

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission September 7, 2006

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

Commissioners Absent: Nikki Gamon.

Staff Attending: Tom Richardson 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 Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Lauritsen, to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2006 Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission as distributed. Motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Participation: Chairman Hull welcomed John MacCallum of the Cheney Free Press.

Old Business: Moorman House Update. Ms. Beeman reported on the successful move of the Moorman House to its new home at the corner of 2nd and G Street which was completed this morning. The overhead lines were cleared by a few inches, with the assistance of crews in CenturyTel and Cheney Light Department bucket trucks manually lifting the lowest set of cables to allow the house to pass underneath. CenturyTel and Davis Communications both donated labor to raise the overhead lines. Crews from several City departments have worked on the project, either on the site preparation, installation of water and sewer service, or helping with tree trimming along the route where the house would be traveling.

Ms. Beeman reported that the same contractor who moved the house will be building the foundation, and that should be completed in the next several weeks.

Commissioner Emerson said that the Moorman House had been built over the top of two large tree stumps at its original location. Since the stumps were protected from moisture, they are relatively intact. There was also a piece of newspaper dated 1922 that was left after the house was moved, possibly having been used as insulation inside a wall.

Ms. Beeman said that another interesting discovery was that the floor joists are not just toenailed into the main support beams, but there are notches cut for each floor joist, and wooden pins placed to hold the beams together. The construction method is one reason the house is as solid as it is after 123 years. The main support beams under the house are hand-hewn timbers.

Donations have been received from Mike Nation (\$5,000); Spokane Preservation Advocates (\$5,000); and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (\$2,500). CenturyTel and Davis Communications donated the labor involved in raising the overhead lines for the house move. Chairman Hull asked that appropriate letters of appreciation be sent to the agencies involved.

Discussion followed on the possibility of learning more about the local climate by studying the tree rings; Ms. Beeman will follow up with someone at the university. She reported that a member of a local metal detecting club will be taking a look inside the old foundation to see if there is anything interesting to be found.

Old Business: Cheney High School Alumni Reunion Report. Ms. Beeman noted that Commissioner Hull, Commissioner Stewart, and Planning Intern Courtney Harder staffed the booth at the alumni picnic. Several alumni either wrote out a story associated with one of our historic buildings, or gave us contact information so we could call them for further details. One woman wrote a detailed story about her immigrant father who returned to Sweden for his mother's 80th birthday. The mother and children were living in a rented house, and while he was out of the country, the mother purchased the house, a rather bold move for a woman to make in those times. The house became the family home for the next 50 years, and was one of our survey properties in 2006.

Commissioner Stewart noted that she had really enjoyed working with Ms. Harder, who was very skilled at finding information needed on the computers.

Old Business: Kennedy House Local Register Nomination. Ms. Beeman reported that the resolution to list the Kennedy House on the local register will be going to City Council in the next couple of weeks.

Old Business: 2006 Historic Survey Project – Final Report. Mr. Emerson presented the final report on the 2006 Historic Survey Project. It was an ambitious project in that we were attempting to begin some level of recordation of every remaining property with potential eligibility for register listing. Approximately 248 properties were surveyed at the 'reconnaissance level' by members of the Commission, and by members of Charlie Mutschler's Public History class. Ms. Beeman and Ms. Harder helped with UTM coordinates, data entry, and GIS records. Ms. Flinn and Mr. Emerson were contracted to do a more in-depth survey of 25 properties representing a cross-section of different decades. They performed research with the County Assessor's office, took photographs, developed physical descriptions and statements of significance.

Mr. Emerson discussed some of the buildings which were determined eligible for the national register. Often these are in poor condition, because many of the changes people do to improve their property actually detract from historic integrity. Several of the houses are the Minimal Traditional style, built post-WWII as housing for returning soldiers and their families. Several

Craftsman style houses were surveyed, and one Ranch style house. Possibly the best preserved older house is the Durrie house on Front Street.

Commissioner Stewart suggested that a poster could be developed showing the variety of housing styles which were touched on in this survey.

Ms. Beeman noted that we now have an electronic database record for every house over 50 years old which might qualify for register listing, including a physical description and photograph. This makes it much easier to provide information on the special valuation program and historic register status when people contact the Planning Department to request zoning information. At this time, we have over 490 properties listed in our database, which represents a large percentage of the buildings in Cheney.

Commissioner Seedorf expressed gratitude to our predecessors on this commission who actively pursued grant opportunities and promoted preservation beginning with the formation of the commission in the mid-1980s. Those would include Charles Luttrell, Charles Mutschler, Craig Holstine, Dan Turbeville, and many others.

New Business: 2007 Grant Project. Ms. Beeman noted that we have been awarded grant funds to host a workshop on appropriate remodels of historic buildings in spring 2007. We will need to begin brainstorming workshop session topics and presenters next month, and considering dates.

Commissioner Flinn noted that the Renovators' Fair in Spokane was extremely popular, but has not been held in several years because of the time needed to organize. Commissioner Hull suggested that vendor tables be encouraged at our workshop to provide information on local resources. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Reports: Commissioner Lauritsen reported on leading tours of a historic farmhouse on his recent trip back to Minnesota. This 22-room brick farm house, built just after 1900, had a large meeting hall upstairs. the owner and his eldest daughter did the work themselves, using brick brought in by railroad from Red Wing, MN, and then by oxen or horse cart approximately 3 miles to the building site. The homestead was left to the local historical society in 1967.

Commissioner Hull suggested that in accepting donations for restoration of the Moorman House, we consider setting a figure for 'repair of lathe & plaster' on a single wall, and then identifying such donations with a small plaque listing the donor on that portion of the interior. She shared a photograph of a plaque from Historic Baker City, Oregon, which was placed on a bike rack as an example of historic district signage.

Commissioner Emerson reported on the serendipitous nature of historic research on his recent report on the Steve Black ranch.

Commissioner Flinn will have an article in the September/October issue of *Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Living* magazine on the history of the Navy presence in Spokane. She shared the story of the Ensign Robert John Monaghan statue at Riverside & Monroe. Discussion followed.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Richardson reported that an informational hearing will be held at the September 26 City Council meeting on I-933, labeled the Property Rights Initiative. This is a measure which, if passed, will have impacts on the City of Cheney.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary