



Village of Plainfield
Historic Preservation Commission
Record of Minutes

Date: January 14, 2010

Location: Village Hall

Chairman Lambert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Allen, Bright, Olsen, Wright, Chairman Lambert
Absent: Commissioners Bortel, Derrick and Spangler
Also present: Michael Garrigan –Village Planner; Joe Baber, Building Official and Merrilee Trotz - Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Bright a motion to approve the minutes for November 12, 2009 as presented. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. Voice vote. All Commissioners were in favor. Motion carried.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS:

Chairman Lambert wished all commissioners a happy new decade and good preservation to Plainfield.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner Wright stated the Marvin seminar person contacted him.

PUBLIC COMMENT: (Items not on the Agenda)

No one approached the microphone.

STAFF REPORT

Planner Garrigan stated there were no new Landmark or District applications since the last commission meeting; there was one pre-application meeting for 23829 W. Main Street. At least one commissioner is working on a landmark application for the Green house and once that is received we provide notice and schedule a public meeting. There have been no new demolition permits received and none approved. He stated Mr. Fazio had requested his demolition permit but has not yet received it. The preservation watch list remains the same.

Commissioner Olsen asked for an update on the permit for Fazio. She also asked how long a demolition permit is valid.

Planner Garrigan said the HPC recommended a partial community impact study. The Village Board did not support that recommendation. Chairman Lambert indicated the watch list was prepared at the request of the Village Board. The list is now 3 years old and the Fazio building has been on the list since the list was prepared.

Chairman Lambert asked what purpose the watch list is serving if the Village Board is not looking at it. He stated the HPC has tried to be a proactive commission and bring the information to the Village Board. He did not feel the commission has been supported. If action is taken on this demolition permit before the Board had acted on the Downtown Historic District will further undermine the belief that this commission is supported by the Village Administration and Board.

Planner Garrigan indicated the HPC packet is given the Village Board members so they have the opportunity to look at the watch list. The list provided a positive and constructive role. The list gives the Village Board members due notice that the

HPC believes are designated as potential landmarks. It is also a tool for staff to know that we need to look out for any activity. It gives a heightened level of scrutiny of these properties.

Mr. Baber indicated all building permits are good for one year. Normally if a permit is to expire the owner could submit a written request for extension which could then be reviewed.

Commissioner Bright asked if they had to rebuild if the building was demolished so we would not just have vacant property.

Chairman Lambert said there is nothing in the ordinance.

Planner Garrigan said we generally require a plan when there is a demolition request but there is nothing that requires the applicant to proceed with the development. The market is going to dictate when the developer proceeds with development. This applicant presented his plan.

Chairman Lambert thought some towns require that the demolition permit and building permits are done simultaneously. He stated the Central Area Plan Committee is getting formulated.

NEW BUSINESS:

Facade Program Standards

Planner Garrigan stated we have had a very active façade program for the past several years. The grants have never gone before the HPC for review. He stated the facade program does not specifically require or mandate that a facade application come before the Village Board to comply with certain standards. We have adopted the Village Design Manual for Lockport Street Business Corridor. We strongly encourage applicants to comply with this document but there is nothing that requires or mandates the application to comply with these recommendations or design guidelines. He asked if the commission believed the facade program should go to the HPC before the Village Board and secondly if the commission believes the proposed guidelines should be mandatory. The Village Board would still have to approve any modification facade program. He stated the facade program was never identified as a historical preservation/restoration program. It is really just to help businesses restore the facade. He asked if the commission felt there should be modifications made to the program.

Discussion was held.

Commissioners concerns

- If it would be beneficial
- Do the guidelines follow the Secretary of Interior Standards
- Would the ordinance have to be amended
- Cost and additional time for applicants
- Accepting Village funds but then has the right to object to historic designation
- Felt it would be a very good tool for COA
- How much life is left in TIF
- Felt there would be a lack of support from Village Board
- Effectiveness of recommendations and support received at Village Board level
- Could the agreement be amended

Planner Garrigan indicated one benefit HPC could provide is whether the improvement is a historical restoration using the Secretary of Interior Standards; COAs could be held and this would be a great resource for landmarks. He thought 12 years were left in TIP. Planner Garrigan indicated he would check with the Village Attorney but the façade program has been an economic development tool rather than preservation tool.

