

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission December 7, 2006

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

Commissioners Absent: Steve Emerson.

Staff Attending: Tom Richardson, John Montague and Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Hull called the meeting to order at 5:21 p.m. and welcomed Charlie Mutschler back to the Commission.

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Commissioner Lauritsen, seconded by Commissioner Mutschler, to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2006 Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Participation: None.

Old Business: Moorman House Update. Ms. Beeman reported that City crews still have the backfill around the foundation to complete. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has announced several grants which may be used for preservation planning activities, and we will be looking for grant funding to continue the rehab of the building. We also will be trying to complete an application for the Preserve America program this winter. Designated 'Preserve America Communities' may apply for a large pot of federal dollars for heritage tourism projects.

Chairman Hull noted that Cecil Ellsworth is working on a line drawing of the Moorman House to use for our fundraising activities. He has provided original artwork for the cover of several of our historic preservation brochures.

Old Business: Workshop Plans. Ms. Beeman suggested a date of Saturday, March 10, which is rather soon, but it does not conflict with any other community activities, including spring break for the university or local schools. The next best date seems to be Saturday, April 21. Discussion followed. Commissioner Mutschler noted that April will be a busy month on the EWU campus as they gear up for activities relating to the university's 125th anniversary. Commissioner Stewart asked if we have looked into tying into the 125th anniversary celebration, and coordinating our workshop with their activities.

Commissioner Lauritsen mentioned that he works with the retiree group, and suggested that two other groups on campus might have an interest in our workshop: the History Department, and also Archaeological & Historical Services.

Discussion followed on the workshop budget, and on speaker honorariums. Our total budget is approximately \$2,800. We will have to charge a nominal fee to cover lunch expenses, probably less than \$10 per person.

Discussion continued on the possibility of tying in to the EWU anniversary activities, and on possible facilities for our workshop. Commissioner Mutschler noted that the library has relatively small meeting rooms which will only hold about 12 people, and auditorium use is controlled by the classroom schedule, which sometimes makes it challenging to arrange special events there. Ms. Beeman will make inquiries and report back.

New Business: Bed & Breakfast as Conditional Use in Historic Properties. Ms. Beeman explained that one of the proposed changes to the zoning code in this year's round of development regulation amendments is a suggestion to allow bed & breakfast facilities to locate in R-2 zones with a conditional use permit, if the house is on the local historic register. They are presently allowed in R-3 zones, with no mention of historic register status, and not allowed in R-1 zones. The Planning Commission has asked what recommendation the Historic Preservation Commission would make with regard to that request.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Stewart said that she thought this would add something important to the community, that this kind of hospitality is presently lacking. Commissioner Gamon stated that she thought this would be a good use of historic properties, and could encourage owners to restore and maintain properties in the way we would like to see it done. Chairman Hull added that this is not the sort of use which would generate a large number of parked cars at one time.

Commissioner Flinn said this is done commonly in Spokane, but there are still the possibilities for neighborhood issues to arise.

Mr. Richardson said that one suggestion had been to allow them outright, but adding the requirement for some kind of historic status is a way to take a step in this direction.

Commissioner Flinn described the circumstances surrounding the recent change of use and special use permit for Patsy Clark's Mansion in Brown's Addition. In Spokane, certain commercial uses can be established in residential zones if the applicants can make a case that it is not financially feasible for the house to be operated as a residence. In this case, historic register status is not required, but it helps. You see a lot of larger, historic homes which won't sell as a single family home, but it will sell for a commercial use.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Flinn added that in Spokane, they actually require the property owner to live on-site; would this be the case in Cheney?

Commissioner Gamon said that she thought the historic register status was an important distinction. Chairman Hull agreed, and said that the goal would not be to open up the community to a rash of bed & breakfast facilities, but to encourage preservation and redevelopment of historic buildings.

Mr. Richardson asked if it was going to be too hard to get on the local register. Chairman Hull suggested that there are not a large number of houses in Cheney which would be historic register material, and which would also be suitable for a bed & breakfast facility. There are several really wonderful homes which would qualify without much trouble; she did not think that obtaining register listing was going to be too much of a barrier.

Commissioner Flinn asked if the conditional use permit would run in perpetuity with the property. Mr. Richardson said that is usually how it works; as long as the conditions are being met, the use is allowed to continue through changes of ownership.

Discussion continued on the nature of changes which might change the building's eligibility for historic register status. Commissioner Stewart noted that some changes to the architecture might preclude inclusion on the historic register, but certain improvements might preserve the useful life of the structure for another 50 or 60 years. In some cases, that might be an acceptable tradeoff.

Mr. Montague suggested that there needs to be consideration of the case of a historic building being destroyed by fire. The needed repairs or renovations could make the building ineligible for continuation on the historic register, but will that cause the owner to lose their conditional use permit?

Commissioner Mutschler said that he agrees we want to be sensitive to the concerns of the person who builds a business. Commissioner Gamon noted that this is a two-part process, with one part being before the Historic Preservation Commission to determine historic register eligibility, and the other part being the Planning Commission's responsibility to grant or deny a conditional use permit, and to set appropriate conditions. By consensus, the Commission agreed that these questions would have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Reports: Commissioner Stewart noted that the front of Goofy's has been updated, as well as the windows at the back of the building being uncovered as was reported last month.

Commissioner Mutschler reported that he has a manuscript off to a publisher for consideration right now, and he has been involved in editing Robert Rubey's memoir about his stint as a medical officer in 1953-54 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Commissioner Lauritsen reported that the EWU Retirees' group is sponsoring a tour to see the Egypt exhibit at the Portland Art Museum the weekend of January 13-14. The exhibit contains artifacts from ancient Egypt, and he regarded it as of the same quality as the King Tut exhibit.

Commissioner Lauritsen shared a newspaper clipping from his hometown about Zion Lutheran Church in Watson, Minnesota; that historic church is featured in a movie titled “The Sweet Land.”

Chairman Hull reported that the Dead Sea Scrolls are on exhibit at the Pacific Science Museum in Seattle through the end of January. They are recommending that tickets to the exhibit be purchased before you go to Seattle, because they are selling out fast.

Commissioner Flinn reported that she turned in the final draft of her thesis an hour ago, and is now ready to begin paying off her student loans.

Commissioner Flinn reported on the National Trust conference in Pittsburgh last month. She said it was a fabulous experience, with lots of interesting information. There were many examples of impoverished neighborhoods and housing projects which have been purchased by non-profit groups who are rehabbing the buildings to turn around and sell at 25 cents on the dollar. This sort of urban renewal has made a huge difference in that city.

Commissioner Stewart reported that American Tradition has a line of pain with a sticker on their sample cards that the National Trust for Historic Preservation recommends them for use on historic buildings.

Staff Reports: Mr. Richardson reported on a pending reorganization of the Building and Planning Departments, which will result in a one-stop permit center.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Chairman Hull adjourned the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Approved:

Bettye Hull, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary