project and the BP station, and perhaps the new Third Street row houses. Macpherson stated that the row houses are an important approach to the downtown and were approved under the HPC review process, and therefore should be included in the district. Schmidt believes the BP station should be left in the district as well.

Schmidt opened the public comment period.

Kelsey Page appeared, representing Blaine Burdick, the owner of 426 Lake Street (Hour Glass Cleaners). He submitted a letter to the Commission. In his view, this is a square cinderblock building with a glass front of no architectural significance. He stated that it is also outside the period of significance from the Hess Roise study of 2002. This structure has no special historic significance, it is a dry cleaners building. It has no particular character or aesthetic interest. The downtown's brick structures are those that are significant, but this building has no fancy finishes. It is non-contributing, like Haskells. Including the building doesn't further the district. That it is one of the few examples of midcentury modern architecture in town is not a criterion and the new library design was rejected by the City due to its modern character, so this building is not a landmark or associated with the history of commerce in Excelsior. The canopy is trade dress that is owned by the tenant. The metal canopy is like a gas station canopy, and is not unique. He believes that Standards 1 and 7 are vague. There is no reason to perpetuate this building beyond its current use. It adds nothing to the downtown's ambiance. Mr. Burdick requests that this property not be included in the district.

Todd Jones, owner of 478 Second Street (the former Teen Clinic building) stated that he had done some responsible improvements to the circa 1910 structure, and then received a notice about putting a portion of the property in the district. He is fine with including the structure in the district, but is opposed to including the rear vacant lot along School Avenue in the district. Smith clarified that Jones' email to this effect had been provided to the Commission.

Bob Bolles stated that he would encourage the Commission to keep the district as large as possible to avoid new development from encroaching and creating visual distractions within the downtown district.

Schmidt asked about the downside of retaining the additional properties recommended for removal in the district. Smith stated that it would not present an issue for the City's CLG status, but SHPO may comment negatively if it doesn't approve of the proposed boundary. The National Register of Historic Places has different rules for district boundaries that would impact availability of tax credits, but the two districts could be different. Haugland asked if any contact had been attempted with 474 Second Street. Smith stated that he had spoken with the owner she was aware of the proposed designation. Schmidt closed the public comment period.

Commissioner Macpherson moved to remove the two demolished George Street properties from the district boundaries and add the additional proposed sites, without the Burdick site included. Carlson stated that it had been appropriate to continue

this item to make sure that the Commission had heard from the owners of the properties proposed for inclusion. He proposed to discuss the properties recommended for exclusion and inclusion separately. Macpherson withdrew his motion. Commissioner Carlson moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to remove the two George Street properties only, and make no other reductions from the 1998 boundaries of the district. Motion carried 7/0.

Carlson stated that he believes that the Burdick property should be added to the district. Finch asked whether it might be appropriate to ask for a new study of the building at 426 Lake Street, as it has aged into potential significance since the date of the last study. Schmidt stated that he does not believe that modern structures should be included in the district. Brabec stated that she has an appreciation for midcentury modern design, and wishes that the owner appreciated the aesthetic value of his building.

Commissioner Carlson moved to add the properties other than 426 Lake to the district, including the portion of the Haskells property that had been previously omitted. Commissioner Haugland seconded, and clarified that this would include 478 Second Street and 474 Second Street. Motion carried 7/0.

Haugland stated that she is not persuaded that the 426 Lake building meets the criteria to be included in the district. Nelson questioned whether it might be possible to include it as a non-contributing building within the district, and doesn't think that every building in the district should be brick to be included. Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Carlson seconded, to include 426 Lake in the district. Carlson requested a roll call vote. Haugland, Nelson, Schmidt and Brabec voted no, Finch, Macpherson and Carlson voted yes. Motion failed 3/4.

Commissioner Haugland moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to reject the staff recommendation to add 426 Lake Street to the historic district. Carlson requested a roll call vote. Macpherson, Carlson and Finch voted no, Brabec, Schmidt, Nelson and Haugland voted yes. Motion carried 4/3.

7. HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE STEERING COMMITTEE

Smith stated that the draft historic preservation ordinance has been circulated, and one significant feature proposed is that the Planning Commission would be responsible for commercial design review outside the historic district, and the HPC would be responsible for design review within the historic district for additions, alterations and new buildings. This is an attempt to streamline the current reviews and avoid an additional layer of historic preservation review. The Steering Committee approved this concept. Haugland explained that when the HPC was originally set up, the Council did not wish to imbue HPC with planning authority, but based on the careful review work done by the HPC over the past 20 years, the City seems more comfortable granting this authority and she believes it is the right time.

Smith stated that financial incentives were also being considered for projects subject to the historic preservation review process, such as reducing building permit fees for those owners who had designated structures. Finch suggested that staff consider other incentives, such as reducing the City portion of property taxes for five years, to encourage new residential designations.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Brabec seconded, to continue agenda items 8 and 9 to the next meeting. Motion carried 7/0.

8. ANNUAL MEETING

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

- a) City Hall
- b) Walking Tour Brochure
- c) Site Alteration Permits Approved Administratively

10. MISCELLANEOUS / COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

- a) Recent City Council Actions

Smith stated that the proposed villas behind the Excelsior Mill were discussed at the last Council meeting, including extensive discussion regarding the number of parking spaces and the parking space sizes. No conclusion was reached, but staff and the applicant were asked to come back with a proposal to resolve the issues next month. The hotel development is still being discussed.

Oppidan is also discussing a proposed change to the Kowalski's building. The contractor installed jumbo brick on the building, which is not permitted by the City's ordinance standards. When it was brought to their attention by the City, the jumbo brick was removed, but they are seeking an exception to retain the jumbo brick on the rear wall of the building facing Mount Calvary Church, which would require a PUD amendment.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Carlson seconded, to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. Motion carried 6/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron
Recording Secretary