

REPORT OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION / DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

Wednesday June 5, 2013 – 4:30 p.m.

City Conference Room – County-City Building
1515 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481

PRESENT: Lee Beveridge, Alderperson Mary Stroik, Tim Siebert, and, Kathy Kruthoff (George Hanson excused).

ALSO PRESENT: Director Michael Ostrowski, Economic Development Specialist Kyle Kearns, City Attorney Logan Beveridge, Alderperson Tony Patton, Cathy Dugan, Bill Schierl, Carrie Butt, and Elizabeth Aquillera.

INDEX:

Discussion and possible action on the following:

1. Approval of the reports from the April 3, 2013 and April 10, 2013 HPDRC meetings.
2. Request from Bill Schierl, representing the Arts Alliance of Portage County, Inc, for a contemporary street art mural on the west facing wall of Dive Point Scuba, 944 Main Street **(Parcel ID 2408-32-2015-15)**.
3. Façade Improvement Grant Program Update.
4. Adjourn.

-
1. Approval of the reports from the April 3, 2013 and April 10, 2013 HPDRC meetings.

Motion by Commissioner Siebert to approve the reports of the April 3, 2013 and April 10, 2013 meetings; seconded by Commissioner Kruthoff. Motion carried 4-0.

2. Request from Bill Schierl, representing the Arts Alliance of Portage County, Inc, for a contemporary street art mural on the west facing wall of Dive Point Scuba, 944 Main Street **(Parcel ID 2408-32-2015-15)**.

Commissioner Beveridge stated that we have all read the proposal, and understand the thinking, but the request does violate the guidelines, however several things have been presented in the past that don't meet guidelines.

Bill Schierl asked if the guidelines referred to were the 2008 centennial and the purpose of the murals, to which Commissioner Beveridge stated yes, those are our guidelines and we had created them at the time when the murals seemed like a good project. Commissioner Beveridge pointed out this is very different and evokes lots of different opinions and attitudes.

Commissioner Siebert stated he opposes this even though he understands were the idea is coming from, but he feels it looks like graffiti, and pointed out the examples in the packet which

appear scary to him. When asked by Elizabeth Aquillera if it was the style or the content that he opposed, Commissioner Siebert answered both.

Bill Schierl explained it started when he went to an exhibit at the Center for the Visual Arts in Wausau where they had done graffiti art in a skateboard proof which was extremely popular. He continued in conversations with Carrie and Bob Butt regarding the wall of the building as a place for a mural. This would allow the creation of a space for contemporary younger artists to show their work and to create interest. His hope is that the wall is continually changing and that it isn't about graffiti, but hopefully the goal of having real artists who do real work rather than graffiti. Furthermore, he pointed out the wall is currently in poor shape. Mr. Schierl continued stating that he and Elizabeth went to downtown property owners to obtain feedback regarding this project. Business and property owners that would typically look at the wall are in favor of it and many have a positive impression of the art, especially rather than the current wall.

Elizabeth Aquillera stated she poled the other end of the street and the majority said yes to the graffiti mural, showing much excitement and interest.

Commissioner Beveridge asked if this could be broken down into different things rather than just street art, such as different divisions, to which Mr. Schierl answered possibly. Commissioner Beveridge added, he loved the colors and thinks the images are intriguing, but there are people who will not understand it at all. Mr. Schierl pointed out that some people don't understand the Sculpture Park or traditional photos. The concept of not knowing the history of the sculpture or mural and the requirements is simply a misconception for this wall not necessarily fitting into the existing mural context, but rather just a place to beautify the building and expand the art scene.

Elizabeth Aquillera explained you are speaking to people that you are not going to reach with the historic murals, however a lot of "smaller town" downtowns in Wisconsin are starting to pursue the same thing. The other end of Main Street has a skate shop, Energy Café and a clothing store called "Identity" which are all of a different generation and style, whose customers may enjoy this type of art.

Carrie Butts added if you go to Google images and type in the word graffiti you will see a lot of pictures of amazing art. Often times the words graffiti is often times associated with bad art. Commissioner Beveridge added he does not think it applies to this.

Commissioner Siebert asked how frequently the wall would change, to which Mr. Schierl answered that in the staff report the recommendation is for an approval process. Initially however, the concept was to be as free as possible, allowing changes to the wall to occur at artist's choosing. Profanity, inappropriate imagery, sexual content, violence, racial slurs, and political gang messaging would be blacked out. He continued that this art is not something that someone is going to complete in an hour; the proprietors of the building will have some control and connection with the artists. Commissioner Beveridge did point out there will be taggers out

there and pieces of art will be painted over, as well as potentially nearby buildings. Mr. Schierl asked if there has been graffiti damage to the existing murals, to which Commissioner Beveridge answered he thinks they are boring enough that kids are not interested. He then added this will draw the right people to come and appreciate it, but at 3am someone with a spray can may be tempted to use it. Mrs. Butt stated they are willing to put a video camera on this side of the building and more lighting if allowed. One currently exists on the front of her building.

Commissioner Kruthoff feels the art is refreshing; the murals in the past are historic, and they have met a certain need. Furthermore, this proposal meets another kind of need for the arts which should be approved by the committee, as changes to paint can be reversed.

Commissioner Siebert asked who is to determine that renderings are disturbing, to which Mr. Schierl answered art would be based on the criteria of profanity, inappropriate imaging, sexual content, violence. Mrs. Butt interjected that if there was something vulgar she would be out there right away covering it up. Commissioner Beveridge also pointed out that the staff report included bringing a rendering through the committee for review, to which Mr. Kearns clarified it was a staff recommendation. Mr. Schierl asked if approval of contemporary images changing was really needed, as a code exists among artist to respect each other's work and create appropriate images. He continued stating he is on the Sculpture Park committee and there has only been one vandalism issue.

Kyle Kearns Economic Development Specialist asked Mr. Schierl to provide more detail as to how going about enforcing the time in which artists art are allowed to be displayed, before being painted over. Mr. Schierl answered that his understanding is in major metro areas unless artists bought the wall there is no control of time frame. Mrs. Butt added they will play that by ear, and see if they get a waiting list of people to paint the wall which may encourage the creation of a schedule. Adperson Patton stated that initially several artists will be interested and if space is given to artists they will respect it.

Commissioner Siebert stated there has been graffiti on some of the murals.

Cathy Dugan, 615 Sommers Street, agreed there is no historical significance at this site and that is what this area is about. She continued stating the proposed area is not the appropriate place for contemporary graffiti art, but another place in town might be. Lastly, Ms. Dugan stated she is skeptical as to what type of artwork will be displayed, but would be more inclined to listen if the University Art professors were involved.

Commissioner Beveridge explained there is a trend of to ensure responsibility, enforcement, and approval, however, there is none of that involved in this project. He continued stating that he liked the idea, and agreed may be shocking to people, but the downtown is shaping up to be the Mecca of the young; there is no other place.

Alderson Patton asked if there is anything in our ordinance that regulates façade painting, to which Commissioner Beveridge stated yes, they have to have prior approval from the Historic

Preservation/Design Review Commission and they can paint the wall a solid color if it is approved by the commission from a historic palette.

Commissioner Kruthoff stated the way the downtown is shaping up, with the arts walk and studio adjacent to the river, the mural is a unifying factor that brings in another view point. Alderperson Patton added, like the skateboarders needed their place, maybe the graffiti artists need one as well, and if someone is willing to give up a wall of their building, it might be worth it. Furthermore, a temporary approval can be given, allowing for a trial period where the committee has the chance to end the project.

Commissioner Kruthoff asked if there was anything that prevents us from requiring a review before something is put up. Mrs. Butt commented that she purchased the building in 1999, during which discussion occurred with city planners that a mural portraying a scuba diver, kayaker, and a rock climber was a concern because it may be advertising, even though she explained it portrays residents of Central Wisconsin. It was never pursued due to financing.

