

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

---

Time and Date: Wednesday, July 31, 2013, at 4:00 p.m. in the Birch Room of Wausau City Hall  
Members Present: Gisselman (C), Tryczak, Forer, Burke, Lemansky, Forer, Oberbeck, Crooks  
(arrived at 4:07 p.m.)  
Others Present: Lenz, Hebert, Knotek, Clemens, Torkko, Treu, Welter, Force, 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 May 29, 2013, June 4, 2013, and June 19, 2013 meetings**

---

Lemansky motioned to approve the minutes of the May 29, 2013, June 4, 2013, and June 19, 2013 meetings. Forer seconded. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

### **Certificate of Appropriateness for Athletic Park**

---

Knotek said that the Woodchucks are moving ahead with the \$2.5 million renovation, mainly with the grandstand portion. This is a significant update and the goal is not to change the exterior wall. Gisselman said the commission is specifically interested in the landmark status of the granite walls surrounding Athletic Park. This will help the project move ahead. Knotek agreed with Gisselman and said that the project is far along and the commission needs to see the whole picture.

Clemens displayed the overall site plan of the new grandstand. The old grandstand will be removed. One portion, about 30 feet, of the historic wall will be removed and left open to keep the neighborhood park flowing and keep the experience of having activities that are tied to baseball games. Clemens showed pictures of the historic wall to the commission. The existing building is set directly on the historic wall. In the renovations, the damaged caps will be removed and will be replaced. Elements will be kept away from the wall, except the box office.

Crooks arrived at 4:07 p.m.

Clemens showed a picture of the wall from the 1930's and pointed out that the door that is currently on the wall did not exist. Clemens said that through the proposal they would recommend removing the door and bringing it back to the original design. Clemens showed a section cut showing the outer wings of the facility and said they are looking at putting accent lighting high in the structure that would cast light onto the historic wall. Clemens displayed daytime and nighttime renderings of the historic wall as it would look. The upper concourse is about 18 feet high and the historic wall is approximately 10 feet high creating a separation and allowing the historic wall to have significance rather than bringing everything down to create an unpleasant situation. The nighttime rendering shows how the proposed lighting highlights the historic wall.

Knotek said that there is little very involved with the wall and the big request is to allow the opening of 30 feet of the existing wall to provide a safe access into the park. Forer asked if the stone that will be taken away will be used to fill in areas. Knotek answered yes. Lenz asked if the interior wall of the box office will be removed and replaced. Knotek and Clemens agreed. Gisselman said there was a previous commission meeting and the commission agreed that the interior concourse is not part of the historic wall. Gisselman asked how far down 5<sup>th</sup> Street is the section that will be removed. Burke asked if the existing wall goes the full length of the foul line. Knotek answered that it will run north on 5<sup>th</sup> Street to the end of the foul line with a small diagonal portion and then it continues along Wausau Avenue until the foul line and continue down 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the centerfield fence. Gisselman asked if there was an opening. Tryczak

said that there is an opening right at the end. Treu said the current opening will be utilized and they will be taking the next section down also. Gisselman said that in earlier discussions, another opening was going to be located further down. Treu said it was decided to make the existing bigger. Knotek said 1 pilaster and 1 section of wall will be removed. Burke asked if the section will remain open. Treu said that it will be 1 section and will be about 22 feet deep. Clemens said the rendering is preliminary and the granite stone wall is not completely identical. Crooks asked if there are any renderings of the opening to the park. Clemens said it was at the office. Knotek said the project is essentially the removal of the wall to the pilaster, similar to how it is now just bigger. Crooks and Gisselman asked if it would be next to the current opening and Gisselman said that 1 large opening is better than 2 smaller openings.

Burke asked if the windows will be replaced. Clemens answered yes. Gisselman asked about the removal. Knotek said the Samuels Group will be in charge of the removal. A qualified stone removal company will be used. Gisselman asked if the granite will be saved. Knotek answered that the extra stone will be used in the park, possibly for a small column with historic nature. Knotek said that originally there wasn't a door and the door will be removed. Gisselman asked if another door will be installed. Clemens said there will be a functioning ticket window. Gisselman said the remaining stone can be saved. Knotek said the remaining stone will be held by the Parks Department. Burke said that this will be a fine addition.

