

City of Stevens Point Meeting Minutes

Historic Preservation Commission

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Present: Chm. Lee Beveridge, Kathy Kruthoff, William Love, Tom Ness, Bonnie Maher, Tim Siebert, Ald. Norm Myers, Bernice Sevenich

Also Present: Jim Siebers, City Assessor; Sarah Robinson, Main Street Mgr.; Rich Sommer, Kathy Dugan, Bill Yudchitz

1. On-Site Visit - 1000 Third Street - 4:30 p.m.

Meeting convened at 4:30 at 1000 Third St. The Commission toured the interior and exterior of 1000 Third St. and viewed the exterior of 941 Portage St. (next door to 1000 Third St.)

2. Meet at City Conference Room - Approximately 5:15 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 5:05 p.m. at City Conference Room in County-City Building (all members of the Commission and public present).

3. Consideration and Possible Action on Request of City to Demolish 941 Portage St. and 1000 Third St.

John Gardner was asked who owned the buildings and why the buildings were requested to be demolished.

John Gardner stated the 2 buildings were owned by the City. They were purchased for the purpose of revitalizing the two-block area. The City also owns the former Lullaby site as well as the former Portesi building. The City purchased the land because we have been advised by developers that we cannot re-sell what we do not own. Developers will not enter into agreements for redevelopment unless the City controls the land. One of the reasons Travel Guard would not consider the downtown site is because they did not believe we could purchase and assemble the development site in a timely manner. We have been advised that the best way to market the property is to own it and to prepare the site for redevelopment. The City was also advised preparing the site includes clearing the site.

The City has had several contractors/developers review the property. Mr. Lepak, former building owner, is a local builder who advised us the costs to remodel and refurbish the building was not financially feasible. He stated major work included tuck pointing, major repairs on the roof structure, and other wall repairs. We also had the McCoy brothers tour the building. They are developers who have experience in rehabilitating buildings. They said they would not be interested in this building. The City inspectors, City Assessor, as well as other City public works staff reviewed the building. City staff members recommended its demolition.

Norm Myers asked how long the building has been vacant. Commission discussion estimated the building has been vacant since approximately 1997 with no one interested in the building.

Bonnie Maher felt the building was a solid building and was in better shape than the building at 1020 First St. before that building was rehabbed into apartments. She didn't see the need to hurry to tear it down. She felt that this building with its fancy brick work cornice and Italianate windows is representative of historic downtown buildings. She reminded the committee that the State Dept. of Historic Preservation recommendation regarding downtowns is to infill not to demolish.

Sarah Robinson, manager for the Association of Downtown Businesses, was asked her opinion. She said she hated to see buildings demolished but on the other hand the building has been empty for a number of years without any purchasers.

Cathy Dugan said the City has completed a relocation plan to acquire all the properties in these two blocks. Gardner said a relocation plan approved by the State of Wisconsin is necessary before the City acquires any occupied properties. The properties in question were not occupied. The relocation plan has been approved.

Bernice Sevenich said the former Quality Beverage building (1001 Union St.) was an old building that was rehabbed. She felt the same could happen here. Sevenich quoted "(3) Powers and Duties for Historic Preservation 2b. Whether the building or structure, although not itself a landmark building, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the historic district as a whole, and therefore, should be preserved for the benefit of the people of the City or the state." She felt this applied in this case.

An email from Mary McComb, member of the ADB Design Committee was distributed. The email encouraged not demolishing 1000 Third Street.

Norm Myers said he didn't think this building was comparable to the former Post Office. Some people have said we should have preserved the former Post Office and he agrees. But this building is not as good as the former Post Office.

Rich Sommer said he has been told the amount of energy expended to demolish any building and rebuild a new building is more than the total energy needed to remodel this building (carbon footprint is less to remodel).

Tom Ness moved, seconded by Tim Siebert, to not tear down 1000 Third St.

Bill Yudchitz said small rehab projects are easier for local builders/owners to undertake than large projects. He said his experience is there is no money in rehab projects.

Vote on motion:

Ayes, Ness, Siebert, Beveridge, Kruthoff, Love, Maher, and Sevenich; Nays, Myers; Motion carried. (7-1)

Tom Ness moved, seconded by Norm Myers, that the Commission allow the tear down of the home at 941 Portage St.

Bonnie Maher asked what the hurry is. Maher said that the house was over 50 years old and meets the minimum age requirement for a historic building. She stated this house is representative of the style of many of the downtown northside homes. She saw no hurry to tear it down

Jim Siebers said there is only a ¼ basement under the home. It has old electric. In his opinion, he did not think the home was in good shape. He also stated there was a large hole in the roof of the garage which he felt was unsafe and unsound.

John Gardner said the home was out of place in a block that would be redeveloped for other uses. Redevelopment of the property as a single family would not be reasonable because of the small size of the home in a mixed use area. He also clarified Maher's statement that the house is over 50 years old and may be old enough to qualify as historic based on age but, in his opinion, the house was not indicative of a specific style and was not eligible to be on the state or local register. Gardner pointed to interior pictures showing the home never contained fine woodwork but was constructed as a plain home.

Dugan said the City has begun demolition by authorizing the removal of hardwood from the home.

Maier said the home was illustrative of a type of home construction and was historic. Ness said just because the home is old does not make it historic.

Vote on motion to allow demolition of 941 Portage St.:

Ayes, Ness, Myers, Love,

Nays Beveridge, Kruthoff, Maher, Siebert, Sevenich Motion failed. (5-3)

Lee Beveridge moved, seconded by Tim Siebert, to deny demolition of the home at 941 Portage St. but to allow demolition of the garage on the site.

Ayes, Beveridge, Siebert, Maher, Kruthoff, Ness, and Sevenich;

Nays, Myers & Love. Motion passed (6-2)

Kathy Kruthoff stated both items should come back to the Commission in the event there is a proposal to re-use the site which would require

demolition of both structures.
Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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