

REPORT OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION / DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 3, 2017 – 4:00 PM

City Conference Room
1515 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481

PRESENT: Chairperson Beveridge, Alderperson Jennings, Commissioner Baldischwiler, Commissioner Debauche, and Commissioner Woehr.

ALSO PRESENT: Associate Planner Kearns, Director Ostrowski, Bailey Voigt, Becca Greening, and Mike Trzinski.

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1. Roll Call.

Discussion and possible action on the following:

2. Report for the April 05, 2017 meeting.
3. Design Review request from Bushman Electric Crane & Sign, representing Delta Dental, to install a wall sign outside the signable area and exceeding the total sign allowance at 1265 Main St Stevens Point WI (Parcel ID: 281240832202718).
4. Historic signage for districts.
5. Penalty provisions for violators.
6. Notification of historic districts during property sale and purchase.
7. Staff update.
8. Adjourn.

1. Roll Call.

Present: Beveridge, Jennings, Baldischwiler, Debauche, Woehr.

Excused: Siebert, Scripps

Discussion and possible action on the following:

2. Report for the April 05, 2017 meeting.

Commissioner Woehr reported that the Commission was overturned at the Common Council's Monday meeting in regards to 1200 Third Street, and cited a comment made by an Alderperson where they had stated that there had been no representation from the commission in explaining their rationale for the request denial.

Associate Planner Kearns added that the council had required the double door design in their approval, but that they would be allowed to use aluminum or steel, and that the original doors be kept on the premises in case a future user wished to utilize them.

Motion by Commissioner Baldischwiler to approve the report of the April 05, 2017 HP/DRC meeting; seconded by Commissioner Debauche.

Motion carried 5-0.

3. Design Review request from Bushman Electric Crane & Sign, representing Delta Dental, to install a wall sign outside the signable area and exceeding the total sign allowance at 1265 Main St Stevens Point WI (Parcel ID: 281240832202718).

Associate Planner Kearns briefly explained the request from the applicant to install a wall sign outside the signable area on the south side of 1265 Main Street above the third floor windows, or the second floor EIFS band near the building roof. While two options had been presented, only one would be installed. He cited a similar request where the Plan Commission and Historic Preservation / Design Review Commission had approved Cobblestone Hotel's signage and also added that the Plan Commission had approved a sign variance for Delta Dental's proposed signage during their last meeting. Given the design guideline standards and existing building signage, the signage was deemed appropriate and he recommended approval.

Commissioner Woehr asked if the signage request was only for the south side of the building, and when the existing signage had been approved, and whether they had been approved through the commission.

Associate Planner Kearns confirmed that the request was only for the south side. In regards to the existing signage, they had been internally approved by staff 2-3 years ago as they had met the design guidelines, noting that Ms. Voigt had done both the Thrivent Financial and Wells Fargo signs.

Bailey Voigt noted that the Delta Dental sign would be the same type of construction as the Thrivent Financial sign with the light shining out of the face of the letter.

Commissioner Debauche asked about the occupancy of the building, to which it was confirmed by Mr. Trzinski that the building will be fully occupied once Delta Dental moves in.

Director Ostrowski stated that the third floor had been vacant since Ministry Health Care moved its location.

Bailey Voigt added that while the building contained several professional offices, only the larger name businesses used the façade signage as part of their branding.

Chairperson Beveridge asked if they were public offices, to which it was confirmed that the Delta Dental offices would have visitors and be business related.

Commissioner Woehr asked for the reasoning behind the green color option rather than a more subdued color, to which it was explained that the green was specific to Delta Dental's national branding guidelines.

Bailey Voigt presented examples of their branding guidelines. While they had presented a white sign option, she noted that it would not appear well on the beige building, and added that the green sign option was preferred and more practical.

Commissioner Woehr asked about the signage on their second building on Hoover Avenue.

Mike Trzinski stated that the signage on the Hoover Avenue building was an unlit, grandfathered sign, and that it had been removed due to construction. Ms. Greening added that after a branding audit, the signage was found to be noncompliant with their branding guidelines.

Aldersperson Jennings stated that there had been some questions from the Plan Commission in regards to location and color. She stated her preference for the east side of the façade in terms of

placement, and the white color sign option. While she understood the branding standards, the white color was more aesthetically pleasing as opposed to the green which contrasted too heavily against the building and existing signage, especially in the Downtown Historic District.

Commissioner Woehr asked if it was possible to recreate the construction of the sign in white with a green border.

Bailey Voigt explained the color options within the staff report. She noted that the included options had been approved by Delta Dental and any additional would have to go back for approval.

Becca Greening explained that they had explored a similar option, but found it to be too subdued. She emphasized the importance of their branding standards.

Bailey Voigt explained Associated Bank had similar signage and provided an example, with Ms. Greening adding that they had explored additional options.

Chairperson Beveridge stated that he saw no issue in allowing the signage.

Commissioner Woehr agreed, with Director Ostrowski then providing examples of similar approved signage.