Commissioner Beveridge asked if this was going to be shepherded by the Arts Alliance, to which Mr. Schierl explained they would put out a call to artists, and because it is new to the Alliance, they do not want to have restrictive barriers. Elizabeth Aquillera added this also is the only place where you can just walk down the street and see art being made. Commissioner Beveridge stated the commission does understand what is being proposed, but unfortunately, the Commission is not part of the art community, and some of these things can be interpreted in many different ways. The commission is looking for some way to approve this but have some idea of what is going to happen.

Commissioner Kruthoff asked if they had reviewed the staff recommendations, to which Mr. Schierl stated yes and he does not have a real problem with them. Mr. Kearns added the reason those staff conditions were placed on the approval is because the historic guidelines do not typically allow the painting of brick and it is frowned upon by the state's Historical Society. Mr. Schierl explained with the control question, the worst case scenario is that the wall just gets painted grey if the project is rejected in the future. Alderperson Patton added most of the designs would occur during the summer and whatever is put up in November would probably be there all winter. Mr. Schierl added that a timeline for this really has not been discussed with the owners or anyone else. Commissioner Beveridge asked what the time line would potentially look like, to which Mr. Schierl answered we would have to work through the process of prepping the surface, posting signage and rules, as well as, getting in contact with street artists to get involved; a couple of months or even by fall.

Alderperson Patton stated as an Alderperson he supports it and believes in its success with MSTC coming downtown and bringing younger people to the area.

Carrie Butt asked if the staff recommended conditions would take care of the concern about control, to which Commissioner Beveridge answered we were told there would be no

renderings beforehand. Commissioner Beveridge then asked if prepping the wall would include painting it a solid color prior to the art, to which Mr. Schierl answered he doesn't know.

Alderson M. Stroik asked if renderings will be done because it may hinder the creativity of the process, to which Mr. Schierl stated the Art Alliance does not want to put itself in the position of judging art.

Commissioner Beveridge asked Director Ostrowski if there was any graffiti problems downtown, to which he answered yes. Graffiti through was found by the library on the murals, on the former Player's Lounge, as well as the Cooper Motors and Shopko last year. However, there was not a specific focus to the downtown area.

Cathy Dugan added that regarding oversight, all art should come before the commission, as described in the staff report. Commissioner Beveridge stated it has been explained during this meeting that art is not going to be controlled and will happen over a period of time. Commissioner Beveridge asked the representatives to get back to the commission regarding answers to some of the concerns and see if there is anyone in the arts league who would have any additional comments or recommendations about control or safety to surrounding buildings. Mr. Schierl stated that if the expectation is for the Arts Alliance is to control those issues, then they will withdraw the proposal as they do not want to be a part of judging art.

Commissioner Siebert pointed out one of the issues is the inappropriate stuff; who will then paint over it, to which Carrie Butt stated she can keep paint to cover it up. Director Ostrowski added if there is any inappropriate language, gang signs, or imagines there is a graffiti ordinance that would require it to be repainted within 10 days by the property owner.

Alderson Patton stated he feels the commission should let it happen with a review process in place, similar to a trial period. Commissioner Beveridge added we are here to protect the image of downtown, and this request is just different.

Motion by Commissioner Kruthoff to approve a contemporary street art mural, on the west facing wall of Dive Point Scuba, 944 Main Street (Parcel ID 2408-32-2015-15) with the following conditions:

- **Proposed artwork shall not display inappropriate language, phrases, pictures, or gang signs.**
- **Artwork shall be limited to the southern half of the western building façade. The northern half shall remain unpainted brick.**
- **Renderings of proposed artwork shall be submitted for review by the Commission Chairperson and designated agent prior to painting to ensure conditions are met.**
- **If the Contemporary Street Mural Program shall ever cease, the applicant and/or owner shall be responsible for restoring the wall with a neutral paint color at any time in the future if decided by the Historic Preservation/Design Review Commission.**

Seconded by Alderson M. Stroik.

