

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission

August 7, 2008

Commissioners Attending: Bettye Hull, Charlie Mutschler, Aimee Flinn & Scott Wilbanks, Steve Emerson and Chris Stewart.

Commissioners Absent: Fred Lauritsen.

Staff Attending: Brian Jennings, Arlene Fisher, James Caddey & Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Chairman Hull asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, the minutes of the July 10, 2008 meeting were approved as distributed.

Citizen Participation: None.

New Business: Wayfinding Report.

Mr. Jennings explained that Community Development staff have been working on a project to study 'wayfinding' in the community. It was initiated when the business community expressed an interest in expanding what the City allows for off-premise signage in the downtown. Staff has been looking at that issue, but also at the larger picture of how we manage the visitor experience in our community. Mr. Jennings introduced James Caddey, Planning Intern.

Mr. Caddey explained that wayfinding is a process that begins when the visitor realizes they have entered the city. Different kinds of signs serve different purposes. Gateway signs serve to let visitors know they have arrived in Cheney. Vehicular wayfinding signs are larger, easier to see from passing cars, and usually have limited destinations listed on the signs. Parking wayfinding signs indicate where available parking lots may be found. Pedestrian wayfinding signs are typically smaller, and may list distance in blocks rather than miles. Location signs are located at actual destinations. In a comprehensive wayfinding system, signs for similar destinations would have a similar appearance.

Mr. Caddey explained that 36% of Cheney residents are EWU students, and each year there is a new incoming class of freshmen and transfer students who need to find their way around town.

Mr. Caddey gave an overview of our existing signage, and identified several problems. There is a lack of signage to recreation destinations in town, including public parks. Many of our signs have small letters, making them hard to read from a passing vehicle. There is no consistent

'branding,' either for community or university signs. He showed examples of what some other communities are doing in terms of signs and wayfinding. Extensive discussion followed.

Mr. Caddey summarized the benefits of wayfinding as providing a sense of place; increased commercial awareness; encouraging exploration of the community; and increased civic engagement. The next steps in this project will be to continue making presentations like this to interested community groups. He will be preparing a case study on signage in Gig Harbor, and finalizing the wayfinding report. Staff will then develop a project plan, and make a final presentation and recommendation to City Council and the Planning Commission. This will include identification of stakeholders, and funding mechanisms for improving signage in the community.

Old Business: Sterling-Moorman House Preservation Plan – Progress Report.

Ms. Beeman reported that Mr. Robeson has finalized his portion of the historic structure report, and will incorporate the portion on the history of the house and its owners into his document. He has added some additional material since submission of the 90% draft document. Chairman Hull commented that Mr. Robeson had gone above and beyond what was called for in our contract; Commissioner Mutschler agreed that he has done an excellent job with the report. Commissioner Wilbanks noted that he was not present at the last meeting to offer his comments, but he thought it was a fantastic piece of work.

Ms. Beeman stated that the draft report was sent to the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation for their 30-day review, and we received a note from Megan Duvall indicating the report was acceptable to them; there were no corrections or amendments requested.

Discussion followed on research still needed to complete the history section.

Chairman Hull gave an update on her research into the trail of ownership of the Sterling-Moorman House, and distributed copies of the chain of ownership for the property at 308 4th Street since the town was platted in 1881. Isabella & Frank Sterling owned the property from July 1883 to June 1886, during the time that the house was constructed. Since Frank was a carpenter & cabinet maker by trade, it is presumed that he was the builder.

The house belonged to the Webb family from 1887 to 1935. Sam Webb was a prominent Cheney businessman and served on the City Council, and his parents were some of the earliest pioneers to come to the Cheney area. There is a family history and photo album from the Webbs located in the Tilicum Museum.

The house passed to the Moormans in 1937. James Madison Moorman was a wheat farmer near Cunningham, in Adams County, and apparently moved to the house in Cheney when he retired from farming. Chairman Hull still hopes to locate obituaries for James and Cleora, because earlier obituaries could be quite informative. James Moorman died in 1965. The Moormans' daughter, Dorothy Anderson, had ownership of the house until 2004.

