



MEETING MINUTES

PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 9, 2024
7:00 P.M. Room 2402

Members Present: Carl Klein, Sarah M. Dreller, Beth Bodan, Charles Smith, Stuart Cohen, Joshua Bowes-Carlson, Amanda Ziehm, Thomas Ahleman, John Jacobs, Lesa Rizzolo, Matthew Johnson

Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Cade W. Sterling

Presiding Member: Sarah M. Dreller, Chair

Minutes Taken by: Cade W. Sterling

PRESENTATIONS

A. **Shorefront Legacy Center**

Laurice Bell and Dino Robinson will provide a presentation regarding the work of Shorefront, an Evanston-based archival institution dedicated to illuminating the rich tapestry of Black history on Chicago’s suburban North Shore. Topic areas will include ongoing cultural heritage initiatives, the African American Heritage Sites Program, and Preserving Integrity to Culture and History (PITCH).

- Dino Robinson and Laurice Bell described Shorefront’s many successes, challenges, and ongoing projects.
- Additionally, the presentation covered past initiatives the Commission had been involved with including PITCH, surveying the 5th Ward, the African American Heritage Sites program, and the Landmark nomination for the former Foster School.
- The conversation included how the work of Shorefront aligns with the Commissions goals to support an equitable local preservation program that means more to more people.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Revised Certificate of Appropriateness Application Form

Review and adoption of a single revised Certificate of Appropriateness Application for all scopes of work to replace the existing three applications for minor, major, and window/door replacement scopes of work. Code Section 2-8-3 (G) (9).

- Staff provided an overview of the initiative which included reducing confusion amongst applicants, ensuring the applications provide the information the Commission needs to review proposals, follows nationwide best practices, and aligns with the City's ongoing permit process improvements and acceptance of digital permit submissions only.
- Staff noted that the previous forms were last updated two decades previously and although still effective, were based in past practice which included more in-person assistance when applying for a COA or permit.
- Commissioners were encouraged by the new COA form and agreed it would help reduce confusion going from three applications to one common application with specific requirements based on scope of work proposed.
- Commissioners requested additional changes to the form including:
 - Acknowledgement of procedures in instances of inadvertent discovery of archaeological resources
 - Aligning requirements for certain scopes of work with the requirements in the Tree Preservation Ordinance including a survey that identifies the location, size, and species of trees in areas of proposed work.
 - Modifying language within the scopes of work to be consistent and cross reference previous sections of the form including the narrative that outlines the scope of work proposed and how the standards are met.
 - Changing the requirements for new construction to specify that existing and proposed elevation drawings be side-by-side on the same page
- Additionally, the Commission suggested the following future resources be developed as time allows
 - Best practice examples of submissions for each scope of work. This would be similar to the best practice submission for window replacement that is currently offered.
 - A sample drawing template that shows how plans, elevations, and detail drawings would best be organized within a COA application
 - Additional videographic resources that explain submission requirements based on each scope of work as well as explains the associated standards for review.
- The Commission voted unanimously to continue this matter to the May meeting to see the final version with the suggested changes included.

B. Cultural Heritage Awards Program

Review and adoption of a reimagined awards program that expands beyond built heritage and physical project design in order to better represent additional historic and heritage preservation themes including living heritage, the arts, intangible cultural heritage, and less tangible stories and histories. Code Section 2-8-3 (G) (21), and Preserve 2040 Initiative 4.15.

- Staff provided an overview of the proposed awards program which was developed in partnership with Commissioners Bodan and Dreler.
- The proposed awards program seeks to celebrate a variety of broader historic preservation themes, which include
 - Research
 - Education and Advocacy
 - Equity
 - Design
 - Climate Resilience and Stewardship, and
 - Art
- The new awards include three categories for award, the Cultural Ambassador Award as the highest form of recognition, and then either individual achievement or outstanding group achievement.
- Nominations for each category would select one or more historic preservation themes under which they are seeking recognition.
- The intent of the program aligned with the Preserve 2040 Plan which called for ending the previous awards held since 1982 and which had become overly reductive and a marketing tool for architecture firms and contractors rather than a broad celebration of those individuals and organizations that embody, safeguard, or advance the broader field of historic preservation and heritage conservation.
- As an example, staff shared that under the previous awards, organizations such as Shorefront, would not have been celebrated while they are certainly more than deserving of being recognized.
- Commissioners asked if staff had a record of all previous award winners under the prior design awards.
 - Staff indicated that they did, and could work to post the winners online as time allows.
- Commissioners celebrated the idea, and acknowledged that it is very unique and different from the previous awards. The good thing is that it can celebrate more types of work and people, but it will need to be heavily publicized so that people really understand what it is and how it is different.
- Commissioners suggested ways to promote the program including in the upcoming newsletter, through a flyer, and on other news and social media sources.
- Staff indicated that the idea was to release the call for nominations in May during Historic Preservation Month and that the call for nominations would be open for three months in part to help get the word out.
- Commissioners stated an understanding for the proposed timeline, but

