

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Time and Date: Wednesday, October 30, 2013, at 4:00 p.m. in the Maple Room of Wausau City Hall
Members Present: Gisselman (C), Tryczak, Crooks, Burke, Forer, Forrest (arrived at 4:05 p.m.)
Others Present: Jacobson, Lenz, Welter, Engen

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Chairperson Gisselman called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m. stating that a quorum was present.

Approve minutes of the September 25, 2013 meeting.

Forer motioned to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2013 meeting. Burke seconded and the motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Historic District Signage Ordinance (Anne Jacobson)

Gisselman said that Jacobson was asked to talk about the beginning processes for enabling legislation giving permission to create a sign ordinance for historic districts. Gisselman said it would be best to have the city council approve the intent of the commission to establish some signage for the various historic districts.

Forrest arrived at 4:05 p.m.

Jacobson said that if it is the direction of the commission, this will be done and the legislation will be drafted. Jacobson said she took a look at Madison's ordinance and said they have a whole chapter that is dedicated to signage and said that Wausau does not have this. The signage regulations are placed in various places in the Wausau Municipal Code. Historic signage would supersede the general signage ordinance. Gisselman said that he doesn't want to start going down this road without the city council knowing about it. Gisselman added that he would like the enabling legislation. If common council or this commission says no, it would be the end. Jacobson said the sign ordinance for historic district would take precedence over the general sign ordinance. A thorough search of the entire code will need to be done to ensure that nothing is missed.

Lenz said that the three places where this could be inserted is at the beginning of the residential, commercial, and industrial zoning chapters. The superseding language could be added in each of the three. Jacobson said that would be a good plan. The details for the historic property regulations would be located in Chapter 2 with the historic district ordinance.

Crooks asked if the historic signage ordinance would need to cover signage for all types of districts. Lenz said that currently even within districts, there are different uses such as homes, churches, schools, and museums. These uses may or may not have different sign regulations. Crooks suggested considering an approach that would say the signage that exists is fine except in these historical districts. This way the whole sign ordinance doesn't have to be rewritten completely. Lenz and Jacobson agreed that is the approach that is being recommended. Crooks said that there are a lot of times where the existing sign ordinance may be fine. Gisselman said that each historical district would be different.

Forer said that the ordinance would need to cover every exception rather than a general signage clause. Lenz asked Crooks if he was referring to using the existence ordinance structure and inserting the historic content into it and said that would be a different approach. Forer said it would be a more practical approach. Gisselman said that separate ordinances would need to be created for each of the zoning

districts. Lenz said that the ordinances are already there and that as Crooks stated, historic language could be inserted. Lenz added that the clause could also be included in the beginning to highlight that there are exceptions and regulations for the historic districts. Crooks asked if signage currently needs a permit. Lenz answered yes.

Crooks suggested that this could be simple by leaving the ordinance alone and determining the signage regulations that the Historic Preservation Commission would look to as guidelines. Lenz said that staff has run into questions with signage in the historic districts. It is not currently written that it needs to come here for a certificate of appropriateness, but staff tends to bring these to the commission as a precaution. Crooks agreed and said that since they may or may not be structures it causes confusion. Gisselman asked if all of the signs in the Downtown Historic District would need a permit. Lenz said that there would be regular sign permits, but wasn't sure if the signage downtown would come to the commission. He said there are elements of the regulations, such as with the hanging blade signs that make them look somewhat historic, because they are small and externally lit.

Gisselman said that Crooks brings up a different approach and would require all signage in historic districts to come to this commission. Forer said that guidelines would be needed. Crooks said that a list of factors and criteria could be created to help determine what should be allowed. Gisselman said the guidelines should be written into the ordinance and samples could be searched for. Crooks said that there would be signs on commercial properties, and some signage on residential properties for bed and breakfasts, churches, and museums. Burke added schools.

Burke said he likes Crooks idea as it is nice and simple. Crooks asked if this could be done without preauthorization from the council. Gisselman said that this would be a different way of thinking and will not need enabling legislation. Jacobson agreed. Forer asked if the guidelines should be published or just kept on file. Crooks said they should be published. Jacobson said the guidelines would be less enforceable if they weren't published. Gisselman said he likes everything up front so everyone knows the rules up front. Forer said that review would be quicker with guidance. Burke said that it could be more self-regulated because the information will be more up front.

Crooks said that the ordinance could state that all criteria for other signage would be applicable. Lenz said that a clause should be included in the Historic Preservation chapter of the ordinance referring to the specific zoning guidelines. It may be difficult to put the guidelines in the ordinance itself because the ordinance is black and white with no visual aids. Other places have gone to codes and regulations that are more user-friendly with pictures and graphics. Lenz said that it would be easier for the commission to determine an allowable sign with pictures and a document could be referenced to in the ordinance. A separate document may be the way to go. The current code can be difficult to interpret because there are multiple places someone needs to look in order to gather information.

Jane Welter said that the zoning ordinance is unclear and should be clarified, and referenced the R4 zoning district. Gisselman asked if this is in reference to the item that went to Plan Commission. Lenz said that it would be a zoning change and the wording can be looked at. Welter said that the music conservatory had beautiful signage, which had several restrictions, and was not the case in the Andrew Warrens Historic District for the Marathon County Historical Society. Welter said she applauds the idea.

Crooks motioned to direct staff to use the existing city sign ordinance, add a layer that would apply to historic districts, develop signage criteria, and to take the ordinance change to the Common Council. Forer seconded and the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Burke asked if the Andrew Warren Historical District and the Easthill Residential Historic District would be addressed differently than the Downtown Historic District. Gisselman said that would be covered under the guidelines and the zoning would determine the allowable signage. Forer said that examples would need to be located. Gisselman said that the types of buildings should also be broke down, in addition to the zoning, and gave examples of churches, day care centers, railroad depots, taverns, etc. This item will be placed on the next agenda. Any zone changes will need to go to Plan Commission.

Landmark / Building – Watch Updates

The Meuret farm will be torched on Saturday for the Higginbotham development. Tryczak said the same family owned the property for 100 years. Lenz said that part of the property is in the city, but the portion that is being burned is not.

Tryczak asked about the North Central Healthcare meeting about the trees. Gisselman said that he wasn't able to attend, but plans to soon and thanked Tryczak for the reminder.

Updates and next meeting date(s)

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 27.

Adjournment

Tryczak motioned to adjourn. Forer seconded. Motion carried unanimously 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gary Gisselman, Chair