Commissioner Mutschler reported on his findings with the Sanborn maps. The earliest Sanborn maps of Cheney, in 1884 and 1888, were concentrated on the downtown, and did not extend into the residential neighborhood where the Sterling-Moorman House was located. This was a fire insurance map service that was aimed at insurance claims adjusters, and they were not likely to map rural areas or less populated neighborhoods. The Sterling-Moorman House was first shown on the 1890 Sanborn map, and it does show the footprint of the lean-to on the back of the house. By 1905, you had the lean-to on the lean-to, on the lean-to.

Commissioner Mutschler described the early history of Cheney. Prior to September 1883, people were probably speculating, buying and selling property and hoping to make a lot of money when the railroad was completed. The railroad was selling property even before they arrived here in town. Titles to appropriate sections of land had been cleared in advance of the rails arriving in Cheney, by about two months.

Old Business: Washington Heritage Capital Grant Award.

Ms. Beeman reported that we have been notified by the Washington Historical Society that we are being recommended to receive a grant in the amount of \$86,884 for work on the restoration of the Sterling-Moorman House. This will be part of the governor's recommended budget for the next biennium, so contracts will not be available until June 2009. As part of the City's match for this grant, we have committed to a community fundraising drive to solicit up to \$35,000. We will also be soliciting volunteers to assist with hands-on work on the house.

Chairman Hull reported that she has made the acquaintance of the lady from the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture who works with fundraising activities. She will contact her to see if she would be willing to visit with our commission to give us some pointers.

Chairman Hull noted that the grant cycle for the Spokane Preservation Advocates is coming up again, and we are eligible to apply for funding two years after having received a grant.

Discussion followed on the restoration of the house. Mr. Jennings asked what assistance the City of Spokane provided for restoration of the Fox Theater. Commissioner Flinn explained that the City passed an ordinance waiving fees for the obstruction of sidewalks, which ordinarily incurs a daily fee. Other than that, there were just the regular preservation incentives available.

Next Meeting:

Chairman Hull reminded everyone that our September meeting, on Thursday, September 4, will be held at the Jore School (One-Room Schoolhouse) on the EWU Campus, beginning at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Stewart said that the metered parking off 7th Street is available after 5:00 p.m. without having to feed the meters. There are no signs directing you to the school, but you can follow the path along Martin Hall, and the schoolhouse is on the right.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Emerson presented four nominations to the state and national registers at the Advisory Committee meeting in Dayton, and all four were accepted. He attended the National Trust reception earlier this week. He reported that the new Historic Preservation Officer for Spokane is Kristin Griffin, who has been in Alaska recently, but has connections with this area.

Chairman Hull reported that she also attended the National Trust reception, and caught a tour of the building that Ron Wells was giving to the National Trust representatives.

Commissioner Wilbanks shared an article on the Bassett Springs location which is the grave site of the first white child in Spokane County. Commissioner Wilbanks reported that he recently visited the museum in Newport, and felt it was very nicely done.

Chairman Hull said that she found a web site that was very helpful with research: www.findagrave.com . Another site that provides photos of headstones is www.teafortwo.com .

Commissioner Mutschler reported that he was a presenter on the deluxe rail tours for National Parks of the Northwest. He is also a certified presenter for Operation Lifesaver now. And Rayette Sterling from the Northwest Room at the Spokane Public Library has just been hired by the university as a reference librarian specializing in diverse populations.

Commissioner Stewart noted that her term on the commission is due to expire at the end of this year, and she would like to know who to communicate with regarding her willingness to continue to serve. Ms. Beeman said that she will notify the Mayor. Commissioner Emerson added that his term is also up at the end of this year, and he will step aside at the end of his term and let someone else have the opportunity to serve on the Historic Preservation Commission.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Jennings reported that there are grants available to communities which earn the ‘Preserve America’ designation. Ms. Beeman said that this commission has endorsed an application to become a Preserve America community, but we have never completed the application process.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary