

**Historic Preservation Commission Minutes  
November 11, 2002**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Vasilion called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**Members present:** Bell, Fessler, Hoefler, LaLonde, and Vasilion

**Members absent:** None

**Also present:** Mary Ann Monzani, Administrative Aide, and Kathy Montanari, Recording Secretary

**3. ITEMS REMOVED/ADDED/CHANGED**

LaLonde requested that all e-mail be directed to him at his business.

**MOTION:** To table acceptance of the October 28, 2002 Historic Preservation Commission minutes to the next meeting

**MAKER:** Bell

**SECOND:** LaLonde

**VOTE:** 5/AYES, 0/NAYS, MOTION CARRIED

**4. REVIEW OF INDIVIDUAL GOALS AND PRESERVATION PERSPECTIVES**

Vasilion reviewed that he had previously requested each member to summarize his individual goals and preservation perspectives at this meeting.

LaLonde read the following statement: "To maintain architecturally significant buildings and/or areas to provide a link to the history of the community in order to deepen our understanding and appreciation of where we come from. These buildings and areas are made important through events, people, scale, quality, and style." In addition, adaptive reuse is an important consideration for him.

Bell quoted the quote from the National Trust for Historic Preservation: "To protect the irreplaceable." He sees the goal of the commission as "preserving buildings, structures, and landmarks which strengthen a community's shared sense of place linking generations in common." Bell wanted to preserve traditional uses of buildings or places while recognizing adaptive reuse. He would like to establish good design guidelines and contribute ideas for new construction and redevelopment within the historic district.

Hoefler added that there might also be homes linked to significant individuals that may not be located within a district. There must be a method to examine and preserve those places, as well. Consensus was that the historic preservation ordinance covered places and people, so this would be an appropriate area of consideration.

Vasilion asked if Hoefler thought a structure designated because a significant individual once lived there should be treated differently than other historic homes, and Hoefler said yes. The home could be preserved to the era when the individual resided in or visited the structure.

Fessler informed the group that through his Internet research he became aware of other communities preserving areas with unique landscape characteristics. In Batavia, that might include the Quarry Park, Challenge Dam, and the Depot Pond. He agreed with the importance of public awareness and education. Fessler felt the values and benefits of establishing a historic district and landmarks should be promoted.

Vasilion agreed that the limestone heritage of Batavia was important. He recently spoke to Lane Allen to thank him for work done by his small group on Batavia's survey of historic structures. Allen related to him that a person from the state preservation organization said every structure containing limestone should be landmarked. In addition, limestone should be saved for future use in the event that a structure must be demolished.

Vasilion read his statement: "Culturally and architecturally significant buildings are important to the telling of the story which is the history of Batavia. As such it is important to engage in an ongoing process of identifying, protecting, preserving, and restoring these buildings. I also believe in the individual freedoms granted by our Constitution. Building owners have a right to use and develop their properties for profit and enjoyment as they see fit. It is rare for a building to find only one use unaltered in its lifetime. Cultural changes, technological advances, and economic realities force most buildings to adapt in some manner in order to survive. I believe the Historic Preservation Commission is charged with striking a balance with these two potentially opposing goals. Preserve our unique local history, yet allow our buildings to adapt to meet our personal and economic needs."

Vasilion asked if there would be value to the commission to consolidate all these statements. Monzani suggested developing a mission statement. Vasilion said a mission statement could capture the essence of the commission's work and also be used in pamphlets.

Fessler noted that other communities seemed to have common objectives and agreed with development of a mission statement. The Rock Island Preservation Commission's site included many valuable resources that would be beneficial to the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission). Monzani collected the goals/perspectives for distribution at the next meeting.

## **5. PRIORITIZATION OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

LaLonde suggested narrowing each commissioner's statements and focusing on specific ideas.

Fessler said that most commissions begin by establishing historic districts and then landmarks.

Vasilion distributed a list of important tasks and a breakdown of those duties as a starting point for discussion. The list includes the powers and duties with which the Commission has been charged. He suggested that each commissioner be responsible for one of those areas. All commissioners would still have input for that area.

The four major tasks consisted of the following:

1. Identify historically and architecturally significant buildings;
2. Develop Procedures and Standards;
3. Monitor and participate in projects impacting our historic district(s); and
4. Public Relations.

LaLonde suggested adding an additional item to Task #3: (d) Periodic review of the Downtown Master Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. These areas would have significant impact upon the commission's work. All agreed to add this item.

