

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission

February 2, 2009

Commissioners Attending: Bettye Hull, Charlie Mutschler, Fred Lauritsen, Scott Wilbanks, Vance Youmans and Chris Stewart.

Commissioners Absent: Aimee Flinn.

Staff Attending: Patti Dean & Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m. and welcomed Commissioner Youmans, who was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Steve Emerson.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the December 4, 2008 meeting were approved as distributed.

Citizen Participation: None.

Old Business: Museum Update.

Joan Mamanakis and Ann Heehn gave a report on the location of the museum following the structural failure of the Wren Pierson Building in early January. Ms. Mamanakis said that currently boxes of museum items are located in several peoples' homes; some paper records are stored at the State Archives Building. The majority of the three-dimensional items are now located in a storage unit near the edge of town. Their greatest need at this point is for a secure, climate-controlled storage area. They will be meeting with the Masonic Lodge later this evening about the possibility of utilizing some currently vacant space in their building on 1st Street. Getting the items out of the storage unit is a priority at this time, due to the potential damage from humidity and temperature fluctuations. Ms. Mamanakis said that they are beginning to plan for reaching out to the broader community for support, including Marshall, Four Lakes, Cheney, Tyler and Amber, and raising the question of whether having a community museum is important.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Wilbanks asked if they had looked into Dr. Miller's old office. Ms. Mamanakis said that the space is still leased to Dr. Miller, and the family is in the process of removing records.

Commissioner Stewart asked if Steve Emtman might have any space available; he presently owns several downtown buildings. Ms. Mamanakis said that they have had conversations, but those buildings need substantial repairs before they are able to be occupied, and he is not really able to put in those repairs and then give away the space rent-free.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Lauritsen asked if anyone has checked on the Cheney Christian Church building which was donated to the university. Commissioner Mutschler offered to try to determine who would be an appropriate contact at the university.

New Business: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness – 306 F Street.

Margaret Band, Valaurie Caprez, and Gary Aker introduced themselves as advisors to the Alpha Phi House at 306 F Street. Ms. Band explained that during the first week of January, the furnace and hot water heater both died. Before the present unit was installed, the hot water tank was connected to the furnace. Because of new building codes, they could not replace the system exactly. At this time, the furnace is vented out the chimney, but the chimney diameter is not sufficient to allow the water heater to be vented through the chimney as well.

Ms. Band explained that their contractor, Sturm Heating, has vented the water heater out a basement window, which is the shortest distance from the furnace room to the outside of the house. They tried two other places to vent the water heater, including the chimney and out the front of the house, but neither of those were possible. This is the third alternative, and appears to be the best option available to them.

Mr. Aker explained that this pipe is both an air intake and an exhaust vent. Chairman Hull asked if the pipe could be exited through the wall and under the porch, where it would be less visible. Mr. Aker said that there is a degree of slope required for the vent pipe which precludes that, without having to penetrate through the foundation wall.

Mr. Aker added that if you painted the pipe to match the house, it would not be too obtrusive. They just need to turn it 90 degrees and run it about two feet to meet the requirements of the building code.

Discussion followed.

Commissioner Lauritsen asked if an electric water heater was out of the question. Ms. Caprez said that it is, because they have already bought the furnace and water heater.

Commissioner Mutschler suggested that this is probably the best option, with the pipe being painted to blend in with the color of the house. In the big picture, you've already got conduit added onto the outside of the house for the wiring.

Ms. Beeman asked about a suggestion made by Mr. Eagle, the building inspector, that would route the vent pipe through the interior of the house to where the floor joists changed direction, rather than closing off the window. Ms. Caprez said that it would be an more expensive solution, and the girls living in the house would be inconvenienced while that work was done. Mr. Aker said there were some flooring problems that would have to be addressed if that was done, and that it would also require going through the foundation wall. They discussed this with Mr. Eagle and the representative from Sturm had concerns about the pitch of the pipe with that option.

Mr. Aker said that venting the water heater through the window required the least amount of modification to the house, and it is reversible, if need be, and the house could be returned to its original state at some point in the future.

Chairman Hull clarified that these repairs were already done, because they had to be done in an emergency situation.

Discussion continued.

Commissioner Mutschler made a motion to authorize the changes as described, with the exhaust pipe vented through the basement window, to be painted to match the trim; he emphasized that this is an imperfect solution, but that it is the 'least-bad' option, and recognizing that it is fully reversible. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stewart; carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stewart added that she appreciates the care and concern that is being shown to the Lowe House, and wants to convey that the Commission is trying to work with the owners, and is on their side in all this, while working within the preservation guidelines that have been established. She emphasized that they are appreciated for their efforts.

Ms. Band suggested that perhaps the Commission might be interested in a tour of the property sometime. Commissioner Stewart said that the Commission loves field trips and would be pleased at an invitation.

Old Business: Possible Historic District in 6th Street Neighborhood.

Commissioner Lauritsen reported that he attended the neighborhood meeting regarding formation of a historic district, and the notes provided by Ms. Hamel accurately summarize the discussion. He noted that Spokane Preservation Advocates hosts their annual tour of historic homes on Mother's Day weekend, and suggested that we might be able to organize a similar event as a fundraiser to benefit the Sterling-Moorman House or the museum, perhaps in late spring or early summer.

Ms. Beeman added that Ms. Hamel is talking with people at the university to try to arrange for some assistance in additional surveys, and several people are intending to survey their own houses. Ms. Hamel has organized a block-by-block network to communicate with neighborhood residents, and is approaching this project with a great deal of enthusiasm.

Old Business: Sterling-Moorman House Project.

Ms. Beeman reported that we are in a place where we need to focus on fundraising. We are still in line to receive a grant of \$87,000 from the Washington State Historical Society; in spite of budget cuts, we are still included in the governor's budget for next biennium, as number 20 on a list of approximately 50 projects which are scheduled to be funded.

Ms. Beeman reported that she and Chairman Hull attended a meeting this afternoon about the future of the museum. The Tilicum members are working to organize a community meeting to draw attention to the loss of the museum space in the Wren Pierson Building. We need to be very clear in our efforts to promote the Sterling-Moorman House project that this is not a complete solution to the museum's needs, both because of the time required to make the Sterling-Moorman House usable, and also because the size of the museum collection exceeds the available space, even with the addition of the carriage house. In our efforts, we should take care to show that our purposes are complementary, not competing.

Discussion followed. It was agreed to set volunteer work days for the first and third Saturdays of March and April to continue with work on the house. Commissioner Stewart suggested that we need to be reaching out to people who have certain talents, who would be willing to volunteer their time. It will raise the visibility of the project just by having the house open, with activity going on.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Stewart offered to contact the Cheney Garden Club to see if they would be willing to help with landscaping the house. Ernie Robeson's plan has some suggestions for landscaping, but the Garden Club might also be willing to make some recommendations about planting that would have been typical around a homestead house in the period 1884 to 1912, which we have identified as the period of significance for this house.

Ms. Beeman will prepare some non-Christmas brick order forms, and will check into the possibility of some temporary signage to advertise our scheduled work days.

Election of Officers:

Commissioner Lauritsen nominated Commissioner Hull to serve as Chairman, and Commissioner Stewart to serve as Vice-Chairman for another year. Seconded by Commissioner Mutschler; motion carried unanimously.

Staff Reports:

Commissioner Lauritsen announced that he will be hosting a concert at his house to benefit the Sterling-Moorman House project. He would like to have someone speak about the Sterling-Moorman House project; Commissioner Mutschler offered to give a brief history of the house

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary