

**MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING
Cheney Historic Preservation Commission
October 27, 2005**

Commissioners Attending: Bettye Hull, Martin Seedorf, Fred Lauritsen, Nikki Gamon, Steve Emerson, Aimee Flinn and Chris Stewart.

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Attending: Glenn Scholten, Bob McClure and Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:22 p.m.

New Business: Certificate of Appropriateness – Lowe House, 306 F Street.

Ms. Beeman introduced Margaret Band, house manager of the ETA PSI Housing Association, and Steve Rostollan, general contractor. She also introduced Bob McClure from the Cheney Building Department.

Ms. Beeman explained that the Cheney Municipal Code requires that owners of houses on the Cheney Historic Register must bring their building plans to the Commission for review before commencing work. In this case, something slipped through the cracks, and a building permit was issued to do repairs to the porch of the Lowe House without the owners being notified of the requirement for design review by the Historic Preservation Commission. The construction project came to staff's attention this week, and the owners were contacted. This special meeting was called to allow the building owners to present their plans to the Commission, so the project is able to proceed without leaving the building in an unfinished and unsafe condition.

Mr. Scholten showed photos of the porch taken yesterday, after removal of the decking and decorative trimwork.

Ms. Band explained that they bought the house in 1996 for use as a sorority and realized the porch had problems, but did not have the money to make repairs until now. The porch posts were wobbly and you couldn't lean against them. The upper deck has been off limits for several years because it is not safe to walk on. Some of the girls' parents were concerned about the safety issues, because portions of the decking were rotted. This spring they chose Mr. Rostollan to do painting and restoration of the porch.

Chairman Hull asked if they are planning to keep the porch the same style, and invited Ms. Band to describe the project in detail.

Mr. Rostollan explained that the porch was in dangerous condition, ready to fall off the house. The support posts were leaning, and the wood decking and beams were rotten. When the porch was built, the posts were set on a stacked stone foundation. The main posts which support the roof are setting on top of the deck. He explained that there is a concrete block retaining wall

which is leaning, and they intend to excavate that out and pour pier foundations up to the posts. The appearance of the porch will be the same, but there will be some changes in the structure to make it more stable.

Commissioner Seedorf asked if the rest of the foundation under the house is in good shape. Mr. Rostollan said that it is; only the porch supports are in poor condition.

Mr. Rostollan showed sketches of the 'before' and 'after' design of the porch. In the 'before' sketch, two posts are shown that extend directly to the deck. He explained that these act as pivot points, allowing the rail to flex. The 'after' sketch shows a slight change, where the horizontal member extends fully between the two porch roof supports, and the two short posts are anchored to the horizontal member.

NOTE: Commissioners Gamon and Flinn arrived at 5:30 p.m.

Commissioner Emerson asked if the concrete block retaining wall was supporting the porch. Mr. Rostollan explained that it is retaining a flower bed and some of the yard, but it will be removed to put in the pier for the post that sits in the middle of that wall. The posts that were carrying the roof load were setting on two 2x6s going corner to corner. There was no real support for that, and it needs to be replaced with a structural beam.

Commissioner Emerson said that it looks like they were trying to shore up with concrete outside the rock. Mr. Rostollan said they were using that to try to divert rain water away from the foundation.

Ms. Band explained that they were trying to keep water from seeping into the basement. They had problems a couple of years ago with water seeping behind the wall into the computer lab and ruining several computers.

Commissioner Seedorf asked Mr. Rostollan if he had any experience with restoration of historic buildings. Mr. Rostollan said this was his first register building. However, he has experience with framing and cabinetry, as well as painting. He explained that he has taken the porch apart piece by piece and the replacement is an exact replication of what was there originally. The fancy trim work has already been fabricated and is in his shop, ready to be re-installed.

Chairman Hull asked if there is a reason the original pieces are not being re-used. Mr. Rostollan said that the whole railing system was rotted out. The main beam was built out of stacked 2x4s, and is not sufficient for the load it would bear.

Commissioner Emerson asked about the bead and spindle work. Mr. Rostollan said that he is just waiting for the balls to be delivered. The materials were used in the original were mainly standard, off-the-shelf materials. He said that he is re-using the original curved pieces, and the rest will be fabricated to match the original exactly.

Chairman Hull asked about the upper porch and whether it is also in an unsafe condition. Mr. Rostollan said that it is also rotted. Once he gets the concrete poured, they will be removing the porch roof and decking, and making repairs to that area, too.

Commissioner Emerson noted that the 1983 nomination to the National Register refers to older photographs of the building. We do not have any of those photographs right now, but Commissioner Emerson said that he is convinced that this is the original porch. The biggest change appears to be that the porch foundation will rest on concrete instead of stone. Since this is not visible from the exterior of the house, he has no problem replacing it with something more secure. And as long as they are duplicating the original spindle work, he has no problem with the project.

Chairman Hull asked if the upper story will be restored in a similar manner, keeping the original material whenever possible. Mr. Rostollan said that is the intention, to replicate the original and to re-use original material whenever possible.

Mr. McClure asked for technical details on the post construction. Mr. Rostollan provided the information, and said that the front of the porch sank about 2" over the years, and they will bring it up to level.

Commissioner Seedorf asked how many residents are living in the house. Ms. Band said there are 20 residents now, 10 upstairs and 10 downstairs. There are 50 members of the sorority. They might all come to meetings at the house, but social functions with additional guests are held at other locations. Commissioner Seedorf asked if Ms. Band is responsible for other branches of Eta Psi besides the Cheney house. Ms. Band said that she is only responsible for the Cheney house.

Commissioner Emerson asked about plans to fortify the back porch. Mr. Rostollan said they will probably do that next summer. The deck is structurally fine, but some of the balusters and arches are rotting away. It will be done in the same manner as the front porch, replicating the original.

Ms. Band noted that the steps on the back porch have been done before, but the railings have not been replaced.

Commissioner Seedorf stated that this is one of the few grand old houses in Cheney; most homes were smaller and more modest. The Commission wants to maintain that, and he appreciates the owners being sensitive to that. He understands that there is sometimes a conflict between the issues of private property and public interest.

Commissioner Seedorf made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as described. Seconded by Commissioner Stewart; motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Hull suggested that Mr. Rostollan investigate the Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation of historic buildings. She noted that his interests and skills appear to mesh well with the special needs of older buildings.

Mr. Scholten asked if Ms. Band had any objection to the staff continuing to photograph progress on the building. Ms. Beeman noted that this project is a good example of how to restore historic buildings, and we would like to be able to show other homeowners how repairs can be accomplished with sensitivity to the historic integrity of the building.

Commissioner Gamon recommended several links from the City of Cheney's historic preservation web page as having helpful information on restoration of historic buildings. The web site is www.cityofcheney.org .

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary