

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission

April 5, 2007

Commissioners Attending: Bettye Hull, Charlie Mutschler, Fred Lauritsen, Aimee Flinn, Steve Emerson, and Chris Stewart.

Commissioners Absent: Nikki Gamon.

Staff Attending: Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:19 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Commissioner Lauritsen to approve the minutes from the March 1, 2007 regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, as distributed. Seconded by Commissioner Mutschler; motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Participation: Chairman Hull welcomed Sue Lani Madsen of Madsen Mitchell Evenson & Conrad, and Jim Moeller, EWU Department of Construction & Planning Services.

Old Business: Hargreaves Hall Remodel Plans. Ms. Madsen said that she had just received the Historic Preservation Commission's letter with comments on the Hargreaves Hall remodel, and will be responding in writing. However, she feels that one of the difficulties with modeling is that perspective is hard to imagine, and the addition is not as intrusive as the Commission perceived it to be. In context, this really does not detract from the historic district. She showed a depiction of what Hargreaves Hall, with the proposed addition, would look like from the historic district. Because the addition is pulled back on the side, and the roofline is lower, it is not observable. She noted that several of the existing trees will be remaining; that is a requirement by the university.

Discussion followed. Chairman Hull noted that most people will be approaching Hargreaves from the Monroe Hall side, and the large expanse of modern glass is just too much.

NOTE: Commissioner Stewart arrived at this time.

Ms. Madsen explained that one of the principles they are trying to follow is that any additions to a historic building should be to the rear. Through the years, the core of campus has moved, so there are really going to be two main entrances to the building. They are also trying to follow the National Park Service (NPS) guideline that suggests that additions should be reversible. The glass addition allows them to leave intact the 16 original windows on the rear of Hargreaves. By

providing the glass, those windows still have daylight coming in, reducing the impact on the interior of the building.

Commissioner Emerson noted that you can always say that buildings which are significantly altered “can be restored,” even to the point of adding vinyl siding all the way around the building which could theoretically be removed. Ms. Madsen agreed that you can remodel in a way that the historic fabric is altered to the point where it would be too expensive or too difficult to restore. They are at the other extreme, where they are actually leaving the historic fabric there where it can be seen and touched.

Ms. Madsen remarked that this is a matter of balancing the interests of a number of constituencies, and finding the middle ground. Under this proposal, they are reversing a number of changes that were made to the building, taking them out and moving them to the addition at the back. The sizing and scale of the addition have been designed to defer to the mass of the original building, and are pulled back from the original Hargreaves profile.

Discussion continued. Chairman Hull agreed that Hargreaves would still look good from the President’s House side, but from the Monroe Hall side, you’re not going to have any sense of a historic district any longer. She feels that the new addition is so ‘loud’ that you won’t have a sense of the old Hargreaves any longer.

Ms. Madsen disagreed, and said that she thinks what you will see is the height and mass of the original building behind the addition, because it is significantly taller, and they put a flat parapet on the addition to defer to the hip roof of the original, rather than tying in to the existing hip roof. She discussed the need for balance between varying objectives, and said they are working on finding that balance.

Chairman Hull asked if the upper glass portions of the side walls in the reading room have been reconsidered. Ms. Madsen said they are still working on that, trying to find a way to give the space some smaller functional meeting spaces while retaining the feeling of that full space.

Mr. Moeller said that he would have to take the blame for the ‘racquetball court’ idea. He was trying not to obscure the historic treatments, but still provide some sort of acoustic privacy to make functional use of the space.

Mr. Moeller asked about the glazed entry on the mall side, and said that there is also glazing on the C Street side of the building, but less of it. Is that less objectionable for having less glazing?

Chairman Hull said that she had not seen designs for that side of the building, but there are also trees and other elements on that side to reduce the impact of the glass. She asked if there has been consideration of some kind of indoor-outdoor space between the old and new buildings, keeping them a little more separate?

Ms. Madsen said that they really have not looked in that direction, because that kind of space doesn’t wear very well in this climate.

Mr. Moeller said that if money was no object, we would build a new building somewhere else and restore this building. Money is an object. Glazing costs three times as much as regular walls, and those expenses are also more expensive to heat. There will be other stages of review where budget considerations are applied to the designs, and some of the glazing may very well be reduced at those stages of review.

Ms. Madsen said that they would be taking these comments into consideration as they continue to work on the design phase and work to balance the various interests. She said that she feels good about where they are going with this project because they have taken the original budget and stretched it to include as much restoration of the original building as possible. She feels they are on the right track, and it is still a work in progress.

Commissioner Emerson said that the unfortunate shadow over this project is the cumulative effect this will have on the rest of the historic district. Stephen Mathison of DAHP says that he does not have sufficient information on what has happened to the rest of the district to make any comment in that regard. This Commission does have the information, so we did make the comment that we believe this will have a negative effect on the integrity of the district.

Ms. Madsen said that she had spoken to Mr. Mathison earlier today and offered to send photos of the historic district, and he indicated that Michael Houser is the person whose task it is to look at historic districts and determine if they are eligible. She added that it is nearly impossible for a historic district to be de-listed unless it is torn down. This is really a local issue, and it comes back to the question of what Cheney wants to do with its historic district. Ms. Madsen said that they would like to make this a 'coming together' of the various interests to reach some consensus.

Discussion continued. Chairman Hull suggested that the question is really whether students in Monroe, or approaching from Monroe, will know they are in a historic district. She does not think so. Ms. Madsen said you could also ask the question of whether they be aware. When you are standing in the quad, you will see the original building. There is a debatable point about whether they should mess with the entrance canopy. It has been there nearly 50 years and serves a purpose in keeping snow off the steps. By adding a new accessible entrance at the side of the building, the original entry did not have to be modified.

Discussion followed on the canopy over the front entrance. Commissioner Emerson noted that the canopy was done rather compatibly, but it does obscure some of the Art Deco details of the building. He did address that in the historic district nomination, and noted that it was appropriately designed.

Mr. Moeller said that Dr. Arévalo's only comment on that element of design was to ask if we could get rid of the canopy. Discussion continued.

Ms. Madsen said that she really thinks the question of what to do with the canopy will go away as a cost issue, because it is not directly related to the new construction. Mr. Moeller agreed, and said that when money is an issue, the cost of taking the old canopy off and the cost of replacing it with something is likely to dictate that we live with what we have for a while longer.

Commissioner Emerson said that if Mr. Mathison is deferring to Mr. Houser on the question of the Hargreaves project's impact on the district, it will be interesting to hear Mr. Houser's opinions. He is scheduled to visit Cheney in May for a workshop.

Chairman Hull agreed, and said that her concern was that the changes which have already been made to buildings within the district are to such an extent that if the district nomination were made today, it would be rejected.

Ms. Madsen disagreed, and thinks there is more of a tendency on the part of historic preservation agencies to be broadminded wherever possible, because the designation tends to foster conversations like this.

Commissioner Emerson added that in the final analysis, this commission will stand behind the comments they offered on the Hargreaves project.

Chairman Hull thanked Ms. Madsen and Mr. Moeller for their comments.

New Business: Historic Preservation Workshop

Ms. Beeman distributed a preliminary schedule, and noted that the facilities are confirmed for Senior Hall. The general sessions will be held in the 2nd floor lounge, and break-out workshops will be held in classrooms. Several speakers are already confirmed, and other speakers' names were suggested.

Discussion continued. The workshop will be titled: "Historic Preservation in the Real World: Doing Right by Your Historic Property." There will be sessions of general interest, and then separate, concurrent sessions for commercial buildings and for residential buildings. Suggestions were considered for workshop titles and potential speakers, and an agenda finalized.

Commissioner Reports: Commissioner Stewart announced that she will miss the May meeting.

NOTE: Commissioners Stewart and Lauritsen were excused at this time (6:26 p.m.)

Commissioner Emerson reported that he went to Walla Walla recently to do another battlefield investigation, similar to the one at Steptoe. The town received a grant, and a group of volunteers with metal detectors found a number of artifacts, including four musket balls, and an 1854 Liberty dime (the year of the battle was 1855). They also found trade beads and buttons dated back to the Hudson's Bay Company era.

Commissioner Mutschler reported that he has been doing campus tours, worked on an interactive display at the library, and has provided presentations on the history of the university for three

different groups on campus. The EWU 125th anniversary has stirred a lot of media interest in the history of the school, as well.

Commissioner Hull reported on recent research at the Custer battlefield. That battlefield is unique in that markers have been placed noting where people fell, rather than in rows in a classic cemetery fashion.

Staff Reports: Ms. Beeman reported on the ongoing reorganization of the Building and Planning Departments into the Department of Community Development.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary