

City of Excelsior  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

January 26, 2016

7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Anderson, Brabec, Finch (joined at 7:07), Macpherson, Nelson, Salita, and Schmidt

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Smith, Advisor Caron

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of December 22, 2015

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

4. CITIZEN REPORTS OR COMMENTS

Mark Williams stated that he is the new co-owner of the former Antiquity Rose property at 429 Second Street and the Pump property at 300 Water Street. The Pump is currently under a long-term lease, but he would like to make some improvements to Antiquity Rose and is wondering whether these buildings are in the historic district and how that will affect their plans. He would like to demolish the Pump building in the future and build something in its place. Schmidt instructed him to work with staff on any proposed projects.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a) Site Alteration Permit - 370 Water Street (HPC No. 16-01)

Smith stated that the new vape shop business is proposing to remove and replace the front wall signage and also replace the fabric ribbon around the canopy overhang. The staff report concludes that the new wall sign does maintain the character of the building, but the new fabric ribbon canopy sign does clutter the appearance of the building.

Brabec asked about the prior Site Alteration Permit for painting and whether the work has been completed. Smith stated that the work has not been completed. Schmidt questioned the appropriateness of the signage. Anderson stated that the oval shape is similar to what is there now. Brabec stated that the sign is much larger than the existing sign. Schmidt read the signage criteria from the ordinance, that signage should not conceal architectural detail or detract from the unity of

**façade** and should be consistent with the historical character of the building. Finch stated that he does not believe the proposed signage is historically appropriate, as it is a very modern design. He believes that the signage does not comply with the standards, nor does the proposed ribbon sign.

The business owner stated that the sign is a bit larger than the existing sign, but there is no signage proposed for the side since the existing signage will be removed and not replaced. The modern logo on the sign is the same color and design used in their New Hope location.

Macpherson stated that the ribbon sign is the most distracting feature. The business owner stated the landlord intends to paint the exterior in the spring. Salita stated that he would like to tone down the sign color. Nelson stated that the signage is temporary in nature and some latitude should be given for business logos. She would like the applicants to reconsider the new ribbon, and noted that the Photoshop image on the photo illustration appears more vivid than what the sign will look like when installed. She supports the staff recommendation, and the findings should be consistent with the staff report. Macpherson would add that there should be no ribbon as a condition of the approval. Brabec stated that she would like to see a smaller sign. Schmidt stated that he is concerned that the signage overrides the historic character of the building, but also would like to encourage reuse and is persuaded by the arguments of the owner that this type of signage is needed for the business. Finch suggested that it should be up to the owner whether to leave in place the existing canvas skirt below the canopy. The business owner stated that the landlord would like to retain the skirt. Schmidt asked whether future removal of the skirt would require a Site Alteration Permit by ordinance. Smith stated yes.

Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Anderson seconded, to approve the Site Alteration Permit with the conditions set forth in the staff recommendation and with the further condition that no alteration to the ribbon awning should occur without a further Site Alteration Permit application. Motion carried 5/2, with Finch and Schmidt voting nay, as they believe the proposed sign is not historically appropriate signage.

b) Site Alteration Permit – 218 Water Street (HPC No. 16-02)

Smith stated that Anthony Novachis is proposing to reuse the existing storefront sign at this location which is suspended in front of the transom windows and repaint it with his business name. Staff noted that the signage retains the character of the building and does not clutter the appearance or conceal architectural details. Staff recommended approval with conditions. Macpherson noted that the illustrated signage on the brick is an error, which was confirmed by the applicant. Novachis stated that the menswear business was started in 1970 by his father in the 50<sup>th</sup> and France area of Edina and will be moving to Excelsior. Commissioner Macpherson moved, Commissioner Finch seconded, to approve the Site Alteration Permit with the staff conditions and the further condition that the existing maroon paint on the **façade will be cleaned by the owner**. Motion carried 7/0.

c) Site Alteration Permit – 321 Third Street (HPC No. 15-18)

Smith stated that the proposed alterations to this individually designated site were discussed at the last meeting. At that time, the Commission requested that certain elements be addressed in the final application. The proposal has been revised to replace the windows on the first level, but retain those on the second level, replace the door and transom, retain the chimney and cornice which will be painted black. Staff is recommending approval with conditions, namely that there be no living space above the garage and the garage windows removed.

Project architect Ben Awes stated that he would like to replace the front door and transom for energy efficiency and security. The upper story windows have been replaced already in recent years, and he would like to replace all of the main floor original windows which he believes are at the end of their useful life. Macpherson noted that the specific windows intended to be used would need to be part of the Site Alteration Permit application. Awes stated that the proposed windows would be custom Marvin clad double-hung windows. The Commission discussed whether the existing windows are repairable and whether the aluminum storm windows would be removed. The consensus was that a professional window restorer from the SHPO list could be consulted for an expert assessment. Regarding the front door, Awes stated that the existing door is one that was located on the building, but may not have been the original front door. The applicant stated that the vestibule entryway helps retain heat so energy is not as great an issue, but security is a concern.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to approve the Site Alteration Permit, with the exception of the request to replace the front door and existing windows pending further information from the applicant regarding an analysis from a professional expert on historic window repair as to whether they can be feasibly repaired, including the conditions in the staff report and the requirement that the garage may not exceed 800 square feet. Schmidt asked for findings of fact supporting the decision.

The Commission discussed proposed findings of fact, as follows: 1) the historic cornice details are being retained and painted black, the issue of the proposed historic window and door replacement is being addressed by removal of these elements from the permit approval and later consideration, and the chimney is being preserved; 2) the requirement that additions to historic buildings should be subordinate to the historic structure, distinguished in style but compatible with the historic character of the building is met, since the design is visibly differentiated in style, located in the rear and rectangular in shape; 3) the types of materials used are permitted, namely aluminum, wood and concrete; 4) the new addition windows are consistent in overall proportion to the original window openings, though of a different style; 5) the rear deck is permissible since it has limited visibility from the front **façade**; 6) the colors and materials proposed are harmonious with the original structure; and 7) the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence that repair of the existing windows and front door is not feasible, so replacement of these elements is not approved and will require a further application. Motion carried 4/2/1, with Schmidt and Finch voting nay, and Macpherson abstaining.

Finch stated that he voted nay because he believes that the addition will be on a highly visible rear elevation from the public parking lot adjacent to city hall, which is a concern for this unique site. Schmidt stated that the addition is so out of character that it starkly overshadows the historic character of the original building and that the new modern detached garage is also part of the issue. In his view, the addition design is compatible with neither the historic building nor the adjacent historic district, so he must vote against it. Nelson stated that this is an important moment in the city's history and this project expands the acceptability of modern architectural elements and design integrity in the city. Anderson stated that his vote was based on his interpretation of the ordinance criteria that the addition is subordinate, differentiated and compatible, and therefore permitted as an addition to a historic property.

Awes stated that the window restoration feasibility analysis would really be just a cost estimate. Macpherson stated that he would like to know the extent of the needed repairs to assess how feasible the restoration would be and how much new material would be required. Awes asked if there were concerns with the proposed

garage. Smith stated that the garage is consistent with the design of the addition and that any garage zoning restrictions are for the Planning Commission to review.

d) Public Hearing on Preservation Design Manual (HPC No. 14-09)

Smith stated that a draft of the design manual is posted on the city website, a letter notice was sent to affected property owners, and tonight is the scheduled public hearing. He noted that Tom Zahn is still looking for good photographic examples of compatible new construction for the design manual, and is also inserting illustrative pictures of good and bad examples of signage.

Smith stated that a current draft of the residential design guidelines is also included in the packet for comment. Schmidt asked about the status of the new HPC ordinance. Staff agreed to check whether the ordinance had been approved or required further HPC review and formal action. The Commission discussed the need for special meetings to work through the commercial design manual. Regarding the residential guidelines, Finch asked about what occurs after page 13, where there is a list of houses and photos and comments from the survey reports. It was agreed that these comments should be removed, and there should be a process to review the residential standards in detail and the process for designating new residential historic sites. Schmidt stated his concern that the National Register requirements in 36 CFR may not have been factored into the consideration of the downtown historic district and would like that to be reviewed. Schmidt opened and closed the public hearing on the commercial preservation design manual. There were no public comments.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Salita seconded, to set aside consideration of the residential design guidelines until the commercial design manual is completed. Motion carried 7/0.

Commissioner Finch moved, Commissioner Macpherson seconded, to continue the remaining items to consideration at a special meeting to be scheduled by staff, with the exception of recent city council actions. Motion carried 7/0.

e) Definitions for Period of Significance, Contributing and Non-Contributing Structures (HPC No. 14-09)

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Memo on Review of Alterations at the Commons

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

- a) Site Alteration Permits Approved Administratively

- b) Next Planning Commission Meeting – February 8, 2016

- c) Next City Council Meeting – February 1, 2016

- d) Next HPC Meeting – Tuesday, February 23, 2016

8. MISCELLANEOUS / COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

- a) Recent City Council Actions

Smith reported that the recommended downtown historic district boundaries were adopted, but the Council requested reconsideration of the recommended exclusion of the 426 Lake Street/Hour Glass Cleaners building based solely on the requirements of the HPC's ordinance, which will be on the HPC agenda for consideration at the February 23 meeting. Oppidan sought certain amendments to its PUD to add signage, which was approved with the requirement that the required street trees be planted and that the LED lights in the parking lot be changed to match other lights in the downtown. The PUD concept plan for the former Excelsior Grill site was approved for senior housing. The PUD ordinance changes recommended by the Planning Commission and HPC were adopted, with language to clarify the types of public benefits and requirements that would be needed that go above and beyond otherwise applicable zoning requirements to get flexibility on design through the PUD process. The Council also discussed the proposed new Burdick building PUD at 287 Water Street, which was denied due to the applicant's request to waive parking impact fees.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Salita moved, Commissioner Finch seconded, to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.  
Motion carried 7/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron  
Recording Secretary