

MINUTES

Cheney Historic Preservation Commission Regular Meeting February 1, 2018

Commissioners Attending: Charles Mutschler, Lee Pierce, Scott Wilbanks, Richard Donley, Martin Seedorf and Bettye Hull.

Commissioners Absent: None (one position vacant).

Staff Attending: Todd Ableman, Brett Lucas, Terry Mourning & Susan Beeman.

Councilpersons Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Mutschler called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. and welcomed guests John Cobb and Patrick Hanley.

Citizen Participation: Chairman Mutschler welcomed guests John Cobb and Patrick Hanley.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the December 7, 2017 regular meeting were approved as distributed.

Old Business - Cheney Depot Report: Chairman Mutschler gave an update on property acquisition for the Cheney Depot project.

New Business – Preservation Award Nominations: Cheney High School / School House Lofts, 520 4th Street

Ms. Beeman explained that there are award programs for recognition of outstanding preservation projects at both the state and national levels, with closing dates for nominations coming up in March. The School House Lofts project would be eligible for nomination under the guidelines of the Valerie Sivinski Award for Outstanding Preservation at the state level, and for the Richard Driehaus award at the national level. Ms. Beeman asked if the Commission was interested in endorsing or authoring a nomination to one or both of those programs.

Commissioner Seedorf made a motion to approve a nomination to both the state and national level award programs for the School House Lofts. Seconded by Commissioner Hull. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Seedorf said that he felt this is an unusual project, both in size and significance, with a large impact on the community. Chairman Mutschler agreed, and commented that there was much more attention to maintaining the historic interiors than is usual in adaptive reuse. Commissioner Wilbanks noted that the rehabilitation was done with an eye to the historic value of the building.

Commissioner Seedorf added that this building is part of the Central Cheney Historic District, and is adjacent to the EWU Historic District. This is not something that stands alone, but it impacts the integrity of nearby properties.

Chairman Mutschler called for a vote; motion carried. Chairman Mutschler announced that the Commission enthusiastically endorses nomination of the School House Lofts for recognition at both the state and national levels.

New Business - Commercial Architecture in Terms of Preservation & Property Rights

Mr. Lucas explained that a recent Facebook post on the Society for Commercial Archaeology page brought to his attention that the 1962 McDonalds building in Portland, Oregon, is slated for demolition in March. At one time, there were dozens of McDonald's buildings of this style and age throughout the country, but now we are down to just a handful. He showed photographs of a number of commercial buildings from the mid-century era which is now in the 50 to 60 year old range. In addition to McDonalds, he cited instances from Denny's, Norm's, Pann's Coffee Shop, International House of Pancakes, Bob's Big Boy, and a Chevrolet dealership in Los Angeles with a Felix the Cat marquee sign.

Although not 'high style' architecture, they are unique and disappearing rapidly from the landscape. Mr. Lucas led a discussion on whether these are worth some level of preservation, and if so, how do we balance that with economic development rights?

Discussion followed, with local examples of buildings of this type. Commissioner Pierce noted that one of the challenges might be retaining signage with trademarked logos or graphics; permission might need to be granted by the owners of both the intellectual and the physical property. He suggested that they may or may not be willing to retain out-of-date signage for a use that no longer occupies the building. Commissioner Hull suggested that the 50-year mark is a starting point for identifying significance, but it is not the only criteria. The Secretary of the Interior's criteria is age plus it being an outstanding example of its type. Perhaps documentation of the building prior to demolition is enough.

Mr. Mourning noted that architectural styles ebb and flow in popularity. He offered the example of Craftsman style, which became less popular as the California Ranch style was just emerging and the newer, more 'modern' style was in fashion. He added that our City Hall building is an example of an under-appreciated building, but if it hangs around long enough, it may be more appreciated. Chairman Mutschler agreed, and noted that this is a good example of a 1950s-1960s municipal building, where all the functions of small-town government were to be found under one roof.

Mr. Lucas added that other types of chains with very distinctive, standardized architecture included Taco Bell, and Howard Johnsons.

Discussion continued, with no action taken. Chairman Mutschler commented that this was a nicely-presented workshop on commercial architecture, and there is much food for thought here.

New Business - The Architecture of Monticello

Mr. Mourning introduced himself and explained that he has been a building inspector in Cheney for a little over a year now, and has worked as an architect for 20+ years prior to coming here. Mr. Mourning gave a presentation on the development and architecture of Monticello. He pointed out that following the Civil War, the building was in disrepair and was used for grain storage, with livestock housed in the basement. Two dedicated, visionary generations of the Levy family as well as a dedicated group of volunteers lobbied for its preservation and restoration. Mr. Mourning reviewed the chronology of construction and changes to Monticello itself, and showed floor plans and a collection of interior photographs of the building.

Election of Officers:

Commission Seedorf made a motion, seconded by Commission Donley, to retain the current slate of officers, with Commissioner Mutschler serving as chairman, and Commissioner Wilbanks as vice-chairman. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Reports:

Chairman Mutschler shared postcard copies of a photograph of a steam locomotive that he took last summer. Commissioner Wilbanks reported that he was recently sent a Civil War diary to review. Commission Seedorf noted that he has been retired from teaching for 6 years, and fully retired for 9 years, and he really enjoyed the presentations this evening.

Staff Reports:

Ms. Beeman announced that the Washington Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation will be accepting grant applications this spring from Certified Local Governments. She asked for ideas on what kind of project might advance preservation in our community.

Commissioner Hull reported that the State History Day competition will be held this year at Green River Community College in Auburn on April 21, and they are always looking for judges. February 28 is the regional History Day competition at EWU, and they also could use judges.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Approved:

Charles V. Mutschler, Chairman

Susan Beeman, Secretary