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**MEETING MINUTES
BELOIT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Tuesday, August 15, 2017, 7:00 PM
The Forum, 100 State Street**

1. Roll Call

Commissioner Blazer called the meeting to order at 7:16 PM.

Commissioners Jacobsen, Blazer, Vater, McGrath, and Truesdale were present.

2. Minutes of the July 18, Meeting

Commissioners Vater and Jacobsen made a motion to approve the draft Minutes. Motion carried, 5-0.

- 3. Public Comments:** July Christensen, Community Development Director, addressed the Landmarks Commission's role in regard to demolitions. Ms. Christensen discussed section 32.07 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and the state statute regarding raze and repair orders. Ms. Christensen clarified that the condemnation of 402 Bluff Street is not the purview of the Landmarks Commission. Ms. Christensen assured the commission that the City's intent is not to circumvent the Landmarks Commission, and the condemnation of the 402 Bluff Street property is permitted under §66.0413(3), Wis. Stats. Ms. Christensen also provided details about the 402 Bluff Street property.

Commissioner Blazer asked if Ms. Christensen would stay for the discussion item regarding 408 Bluff Street property in case there were further questions. Ms. Christensen informed the commission that she planned on staying.

Drew Pennington, Director of Planning and Building Services, commented on the condemnation process involved in a condemnation. Mr. Pennington described condemnation as a tool of last resort, and explained that the property owner of 402 Bluff Street was issued 19 citations, none of which compelled the owner to take action. Mr. Pennington also mentioned the City attempted to contact the property owner to discuss acquiring the property but did not receive a response. Mr. Pennington described how the poor condition of this property resulted in many neighborhood complaints and explained that the City has very limited tools to use when correcting a problem property. Mr. Pennington commented on the notice he had sent to the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding the City's intent to condemn the historic residential structure located at 402 Bluff Street. Mr. Pennington also commented on some of the commissioners comments made during the last Landmarks Commission meeting. Mr. Pennington encouraged commissioners to contact him if they have any questions or concerns. Mr. Pennington then asked if the commissioners had any questions.

Commissioner McGrath commented on the intent of the letter he had sent to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Commissioner Blazer suggested that this topic should be further discussed during the discussion item.

Bill Door commented on the intent of the Historic Preservation Ordinance in regard to condemning properties and then speculated on the cause of neighborhood blight.

Mr. Door then commented on the status of the Near East Side/ College-Park Historic District name change, and the reason for promoting this district as College-Park. Mr. Door suggested discussing possible action on changing the signage for the Near East Side/ College-Park Historic District.

4. Michael Phillips – Certificate of Appropriateness

COA-2017-13 Review and consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness to repairs to the wood siding on the residential structure located at 725 Chapin Street.

Rudy Moreno, Planner II, read the staff report and recommendation.

Michael Phillips, Director of Facilities at Beloit College, provided details of the subject property and described the proposed improvements.

Commissioner McGrath asked Mr. Phillips for clarification on the materials that will be used for repairing the damaged wood siding. Mr. Phillips verified that wood will be used to repair damaged sections of the existing siding.

Commissioners Rick and Jacobsen motioned to approve the COA. Motion carried, 4-0. Commissioner Vater abstained from voting.

5. Michael Phillips – Certificate of Appropriateness

COA-2017-14 Review and consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow repairs to the wood siding on the residential structure located at 804 Church Street.

Mr. Moreno read the staff report and recommendation.

Mr. Phillips briefly described the proposed improvements.

Commissioner Jacobsen asked Mr. Phillips for clarification on the properties current address. Mr. Phillips explained there are two houses with different address numbers located on the subject property.

Commissioner McGrath expressed appreciation for the restoration of the original siding with like materials.

Commissioners Jacobsen and Truesdale motioned to approve the COA. Motion carried, 4-0. Commissioner Vater abstained from voting.

6. Report on Staff Activities Since Last Meeting

A. Report on Staff-Approved Certificates of Appropriateness

Mr. Moreno reported on staff approved COA's that were issued since the last Landmarks Commission meeting.

B. Historic District Nomination

Mr. Moreno informed the Landmarks Commission that City Staff has chosen Legacy Architecture as the consultant historic district nomination RFP. Mr. Moreno added that Legacy Architecture is willing to do the nomination for \$10,000.

7. Discussion of 402 Bluff Street

Commissioner Vater suggested that the commission start with establishing what they hope to accomplish with this discussion item.

Commissioner McGrath expressed he would like to establish a better line of communication between the Landmarks Commission and City Staff.

Commissioner Vater mentioned better communication and possible training for the Landmarks Commission as suggested by Commissioner Jacobsen.

Commissioner Truesdale acknowledged that the condemnation of the 402 Bluff Street Property was done within the confines of the Historic Preservation Ordinance; however, he felt City Staff could have approached the Landmarks Commission prior to condemning the property. Commissioner Truesdale speculated what could be done with another vacant lot within the Bluff Street Historic District.

Commissioners Vater and McGrath suggested discussing the future of 402 Bluff Street as well.

Commissioner Vater stated she felt that she didn't have enough information on this topic.

Commissioner Jacobsen asked if there was anything discussed during the meeting could determine the future of the 402 Bluff Properties.

Ms. Christensen commented on the current status and timeline on the demolition of 402 Bluff Street. Ms. Christensen described the process of demolishing a structure, and clarified that the City will not own the property at any point.

