

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Time and Date: Wednesday, December 3, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in the Birch Room of Wausau City Hall
Members Present: Gisselman (C), Crooks, Forer, Gidlund, Grimm, Tryczak
Others Present: Brad Lenz, John Fischer

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 the minutes of the September 24 and November 6, 2014 meetings

Crooks motioned to approve the minutes. Tryczak seconded, and the motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

Introduction of new members

This item was taken prior to the meeting officially being called to order. Gisselman said the new members were sworn in a little while ago so they are official. Everyone present introduced themselves.

Possible Designation of the Sav-O Supply building, 1418 North First Street, as a Local Historic Landmark

Gisselman stated that the commission should complete the process for Sav-O Supply. Last month a public hearing was held in regards to designating the building. He said Mr. Fischer spoke to this item as can be seen in the meeting minutes.

Fischer said the minutes did a pretty good job of summarizing the comments, but he also prepared written comments.

Gisselman said the Economic Development Committee recommended to Council the proposal from MetroPlains for loft apartments in the building. The Council debated the proposal at length and decided to send it back to E.D. for further study. He said the previous discussions at Historic Preservation were mainly in preparation of the MetroPlains development. Right now, he said the development is somewhat in limbo and he did not want to be in the way of some kind of development of the property. He said he is recommending the commission put this on hold, so to speak. He said if it passed at this time, it could become another controversial issue at Council because we don't know what the future development may be. He said he didn't know where MetroPlains is at this time since the Council back off their proposal.

Lenz added that no action was taken at the public hearing last month because a quorum was not present. He said that if action had been taken it would've needed to go to the next Plan Commission and Council. He said that at the last meeting we said we would meet on Dec. 3rd to take action, so to be transparent, that is why it's on the agenda for tonight.

Gisselman added that we wanted to talk about how to proceed. Gisselman said it is his recommendation today that no action is taken. If we want to visit it again in conjunction with some new developments that may need landmark status, we've had the public hearing already and can move it on to city council. He thought it may be premature to move it on at this point.

Crooks said under the scheme of the ordinance, it is incumbent upon us to take action on the public hearing – either we recommend designation or do not recommend designation. We can't just leave it sitting out there in limbo. If we table it, he didn't think it would be proper to come back months from now and resurrect it. He thought we'd have to start the process over again.

Forer asked if we could vote to not designate it at this time.

Crooks said that could be one of the options. If we wanted to bring this back up, the notices should be resent and the whole public hearing process should start again. He said the ordinance isn't super clear on the timing of the steps, but he didn't think we should table it indefinitely. He wanted to make sure the commission is doing its job if we do think the building meets the criteria in the ordinance. He was concerned if a developer comes along and wants to do things to the building that aren't historic, and we haven't done anything to designate it as a landmark, we wouldn't have any review.

Lenz said that since the property is owned by the City, it would need to go through other committees and the Council to dispose of it. Crooks added that it is out of this commission's hands at that point. Gisselman said the Council could at that point send it to this commission for review. Crooks agreed but said it would be informal. Crooks had concern about that because this commission has the expertise to review architectural details, and that's one of the reasons we exist. He said if we think it's historic, we should have the fortitude to say so and move it forward. If it's not historic, then we don't designate it. Gisselman added then we wouldn't have much to say unless we bring it back another time. Crooks said the process is rather slow and there may not be time to go through the designation again.

Gisselman asked whether we can wait another month to bring the two new members some of the historical information. Crooks said it may not be explicit in the ordinance when we have to vote, but it's implicit that we vote rather soon after the public hearing. Gisselman agreed. Lenz said that with any committee, it is expected that some sort of action is taken on actionable items, but things do get tabled or postponed. Lenz said the timelines in the ordinance are for after a recommendation is made at this committee. Gisselman would like to provide some historical background to the members so they can make a judgment call. Discussion followed.

After reading the ordinance, Crooks said there is no absolute time frame, and we're well within the intent of the ordinance doing what we did today after the public hearing. Gisselman asked if we could wait a month, which Crooks agreed with. Lenz added that we're giving a specific time frame so that is beneficial to those interested in this matter. Fischer said the RFP's out for the building are due back March 31st.

Crooks thought we could forward other recommendations to the Council rather than landmark status if we thought that landmarking it would impede development. He said that since the City owns it, there is more control of what happens there.

Gisselman said if we delayed it a month, we could speak to that point about it being historic but not necessarily a landmark that would be part of the ordinance.

Grimm made a motion to postpone a decision on designating the Sav-O Supply building until the January 28th meeting. Gidlund seconded, and the motioned carried unanimously, 6-0.

Future agenda items and next meeting date(s)

Gisselman said the Sav-O decision will come back to the next meeting, as will potential future landmarks.

Crooks asked about a status update on the Wausau Club. Lenz said that he will see what is discussed at the next E.D. meeting and bring back any new updates.

Adjournment

Crooks motioned to adjourn. Forer seconded, and the motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gary Gisselman, Chair