Commissioner Kruthoff continued stating she understands both side of the review argument, but feels the comfort level of the community, area, and the commission is a responsibility that we have to have. Furthermore, it doesn't mean the Commission has to have a full meeting for approving art, but our commission has to have part of that review to ensure that conditions are met. She continued stating that she trusts Mrs. Butt wouldn't approve something that was inappropriate in nature. Commissioner Beveridge added that he is still concerned an attractive nuisance will be created with this approval. Mrs. Butt added that traffic flow is in the opposite direction of this wall and in order to see it you will have to be walking. Additionally, the city Police Department has called her a few times in the past when kids have gotten on the roof, and to review her camera footage which point towards Main Street.

Amended Motion by Commissioner Kruthoff to approve a contemporary street art mural, on the west facing wall of Dive Point Scuba, 944 Main Street (Parcel ID 2408-32-2015-15) with the following conditions:

- **Proposed artwork shall not display inappropriate language, phrases, pictures, or gang signs.**
- **Artwork shall be limited to the southern half of the western building façade. The northern half shall remain unpainted brick.**
- **Renderings of proposed artwork shall be submitted for review by the Commission Chairperson and designated agent prior to painting to ensure conditions are met.**
- **If the Contemporary Street Mural Program shall ever cease, the applicant and/or owner shall be responsible for restoring the wall with a neutral paint color at any time in the future if decided by the Historic Preservation/Design Review Commission.**
- **In one year from approval, review shall occur by the Historic Preservation / Design Review Commission of the Contemporary Street Mural Program, during which the commission shall determine the programs continuation or abolishment and add any conditions to approval.**

Seconded by Alderperson M. Stroik.

Commissioner Beveridge stated he thinks we are going to end up approving something that ruins the downtown mural atmosphere. Furthermore, he requested the applicant to provide material in the future to alleviate many of the Commission's concerns. Mr. Schierl answered that internally, the Arts Alliance will have to discuss the program specifics, historic guidelines and approval process to ensure the program can be sustainable for a year.

Ms. Aquillera added the cultural center in Wisconsin Rapids just a week or two ago had a skateboard artist there talking about more contemporary art and doing a workshop with youth. Commissioner Beveridge asked staff to contact other surrounding communities to see if this has come up, and to find something similar that communities have made themselves comfortable with.

Roll Called Commissioner Beveridge – aye, Alderperson Mary Stroik- aye, Tim Siebert – abstain, Kathy Kruthoff- aye, motion carries 3-0.

3. Façade Improvement Grant Program Update.

Mr. Kearns stated the commission has been provided with the memo regarding the current funds approved for the Façade Improvement Grant. He continued stating that six projects have received approval for funding, with two complete which received reimbursement.

Mr. Kearns also provided an update on current projects, specially relating to 1225 Second Street which will not be pursuing corncob blasting as it is not allowed by the State's Historical Preservation Society. Instead, discussion has ensued to identify other non-abrasive cleaning methods. Commissioner Beveridge pointed out that multiple color patterns have been discussed for the building in order to bring out the detailing.

Mr. Kearns then discussed the Mattlin Building, 920 Clark Street, stating the solar panels have been taken off which has exposed wood trusses and steel beams. The applicant has expressed interest into extending the windows and providing transom windows up to what has been exposed. Commissioner Beveridge added the original sign on the east side of the building has also been exposed. Mr. Commissioner Seibert asked for clarification as to what was behind the solar panels, to which Commissioner Beveridge answered there had been glass block and that was taken out and stud wall was put in with some insulation.

Alderperson M. Stroik asked about Specialized Computer Systems project, to which Mr. Kearns answered it was postponed until this year because they could not do the wood work and painting prior to the snowfall.

Commissioner Beveridge asked about the funds being available for the mural that was previously talked about, to which Mr. Kearns answered he did not think the funds would assist with the painting of a mural and the materials and labor to do so. However, if the Butts wanted apply for the removal of tar and so forth, they may be a candidate for funds as the wall is visible from the right-of-way and abuts an alley.

4. Adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 5:39 p.m.