Commissioner Debauche expressed that he was pleased with Delta Dental moving in downtown, and that it was good for the city to see a prominent business downtown.

Becca Greening asked whether they would have to come back to the committee if they wanted to place an additional sign on the building, to which it was confirmed that they would have to seek approval.

Chairperson Beveridge stated that there were different guidelines for primary or secondary signs, their sizes, and facing facades.

Bailey Voigt asked whether the applicant was fine to choose either color option, to which Associate Planner Kearns confirmed and stated that they would outline the approval within the Design Review Certificate.

Motion by Commissioner Debauche to approve the Design Review request from Bushman Electric Crane & Sign, representing Delta Dental, to install a wall sign outside the signable area and exceeding the total sign allowance at 1265 Main St Stevens Point WI (Parcel ID: 281240832202718); seconded by Commissioner Baldischwiler.

Motion Carried 5-0.

4. Historic signage for districts.

Associate Planner Kearns summarized that the following three agenda items were requested to be brought up for discussion. In regards to signage, he noted, they didn't necessarily have a budget, but it was something they could plan for in the future.

Director Ostrowski quickly noted that rather than filing a document for every document, the Registry of Deeds Department would allow them to record a single document for each district that would be on the deed of every property within the district. This in coordination with another item, such as signage, he stated, would be very beneficial.

Commissioner Baldischwiler agreed that it made sense as some residents did not realize they were in a historic district, with Director Ostrowski adding that some realtors will or will not let them know they're in a historic district, while others simply may not know at all.

Commissioner Woehr stated that the purchaser of the property would generally not see the title search until after they sign the paperwork.

Director Ostrowski explained that it was just another way to notify them that they were in a district. When they had started the façade improvement grant program, he explained, they had sent out notification letters detailing requirements and guidelines. While it took a while to catch on, it was helpful as not every home or business owner may know about the district.

Commissioner Woehr asked whether small notices could be placed with the tax notices.

Associate Planner Kearns explained that a concern about using tax notices as a way to send other items, would be that people may consider it junk if it's the first thing they saw, and potentially ignore the tax bill by accident. It could also open up requests from other departments to do something similar within the tax bill and then it would become a huge avenue for the city to advertise through tax bills.

Director Ostrowski noted that they did not have such a huge number of properties that they could not do a direct mailing, with Associate Planner Kearns adding that there were roughly 350-400 properties. Even with mailing costs, it would most likely save staff time in the long term.

Chairperson Beveridge asked whether they were going to be noted in the legal description of the property with a CSM reference number, to which Director Ostrowski stated that they would be noted in the legal description, not on a CSM. They would have to work with the Register of Deeds on the specifics.

Associate Planner Kearns stated that the next step would be for the City Surveyor to draft legal descriptions of the districts, have it run by the Register of Deeds for a better understanding of the process, and then bring it back to the committee for a final review.

Chairperson Beveridge explained that once a property is listed, the data sheet has to be turned over to the MLS listing within 24 hours, adding that there may be somewhere on the data sheet where you could list it as a historic property.

Associate Planner Kearns, bringing it back to Agenda Item 4, asked whether the commission wished to pursue updating signage or direct staff to budget for those costs, as well as describing additional options such as working with design students.

Commissioner Woehr recommended against placing signage in the ground, and Chairperson Beveridge suggested signage similar to street signs with a plaques at the top.

Commissioner Woehr suggested they take advantage of street sign posts and place a 'Historic District' sign below the existing street name sign, noting that it would be cost effective.

Associate Planner Kearns stated that they would have to confirm with the Public Works Department with using existing street sign posts, as they liked to keep the street signs clear of all other information. However, they could also look at placing them on a street light near that location or other public right-of-way poles to save some costs.

Director Ostrowski suggested that color could be used to differentiate the historic districts. This would eliminate the need for more than one sign.

Commissioner Woehr reiterated that if the signs were placed on the street signs or near the vicinity of the street signs, it would increase awareness of being within a historic district, as well as there being less of a chance of vandalism.

Commissioner Debauche mentioned that it would also be good for potential buyers. Overall, he agreed that signage needed to be looked into more, noting that the design of the signs should be consistent across all signs, whether they be street signs, large signs, or plaques.

Aldersperson Jennings explained that she was working with the Public Works Department in addressing sign clutter along Clark Street, and recommended against putting up any additional signs. She liked the idea of changing the color of the street sign or having decorative caps on the poles to differentiate historic districts.

There was a general consensus of wanting to pursue signage options for historic districts.

5. Penalty provisions for violators.

The Ordinance Enforcement Penalty Dichotomies handout created by Commissioner Woehr was distributed.

Chairperson Beveridge stated that there was a need to enforce the penalty provisions by briefly summarizing a recent situation in which work had been done on a historic home without prior approval. That request, once it came before the commission, was denied, and went to public protections for an appeal. Ultimately the Common Council had accepted their request.

Commissioner Woehr cited other examples where work has been performed without prior approval and permits. While going through the penalties relating to the ordinances, he found that the penalties for Historic Preservation/Design Review were not consistent, or as harsh, as other items. At the very least, he stated, they should know to come to the Building Department for permits even if they didn't know they were in the historic district.

Aldersperson Jennings asked why fines were not issued for a particular case, to which Associate Planner Kearns explained that when requests were made to the commission, it's was typically in good faith and if work started, applicant were asked to stop. They didn't want to create a bad reputation for the commission or Community Development Department as a result of fining applicants during a waiting period to see if they had been granted approval or denied. However, if someone chose not to come before the commission and they continued to perform work, there was value in having them pay the penalties and going through the correct avenues.

Director Ostrowski further explained that a lot of the time, property owners didn't always know they were in a historic district. In addition to being able to issue citations on a daily basis, there was another chapter that outlined additional fees and forfeitures for specific violations, and between service and court fees, the costs could be much greater than \$100.00. He understood the frustrations of having work performed on historic structures without prior approval, but cautioned against a fast and hard approach as it was possible to create a negative reputation for the commission. He added that they were already looking into increasing some of the fees, charges, and fines for not pulling permits.

Chairperson Beveridge asked whether the request to appeal for double doors as 1201 Third Street had been noticed to the department, to which Associate Planner Kearns stated that the applicant provided notice.

Director Ostrowski stated that they needed a combination of items, such as education, penalty provisions, and financial resources in order to aid people in maintaining their homes as they could get very costly. While the façade grant program had assisted in cleaning and retrofitting a lot of buildings, they needed to expand the program to residential areas as well.

Commissioner Woehr asked if they needed to pressure the Finance Committee for additional funds, to which Director Ostrowski stated that it would most likely be a request to the Common Council.

Director Ostrowski explained that it had initially taken a bit of time for the program to get off the ground, but when it did, the funds went quickly as exterior renovations were very costly.

Chairperson Beveridge asked if the Common Council could overrule an electrical or plumbing violation like they could overrule Historic Preservation. He explained that the combined knowledge of the commission on historic matters far exceeded that of the Common council, and yet they overturned their decisions.

Director Ostrowski explained that the right to appeal was within the City Ordinance, and added that it was important to make the council members knowledgeable about the design guidelines, and why they were important.

Chairperson Beveridge stated that he would have attended the meeting if he knew it would have helped, to which Commissioner Debouche asked if they could be notified if there was going to be an appeal.

Commissioner Woehr stated that a comment had been made by an Alderperson that there had been no representation for Historic Preservation at the appeal. He also noted that the Mayor had made a comment about the Historic Preservation Commission being advisory to the Common Council, but rather it was a standalone body with a separate appeal process, adding that it was important that the Alders were aware of the distinction.

Alderperson Jennings asked if the façade grant could be placed as an item for a future agenda item. In the interim, she asked how those funds were replenished.

Director Ostrowski briefly explained the original source of the funds, and some ways in which they could go about replenishing those funds in the future. He stated that he wanted to put together a document showing the benefits of the program prior to presenting it to council, noting that they already had several projects waiting on additional funds.

Alderperson Jennings commented that Appleton had taken an aggressive approach in regenerating their area by buying homes and tearing them down. If something similar could happen along Clark Street, homes could be bought, improved, and converted, which could lead to creating a continuous historic coordinator.

Director Ostrowski stated that it would be a good conversation for the Redevelopment Authority.

Commissioner Woehr asked on the status of Edgewater Manor, to which Director Ostrowski stated that while they were waiting for additional wall specific data, they were moving forward.

6. Notification of historic districts during property sale and purchase.

This item was discussed under Agenda Item 4.

7. Staff update.

Associate Planner Kearns stated that the only update was in regards to the appeals which were previously discussed during Agenda Item 2, the review of minutes.

8. Adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 5:03PM.

Attachment Pertaining to Item 5: Ordinance Enforcement Penalty Dichotomies

Ordinance Enforcement Penalty Dichotomies

Chapter 16 – Streets, Alleys & Sidewalks

16.10 - \$100 forfeiture or up to 60 days in jail in lieu of payment.

Chapter 18 – Plumbing Code

18.12 - \$500 fine or up to 30 days in jail in lieu of payment.

Chapter 19 – Electrical Code

19.10 – Not to exceed \$75 or up to 60 days in jail in lieu of payment.

Chapter 21 – Building and Premises Maintenance & Occupancy

21.14 - \$100 for each violation or up to 30 days jail in lieu of payment. Each day or violation is a separate offense.

Chapter 22 – Historic Preservation/Design Review

Part 12 - \$200 for each offense. Each day violation exists is a separate offense.

(No mention of jail time)

Chapter 23 – Zoning Code

23.06 4) - \$35 to \$500 or up to 30 days jail in lieu of payment. Each day of violation is a separate offense.

Chapter 25 – Sign Ordinance

25.13 – Subject to penalties listed in the Zoning Code (Chap 23). Each day is a separate violation.