

MINUTES
April 12, 2021
Historic Preservation Commission - Virtual
City of Batavia

Please **NOTE:** These minutes are not a word-for-word transcription of the statements made at the meeting, nor intended to be a comprehensive review of all discussions. They are intended to make an official record of the actions taken by the Commission/Committee/City Council, and to include some description of discussion points as understood by the minute-taker. They may not reference some of the individual attendee's comments, nor the complete comments if referenced.

1. Meeting Called to Order

Chair Hohmann called the virtual meeting to order at 5:32pm.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Chair Hohmann; Commissioners Hagemann, Faivre and Saam

Members Absent: Vice-Chair Bus

Also Present: Jeff Albertson, Building Commissioner; Scott Buening, Director of Community Development; and Jennifer Austin-Smith, Recording Secretary

3. Approval of Minutes: March 22, 2021

Motion: To approve the minutes from March 22, 2021

Maker: Hagemann

Second: Saam

Roll Call Vote: **Aye:** Hagemann, Saam, Faivre, Hohmann

Nay:

4-0 Vote, 1 Absent. Motion carried.

4. Items to be Removed, Added or Changed

There were no items to be removed, added or changed.

5. Matters From the Public (for items not on the agenda)

There were no matters from the public.

6. COA Review: 222 East Wilson Street – Monument Sign (Wilson Street Mercantile, applicant)

Jenni Zielke and Suzanne Ray addressed the Commission. Ray shared that they recently opened a store at 222 East Wilson and would like to put a sign out front advertising their store. Albertson shared via the screen share feature on Zoom the image of the sign, location drawing and sign information. Albertson reported that zoning has reviewed this application and it does comply with the Zoning Code. They are using the existing posts that are there.

Motion: To approve the COA as presented

Maker: Hagemann

Second: Saam

Roll Call Vote: **Aye:** Hagemann, Saam, Faivre, Hohmann
 Nay:
 4-0 Vote, 1 Absent. Motion carried.

7. COA Review: 20 North Island Avenue – Wall Sign (Joe Schullo, applicant)

Joe Schullo, applicant, addressed the Commission. He would like to put up the outdoor sign above the windows for advertising. Albertson stated that this has been reviewed and does comply with the Zoning Code. Albertson reported that this building is classified as non-contributing in the district. Albertson shared through the shared screen option of Zoom the image of the sign and the sign details. Hagemann commented that the proposed signage is in line with most of the other signs in the area.

Motion: To approve the COA
Maker: Saam
Second: Faivre
Roll Call Vote: **Aye:** Saam, Faivre, Hagemann, Hohmann
 Nay:
 4-0 Vote, 1 Absent. Motion carried.

8. COA Review: 14 North Washington Avenue – Demolition (Barco Products, applicant)

Albertson reported that this is the second meeting on this item. The first meeting, on March 22, 2021, was to discuss whether the application was complete and whether it was okay to move forward to the review portion of the process. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approved moving forward to the review portion of the meeting. Albertson stated the applicant provided the information requested by the HPC and has been shared with the Commission via the posting.

Morgan Moseley, applicant, addressed the Commission and discussed the poor condition of the house and its foundation and how they plan to beautify the area.

Hagemann shared that he has taken a look at the building itself and the thing he is weighing on this is the beautification of this area. He believed that the only reason this building is considered as contributing and not non-contributing is because it is on the same property of the Louise White School. Hagemann continued that he thinks that it is not cost efficient to upgrade it and adding some area that would help beautify that corner would help the former Louise White School visibility and add landscaping to that area. He would be in favor of this COA going forward. Saam agreed and added that it turns the property into a campus with more green space. It would be more appealing for visibility from the downtown as well.

Faivre stated that she is not in favor of this COA. This is a slippery slope and is not in the best interest of our downtown to get rid of a home that has a lot of character. The home has been allowed to deteriorate for a number of years but she disagrees with the whole idea of tearing it down. She also does not like the fencing that is being proposed around the old Louise White School. She does not believe the proposed fencing adds to the character of the downtown. She is not in favor of demolishing this home from 1885, it has a lot of character and she does not agree with the demolition.

Chair Hohmann stated that we are dangerously starting a precedent here. Unfortunately, the City started the precedent with the Baptist Church and buying something and not keeping it up. In his opinion this was intentional. The home was purchased and left to sit there until now where it is a detriment to the finances to make the repairs to it. Hohmann wants everyone to understand that he does not think we should allow a precedent in the City allowing someone to buy a piece of property and neglect it until the point where they would have to tear it down. Saam concurred. This property in particular was not in good condition years back when it was purchased. She asked if there is something we do as a City to prevent something like this to happen in the first place. Albertson answered generally we are attempting to work with homeowners with code violations and property maintenance. There are only a couple of staff members that cover the entire town and there are a lot of areas we do not get to unless we are aware/informed of them. We do not have an active program other than our general code enforcement or property maintenance. Buening added that oftentimes staff does these on a complaint basis and staff did not have a complaint about this building until recently. Buening commented that he would like to know how much the applicant put into the building since purchasing, which would most likely be nothing. This is demolition due to neglect and it is unfortunate. Moseley stated that there was no money that was put into the house because it was in poor condition five to six years ago.

Faivre shared some communities offer tax incentives to homes that are contributing in the downtown area to keep them up. There are communities that start demolishing homes like this and all of a sudden their downtown has no character and there is nothing great about it anymore. She considered the possibility of landmarking historic homes.

Albertson read the criteria for demolition to the Commission. The general consensus of the Commission was in agreement that the cost of repairs that would bring this building to the point of demolition. Albertson noted that is criteria item C.

Chair Hohmann offered to continue this discussion if it needs more thought or we could have a motion to bring this to the Committee of the Whole and then full Council. Saam stated that she would like to look at the process to ensure something like this does not happen again. At this point, this property is beyond repair and an eyesore. There are a lot of properties downtown that this could happen to and if we could work to prevent that from happening it would be beneficial to the Commission and the community as a whole. Faivre agreed. Buening asked for the Commission's cooperation in assisting staff in finding these properties and pointing them out. He asked that the Commission let staff know of any properties needing attention and they would follow-up on those. Albertson agreed. Faivre suggested a walking survey that is done annually or semi-annually to try to capture all of these buildings and homes.

Motion: To approve the COA with condition C
Maker: Saam
Second: Hagemann
Roll Call Vote: **Aye:** Saam, Hagemann, Hohmann
Nay: Faivre
3-1 Vote, 1 Absent. Motion carried.

9. Updates:

- 1. 7 East Wilson Street – Historic Inspection**
- 2. Anderson Block Building – Masonry Maintenance**
- 3. Significant Historic Building Inspection Program**
- 4. 227 West Wilson Street – Historic Inspection**
- 5. 16 East Wilson Street – Historic Inspection**

Albertson stated that there are no updates to report.

10. Other Business

Albertson reported that he had to issue two emergency roofing permits due to leaking. One was on a non-contributing structure at 108 South Batavia Avenue and the other is a significant building at 109 South Batavia Avenue. They both are flat roof buildings.

Albertson asked if the Commission would like to move to a hybrid meeting where some attend in person or to stay fully remote. Saam asked to stay remote until we have more commissioners to ensure we have a quorum. The consensus of the Commission was in favor of staying remote.

Chair Hohmann shared that he will be moving to Wisconsin full-time. He will try to attend the remote meetings until the Mayor gets more members.

Buening reported that staff is working on the application process for landmarking. We will be discussing some code changes to nominate a property to be landmarked. When it all is solidified staff will come back to the Commission with the information.

11. Adjournment

There being no other business to discuss, Chair Hohmann asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:14pm; Made by Hagemann; Seconded by Saam. Roll call was made and all were in favor. Motion carried.