LaLonde felt the groupings were appropriate as was the idea of one commissioner heading each task. Vasilion said one commissioner would be responsible for the task but the group would collectively decide the priorities within each task area. Other commissioners could assist if they wish or volunteers could be utilized.

Bell agreed with the need to prioritize tasks.

LaLonde felt completion of the survey should be a top priority, with definition of the district to follow. Initial discussions were to have a downtown district but he saw other areas being included.

Hoefler supported the development of a mission statement, as that would be an important component of the public relations aspect. It will be important for people to understand the goals of commission. He suggested preparing a leaflet with the commission's goals and sending it to organizations to solicit their feedback. Finishing the survey and designation of the district are also top priorities.

Bell believed the establishment of a district and goals/priorities could be done in tandem. Perhaps the announcement of the initial district could be done in the brochure, along with how the commission hopes to contribute to the community.

Monzani suggested that the commission might want to build a foundation before requesting feedback from other organizations and the community. They may not yet be prepared for that input and don't want people to lose interest.

Fessler believed the first group the commission would encounter is the business community, if downtown is the first district established. Perhaps the mission statement

could include the positive economic impact for the community. If that first contact is positive, momentum could build as the Commission's work proceeds.

Vasilion asked for comments about each person's view of the most difficult issue before the Commission.

Hoefler said it would be designating the boundaries of the district. People may even want to be within the district for the possible economic benefits it can bring.

LaLonde believed the public relations aspect would be most difficult. It will be important to educate people about benefits of having a district.

Vasilion looked forward to setting boundaries of the district, but agreed that convincing the public may be difficult. It will be critical that priorities be designed to maximize the outcome, i.e., establishing the district. All five Commissioners must decide the path taken to achieve these results.

Hoefler asked if other commissioners would be willing to take a walk together through town, possibly led by Mayor Schielke, to gain a sense of the various environments that make up Batavia.

LaLonde wanted to be prepared with standards and public relations before designating a district. That may be a 6-8 month process. Monzani was not aware of any timeline as to when the City Council hopes to have a district established.

Vasilion hoped to see the first district established within a year. He anticipated that it might take about 9-12 months before that could happen. It will certainly depend upon how the work is spread out and prioritized.

Bell asked if a City Council member had been designated to oversee the Historic Preservation Commission or if it fell under the purview of a particular City Council Committee.

Hoefler also questioned how often minutes would be placed into the official City Council record. Monzani said that the HPC would be linked to the Civic Improvements Committee. That committee consists of Aldermen Hart, Vance, Clark, Frydendall, and Miller.

Bell said his impression was that the City was interested in establishing the initial district downtown. Monzani said many of the comments made at the previous meeting were informal, but the TIF district may have relevance. She could not say for certain without further research and examination of the Downtown Master Plan.

Vasilion did not see any designated priorities for historic districts within the ordinance and believed the commission was free to decide.

Vasilion requested copies of Council Committee memberships, including contact information, so that he could begin to introduce himself on behalf of the commission to these various groups.

Bell requested that commission members receive copies of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Monzani will be meeting with Kai Tarum about building a library of reference materials as well as obtaining individual copies of pertinent information for all Commissioners.

In Bell's previous experience as a member of Geneva's Historic Preservation Commission, he found that once the district is formed, a great deal of the work will consist of routine matters such as reviews of signs and awnings. Bell said that the sign ordinance covers size and illumination, but there may be special considerations for signs within the historic district. For instance, the appropriateness of internally lit signs may have to be discussed. Monzani said that perhaps the commission might want to designate authority to City staff to handle routine items, so it can handle the larger issues at hand.

Monzani suggested that the commission invite the St. Charles Commission to attend a meeting to find out what has worked for them. The HPC could develop a list of topics or a survey to use as a basis for discussion.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT OF WORK PLANS**

Vasilion asked each commissioner to indicate his preference regarding the four major tasks.

Hoefer expressed interest in Task #1 (Identification of historically and architecturally significant buildings) and Task #4 (Public Relations).

Fessler was also interested in Task #1 and Task #3 (Monitor and participate in projects impacting our historic district). He has a good background in the area of Task #3.

Lalonde's preferred areas were Task #1 and Task #3.

Bell volunteered for Task #1 and Task #2. (Procedures and Standards)

Vasilion expressed interest in Task #4 (Public Relations) or Task #2

All members agreed that it was a good idea to have one person be responsible for each area. Of course, the philosophy of the entire group will be promoted in accomplishment of these tasks.

Vasilion said that if commissioners were agreeable to the four areas, each would be included on future agendas so that reports/updates can be provided to the other members similar to what is done by Committee Chairmen at City Council meetings.

LaLonde commented that Task #3 would be the least important in terms of priority at this early stage. Monzani reported that there are meetings regarding the Route 25 Realignment and the Wilson Street Bridge Replacement and she can obtain minutes if the committee so desires. Vasilion said the commission might want to explore whether it can be represented in those meetings.

Hoefler believed that top priority should be given to development of procedural guidelines and having a meeting with members of the St. Charles commission. Monzani felt it would be helpful to use their experience as a guideline for various procedures and suggested that the commission develop a specific set of topics so the meeting remains focused.

Vasilion asked if all members agreed with the four categories, and it was the consensus of the group that they were acceptable. These areas will be included on future agendas with updates to be provided by individuals responsible.

Vasilion then asked that individual members be responsible for these areas:

Task #1 Identification of Significant Buildings - LaLonde

Task #2 Procedures and Standards - Bell

Task #3 Monitoring projects - Fessler

Task #4 Public Relations - Hoefler

Each member can elect to ask for assistance and input on priorities. Vasilion requested that Fessler help LaLonde with Task #1, since Task #3 will not be as large of a task at the outset. Vasilion will also work on Task #4. He suggested that they volunteer to do a presentation at an upcoming Chamber lunch. Vasilion then asked for contact information for various historic preservation groups and local organizations. He will begin scheduling lunch meetings about once a week with representatives of those groups.

Task #1: LaLonde agreed with the priority order on Vasilion's November 11, 2002 list of highlighted tasks. Commissioners reviewed Batavia's survey and discussed the format; it contains a list of streets needing completion. LaLonde asked how in-depth the surveys should be, since interviews of owners of some structures may be needed. Vasilion believed it would be wise to retain the current form. LaLonde said he would review forms used by other communities and also seek input from Lane Allen and Alderman Linnea Miller who put the survey together. Vasilion reported that Allen was willing to continue working on the survey.

The commission then explored the possibility of creating a database and asked how much time Monzani would have to devote to their requests. She replied that while she does have many other responsibilities, the commission may make requests and she will do her best to accommodate them. If time becomes a problem, she will let them know. She will check with the City's Information Systems Coordinator about the feasibility of

scanning the survey forms completed thus far. Monzani will also research the issue of how pertinent information regarding the HPC could be listed on Batavia's web site. Hoefler indicated that it might be possible in the future to include a permit application on the web site.

LaLonde summarized that his three primary goals for Task #1 were to define the survey form, determine the amount of remaining work to be completed, and estimate the manpower needed to finish the survey.

Vasilion requested that commissioners be provided with the names of other applicants for the HPC who would still be willing to participate in various tasks.

Task #2: Bell indicated that the procedures for a Certificate of Appropriateness and Certificate of Economic Hardship are clearly delineated in the ordinance, but forms will need to be developed. He will obtain examples from other communities. LaLonde suggested a review and discussion of possible amendments to the ordinance, but Bell felt that they would need good reason for doing so at this early stage. Hoefler recommended implementing the ordinance as written and waiting to see if any problems come up during the first few permit applications.

Vasilion reported that he had spoken to John Gamble regarding the question of whether or not real estate listings contain information pertaining to historical significance of a property or inclusion within a district. That information is not included in listings and, in fact, the local real estate association is likely to oppose formation of any historic districts and would lobby against it. LaLonde explained that real estate salesmen see this as a limit to the potential market for a property. Commissioners felt that public education could show the opposite to be true, as designation is seen as an asset in many other communities.

Bell will begin working on design guidelines.

LaLonde asked about the commission's relationship with the Civic Improvements Committee and what the facade review task would consist of. He requested procedures for the facade grant program. Monzani will begin to organize the commission's information in a binder.

Task #3: Fessler will contact department heads for status updates on major projects. Vasilion asked him to inquire whether or not it would be appropriate for an HPC member to be present at the meetings. Also, an additional item (d) will be added to Task #3 regarding review of the Downtown Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan.

Task #4: Hoefler will set up a meeting with Elgin or St. Charles and establish an agenda for that discussion. Monzani offered to set it up, but will need a list of topics before doing so. Vasilion and Hoefler will meet Friday to develop that list.

Vasilion asked that anyone needing time on an upcoming agenda advise him in advance so it can be reserved. This should be done by the Monday prior to the meeting so that publication requirements can be met.

Bell requested that all members send one another their contact information.

Vasilion announced that the next meeting would be held on Monday, November 25, at 5:30 p.m. He asked Monzani to provide an extended meeting schedule.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by  
Kathy Montanari