

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission February 2, 2006

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

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Attending: Allan Gainer and Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Commissioner Lauritsen, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2006 Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission as distributed. Motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Participation: Chairman Hull welcomed Mayor Gainer, and introduced members of the Commission. Chairman Hull also welcomed guests Rita Seedorf and Tim Garceau.

Mr. Garceau explained that he has been working with Pathways to Progress, drafting design guidelines which might be adopted for the downtown. He has been looking at a model ordinance developed by the Town of Oysterville for protection of historic building features in their downtown. He raised several questions for the Commission's consideration: Will the Historic Preservation Commission be the design review committee, or will a separate committee be appointed? For example, the Town of Oysterville's committee consists of an architect, an engineer, a planner, a downtown business owner, and a community member. Will there be application fees for design review, and how will those be set? How will a design review application be triggered – by a land use permit, or by a building or construction permit? Will there be a distinction between major and minor modifications? Some jurisdictions define a 'major' modification as more than 5% of the building's value.

Discussion followed. Chairman Hull stated that this commission has acted as a design review committee in a number of instances, and it might be advantageous to have this group continue to act, rather than try to gather another group of professionals to do similar work.

Ms. Beeman explained that most of the fees for land use actions, such as conditional use permits and zone changes, are established based on the average amount of staff time that it takes to review and process the application. It's not really a revenue generator, but the fee is intended to cover the cost of providing a service to the applicant which is beyond what the average citizen of Cheney is receiving.

Commissioner Flinn said that the City of Spokane has a fee of \$125 for design review of residential buildings and \$250 for commercial buildings, and they are considering increases in those fees. Some other cities assign fees on a graduated basis, based on the total cost of the remodel.

Chairman Hull expressed a concern that if the design review was optional, then people would skip it because of the cost of the fee. She said that Cheney businesses operate on a narrow margin, and she does not want this to be a hardship for property owners.

Mr. Garceau explained that the proposal was that design review would be a component of the zoning regulations for the Mixed Use zone. He will make a distinction between actions required by the zoning, and other actions or design characteristics which would be recommended as carrying out the tone of the historic elements.

Chairman Hull suggested that we involve Mr. Richardson in the discussion as we begin to consider the design review ordinance. Commissioner Gamon requested that a copy of the ordinance be provided for the commissioners to review.

Old Business: 2006 Survey Project – Review Completed Descriptions – Houses 1880 – 1899. Chairman Hull announced that the review of completed house descriptions would be placed later on the agenda so our guests did not have to sit through the entire discussion.

Old Business: Review Proposals for Historic Research Consultant. Ms. Beeman stated that the Request for Proposals had been advertised in the Spokesman-Review, and application packets were mailed to approximately 25 consultants on lists maintained by the Spokane City/County HPO and the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. No proposals were received. One consultant sent a letter asking to remain on our bidders list, but stating that her schedule does not permit her to be involved in this survey project.

Commissioner Flinn noted that many of the consultants in the Spokane area are extremely busy right now.

Ms. Beeman said that this is the second year that we have been in the position of having advertised the opening and receiving no proposals. Under the City's purchasing & hiring policy, if an opportunity has been properly advertised and no proposals are received, the City may enter into a contract with anyone they deem to be qualified to perform the work. Last year we contracted with Commissioner Emerson and Commissioner Flinn to perform the survey work. While that was allowed, it would be preferable to find a qualified consultant who does not sit on the Commission, to avoid any appearance of fairness or conflict of interest issues.

Chairman Hull suggested that we contact Charles Mutschler and see if he would be willing to take on the survey project, or if he can recommend a qualified student for the project.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Seedorf asked if there was any way to extend the time limit for the grant project, and if that might make the project more attractive to some of the consultants who have quite a bit of work. Ms. Beeman said that the intermediate deadlines are somewhat flexible, but the overall grant completion date is firm.

Commissioner Flinn said that she had been contacted by Diana Painter of Petaluma, California, about the Cheney project. She expressed interest, but felt the cost of travel to this area would be prohibitive.

Commissioner Seedorf stated that Mr. Mutschler is a public historian, as well as archivist, and he has a Ph.D. in history, and years of experience on this commission. Although he is employed full time, he might be willing to undertake this project, and he is certainly qualified.

Commissioner Emerson explained that Architectural & Historical Services has such a high overhead that small contracts like the Cheney survey are not tenable for them. He said that his understanding is that most of the local consultants in the Spokane area are quite busy right now. Discussion continued. Commissioner Emerson said that if we are unable to find another consultant willing to do this survey, he and Commissioner Flinn would be available.

Ms. Beeman will contact Mr. Mutschler and report back to the Commission on his interest and availability.

Old Business: Moorman House Update. Ms. Beeman explained that the Moorman House is an 1880 Gothic Revival style house located at 4th and G Street which is located on the Cheney Register of Historic Places. The house has been vacant for 20 years or more, and is now in danger of demolition unless it can be moved to a new location. The building is structurally sound, with a roof which was replaced in 1997. Mrs. Dorothy Anderson, the daughter of James Madison Moorman, made several repairs to the building in the late 1990s and applied for local register listing, but her health did not permit her to continue to rehabilitate the interior of the building.

The Historic Preservation Commission has actively sought proposals to relocate the building, and has shown the building to over 200 people. Several parties pursued plans to move the house, but all have fallen through, for a variety of reasons. Now, the owner of the property has told us that the building must be relocated by July, as he plans to begin development of that lot by August.

Ms. Beeman described a proposal to relocate the building to a city-owned lot and renovate it for use as a museum, while maintaining its local register status. Discussion followed on possible locations for the building, and possible sources of funding. Ms. Beeman noted that there are some grants available, but all will require some sort of city match.

Chairman Hull noted that the renovation of the interior will also be a long-term project because so much work needs to be done.

Mayor Gainer said that one of his priorities is to see a small museum established to showcase Cheney's colorful history. Discussion continued.

Ms. Beeman noted that staff has had conversations with members of the Tilicum Board and they have indicated support for the concept of renovating the Moorman House with the idea of eventually relocating their collection, which is presently housed in the Wren Pierson Building. If that were to happen, the issue of better access to the second floor of the Moorman House would have to be addressed, as the existing stairs are quite narrow and steep, and many Tilicum members are of an age to need better accessibility than what currently exists. Ms. Beeman said that the Tilicum Club has had custody of their museum collection since 1935, and it is a wonderful collection, but the present location is not very visible to the community.

Mayor Gainer asked that a proposal for the Moorman House be written up and sent to him for consideration.

Commissioner Seedorf asked if there are any other city-owned lots which could be considered for siting the Moorman House. He added that the present owner of the Moorman House has been very accommodating in allowing us time to pursue alternatives to demolition of the house.

Ms. Beeman said that other towns the size of Cheney, and even smaller, are able to support museums. Ritzville has museums which are owned by the city, and operated by a non-profit group of volunteers. Maintenance costs are shared between the city and the non-profit group.

Commissioner Flinn suggested that as a non-profit group, the Tilicum Club has many more grant funding opportunities available to it than the City of Cheney, a local government, does. For instance, Spokane Preservation Advocates offers grants of up to \$5,000, which could be used as match for other grant sources.

Ms. Beeman said there is another grant at the state level, the Heritage Capital Projects Fund, which may be an opportunity to obtain funding for a museum project. That requires matching funds from the City, but a portion of that may be in in-kind services, such as volunteers' donated time, and staff time.

Chairman Hull said she thought it would be easy to find community support for a restoration project once we had something tangible to put in front of people. Pathways, the University, local schools, and other groups may be willing to help once we have a plan and start getting the word out. Discussion followed.

Mayor Gainer reminded the commission that he is on the Pathways board, and Pathways would be supportive of a museum project. Commissioner Lauritsen asked if the Eastern Washington Historical Society offers grants. Commissioner Flinn said that she is not aware of any funding from that source. Ms. Beeman noted that other area businesses may be willing to donate to a museum project. For example, the Spokane Teachers Credit Union was a major donor to the restoration of the Jore Schoolhouse on the EWU campus. Commissioner Gamon said that several local businesses have community involvement programs, including the credit unions and Starbucks. Discussion continued.

New Business: CLG Annual Report. Ms. Beeman reviewed the CLG Annual Report that was submitted to DAHP covering activities of the Commission in 2005:

- 2 design reviews conducted (Lowe House & Moorman House)
- 30 new additions to local historic inventory (DAHP grant project)
- 1 updated inventory form
- 4.5 acres surveyed
- 10 regular Commission meetings (Jan & Dec. cancelled due to weather)
- 3 special meetings (1 for design review – Oct. 27; 2 for W. Cheney survey / history project – Feb & March)
- Held walking tour of historic downtown for members of Pathways to Progress board (May)
- Prepared 11 newspaper articles on history of homes in West Cheney survey area
- Held dedication of bronze marker in historic downtown (April)
- Newspaper and television coverage of Moorman House – endangered local register property
- HPC members participated in community planning/visioning meeting (October)
- Maintained and enhanced HP web pages
- Displayed historic Cheney banners during Rodeo Days parade (July)

New business: Newspaper Articles. Ms. Beeman reported that the Cheney Free Press has now published 9 of the 11 newspaper articles on historic buildings that the Commission provided. They originally estimated they would publish approximately one article per month, but have used them more frequently than that. The editor has indicated they would be happy to receive additional articles.

Commissioner Stewart asked how we should go about selecting the houses for the next series of articles. Discussion followed. Commissioner Stewart volunteered to provide an article on the Ratcliffe House; Commissioner Seedorf is working on an article on the Gibbs House. Commissioner Flinn has written a research paper on Isle Hall which could be turned into an article. Commissioner Hull suggested that we have quite a lot of information on several of the EWU buildings, and on the Philena, which was named for Governor Martin's mother.

Commissioner Seedorf noted that old Highway 10 came through Moses Lake, Othello, Lind and up to Ritzville, and it is routed that way because Governor Martin wanted the quickest, most direct route to Cheney. That is the route that was followed when I-90 was constructed. Mayor Gainer noted that Governor Martin held the offices of both mayor of Cheney and governor of Washington at the same time, for a three-year period.

Commissioner Lauritsen suggested that the Durries have made some very appropriate modifications to their historic home, and we could describe their efforts.

Commissioner Stewart asked if we could provide a list of reference numbers, street addresses, and homeowner names for consideration for future articles.

Election of Officers. Commissioner Stewart made a motion to retain our current slate of officers, with Commissioner Hull as Chairman and Commissioner Gamon as Vice Chairman. Seconded by Commissioner Seedorf. Commissioner Lauritsen made a motion that nominations for officers be closed; seconded by Commissioner Seedorf. Chairman Hull called for a vote; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stewart expressed appreciation to Chairman Hull for her leadership to the Commission.

Commissioner Reports: Commissioner Seedorf reported that Mrs. Seedorf has been helping him to complete the inventory, and they will be finished before the next meeting.

Commissioner Lauritsen shared a brochure on the “Old House Sampler” lecture series at the Museum of Arts and Culture this spring. Commissioner Emerson highly recommended Michael Houser’s talk on Thursday, February 23 which will deal with identifying houses and architectural styles.

Commissioner Flinn shared copies of a new series of brochures she is working on for the Spokane HPO on frequently asked questions about the local register. She stated that she will be in Lisbon, Portugal, for her vacation destination with the U.S. Navy this year, and will miss the March meeting.

Commissioner Stewart asked for clarification on how to describe survey activities on the timesheets.

*NOTE: Chairman Hull called a 5 minute recess at 6:25 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Flinn asked to be excused at this time.

New Business: 2006 Survey Project: Review Completed Descriptions – Houses 1880-1899. Commissioner Lauritsen reviewed the descriptions of houses he has surveyed and Ms. Beeman showed photographs of each house. Discussion followed.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary