

Historic Preservation Commission
Regular Meeting
July 9, 2015

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.
- 2) Roll Call.
Present: Kathy Bruxvoort, Rhonda Kermode, Jim Mansueto, Kent Oppenhuizen.
Absent: Julie Heerema Mueller.
Others Present: Jerry Byers, George Wesselhoft.
- 3) Elections
 - a) Chair. The Commission elected Jim Mansueto as Chair for 2015.
 - b) Vice Chair. The Commission elected Kathy Bruxvoort as Vice Chair for 2015.
- 4) Approval of Minutes – June 11, 2015 Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.
- 5) Review of Draft Documents.
 - a) Historic District Overlay Ordinance. George Wesselhoft mentioned that at the last meeting the Commission discussed setting the rules in place first before actually adopting a geographic district. In other words, taking the ordinance and the proposed architecture handbook to Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council and suggesting that these are the proposed rules but that they would not yet be imposed on any specific properties. It would be a text amendment process and if approved then the next step would be the petition process, getting the necessary signatures and having the hearings for the district establishment.

Kathy Bruxvoort asked about the College Historic District and has that already been labeled a district and by who and what does that mean.

Jim Mansueto responded that the Historic Pella Trust is spearheading and is paying a historian to analyze all the homes to look at the possibility of making a historic district. His understanding is that a separate group, not the Historic Preservation Commission, would have to obtain signatures for the historic overlay.

Mr. Wesselhoft clarified that as far as the proposed overlay ordinance, the first step would be the signatures and if you do not get the required signatures then you cannot go to the next step.

Mr. Mansueto stated that we could do all this and actually not have any historic districts.

There was discussion about the proposed historic district establishment process.

Rhonda Kermode mentioned that they are trying to do these things so they mesh together to do the historic district with the overlay zone and say these are the guidelines, then that offers some protection for the area.

Mr. Mansueto gave an example on North Main Street a house where they are replacing windows where they just put in vinyl double hung, that is where these guidelines would help protect the integrity, try to rehab the existing windows or if you are going to change them try to do something architecturally correct to match the house; he added that there is the possibility of getting up to 45% of your costs reimbursed through tax credits.

Ms. Kermode mentioned the Certified Local Government (CLG) program through the State of Iowa where you can get more grants but then the State has more control.

There was discussion about CLG and the City of Oskaloosa as an example.

Mr. Wesselhoft reviewed Section 1 of the draft ordinance where the language talks about the purpose and is found in other model ordinances. He added that the Ad Hoc Committee looked at such cities with established historic programs as Des Moines, Dubuque, Iowa City, and Mount Vernon. He mentioned in Section 2 the 60% signature threshold there was a lot of discussion about this at the Ad Hoc Committee. In particular, he noted that the draft language states that each property owner would get just one signature regardless of the number of properties they own.

Jim Mansueto mentioned they looked at other cities and the Ad Hoc Committee came up with the 60 percent, but that if the Commission wants to change that is something for discussion.

Kathy Bruxvoort asked if there are 40 properties then you need signatures for 24 properties and explain the one signature per property owner. She suggested it might be helpful or a deterrent for the one signature.

Rhonda Kermode suggested how people feel really matters and that the one property owner signature requirement was intended so one could not sway the whole process.

Jim Mansueto mentioned part of the reason this all happened is when Dennis Vander Beek started buying up all the homes on Main Street and tearing them down.

There was further discussion about the possible process for historic overlay.

Jerry Byers suggested that staff could come up with a flow chart or process diagram as to how the process would work with Historic Preservation Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

Mr. Wesselhoft reviewed Sections 3-9 of the draft ordinance. In particular, the applicability section and approval criteria were mentioned. Mr. Byers mentioned the permitting process. The Commission asked staff to research other cities respective of Section 6 on economic hardship.

Jim Mansueto brought up Section 5(b)(iv) Alterations to existing structures in the historic districts which do not require a building permit and mentioned the need for communication for this type of project.

There was further discussion about alterations not involving a building permit but that would require a historic permit.

The Commission agreed to the suggestion by staff that in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings, that special meetings similar to the Community Development Committee be held as needed if historic applications are received once a historic district would be established.

b) Historic Preservation Handbook. George Wesselhoft summarized the draft handbook document and mentioned that it would be referenced in the proposed overlay district ordinance.

Jim Mansueto asked if on page 2 of the handbook the paragraph could be in bold face type which mentions that historic permits are required for alterations which do not take a building permit but are visible from the public street or front of the structure.

There was discussion about the 25% proposed limitation found in Sections 2.0 and 2.1 which would limit building footprint expansions. Mr. Wesselhoft mentioned that if someone for example had a 1200 square home in terms of building footprint area then they would be limited to 1500 square feet total or only 300 square feet for addition.

Ms. Kermode added that this about the character of the neighborhood and gave the example of an Arts and Crafts bungalow.

Mr. Wesselhoft mentioned under 3.0 the same 25% rule as above was listed in prior draft from the Ad Hoc Committee but was unintentionally omitted and staff will restore that provision in the draft document.

The Commission directed staff to review other cities as it pertains to the building mass issue such as the 25% rule for historic review.

Mr. Wesselhoft mentioned that doors and window changes would be subject to historic review under the proposal which currently someone can change out a door or window on their house without any City permit.

Mr. Mansueto suggested the wording be changed for windows.

Ms. Kermode mentioned the need for education process about restoring old windows.

Mr. Byers brought up an example of someone that is redoing a balcony on a historic home and they have to make the railing heights meet the Building Code.

Mr. Wesselhoft noted on the draft historic permit form document there is language that says the Historic Preservation Commission does not review for zoning or building codes and that the work involved must comply with other applicable codes.

There was further discussion about the handbook draft document.

Mr. Mansueto mentioned that on page 11 under Paint Color the wording to avoid glossy paint should be keep but delete very bright or all white in color.

Ms. Bruxvoort brought up ramps as an element.

Mr. Byers responded that ADA handicapped ramps could be an issue.

The Commission directed staff to check with other cities in so far as handicapped ramp review under historic preservation.

The Chairman asked the rest of the Commission to review the documents further before the next meeting.

6) Other Business. It was mentioned that the next meeting would be on August 20.

7) The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
George Wesselhoft
Planning and Zoning Director