

City of Excelsior
Heritage Preservation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, June 19, 2012

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

Present: Bolles, Macpherson, Meyer, Mueller (joined at 7:18), Sanders

Absent: Finch, Roden

Also Present: City Planner Braaten, City Planning Consultant Richards, Advisor Caron

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting of May 22, 2012

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

3. CITIZEN REPORTS or COMMENTS

None.

4. MISCELLANEOUS/COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

a. Recent City Council Actions

It was moved by Commissioner Bolles, seconded by Commissioner Macpherson, to table discussion of this item until Communications and Reports. Approved unanimously.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Site Alteration Permit for Exterior Alterations at 205 Water Street--Tim Brandow, Brandow Properties, LLC

Steve Mullenbach presented the application for Brandow Creative. He presented a proposal for combining the former Capers and Ming Wok spaces into a single restaurant space with a new retail space and entrance on Second Street. While the original application showed wood siding as the primary element, he submitted a new proposal due to the discovery of the old Red Owl/Bacon Drug store tile under the current stucco façade. He reported that it appears to be in good shape, so the primary exterior material is now proposed to be the original tile where existing and they propose to replace any damaged tile with a similar color and type. The new retail space and entrance on Second Street will remain as it was originally proposed with a new limestone facing.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Site Alteration Permit for Exterior Alterations at 205 Water Street--Tim Brandow, Brandow Properties, LLC – (Continued)

The proposal also adds some height to the building's roof parapet of approximately two feet. The applicant would propose to keep the existing windows on the Water Street facade and add three additional windows and a new door on the Second Street side. It was noted that the control box for the street lights is currently blocking the area that would contain the new windows and this would need to be addressed.

Macpherson suggested that the exterior material on the building might not be tile but might actually be a concrete masonry unit (CMU) with a glazed face.

The applicants also propose to add bronzed sign holders and blade signs and a number of flush mounted signs. Richards noted that the building would only be allowed to have a total of three signs for the restaurant under the City Code.

The main door off Water Street is proposed to be a revolving door to add a 1940's supper club effect to the space. A second exit would be located on the Second Street side. The plan on this elevation calls for adding a prominent doorway entrance, covering the existing concrete block with limestone and adding bronze window casings. A billboard frame is shown on the Second Street elevation, but its potential use has not yet been determined.

Richards noted that the plan would require a conditional use permit (CUP) for shared parking between buildings and payments in lieu of parking spaces to the City.

The Commission discussed a number of conditions that it would require for approval of the proposal. Any new tile or masonry units must be presented to the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) for review of compatibility. The existing windows on Water Street should be retained if possible, and additional HPC review would be required for any replacement. No outdoor seating was proposed or approved.

Sanders stated that the originally proposed wood facade raised an issue for her, but that this issue has been addressed by the proposed use of the original CMU.

The addition of new windows on the Second Street side was appropriate to break up a long facade. Any deviations from what was presented would need to be reflected on a revised plan, including the required changes in the number of signs, and presented to the HPC for formal approval.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Site Alteration Permit for Exterior Alterations at 205 Water Street--Tim Brandow, Brandow Properties, LLC – (Continued)

The Commission noted that it was fine for the applicant to continue to remove the existing stucco surface to assess and confirm the condition of the underlying CMU.

The use of a front revolving door was acceptable, but color and material needs to be compatible with the other doors on the building. The addition of a front awning would require a license agreement with the City, and would need to meet height and setback requirements.

Meyer noted that there were restrictions in the City's ordinances for Design Standards and sidewalk cafes prohibiting sidewalk obstructions within 4 or 5 feet of the curb line.

Mullenbach stated the proposed posts for the awning were located within 20" of the curb, but that they could perhaps eliminate the posts to avoid sidewalk maintenance issues and obstruction of pedestrian traffic.

Any changes required to the plan due to Planning Commission requirements or City Code issues would need to come back to the HPC for review with a complete updated set of plans.

Mullenbach stated that the addition of a powder coated metal brow on the back of the building is intended to relate to the new front entrance material, and also noted that the proposed ivy has been eliminated from the plan.

Macpherson noted that ivy is deleterious to most materials and the removal of ivy from the plan is a good idea.

The Commission noted that if there is any need to modify or change the elevations or to return to the prior submitted plan, this would need to come back to the HPC for additional review. The addition of any mural to the billboard space on the Second Street side would also need to be presented for HPC approval.

It was moved by Commissioner Mueller, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to approve the Site Alteration Permit based on the proposed revised plan as submitted at the meeting with the conditions noted above. Approved unanimously.

Richards introduced the County's submission of a new library plan for construction in the Lyman Park area. The proposal calls for a new building, with a new drive aisle off Water Street that has been relocated to a shared curb cut with ArtWorks. The new parking will be located behind the building.

5. NEW BUSINESS

b. Site Alteration Permit for New Library at 337 Water Street -- Hennepin County

The building also features access points from the bike trail. The plan calls for a predominantly brick structure with limestone architectural elements.

Lee Anderson of Hennepin County Property Services presented the resubmission. He stated that the County has benefited from dialogue with the Library Committee, including Commissioners Sanders and Roden. He stated that the County wanted to successfully respond to the City's requirements with this new proposal. The project is at the conceptual design stage. Michelle Maiers-Atakpu representing 292 Design Group, the project architect, was present to discuss the plan and Stewart MacDonald, the historic architectural consultant from MacDonald and Mack, was also present.

Sara Garbis from Hennepin County Library stated that the new building has been designed to serve as a destination for drivers, bikers, and pedestrians. Its amenities such as outdoor seating areas will extend into the adjacent outdoor space for community use even when the library is not open. There will be welcoming entrances both on the front and trailside. There will also be a 24 hour book drop in the rear.

Maiers-Atakpu stated that the building is slightly set back from Water Street to preserve sightlines. There are proposed seating areas along the trail side, with no fencing but low plantings to define the area. There is no major rooftop equipment visible. Bench seating has also been proposed in front of the building along the sidewalk. The existing wood fencing along the trail is proposed to be removed. A monument sign is proposed in front of the building.

Bolles suggested adding a concrete surface to the trail where it meets Water Street along the side of the new library.

Stewart MacDonald, MacDonald and Mack, stated that they had toured the downtown area, and noted that the immediate context for the library site was gone, but that a traditional style of building was called for in order to relate to the downtown fabric. They intentionally sought not to replicate another historic building in town. The Library Committee felt that the library building needed some architectural emphasis. As a result, all major mechanical elements were moved off of the roof to the first level. The Water Street entrance was given some prominence, with sidelights, transoms, and an arch. The overall materials are decorative cast stone and modular brick. Painted metal is used for the doors and windows.

The primary front elevation shows three repetitive bays with transoms, separated by pilasters. There is corbeling in the brick on the top to add

5. NEW BUSINESS

b. Site Alteration Permit for New Library at 337 Water Street -- Hennepin County – (Continued)

texture. Period appropriate light fixtures have been added around the doorway with decorative plaques beneath. The secondary trail elevation has simplified corbeling, and arched windows to light the corridors. The rear of the building has a decreased emphasis on detail. Period appropriate brackets are used for roofs over entrances. The rear of the building has no windows.

Pre-weathered zinc is used for roofing materials. The driveway side elevation has repeated but simplified windows and corbeling. Overall, the design shows a hierarchy of elevations, but all elevations hold together and make a consistent statement.

MacDonald presented a localized context depiction for the building shown from the street and in montage to show compatibility. The monument sign is on a stone and brick base. The building calls for all brick on the rear, rather than stucco. The Commissioners commented favorably on the appropriately monumental presence of the building and the crested cornice detail, which makes a statement that it is a library, rather than a storefront.

MacDonald noted that the types of brick used in downtown are highly varied in color and type. This presents an aesthetic and historic issue. He stated that it is important that no jumbo brick should be used, and all brick must be an appropriate size to create texture. He noted that there should not be a pronounced variety of brick colors on the building. They selected an iron spot brick with a brown/red cast for a bit of sparkle.

The building has three areas that are finished with cast limestone, with different textures--a hammered finish on the base of the building, rock face on the sills, and a smooth face for the cornice band and panels. As noted, pre-weathered zinc would be used for roof materials. They picked a dark green-black color for painted surfaces and found a Sherwin Williams historic color that was very similar to authentic period paint chips from the 1880s-1920s. They will use a simple ogee form for all window and door moldings and will have exposed lintels.

Windows will feature a removable grid system on both the outside and inside with a spacer between glass panes for visual authenticity. They will also use a bevel for the exterior that mimics putty lines.

Commissioners asked about the monument sign. Anderson discussed the importance of standard library signage for the County. There is some opportunity for variation, and they are considering a vertically oriented sign for visibility. The use of an open/closed element to the sign is important for library users, and they typically add LED lighting. The proposed base would

5. NEW BUSINESS

b. Site Alteration Permit for New Library at 337 Water Street -- Hennepin County – (Continued)

match the brick of the building with cast stone. The County is looking at a possible alternative to the standard LED lighting that would result in non-pixelated LED lighting behind a panel. This alternative is still being explored with their sign vendor. The proposed sign is four feet wide by six feet tall.

Commissioners expressed some concern about the proposed monument signage, and specifically that its modern appearance and suburban design and dimensions would detract from the building. A proposed secondary sign would be a plane sign attached to the rear wall, similar in design, but not backlit.

Richards suggested adding a brick surround to the monument sign to make it appear less modern, and Anderson stated that this could be explored.

Commissioners expressed a preference for instead scaling down the sign to make it less massive. Backlit elements include the stylized blue H, along with the rest of the font lettering in white, and the open/closed red LED panel.

Commissioners asked that the sign come back to the HPC for further review. The County stated that it would look at options to better integrate it with the building.

Macpherson noted that the Hennepin County logo and font are not likely to change, which is in part what lends a modern appearance, so the other aspects of the sign are really the focus.

Bolles asked that boulevard tree replacement and streetlight fixture electrical repairs be done as part of the planned sidewalk replacement.

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to approve the Site Alteration Permit as presented, with the condition that the monument sign be presented for further review. Approved unanimously.

c. Site Alteration Permit (after the fact) for Exterior Alterations at 234 Water Street--Bart and Wendy Baker, Capers

Commissioner Bolles recused himself from discussion of this item.

Braaten stated that the Capers awning approved for installation at 207 Water Street was removed and reinstalled on the building at 234 Water Street.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- c. Site Alteration Permit (after the fact) for Exterior Alterations at 234 Water Street--Bart and Wendy Baker, Capers – (Continued)

Braaten reported that Mr. Baker had been under the assumption that a prior HPC approval for an awning on one building carried over to the same awning on another building.

Among the concerns discussed by the Commission with the new location were the positioning of the awning on the building facade, the anchoring of the awning into the brick rather than the mortar joints, the obscuring of architectural detail on the building, and the segmentation of the architecture of the building by not incorporating a feature that continues across the building facade.

Macpherson and Meyer reported that they had examined the awning on site. Macpherson emphasized that, just because an element works with one building's architecture, it is not necessarily compatible with another different type of architecture.

Commissioners agreed that a canopy installed on a building needs to have unity on that building, and that a permit for a canopy is not transferable to another site without prior review for compatibility. A recessed slant entry generally should not have an awning.

The consensus of the HPC is that the awning should be removed and any damaged brick repaired to City's satisfaction within 45 days. Any alternate signage proposed should be designed for this building and presented to the Commission for approval.

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to deny the Site Alteration Permit based on the following:

Findings of Fact

1. The proportions and positioning of the awning are not compatible with this building's architecture;
2. Awnings should not be anchored in the face of brick as was done here, but rather in the mortar joints;
3. The awning obscures significant architectural detail on the building, including brick detail and tin banding;
4. The awning does not introduce a feature that continues across the building facade in a unifying manner and is not an appropriate element for the slanted style of storefront.

Denied unanimously.

5. NEW BUSINESS

d. Designation of Oak Hill Cemetery

Sanders clarified that she is exploring the possibility of obtaining grant money to make improvements to the cemetery.

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

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Excelsior Downtown Historic District Boundaries

It was moved by Commissioner Mueller, seconded by Commissioner Macpherson, to continue consideration of the revised boundaries at the next meeting.

b. Possibility of Historically Designating Portions of Excelsior Elementary School

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

c. Adopt revisions to By-Laws

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Meyer, to adopt the by-laws as revised at the last meeting. Approved unanimously.

d. Adopt Goals and Objectives for 2012

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to continue this item to the next meeting and to request a corrected version reflecting the amendments from the May meeting. Approved unanimously.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

a. Designate Liaison for Planning Commission Meetings

Special Meeting of Thursday, June 21 - Macpherson

Regular Meeting of Tuesday, July 9 - Sanders

b. Site Alteration Permits Administratively Approved

Lane stated he had approved the relocation of projecting signage from the Bennett Livery Building to the former Zelas's space on Water Street.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

c. Next Meeting - Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Information only.

d. Recent City Council Actions

Richards reported that the Metropolitan Council force main project is coming forward. The new force main will go down George Street, up Morse Avenue and then down Excelsior Boulevard. A proposal for the former Choice building, which is outside the historic district on Water Street, is also under review by the Planning Commission.

8. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Macpherson, seconded by Commissioner Mueller, to adjourn. Approved unanimously. Adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Caron
Recording Secretary