

## **MINUTES**

### **Cheney Historic Preservation Commission**

**September 4, 2008**

**Location:** Jore Schoolhouse, EWU Campus

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Aimee Flinn and Steve Emerson.

**Staff Attending:** Brian Jennings & Susan Beeman.

**Councilpersons Attending:** None.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. following a tour of the schoolhouse, and welcomed guests Ann Heehn and Joan Mamanakis from the Cheney Historical Museum, Dave Teller from the Cheney Free Press, and Ernest Robeson.

**Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Hull asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, the minutes of the August 7, 2008 meeting were approved as distributed.

**Citizen Participation:** None.

### **Old Business: Sterling-Moorman House Preservation Plan.**

Ms. Beeman distributed copies of the final version of the historic structure report, and Mr. Robeson reviewed his findings and recommendations. He emphasized that the key to the restoration of the house would be to keep the front of the building simple, and pedestrian oriented, perhaps adding a bench near the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and G Street, and a sign identifying the historic house.

Mr. Robeson suggested that the retaining wall at the back of the lot could be moved back slightly, which leaves plenty of room for parking, and also maximizes the space for a planned outbuilding at the rear of the lot. He suggested that if funding permits, doing the carriage house first would provide toilet rooms for volunteers working on the main building, and storage space for tools and material would be available right away. It would also be some significant and obvious progress, which might be a benefit since the house has been setting with little change since its relocation. Electrical panels could be located in the carriage house and brought underground to the main house, leaving the main house with a more historically accurate appearance.

Mr. Robeson recommended that a couple of trees be planted on the west side of the property, both for shade and also to enhance the feeling that the building had always been at that location.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Mutschler said that he is impressed with this document, and feels that Mr. Robeson has done a wonderful job. His report answers a lot of questions about public access, code requirements, and appropriate restoration approaches. The comment about making obvious progress immediately through construction of a carriage house is very wise.

Commissioner Stewart agreed, and commented that this report is excellent work.

Mr. Robeson emphasized that from a preservation standpoint, the windows are the most important feature of the house. Care should be taken with making the windows operable again, and throughout the construction process to adequately protect the original materials. He suggested that we find 1-2 volunteers who would like to learn everything there is to know about restoring windows, and let them review the reference materials on the subject. They would then be entrusted with working on all the windows, in turn.

Mr. Jennings commented that the Spokane Home Builders' membership is quite broad, and we might find someone with needed skills who would be interested in working with us. Chairman Hull noted that there is an active membership in the Spokane Preservation Advocates with an interest in hands-on restoration work, too.

Mr. Jennings added that monument-type signs are not currently allowed in the C-1, Downtown Commercial Zone. Generally, monument signs are automobile oriented, and the code in the C-1 zone is designed to encourage pedestrian-oriented signs, such as the Tully's sign that is mounted on Brewster Hall.

Mr. Robeson said that he had located some additional reference material that was not included in the body of the report, and he has provided a binder with this additional information. It includes information on mechanical systems with smaller ducting, contact information for manufacturers of wood sash windows, and other helpful references.

Commissioner Mutschler made a motion to extend a vote of thanks to Mr. Robeson for his work on this project. Seconded by Commissioner Wilbanks; motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Hull suggested that we proceed with other items on the agenda for the convenience of our guests, and return to further discussion of a fundraising plan for the Sterling-Moorman House later in the meeting.

#### **New Business: Presentation on Operation Lifesaver.**

Commissioner Mutschler explained that Operation Lifesaver is a program that provides educational presentations on railroad crossing and pedestrian safety. It is an international operation, begun in 1972 when a railroad employee got together with members of the law enforcement community to see if they could do something about the increasing rate of accidents at railroad crossings. They proposed to do this through a three-pronged approach: education, engineering, and enforcement.

