

**MINUTES**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING,**  
**Thursday, May 28, 2015 @ 4:30 p.m.**  
**Training Room, City Hall, 101 First Street SE**

Members Present: Amanda McKnight-Grafton      Chair  
Bob Grafton  
Ron Mussman  
Tim Oberbroeckling  
Mark Stoffer Hunter  
Pat Cargin  
B.J. Hobart  
Todd McNall  
Sam Bergus  
Barbara Westercamp  
Ann Poe – City Council Liaison

Members Absent: Caitlin Hartman

City Staff: Jeff Hintz, Planner  
Anne Russett, Planner  
Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director  
Kevin Ciabatti, Building Services Director  
Sandy Pumphrey, Project Engineer  
Sandi Fowler, Assistant City Manager

**Call Meeting to Order**

- Amanda McKnight Grafton called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.
- Ten (10) Commissioners were present with one (1) absent.

**1. Public Comment**

- James Adair commented about the Knutson building at 525 Valor Way SW and cited a newspaper article which noted the City had paid 1.5 million dollars for the property and as such the City of Cedar Rapids should keep the building, restore it and try to use it for the amphitheater or some other civic purpose. Mr. Adair also made general comments about the proposals and the overall cost of the project.
- Carissa Starleaf commented about the Knutson building at 525 Valor Way SW and stated she hoped the city would save the building and talked about other properties in Cedar Rapids, significant to the history of the community had been torn down in the past and cannot be replaced. There is a concern that too many historic properties have been removed and that there are not many left.
- Jim Hobart of Hobart Historic Restoration spoke about the Knutson Building at 525 Valor Way SW and how it would be much better for the community if the building was transferred to a private owner, restored and the development would help to generate

money for the city's tax roll. Mr. Hobart also spoke to the future of the property and that it would not be beneficial for the building to be torn down to make way for a surface parking lot which would serve the amphitheater; the historic structure is key to the area and a part of the neighborhood.

## **2. Approve Meeting Minutes**

- Todd McNall made a motion to approve the minutes from May 14, 2015. Barb Westercamp seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **3. Action Items**

### **a) Demolition Applications**

#### **i. 1230 Harrison Court NW – Private Property**

- Jeff Hintz stated that this property was built in 1952 and was recently looked at as a part of the 2014 Citywide Survey; the property was not eligible for the state or national registers. The property is the last single family home on the west side of the street is being demolished to make way for a senior living facility.
- Todd McNall made a motion to approve demolition of 1230 Harrison Court NW. Tim Oberbroeckling seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **ii. 3321 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE – Private Property**

- Jeff Hintz stated that this property was built in 1952 and was recently looked at as a part of the 2014 Citywide Survey; the property was not eligible for the state or national registers. The property was a bar for some time but had not had a liquor permit in recent years and was for sale prior to the demolition request; the property has undergone several changes in appearance and no longer resembles 1950's era construction. The demolition is being sought to create more visibility for the auto business to the north, which the applicant of the demolition also owns.
- Mark Stoffer Hunter gave some background on the property and noted when originally constructed, the building had a walk up counter for food orders and confirmed this property had undergone several changes over the years. He would like to obtain photos if original portions of the building are uncovered during the demolition.
- Mark Stoffer Hunter made a motion to approve demolition of 3321 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE. Barb Westercamp seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **iii. 931 Blairs Ferry Road NE – City Owned Property**

- Jeff Hintz stated that this property has never been included as a part of a reconnaissance survey but after staff had reviewed the site it would very unlikely this property be considered eligible. The structure has no defining architectural features and is not associated with significant persons or events. The warehouse is being demolished to make way for a three story mixed use facility with offices, retail and a restaurant.
- Time Oberbroeckling made a motion to approve demolition of 931 Blairs Ferry Road NE. B.J. Hobart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **4. New Business**

### **a) Discussion and Recommendation on 525 Valor Way (Knutson Building)**

- Jennifer Pratt went through some of the background and timeline of the Knutson Building. The City took possession of the property in February 2013 for \$1.5 million. That price included the building, the property, as well as the business relocation. The

purpose of the purchase was to remove the metal scrap operation which was not compatible with the new amphitheater.

- February, 2013 - Letter of interest received
- April 10, 2014 - HPC recommended proceeding with request for proposals based on elevating or moving the structure on site.
- July 22, 2014 - City Council initiated request for proposals to determine if private sector can provide a financially feasible proposal.
- September 30, 2014 - Three responses received; evaluation team recommended KHB, but new hybrid levee was out of scope.
- February 24, 2015 – City Council declined proposals and directed issuing new RFP
- March 24, 2015 - City Council initiated request for proposals seeking a financially feasible response with new hybrid levee.
- April 13, 2015 - Three responses received; evaluation team recommended KHB.
- May 26, 2015 – Scheduled date for City Council consideration; HPC request to provide formal recommendation.
- June 23, 2015 – Anticipated date for City Council consideration.
- Jennifer Pratt discussed three options for the Commission to recommend to the City Council.
  - Option 1: Renovation by KHB Redevelopment Group, LLC.
    - Upfront grant of \$750,000 - no funding source currently available.
    - Purchase price of \$1.
    - 10 year, 100% reimbursement of property taxes.
    - \$100,000 to route Flood Control System around the building with floodwall.
- Todd McNall stated that the proposal recommended was extremely well thought out and had a solid backing from capable developers.
  - Option 2: Stabilization until Flood Control System is constructed.
    - Building placarded - Unsafe to Enter - based on a March 23, 2015 walkthrough.
    - Unknown upfront costs to mothball the building - no funding source currently available.
    - roof repair/replacement
    - structural assessment and stabilization
    - Liability and maintenance costs incurred for 10 to 15 years, until flood control is completed.
    - \$100,000 to route Flood Control System around the building with floodwall.
  - Option 3: Demolition of building with request to pursue a long-term funding strategy to support Historic Preservation activities in the community.
    - Cost of demolition is eligible for State Flood Mitigation Program Grant reimbursement.
    - Eliminates on-going liability and maintenance costs.
- Staff recommends option 3 with emphasis on the following opportunities:
  - Explore long-term funding strategies, such as a Revolving Loan Fund, to support Historic Preservation activities, as proposed in the draft Historic Preservation Plan to be considered by City Council in September 2015.
  - Comprehensive evaluation of future land use, including operational needs of the McGrath Amphitheatre and compatibility with the historic restoration of the Mott Building.

- Tim Oberbroeckling had asked about the Council hearing this item had originally been scheduled for on Tuesday May 26<sup>th</sup>. General discussion was held regarding what the Council would have been evaluating during that meeting.
- Mark Stoffer Hunter spoke to the significance of the building in the early development of Cedar Rapids, noting the property was designed by a local architect and that there are not any examples of this intricate brick work of this time period in Cedar Rapids any longer.
- Amanda McKnight Grafton had asked about option 3 and the revolving loan fund that could be established. Jennifer Pratt stated that this was incorporated because Options 1 and 2 had real costs associated with them. Ann Poe mentioned this loan was brought about by staff in response to her request to help find some funding for preservation related activities. The condition of the building and the possibility of the city using it for amphitheater related activities were also deliberated.
- Jennifer Pratt spoke to the original reason for purchasing the property, which was to remove the incompatible use from the area. The previous metal scrapping and recycling facility was not congruent with the other facilities in the area and there was also a business relocation portion included in the 1.5 Million originally spent on the facility.
- Mark Stoffer Hunter detailed the development of the area from the turn of the century to the police station's construction in 1995.
- Todd McNall spoke to the condition of the building and roof in particular and noted the proposal which was recommended by the review committee included repair work and structural improvements as a part of the renovation.
- Mark Stoffer Hunter will work with City Staff to help get the history of the property to the City Council members at the next public hearing.
- Amanda McKnight noted there was unanimous consensus amongst the commission that the property should be saved. The Commission would like to see a structural analysis of the cost to mothball the building and an estimate for how much it would cost to preserve the building.
- The group recommendation was unanimous in that more cost information was required to assess the options and make a final recommendation.
- Jennifer Pratt noted that staff would take this request for additional information to the City Council on June 9, 2015 for consideration and come back to the HPC with an update.

A five minute recess was allowed for those who were interested in the previous item to leave and talk in the hallway.

## **5. Old Business**

### **c) 2015 Preservation Showcase Debrief**

- Item 5c was moved up to accommodate the schedules of commissioners who had to leave the meeting early.
- Amanda McKnight Grafton stated that Bob Yapp as a part of the Showcase was a great draw for the event. However, overall attendance was still an issue and competing with other events during nicer weather would always be a reality. Cross publicizing with other events would be a way to help improve attendance.
- General discussion was held about using some of the budget to do a targeted mailing to those in the historic districts or those who had participated in past public events related to preservation.

- A change in location for future showcase events was mentioned as something the Commission could consider. Mark Stoffer Hunter had suggested the History Center would be interested in holding an event. Discussion about foot traffic from passersby and perhaps including some of the Grant Wood facilities would help draw people to the history center site.
- Partnering with others, having a three day event, including events/classes eligible for continuing education credit and having more award categories with signage placed, recognizing the winners was discussed by the Commission.

B.J. Hobart left the meeting at 6:23 PM.

**b) Letter of Agreement with IEDA and SHPO Budget**

- Item 5b was considered next after consent from the remaining commissioners.
- Anne Russett discussed the past LOA projects and how the funding had been allocated and spent in some cases. There is roughly \$28,000 remaining for the 2016 showcase and five remaining technical assistance trainings. The LOA will end in November of 2016 and all the associated activities need to be completed by that time.
- Todd McNall mentioned it could be difficult to have the five trainings wrapped up in one year and the possibility of doing a 2017 showcase instead.
- Anne Russett confirmed staff would have to check with the IEDA and the LOA would have to be amended as well as the grant. The Commission expressed a desire to have this investigated.
- Barb Westercamp made a motion to have staff investigate the possibility of having a 2017 showcase to replace the five trainings. Todd McNall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**a) Draft Historic Preservation Plan**

- Anne Russett stated this would be the draft presented to the Commissioners during the meeting was a revised draft that the reviewing bodies under the MOA were currently reviewing. A formal Commission review and recommendation to City Council is slated for August 2015.

**6. MOA/LOA Project Updates**

- Jeff Hintz let the group know the Historic District signage had been ordered and is anticipated for a late summer installation.

**7. Announcements**

- Bob Grafton stated 1257 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue house had recently been acquired by SaveCR Heritage and a foundation for the move would be in place sometime over the summer. The move of the house is anticipated for late summer.
- The Commission inquired about letters of recognition for the Frankie house and the possibility of providing them to the parties who had worked on the project.
- Jeff Hintz stated he was looking for a volunteer from the HPC to work with city staff and the applicant on the E Avenue Fire Station project to help ensure historic work would be done with the facility.

**8. Adjournment**

- Barb Westercamp made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m. Todd McNall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Hintz, Planner II  
Community Development