

City of Excelsior  
Heritage Preservation Commission  
Minutes  
Tuesday, February 23, 2011

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

Commissioners Present: Bolles, Finch, Meyer, Mueller, Roden, Sanders

Commissioners Absent: Bipes

Also Present: City Planner Fuchs, City Attorney Staunton,  
Planning Consultant Richards, and Advisor Caron

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of January 25, 2011

It was moved by Commissioner Finch, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to approve the minutes as written. Approved unanimously.

3. CITIZEN REPORTS or COMMENTS

None.

4. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a. Recent City Council Actions

City Attorney Staunton updated the Commission on recent City Council actions. He stated that, due to the possible imminent construction of a new library, the City had approved the temporary relocation of the Farmer's Market to the Mount Calvary parking lot, the Flea Market to the vacant property at 10 Water Street property, and the Christkindlsmarkt event to the East Municipal Parking Lot. An ordinance was adopted to amend the R-3 district to allow general business uses, but not retail, and to allow a drive through for a bank by conditional use permit if circulation issues in the residential area can be handled. The Council also decided to repeal the First Street parking restrictions, and the old Lightly Epicurean site on Highway 7 received design standards approval for a new wine shop use. The Council also heard Hidden Lane dock concerns and agreed to apply for a LMCD variance to allow two approved City docks to be reconfigured. The Council also established LMCD City representative standards of conduct, and approved publication of bids for the Excelsior Parkland site reconfiguration.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Site Alteration Permit for Signage at 436 Union Place (Second Street) --  
Chuck Gross

Chuck Gross, the building owner, applied for a Site Alteration Permit to allow signage for six tenants to be shown on an existing multi-tenant sign on the Second Street side of the building. He also proposed to market the building as Bennett Place and place that name on the sign, based on the early owner of the livery stable, consistent with the building designation as Historic Site #22.

It was moved by Commissioner Roden, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approve the Site Alteration Application for signage as presented. Approved unanimously.

- b. Site Alteration Permit for Exterior Alterations at 229 Water Street -- Joseph Reger

Kathy Anderson, Architectural Consortium, the architect for the project, presented on behalf of the applicant. The plan called for replacement of all doors and windows, including transoms.

The earliest extant photographs of the building date from approximately the 1950s. It was noted that the original transom window glass appears to be above the door to the upper stairway. Anderson stated that the current owner has closed on the purchase of the property. She stated that any proposed signage would be presented later.

Planning Consultant Richards stated that the metal beam above the storefront will remain. The proposal is to replace all of the first story windows and doors. It appeared that the sill brick beneath the storefront windows was also replaced in the 1950s when the storefront was reconstructed and a different color brick was used. The applicant would propose to stain the brick to attempt to match the color of the original brick above.

The Commission determined that the upper story windows are not the original windows and therefore have no historical significance. The applicant proposed to install new windows with gridded panes.

Richards itemized the specific areas his report had identified for consideration. It was confirmed with the applicant that any windows would be of all clear glass with no tinting. With regard to the staining of the sill brick, the applicant stated that it would consist of individual staining each brick face, so it would not affect the mortar. The Commission stated that its concern with applying a stain to the brick was to ensure that the lack of

5. NEW BUSINESS

b. Site Alteration Permit for Exterior Alterations at 229 Water Street -- Joseph Reger – (Continued)

porosity of the stain would not trap moisture against the brick, leading to premature deterioration. After discussion, as the sill brick is not the original brick and was added with the comparatively new storefront, the Commission determined that it could allow staining under the Commission standards.

The Commission reviewed the proposed paint color and window materials, both of which would be a bronze color.

The Commission discussed the appropriateness of muntins in the windows, particularly on the upper level, which originally had simple double-hung windows. It was also noted that the transom above the upper story stair has what appears to be the original transom design, with two vertical panes and no grid pattern. Commissioners also expressed concern with the proposed changes to the storefront character, moving from a series of two to three display windows, that the proposed transom space seems higher than typical for buildings of similar vintage and the district's period of significance, and presents a grander door than is typical in the district. The Commission determined that the historic transom windows above the upper entrance are significant historical features of the building and should be retained.

The Commission indicated that the addition of a metal canopy over the doorway seems like an acceptable element to replace the fabric awning, as long as it does not conceal architectural detail. The proportion of the storefront transom windows to the storefront display windows presented a concern. The applicant clarified that the materials for the upper story window frames would be metal clad with wood or a composite material to look like wood. The Commission indicated that it would need more details on the specific window materials.