suggested that future calls for nomination occur in January, with a celebration held during Historic Preservation Month in May.

- Commissioners also suggested that the biggest lift would likely be forming a jury of qualified individuals, although that is easier than ever before since the Jury could review submissions remotely rather than in-person. It will be important to form the Jury based on the types of nominations received so that they are qualified to pass judgment.
- Commissioners suggested that the Jury should be comprised of individuals from outside the community to maintain objectivity.
- The Commission voted unanimously to adopt and sponsor the new awards program with the aforementioned changes to timing of the call for nominations in future years, as well as that the Jury be comprised of members outside of Evanston.

C. 2023 Preservation Commission Annual Report

In compliance with Article 11 of the Rules and Procedures, the Commission shall review and adopt the 2023 Annual Report to be presented to the Planning and Development Committee.

- Staff provided an overview of the annual report with the following highlights
 - 11 regularly scheduled meetings and 24 working group meetings
 - Staff providing over 600 instances of technical assistance
 - Past year major accomplishments including
 - Active Commissioner Recruitment
 - Re-activating the newsletter for the first time in 3 decades. This resulted in a spike in subscribers and offers to volunteer
 - Increased advocacy efforts and being proactive rather than reactive. Examples included Harley Clarke, the inherent sustainability of preservation, review and recommendations of the Ryan Field MOA, expanded tribal consultation and building of relationships, and finalizing the launch of the City's legacy business program
 - Implementing an ongoing speaker series as an education and advocacy tool
 - Creating a consistent training and orientation document
- Current objectives including implementing aspects of Preserve 2040 and engaging in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance processes
- Staff reviewed the overview of the Commissions binding review authority
 - 243 total cases, 90% administered by staff. Of the remaining 10%, none were denied, five were approved with conditions, and two withdrew.
- Staff provided an overview of issues to communicate with the City Council
 - Opportunity for a local policy for inadvertent discovery of ancestral human remains and local reinterment
 - Opportunities for conservation districts to protect vulnerable neighborhoods and naturally occurring affordability
 - Lack of incentives for historic homeowners

- The current ordinance not facilitating the desire to register and celebrate less tangible histories and cultural resources
- The Commissions expertise being an underleveraged tool for the City to realize its many goals surrounding housing, affordability, economic development, and sustainability
- The Commission voted unanimously to approve the 2023 report.
- Staff indicated that the plan is to present the report to the Planning and Development Committee at the end of May.

5. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. Minutes of February 13, 2024

- The February minutes were adopted without amendment

6. DISCUSSION (NO VOTE WILL BE TAKEN)

A. Realtor Training/Certification Program

Commissioner Bowes-Carlson will provide an update on progress related to a historic preservation certification and training program for local realtors. Code Section 2-8-3 (G) (8) and Preserve 2040 Initiative 4.12.

- Commissioner Bowes-Carlson provided an update on the realtor training program, noting that there has been a shift in approach from an event and walking tour, to coming to where realtors are at monthly training sessions or larger meetings between groups.

B. Noyes Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study

Commissioners Bodan and Ahleman will provide a summary of a working group meeting they attended with representatives of the Public Works Agency regarding the preliminary scope of work for the Noyes Cultural Arts Center. In compliance with the Commissions advisory review and consultation powers and duties related to city-initiated projects or activities, the Commission shall review a draft comment letter incorporating comments received to-date and make any additional suggestions. Code Section 2-8-3 (G) (24).

- Councilmember Kelly and Parks Board member Mary Rosinski asked to address the Commission regarding the feasibility study.
 - The Chair indicated that the proper time for public comment regarding this matter was at the start of the meeting before Presentations and New Business, which was intended so that members of the public would not have to sit through an entire meeting to submit comments.
 - The Councilmember and Board member asked if they could still speak, noting that they were late to the meeting since the previous Finance and Budget meeting went long, where they were also discussing the plans for the Noyes Center
 - The Chair stated that she would allow them to speak, but limit

them to three minutes each in the same way members of the public are limited

- Councilmember Kelly stated that she was increasingly worried by the proposed scope of work for Noyes and that it was not necessary and would leave to the City vacating the building. She acknowledged the significant programming the building offers the community, and noted in terms of revenue, it was net positive, one of the few centers in the City that makes money. The problem is that the money hasn't been reinvested in the building. She indicated that all it needs is likely new HVAC improvements.
- Mary Rosinski echoed much of the Councilmembers points, also noting that the building makes money each year and in the past made even more money for the City. The programming within the building are indispensable and extremely important to the Community and what the Parks and Recreation Department offers. There is no other place those programs could be housed.
- Commissioners Bodan and Ahleman provided a summary of a working group meeting they held between themselves and City Staff. They acknowledged that the meeting was successful to understand what is being proposed and why, and although it is nice to be part of the conversation before this is coming before the Commission for permit, it would have been nicer to be involved from the start to help guide some of the studies parameters.
- On its face, the improvements are not necessarily concerning and can be compatible with the buildings design vocabulary and architectural integrity. However, it isn't clear that the improvements are entirely necessary.
- Commissioners expressed a concern that what was occurring was politicization of the building and that it may lead to it being vacated, if the price tag is seen as too high, which was expressed at the previous meeting (Finance and Budget). This seems to be repeating a pattern of disinvestment in the City's facilities, primarily their culturally significant older buildings, where they aren't maintained incrementally or invested in realistically, and then we are told they need millions of dollars in capital improvements that we can't afford. This is what happened to Harley Clarke and it is happening with the Civic Center as well.
- Several Commissioners expressed a concern that there are not individual capital plans for each building, especially those of cultural significance.
- Several Commissioners questioned how a few million dollars in HVAC improvements had ballooned into 29 million dollars in other improvements and whether the parameters of the study was flawed.
- Commissioners sought to reframe the study to not look at only one metric, what it would take to make this building net zero, since it disregards the complexities that exist such as the inherent sustainability of the building as it existed for over 130 years, its associations with the

public and the programming it offers, the financial realities of the City and what we can actually afford etc. The goal should be making realistic improvements over time that make these buildings as green as possible while allowing them to continue serving the public and communicating their history.

- Several Commissioners stated a need for the City, specifically Public Works, to engage with the Commission and the Preservation Staff members much earlier in the process for not only this type of work but all types of work that affect historic and culturally significant resources. If that isn't occurring now, that process has to change. This seems to be a recurring problem where the Commissions feedback is seen as performative.
- Commissioners asked about next steps.
- Staff stated that they would incorporate the feedback received and edit the draft comment letter. Before sending it to the Public Works Administration and City Council, they would route it for approval between the Chair, and Commissioners Bodan and Ahleman since they served on the working group.

7. STAFF REPORTS

A. Envision Evanston 2045 Update

Staff will provide an update on progress related to the development of Envision Evanston 2045, followed by discussion.

- Staff provided a brief update on progress to date which has been limited to engagement with the community.
- Commissioners expressed frustration with the process and lack of preservation specific engagement between the consultant and Commission.
- Staff indicated that there would hopefully be more specific and meaningful engagement with the Commission as draft materials are produced for review and critique

B. May Newsletter - Call for content

Staff will provide an overview of the newsletter scheduled to be released in May, which is also historic preservation month.

- Staff reminded Commissioners of the timeline for receiving content for inclusion in the May newsletter which is scheduled to be released the first week of May.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:05pm.

Order & Agenda Items are subject to change. Information about the Preservation Commission is available at: Preservation Commission Questions can be directed to Cade W. Sterling at 847-448-8231 or at csterling@cityofevanston.org The city is committed to ensuring accessibility for all citizens; if an accommodation is needed to participate in this meeting, please contact the Planning and Zoning Division at (847-448-8687) 48 hours in advance so that arrangements can be made for the accommodation if possible.

Español - La ciudad de Evanston tiene la obligación de hacer accesibles todas las reuniones públicas a las personas minusválidas o a quienes no hablan inglés. Si usted necesita ayuda, favor contacte a Carlos D. Ruiz de la Oficina de Planificación y Zonificación llamando al (847/448-8687) o cruiz@cityofevanston.org con 48 horas de anticipación para acomodar su pedido en lo posible