Commissioner Mutschler presented the Operation Lifesaver training, and offered to provide brochures for inclusion in 'welcome to Cheney' packets being provided to new residents at The Grove Apartments. He is also available to bring the Operation Lifesaver training to interested community groups.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Stewart expressed concern about the safety of residents of the new apartments who will be crossing the railroad tracks daily, and who may be inclined to be casual about safety. Mr. Jennings noted that the crossing on Cheney-Spangle Road, which was once an easygoing rural crossing, is becoming urbanized. The Cheney Police and Fire Departments are being proactive in providing information to new residents of these apartments. There has been discussion about the need for a different kind of railroad crossing, but the cost of a tunnel is prohibitive in our basalt rock soils, and an overpass is not practical because of clearance issues, and the distance between the railroad and 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

**New Business: Sterling-Moorman House Fundraising Plan.**

Ms. Beeman suggested that we organize a work day at the Sterling-Moorman House to test out our volunteer procedures, and to begin to raise visibility of the project to the public. It was decided to arrange a work day for Saturday, October 4, from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Mr. Robeson suggested that there is a material in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor ceilings that should be tested for asbestos before anyone begins to remove that material. We are in possession of an asbestos report that was prepared for Mr. Nation, but the ceiling material was not tested specifically.

Ms. Mamanakis suggested that we prepare the drawings showing recommended restoration work and have them mounted on poster board so volunteers and visitors to the house may see what is being planned.

Ms. Beeman suggested that a vinyl banner be prepared to provide temporary signage about the building's history and the rehab project. We are planning to sell engraved bricks, such as has been done at the library and in the downtown revitalization project, to raise a portion of the needed matching funds for the Washington Heritage Capital Projects grant.

Discussion followed on fundraising ideas. It was decided to schedule a special meeting for Thursday, September 25, for the purpose of a brainstorming session on fundraising, branding, and promoting the restoration of the house.

Mr. Jennings said that this is a marketing plan. What is unique about this house? Cheney's first house, oldest house? Referring to it by the name "Sterling-Moorman House" does not tell people very much.

Mr. Teller added that it is not clear that it is not associated with the LDS Church.

Commissioner Mutschler suggested that we need to get people interested in the idea that this is part of our community history and heritage; we need to be deliberate about explaining why the building is meaningful to the general public.

Ms. Mamanakis said that we need to think about how to reach more people. Not everyone visits downtown; not everyone reads the Cheney Free Press. The museum faces the same issues in trying to reach a broader segment of the community.

Commissioner Lauritsen suggested that it would be appropriate to add a sign on 1<sup>st</sup> Street as we have which directs people toward some of the churches which are located out of sight of the main business district. We could also add 'Home of the Sterling-Moorman House' to our entrance signs to the city.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Mutschler stated that any oversight committee should include representatives from the museum, and also possibly from Pathways and the Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Hull suggested sending a letter to other community organizations, explaining the history of the house and the rehab project. We should also consider forming an oversight committee which is separate from the Historic Preservation Commission to spearhead work on the house.

Mr. Jennings suggested scheduling a future meeting with the sole purpose of brainstorming regarding the Sterling-Moorman House. It was decided to set the meeting for Thursday, September 25.

Commissioner Lauritsen suggested contacting the EWU Retirees' group which meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month; they might give us a few minutes to introduce the project.

Chairman Hull asked if we could have a sign or booth at Cheneyfest; Ms. Beeman will check into it.

#### **Commissioner Reports:**

Commissioner Mutschler reported that he attended the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in San Francisco.

Commissioner Lauritsen announced a Downtown Fall Workshop on organization successful downtown revitalization. This will be held September 24 in Prosser.

Commissioner Hull reported that she is working at the family history center on Melville Road on Thursdays, and she is excited about some new technology that will make researching easier.

#### **Staff Reports:**

Mr. Jennings reported that the Wayfinding Report will be on the City Council agenda later this month.

Chairman Hull reminded everyone that the Spokane Preservation Advocates will be hosting a tour of historic homes on Cliff Drive on Saturday, September 13, from noon to 4:00 p.m. Details are available in their September newsletter, and on the SPA web site.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

**Approved:**

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Bettye Hull, Chairman

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Susan Beeman, Secretary