Consensus was not to take this facade program to the Village Board for formal approval

Village Green District

Planner Garrigan stated there has been talk of possibly starting another district. He stated the Plainfield Park District in starting some major restoration or updating some of the aspects of the Village Green specifically a bathroom facility, traditional lighting,

Discussion was held as to whether this would be just the park or the possibility of including the homes from Route 59 to James and from Commercial to the alley on Lockport. If they want to form a District it would be done following the same process as was handled on the east side and the downtown district. The biggest concern seems to be how the votes would be counted. It was asked if the commissioners felt this was the correct time and if there was support for another District and how you define the district. This area is more owner occupied and this should come from the residents.

Chairman Lambert indicated he knew of a few houses on Route 59 that were interested; the Pioneer house which is landmarked, several properties around the Village Green, the Martin house which is landmarked, but in trying to connect them there may not be continuity. The Board wants at least 51% not objecting to the application not to the idea of a district.

Some commissioners felt it was worth talking about as the research has already been done; we have contributing and landmarked structures. Some commissioners felt it would be difficult to landmark the Village Green alone at this time. A district could be done with one landmark and one other property. Some commissioners felt it should move forward. Planner Garrigan will work with subcommittee to get an education process to see if they can build out to the homeowners. This probably would not come forward until summer.

Demolition by Neglect

Planner Garrigan indicated he has had discussion with the Village Administrator, Police Chief, and the Sergeant in charge of Code Enforcement and Building Official Joe Baber. Code Enforcement has some concerns with enforcement and Police feel they do not have the manpower to make an active enforcement process of going through the properties identifying properties as demolition by neglect. We do have a nuisance code which gives the Village some power to issue citations or we can condemn a property through the court.

Mr. Baber concurs with Planner Garrigan due to the reduction of staff in the office. His primary concern is building safety, property maintenance could be very time consuming and costly. He indicated the village is looking at a special assessment tax primarily for weed enforcement so if the Village incurs cost it would go directly on the property owners tax bills.

Discussion was held regarding the challenges of maintaining the buildings if the owner does not have the funds to make the necessary repairs. Commissioners discussed how this would be handled if it were in a new subdivision. In a new subdivision things would be handled by the building codes, these may not be habitable and may not have occupancy permits. This goes beyond staffing. Some of the issues are: What is the mechanism, how do you do this, who pays for it. There are property right issues also.

Chairman Lambert indicated there is a house in the core that has had cardboard or plywood in the window for up 2 years. Glass is not that expensive. He asked how they could bring issues to the attention of staff. If there are things in the core area that are concerns – is this helpful or does it become more difficult as there is no way to deal with it.

Planner Garrigan stated if the owners does not have the financial wherewithal to make the repairs, the questions who makes those repairs. Who decides if it is merely esthetics; is peeling paint a structure issue or merely esthetics; do we issue citations for esthetic issues?

Chairman Lambert degradation leads to neglect.

Mr. Baber said even if it goes to court and the owner does not have the finances to make the repairs, the owners are given more time. The facade programs can help. He said the village plans to look at things closer and property maintenance is something that needs to be evaluated and put some new procedures in place.

Chairman Lambert indicated there are some service groups that may be willing to assist with simple repairs. Some property owners are not willing to let service groups assist them. We do not want this to become a repeated pattern for request for demolition in the village.

Discussion of possibility of liens or special assessments on buildings.

Mr. Baber stated he talks with lots of property owners. Sometimes the insides are so outdated and not in compliance.

Discussion of fundraisers with the whole village behind it to possibly save buildings. If the building is in an historic district and falls into derelict condition and they could not afford to make the repairs, they could turn to Landmarks Illinois because we

are a certified local government and they would look at that as a National Register District and there are some repair funds. A letter could be forwarded to the owner giving them options to investigate. Maybe there are grants available.

Chairman Lambert stated he would like to see a letter going to the owner indicating the repairs needed and a reasonable time frame given for the repairs also indicating if you are unable to fund these repairs yourself then here are some community and regional resources that may be able to provide a source of repair funding. This is not a negative letter; it is giving them a time frame and giving them an option if they do not have the wherewithal to perform to investigate. Some property owners do not know where to look for money, bank lending is very difficult these days. Maybe this is something the HPC could provide the building department.

OLD BUSINESS:

Downtown Historic District

Planner Garrigan indicated the Downtown Historic District will be on the Village Board February 1st agenda for vote.