The proposal called for light fixtures with clear glass and a yellow light, which seemed compatible. The Commission clarified that the historic transom window above the upstairs stairwell must be retained as a historic feature. If after further review, the transom is beyond repair, it will require an additional application and further consideration by the Commission.

City staff indicated that the application had been deemed complete on February 14, 2011, so the Commission could continue this item to its next meeting for additional drawings to be prepared and submitted reflecting the discussion.

It was moved by Commissioner Finch, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to continue this item to the March 22, 2011 meeting. Approved unanimously.

5. NEW BUSINESS

c. Preview of Hennepin County Library Facility

Lee Anderson, of Hennepin County Property Services, introduced the representatives who were there to present the current concept plan for the new Excelsior library.

Kelly Koop, a librarian in the Capital Projects office, described the service enhancements that would be a feature of the new library, including its use of natural light, the accommodation of a perceived need for a flexible meeting room, the site's connections for bicycle access, the attempts to extend the library to the outdoors, the incorporation of an external book drop, and the presence of a central service area to monitor the library facility.

Mark Wenzel of 292 Design Group presented the concept plans for the facility and site. The project would use the front half of the Lyman site, approximately as far back as the existing storage sheds. The facility abuts Water Street, with bike parking adjacent to the trail, and features a small garden on the Water Street side of the building. There will be 24 vehicle parking spaces in the rear, black ornamental fences along both sides of the building to direct pedestrians onto the primary sidewalk, and a sign at the plaza that would be consistent with standard Hennepin County library signage. The library entrance is located on the trail side of the building, with a covered canopy from the Water Street sidewalk to the door. The building features an open floor plan that can be reconfigured with certain "special places" featuring small scale natural vistas.

The cornice on the Water Street facade is at a height of 16 feet. The building will use a dark brown brick of modular size for the masonry portion of the structure. Zinc is proposed to be used for the cornice and columns. The building will have no painted surfaces. The rooftop light monitors are also clad in zinc and provide a beacon effect in the large rooftop windows at night. The overall scale is about the same as the Artworks building nearby. The material on the back portion of the building is stucco.

Also present from Hennepin County were John Wicks and Peggy Bauer, the Excelsior Librarian.

The representatives stated that the County was excited about the project, and that they had reached the end of the schematic design phase of the project. The County administration had reviewed the design and had determined that it meets their standards to be a flexible facility that can serve future needs and meets sustainability goals. The County has a \$6.6 million budget for this project.

5. NEW BUSINESS

c. Preview of Hennepin County Library Facility – (Continued)

Commissioners expressed their concerns about the design and its degree of compatibility with the historic downtown context and fabric. Several Commissioners sought to confirm that the architect had access to the City's ordinances and design standards in preparing the concept design. Mr. Wenzel stated that he did have access to the information and believed that the project met the City's requirements. Several Commissioners indicated that the project's apparent lack of adherence to the City's standards would pose a challenge when a formal application came forward.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Demolition by Neglect Ordinance Provision

City Attorney Staunton presented draft language for the requested demolition by neglect ordinance. He stated that all of the issues he discussed in his memorandum had been addressed in the draft ordinance, which defines demolition by neglect, allows for investigation by the City, and suggests possible remedies that could be imposed for failure for a designated historic site owner to properly maintain their building. The Commission discussed that the ordinance should be revised to eliminate the words "seek to" from those remedies that are within the City's ability to address.

Commissioner Finch asked about how historic site owners know whether they are subject to the ordinance. Staff indicated that such sites are documented on the City's list, and this may be displayed on the City's website. Staunton suggested that the City might also consider recording designations in the chain of title to place such owners on legal notice. He noted that the administrative penalty process is available, and that rather than prescribing a particular remedy for all cases, the City might be better served by having a wide range of remedies available and to determine which is appropriate based on the particular circumstances.

It was moved by Commissioner Finch, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to recommend adoption of the ordinance. Approved unanimously.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

a. Site Alteration Permits Administratively Approved

Fuchs reported that he is currently working on a projecting sign for the Bennett livery building for a business named Haven Maven.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

b. 2010 Goals and Objectives

It was moved by Commissioner Finch, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to continue this item to the next meeting. Approved unanimously.

c. Next Meeting -- Tuesday, March 22, 2011

The Commission discussed the need for a third work session on new construction standards in the downtown historic district.

It was moved by Commissioner Finch, seconded by Commissioner Bolles, to schedule a work session for March 10, 2011 at 7:00 p.m., subject to room availability. Approved unanimously.

8. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Roden, seconded by Commissioner Finch, to adjourn. Approved unanimously. Adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Finch  
Secretary