

Minutes of the March 30, 2023, meeting of the Washington Historic Preservation Commission.

Members present: Dan Bagley, Denny Dingedine, Brent Goken, Dan Philips, Walter Ruppman, Nancy Silverthorn, and Leri Slonneger

Members absent: None

Also present: Jon Oliphant, Derek Schryer, and Jim Snider

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. Mr. Oliphant opened the meeting by noting that this is a greater than usual audience. He stated that the primary role of the Historic Preservation Commission is to evaluate proposed renovations and/or construction in order to preserve historic and architectural characteristics of the Square within the guidelines of the Code. The Code mandates that a Certificate of Appropriateness is needed prior to issuing a demolition permit. The Commission evaluates the improvements, makes sure they align with the Square Design Guidelines, and approves or denies the application. Mr. Oliphant shared that City staff is aware of some neighboring concerns, but noted the Commission has no oversight regarding neighboring properties. He asked that remarks be limited to three minutes.
2. Audience Comments: Sharon Amdall provided a comment on behalf of her and her husband John. She stated that they look forward to this issuance. They feel this will be positive for the Square. This will attract people from across the region. She stated that shop owners on the Square are desperate for this. They see this as a clear advantage to provide a casual and upscale lunch break while shopping. Ms. Amdall stated that this was designed by a world-renowned architect and this developer creates properties that are catalysts in small towns and this will help increase sales tax revenue that will help repay the development. She stated that many have criticized the parking situation but thanks to Mr. Oliphant, parking is being addressed. She also stated that this is a walkable, attractive design. Ms. Amdall concluded by stating that this invites us to stay, shop and dine, unlike the sad, dying towns that they pass through. She asked that the Commission to support the proposal.

Jeannie Herbst shared that she has been on the Square for many years. Her family has operated businesses on the Square for years as well. She stated that she did homework on what the Square looked like in 1945. She shared characteristics and activities around the Square over the years including the Danforth Hotel, which was across the street and was big. In 1976 there was an article stating "A World of Shopping Around the Square." She stated that in 1976 there was Marcie's Pizza, Napa, Village Cobbler, Ruth's Beauty Salon, the Tally Ho Restaurant and Pauline's Sports Store. She stated there was plenty of parking for all the stores. Ms. Herbst stated that this will bring families that will sit and talk like they do at other restaurants in town. Ms. Herbst continued by stating that this is new but it still has the old elements and shared that her place mixes old and new. She also stated that young people love the history and she thinks about how beautiful it will be in the winter for the Candlelight Stroll. Ms. Herbst stated that the developers are German, who work hard and love family and food and this will be about food and family. She concluded by sharing safety concerns with Peoria and said this will bring people because they will be safe and want to enjoy good food.

3. Approval of Minutes: Mr. Goken made a motion to approve the October 12, 2022, Commission meeting minutes. Second by Ms. Slonneger. Motion approved 7-0.

4. New Business:

Certificate of Appropriateness – 140 Washington Square. Mr. Oliphant briefly summarized the project. This is a COA request from Grist Mill Ventures and CL Real Estate for the demolition and exterior design of the proposed brewpub on the Square. This will replace the current 1950 building. The first floor will be the brewpub. The second floor will have a rooftop bar with short-term residential units. Erin Maze and Nathan Watson from Grist Mill Ventures and CL Real Estate offered a brief overview of the project and the inspiration behind its design. The design was done by Lohan Architecture out of Chicago. They took the historic elements already on the Square and extended them into the design. The window characteristics and the brick echoes the Historical Society's building and the metal elements were inspired by William Holland's blacksmith shop. Mr. Maze stated that it is a contemporary design using historical elements that take cues from other parts of the Square.

Ms. Silverthorn said that while the building looks nice, it is too contemporary and would not fit within the Square, which is her objective with the vote. Mr. Maze and Mr. Watson pointed out that this building is intended to merge historical elements with a contemporary design and to not fake an architectural identity. The first floor was designed to be higher to match other buildings and to maintain significant horizontal lines from the Danforth Building. The rear has punched openings to match the scale of the existing buildings and while it could have been a one-story building, that would not match the scale of most of the other Square buildings. Ms. Silverthorn questioned the balance of the buildings on the Square. Mr. Philips said that if every building were historic, this design likely would not fit. However, there are far too many changes for the Square to be considered another Galena.

Mr. Goken said that the initial social media posts were overwhelmingly positive and this building fits the mold of having a different architectural style and would be an improvement on the current building that is not historic. He feels that this will attract a lot of young people and noted that many younger people are moving to the area. Mr. Dingledine said that history has a different meaning to different people. This creates a new history for Washington and he thinks it will draw people in just to look at the building. Mr. Goken asked if the brick is the same as on the Danforth Building, as he likes how it visually matches. Mr. Watson said the idea is to come close to a match. Mr. Ruppman asked about the process should the COA request be approved or denied. Mr. Oliphant responded that a demolition permit and building permit cannot be issued until after COA approval. Should it be denied, the applicant could either resubmit a COA request to the HPC within 14 days or could appeal the decision to the City Council, provided no changes to the current COA request are made. Mr. Watson expressed some frustration that private legal matters have been brought to the public. He indicated that his company is working with both of the adjacent property owners to alleviate any concerns. He is confident that those matters will be worked out. Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Schryer said that the City cannot interfere with matters between adjacent property owners.

Mr. Goken asked that the following statements be incorporated into the minutes: 1) the brewpub has publicly agreed to "be good neighbors" and to cover costs due to damage; 2) approved minutes for public meetings can be used in court, if needed, acknowledging the attorney in the room with a remark of "I'm not an attorney. My brother is, and we have one present today. I'm pretty sure by you publicly promising to work with your neighbors and resolve any conflicts, those statements are part of a public record."; and 3) the secretary will incorporate these statements into the minutes. Ms. Slonneger said that she has concerns about the building's impact on the surrounding neighborhood. It was pointed out that those concerns are not applicable to the HPC's role. Mr.

Goken reiterated the HPC's role and acknowledged the concerns would need to be resolved privately. Mr. Schryer said that the Historic Preservation Code does not speak to the neighboring properties and there is a good faith that any developer would maximize any avoidance of damage to an adjacent property. The HPC's role is to focus on the design. Ms. Slonneger said that the City should be interested in the impact of the building on the adjacent buildings and that the questions from the nearby property owners should be addressed. Mr. Phillips said that he understands Ms. Slonneger's concerns but that is not what the HPC is responsible for. Ms. Slonneger asked why the HPC was not asked to look at the blueprints due to questions about the adjoining buildings. Mr. Watson said they are preparing responses from their attorney. He would rather talk directly with the neighbors and that they have given the Historical Society the drawings previously. Mr. Oliphant said that the City's building inspector has been to each of the properties and provided feedback to the developer and neighboring owners on the applicability of the adopted building codes to use towards the design and eventual construction.

Mr. Oliphant read the following request for a motion: "As the temporary Chair, I ask for a motion to find that the proposed two-story structure described in the Certificate of Appropriateness application submitted by CL Real Estate LLC dated March 16, 2023, meets the design guidelines of the Historic Preservation Code Chapter 154.601 et seq., including, but not limited to the infill building guidelines described in Section 154.620(D)(9) of the City Code and to approve the issuance of a COA to CL Real Estate LLC for the real estate parcels owned by Grist Mill Ventures LLC and described as Tazewell County Property Tax ID number 02-02-24-108-016 and 02-02-24-108-018." Mr. Phillips motioned, seconded by Mr. Goken. Ms. Slonneger stated that it was confusing and asked if this the COA is to approve tearing down the buildings, the design of the new building, or one inclusive vote. Mr. Oliphant clarified that it is for both the demolition and exterior design as well as for the signage.

On roll call was:

4 Ayes: Mr. Bagley, Mr. Dingleline, Mr. Goken, Mr. Phillips

3 Nays: Mr. Ruppman, Ms. Silverthorn, Ms. Slonneger

Motion carried by roll call vote.

5. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:53 pm. The next meeting date will be at a time and location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Oliphant