2010-2011 HPC Budget

Planner Garrigan indicated that the budget for 2009-2010 was approximately \$19,000.00 with \$6,000 for special grants or the rehab program. Last year there were no specific requests for the residential rehab program. This year there is no separate line item for HPC, it will be included within the Planning Department. We are proposing a budget of approximately \$4500 to provide the necessary funding for landmarks, plaques, publication, and \$1500 for dues and subscriptions and limited education or seminars.

The Board reviewed the budget at their last meeting; they questioned the rehab program but in view of the fact that there have been no requests and the Village has not granted any monies for residential rehab for the past several years to eliminate that line item. Over 60% of the previous budget went for staffing.

Several commissioners thought there was no rehab money last year and they actually discouraged people from applying. As of the end of December 2009 HPC spent a little less than \$3500.00 from the budget.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Commissioner Bortel stated LDDC met at the Village Hall on Thursday, Jan. 7 at 11:30 AM. Tom from Plainfield signs had rendered a drawing or example of a sign to be placed above the 3 street signs as follows:

1. Northwest corner of Lockport & Bartlett at Plainfield Academy
2. Corner of Amboy and Bartlett near the house of Commissioner Wright
3. Corner of Amboy & Center on Southwest corner.

The members present at this meeting along with staff suggested that the colors of the East Side Historic District signage would reflect the colors that are presently contained in the existing plaques that the Village Board awards to Landmark recipients with an accent color around the edge to set it off from the existing Green & white street signs. The Sign would have the HPC logo on it along with the words 'East Side Historic District' and would be mounted on top of the existing signs. Staff was going to send the plaque example to Tom at Plainfield signs and he would render a new drawing with similar colors to the Plaque as well as prices for the 3 signs. This could be ready for the HPC Jan. 28 meeting.

We also discussed the current writing of the narrative for the Green-Lutter residence. Chairman Lambert has agreed to work on the architectural description of the house, since this is one of the Chairman's favorite Plainfield houses and Commissioner Bortel and Leif Henriksen will help out with the historical narrative.

V-C Bortel has been in contact with the Town Historian of Henrietta, NY, Helen Elam to learn more about the Elihu Kirby family as well as providing her information regarding the Green-Wheeler-Kirby connection between Henrietta and Plainfield. Helen Elam is the Town Historian for Henrietta, NY and Chair of the town's HPC. The Green-Lutter residence was built from a model/drawings of the Kirby residence which was built in Henrietta, NY in the 1830's by Elihu Kirby...Kirby's house is nearly 4 times larger than the Green residence and is still standing, although it has been moved from its original site in Henrietta to a neighboring community in the 1980's. Helen was able to provide an address for the house and she was in the house 10-15 years ago. There is also another person from the Town of Rush who is working with Bortel to secure current photos of the moved Kirby residence. This residence is important to our story because Dennison Green's wife was a Wheeler. Green and his wife were originally residents of New York State before moving to Joliet in 1836. Otila Wheeler along with her

parents, 5 brothers, and 2 sisters moved from New Lebanon, NY to Henrietta sometime before 1815, Otilia's youngest brother, Bentley was born in 1815. Otilia had a sister Mary Victory Wheeler who married Elihu Kirby, a wealthy merchant from Henrietta. After their marriage in 1831, they lived in Henrietta and they had 4 children, one of whom was Josephine E. Kirby; her first husband was Daniel Halsey and he died leaving her with 2 children; she would later marry Dennison & Otilia Green's and had a son, Judson D. Green; they would live here later in Plainfield in the Green residence. In addition Mansfield Wheeler and Rebecca Wheeler would move from Henrietta and would come to live later in Joliet. Mansfield died in Joliet in 1860 and Rebecca Wheeler died in Joliet in 1887.

DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Wright stated the emailed reports were great.

Planner Garrigan indicated if there are plans regarding a proposed demolition, or a Certificate of Appropriateness or something that has physical plans then you will receive paper copies. When it comes to staff reports and minutes you will receive electronically.

Commissioner Olsen asked if Village Board or Plan Commission were going electronically also. Planner Garrigan indicated not at this time as Village Board and Plan Commission usually receive plans. Plans are easier to review in the hard copy form. HPC is leading the way.

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Olsen made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wright seconded the motion.
Voice vote. All the Commissioners were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,
Merrilee Trotz - Recording Secretary