Mr. Pennington commented on the status of the demolition process.

Commissioner Jacobsen mentioned a demolition deadline that was brought up during the previous Landmarks Commission meeting. Commissioner McGrath commented on the condemnation posting he had seen on the door of the residential structure located at 402 Bluff Street.

Commissioner Blazer asked Ms. Christensen if there is an advantage to having this property demolished before the tax sale.

Ms. Christensen explained City Staff was just moving forward with the condemnation process in order to remedy the numerous neighborhood complaints regarding the 402 Bluff Street property. Ms.

Christensen mentioned Commissioner McGrath's comment regarding neighborhood support for repairing the property, and speculated that the neighbors would like a resolution to the ongoing code violations at 402 Bluff Street.

Commissioner Blazer commented on the condition of the inside of the property. Ms. Christensen discussed the City's unsuccessful attempts to gain permission to inspect the inside of the residential structure.

Commissioner Blazer commented on the condition of the residential structure and speculated the cost of repairs. Ms. Christensen explained, although there is no limitation on how much money can go into repairs of a structure, the real challenge is finding a buyer who would be willing to invest into the dilapidated residential structure.

Ms. Christensen explained that City Staff will make an effort to approach the Landmarks Commission prior to condemning any historic structure if another situation, such as the 402 Bluff Street property, came along in the future.

Commissioner McGrath mentioned the 402 Bluff Street property did not come in the agenda as a discussion item during the past 12 months. Commissioner McGrath explained he was surprised when informed of the condemnation of 402 Bluff Street.

Commissioner McGrath suggested that City Staff did not get a chance to inspect the foundation. Ms. Christensen explained that there was a tree growing out of the foundation. Commissioner McGrath suggested that the foundation appeared to be fine, and the cost of the repairs may be inaccurate if the cost of foundation repairs were included. Ms. Christensen explained the structure was inspected by a certified building official. Commissioner McGrath insisted that the inspector did not look at the foundation from the inside of the basement. Mr. Pennington explained that the foundation of the residential structure is not fine. Commissioner McGrath pointed out that the notice sent the Wisconsin Historical Society did not distinguish the difference between the addition and the original structure.

Ms. Christensen suggested that some of the comments made by Commissioner McGrath may be misleading in regard to City Staff's approach and intent on remedying the violations at 402 Bluff Street. Ms. Christensen explained that she is fine if the Landmarks Commission disagrees with the City's intent to condemn this property; however, she expressed concern over some of the comments made regarding 402 Bluff Street. Ms. Christensen described City Staff's willingness to work with the Landmarks Commission, and pointed out that better communication is needed.

Mr. Pennington explained that he is open to any comments or suggestions for the property 402 Bluff Street. Mr. Pennington clarified that the addition to the residential structure located at 402 Bluff Street is part of the structure, and everything in the City's Intent to Condemn Notice sent to the Wisconsin Historical Society was correct. Mr. Pennington affirmed that the condition of the 402 Bluff property had to be addressed, and the condemnation of the structure was a tool of last resort.

Commissioner McGrath said he would like to clean the property and see if he can find an interested buyer before the structure is demolished. Commissioner McGrath added that he had reached out to Joy Bosco, Executive Director of NeighborWorks Blackhawk Region, to discuss the possibility of purchasing 402 Bluff Street, but he was informed there were no funds available.

Commissioner Vater asked Mr. Pennington what he would like to do and what his timeline is regarding the 402 Bluff Street property. Mr. Pennington explained there seemed to be no other viable option at this time other than demolishing the residential structure.

Commissioner Vater asked for clarification on the foreclose process. Ms. Christensen explained the foreclosure tax sale process.

Commissioner McGrath reiterated that the neighbors would like to see the house restored, and he was concerned that the property would remain an empty lot if the house is demolished. Ms. Christensen and Mr. Pennington speculated what could be built on an empty lot in the historic district. Commissioner McGrath expressed he would rather see the property owner occupied as opposed to it becoming a rental property if the house were spared from demolition.

Ms. Christensen discussed the possibility of looking into training for Landmark Commissioners.

8. Committee Reports

A. Education and Outreach Committee:

Commissioner McGrath handed out examples of Madison and Milwaukee's historic guidelines discussed the possibility of updating Beloit's Historic Preservation Guide. Commissioner McGrath expressed concern that the current brochures are outdated.

Commissioner McGrath reminded the commission of a Annual Historic Elgin House Tour on September 9th and 10th.

B. Site Visits Committee: none

C. Grant Writing Committee: none

D. Ad Hoc Sign Committee: Commissioner Truesdale discussed the estimated costs of the the Near East side/ College-Park Historic District sign change.

Commissioner Truesdale suggested that the sign change should be an action item on the next agenda so the project can move forward.

Commissioner Vater suggested that the funding and cost get figured out before taking action.

Ms. Christenson suggested that the topic gets put on the agenda as an item for consideration due to the fact that there are still details to work out before making a motion on a resolution.

Commissioner Vater expressed concern over the availability of City labor to install the new signage considering the time it had originally took to coordinate the installation of the current signs.

Ms. Christensen said she would reach out to other departments to see how the placements can be coordinated.

9. Future Discussion Items

Commissioner Truesdale requested that the Near East Side/College-Park sign change gets put on the next agenda as an action item.

10. Adjournment

Commissioners Vater and Jacobsen moved to adjourn at 9:05 PM. Motion carried, 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rudy Moreno, Planner II
September 12, 2017