Oberbeck asked if there are photographs on what the windows looked like as these seem modern. Clemens said that there weren't any photographs. Gisselman said there was a wooden shutter. Knotek said that more research could be done, but there hasn't been anything found yet. Oberbeck said they seem more modern. Clemens said they were probably functional shutters with no window. Samuels Group recommended a ticket window for security. Oberbeck asked if a darker colored window frame could be used. Clemens answered that could be arranged. Knotek added that it will be addressed.

Crooks motioned approve the certificate of appropriateness for Athletic Park. Tryczak seconded and the motion carried unanimously 8-0.

### **Discuss Historic District Signage**

---

Gisselman said that it has been asked that committee start to think about signage that is allowed in historic districts. There are 3 districts that are Class II Local Historic Districts. Gisselman passed out a copy of Beloit and Rochester ordinances in regards to historic district signage. Neighbors were present regarding this item. Gisselman said this is the beginning of talks. Any ordinance changes would need to go to Plan Commission and Common Council. This can take limited time or it could be complicated, depending on how specific the commission wants to get. Gisselman asked for comments and suggestions.

Crooks asked if this would be a citywide sign ordinance. Lenz answered that it could apply to specific districts. Sign regulations are very strict in residential districts and require conditional use approval. Hebert said the downtown district has a content requirement and residential districts are typically non-lit signs. Crooks asked about size regulations. Hebert said that there are mainly the size and placement regulations. Lenz said the ordinance is not as clear as we would like – different uses in residential districts have different regulations. Crooks asked if any sign in a residential area would require a conditional use permit. Lenz answered yes and said there are 4 different residential districts. The committee looked over a copy of the residential signage ordinance. Crooks asked about historic markers on residences. Hebert answered that small plaques are allowed but it is prohibited to have home occupation signs. Crooks asked what the public opinion is.

Torkko said that historic preservation has always been a balancing act between beneficial and useful and being historically correct. As it relates to signage, there seems to be a strong movement to market with electronic signs. Torkko said he objects to electronic signs in historic areas. Electronic signs are in one area, then another, and soon they will be in all areas. The modern image does an injustice to historic preservation with historic integrity. Laughlin said that they all feel that way and were surprised that the committee would recommend the sign for the Historical Society go further. The rules should be stronger toward signage in historic districts.

Welter said that all the neighbors feel the reader board signs are inappropriate. There is a concern that the historical society would set the precedent. Gisselman said the commission is talking about all 3 historic districts. Welter said that a residential district could be differentiated from the downtown district. Welter said she would like to see no digital signs downtown either, but said they should not be lumped together. Hebert said that the downtown business district does not allow any electronic signage, but there is UDD mixed in with the downtown area. Staff has denied requests for electronic signage in downtown business district. Welter said Associated Bank and other businesses have electronic signage. Lenz said that historic districts don't coincide with zoning districts – the downtown area, for example, is mixed with B2, UDD, and central business district zoning.

Gisselman said it is not the commissions call in regards to zoning districts, just historical districts as outlined in the ordinance. Crooks asked if there is a potential to amend the ordinance. Lenz said that all historic signs could be looked at, but we need to look at all sections of the zoning code. An amendment would be in multiple locations in the code, unless there is an overlay paragraph like what was done in Beloit. Crooks said the ordinance cannot be in a conflict with other signage ordinances. Gisselman said the next step would be to have commission members view the current signage ordinance. Crooks said the commission has talked about this issue the past year or two and have talked about relaxing the overhang, for example. Lenz said there is some allowance to have an overhanging sign for some buildings on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, but not in other districts. Crooks said the Andrew Warrens district is a mix of residential and commercial zoning. Oberbeck said this would be an appropriate time to look at signage because of what is being done with the way-finding initiative. This would help clean up the older ordinances. Lenz said that staff has talked about this as sign regulations are located in multiple chapters in the code, and it is not the easiest for people to follow. It would be a good idea to have one area for the sign zoning. Crooks asked if a comprehensive signage ordinance could be created and also have provision for historic districts like Beloit. Lenz said yes, and the Rochester one could also be used as a guide. Gisselman said that this is the beginning of the discussion and to get a sense of how to move forward. There could be larger signage ordinance with historic districts as part of it or the historic sign ordinance under the historic preservation portion of the ordinance. Lenz said that the City will be developing urban design standards and signage could possibly be addressed specifically for historic signs.

Crooks asked if a resolution should be created asking the council to address this. Oberbeck asked if it would need to go to Plan Commission. Gisselman agreed that Plan Commission would be a place to start. Crooks said that a commission with a broader authority could study the issue and then this commission could get involved to give our input for the historic districts. Gisselman said the wording for the resolution can be worked out. Lenz asked if the commission should adopt a resolution to send to Plan Commission and Common Council stating that the commission recommends adopting historic district guidelines. Crooks asked if the historic preservation ordinance would be amended and said that he would like that done after the City does a comprehensive look at signage. Lenz said a resolution could tell council to fold this initiative in with the urban design initiative.

Torkko said that this group is in charge of historic preservation and said he doesn't understand why this

would need to wait to get approval from other parts of the city. Torkko said the commission should work on its part and let the other parts work its way through. Oberbeck said that coordination needs to be done because there are so many other zoning districts. Lenz said that it would help to have visuals so everyone is seeing the same thing. Gisselman said that there cannot be historic districts signage that conflicts with zoning districts. Crooks said that the historic signage ordinance can be more general and the zoning ordinance would be more specific. Burke said the signage would originate here before the permit would get issued. If there was a general signage ordinance, it could be a starting point. Oberbeck said that it would need to be according to the zoning ordinance. Crooks said the historic signage ordinance does not need to be specific, in regards to size. He said there needs to be some guidelines. Forer said that there wouldn't be much more added to the process. Gisselman asked if Lenz and Hebert could bring a resolution to next month's meeting. Crooks asked for a presentation of the signage ordinance and a recommendation of what type of action could be taken.

Welter said that Plan Commission already approved unanimously a sign because of the support of this commission. The certificate of appropriateness carries weight. At that meeting, there were 2 different sign proposals, both in residential districts, and said she doesn't understand why the other requested one was passed. Welter said that there doesn't seem to be consistency or guidance whether it is a historic district or just a residential district. Gisselman said that in regards to the conservatory, that was the Plan Commission's decision. Welter said that this commission recommended that the signage for historical society be approved and that shouldn't have happened. Royer said it is contradictory. There should be a stronger sense of regulation in a historic district. If a neighborhood can be protected from intrusive signage, a historic district should be double protected. This commission has weight and bearing. Force asked what is going to happen to the proposal in the meantime since it appears that it will take some time to get the issues resolved. Gisselman said that proposal it is not listed on the agenda, the signage item was brought to the commission for discussion. Crooks asked for a recap of the Marathon County Historical Society signage issue. Gisselman said that an approval was requested by the Marathon Historical Society. The commission looked at the proposal and approved it. The item moved to Plan Commission and this is where the neighbors spoke out. Forer said because of the neighbors, the historical society chose to pull the item from the council agenda and the signage is not being actively pursued.

Gisselman asked Lenz and Hebert to bring the current zoning regulations to the commission. Oberbeck asked if an overlay map of the historic districts and zoning would be available. Lenz said zoning regulations will be relatively general – the downtown district will allow a variety of signs even though they are not historic.

Force said the proposal was approved and asked if the Marathon County Historical Society is planning on having it. Forer said it is not planned.

#### **Updates and next meeting date(s)**

---

The next meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2013 at 4:00 p.m.

#### **Adjournment**

---

Crooks motioned to adjourn. Burke seconded. Motion carried unanimously 8-0. Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Gary Gisselman, Chair