MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
Lower Level – Room 41, City Hall/Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard
March 8, 2012

Present: Richard Dana, Robert Ferguson, Matt Hill, Renee Hutter, Michael Justin, Rich Laffin, John Manning, David Riehle, Steve Trimble, Diane Trout-Oertel, David Wagner
Absent: Matt Mazanec (excused), Jennifer Haskamp (excused)
Staff Present: Amy Spong, Christine Boulware

BUSINESS MEETING

I. **Call to order: 5:05**

II. **Approval of the Agenda:** Commissioner Trout-Oertel motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Ferguson seconded the motion. **The motion passed 9-0.**

III. **Conflicts of Interest** – None were stated.

IV. **Approval of the meeting minutes:** Commissioner Ferguson motioned to approve the minutes changing Commissioner Trout-Oertel's absence on February 23 to excused. Commissioner Hutter seconded the motion. **The motion passed 9-0**.
   A. January 26, 2012 Public Hearing
   B. February 9, 2012 Business Meeting
   C. February 23, 2012 Public Hearing

V. **Chair's Announcements** – There were no announcements.

VI. **Staff Announcements**
   A. February Design Review Statistics (submitted)
   B. March Legislative Hearing Notification (submitted)
   C. Staff met with other City staff to discuss the future of the Arlington Library. Commissioner Trimble volunteered to serve on the Arlington Library committee.
   D. Staff met with Jun-Li from Springboard for the Arts. There are grants for art installations along the Central Corridor. Staff provided information about the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District, Lowertown Historic District and Heritage Preservation design review process.
   E. Staff met with representatives from House of Hope. An application is expected in the next couple weeks.
   F. Staff has been working with SHPO staff to review the Schmidt Brewery plans. There may still be changes in the HPC approved plans given to the NPS for review.
   G. A hand count of commissioners who plan to attend the retreat on March 29 was taken.
   H. Commissioner Hutter volunteered to serve on the Preservation Awards Jury.

VII. New Business

A. 494 Ashland Avenue (St. Paul Church Home), Hill Historic District, by Harriss Architects, Inc, for a pre-application review to rehabilitate the Ashland Hotel, raze the additions and construct a new addition onto the Hotel. (Amy Spong, 266-6714).

Staff explained the process for Pre-Application Review. Staff did not make a recommendation and the HPC would not be making any decisions. The HPC would give the applicant direction and feedback. This was not a public hearing and there would be not testimony.

Commissioner Manning asked staff about the height of the last proposal the HPC reviewed for the site. Staff replied the last proposal had a similar step back at the upper floor, but the previous height was inaccurate by approximately 5'-0". Commissioner Ferguson inquired about what variances would be necessary. Staff stated the applicant would need a rear setback variance and a lot coverage variance.

John Harriss, architect, was present to discuss the preliminary proposal as well as Lance Lemieux and Greg Mathis, 106 Group.

Harriss stated that the height of the last proposal was 50 ft on the plans, but 54' in reality. The current proposed height is 46 ft. He confirmed that alley setback and lot coverage variances would be required. He stated that he tried to use the last project as a starting point, but didn't want to mimic the design. He showed the site plan on the overhead. He noted that the main entrance would be on the Mackubin elevation, but the Ashland Hotel entrance would be restored and still functional. He added that they hoped to preserve the two large oak trees. One change identified on the Mackubin side was the step back of the building to preserve more of the south elevation while still making a connection to the historic building. He noted that the access to the building needs to be at grade for the senior occupants. He added that if the base were raised there would be the need for ramps which would increase access difficulty and occupy a lot of space. He noted that there would be an enclosed memory garden at the northeast corner of the building and the Ashland elevation would be heavily landscaped.

The site plan showed there would be several parking spaces at the ally, but there would be 38 spaces underground that would be access through a garage entrance on the east elevation from the alley. He informed that they do not plan to use the lot at Mackubin and Holly for parking. There will be a loading dock at the alley elevation and trash will be kept in the garage.

Commissioner Manning asked about the difference between a care suite and assisted living. Harriss replied that there was a higher degree of care provided with a care suite. He showed elevations of the building and discussed potential materials, access and attachments. He showed perspective views and images to illustrate the amount of lot coverage proposed (54.6%) compared to existing lot coverage (31.4%) that of the last project reviewed at the site (49.3%). The maximum lot coverage permitted by zoning is 35%. Commissioner Dana asked if

they were including the square footage of the empty lot at Holly and Mackubin. Harriss stated they were. Commissioner Trout-Oertel inquired as to what would be the proposed use for the parking lot. Harriss stated that the lot wasn't needed for parking and they would not propose anything. Commissioner Trimble noted that if there would be new construction there, then the percentage of lot coverage would increase. Why not just include the area affected. Harriss stated that DSI asked them to not include the parking lot in the equation. Commissioner Trimble asked if the parking lot was zoned for parking. Harriss replied that it was zoned for residential and that they also needed a Conditional Use Permit for the project. Commissioner Dana asked who would use the underground parking. Harriss replied it would be used by employees and visitors. Commissioner Dana asked what the code required for parking. Harriss replied twenty-five and that number would be exceeded. Commissioner Dana asked if the alley were needed for access and about maintenance. Commissioner Manning stated that the statements about the parking lot created ambiguity and possibly a barrier for community engagement in how the lot coverage was being calculated. He asked if the last proposal had underground parking. Staff replied that it did. Harriss stated that the difference was that the last proposal was raised above grade and this one is proposed at grade. They would need more distance to get down into the parking garage and that pulling directly into the alley would cause a safety issue. Lance Lemieux stated that the vacant (parking) lot would most likely become rowhouses at some point, as that style of residence would be appropriate at the site.

Chair Laffin asked if the commissioners had any comments about accessing the proposed building at grade. Harriss reminded that the last project raised the building off grade significantly and it would become a barrier for residents. Commissioner Dana asked how the differences between floor heights would be dealt with between the new construction and the hotel. Harriss replied they would meet at a mid-landing point at the egress stairway. Chair Laffin stated it would be difficult to integrate a ramp into the design if the first floor were raised. The last proposal was raised 5 to 6 feet off grade. Harriss noted that the terraces at the Ashland elevation would be differentiated with brick piers. Commissioners inquired about wheelchair access, non-stair access at the Mackubin elevation, ceiling heights and floor-to-floor heights.

Chair Laffin asked if the 4th floor could be visually "lightened-up" with the use of other materials. Harriss replied it would be possible to have a lighter expression at the top floor. Chair Laffin suggested the use of more metal above to relate to the copper panels on the lower floors. Harriss explained that the top floor is already differentiated from the lower floors in the number and placement of windows and cast stone banding. Also the cost between copper and brick would not be too different. Chair Laffin asked if he'd considered terminating the cornice at the top floor. Harriss replied that it wouldn't have a huge affect, as it is already modest compared to that of the third floor and the historic hotel.

Commissioner Trimble inquired as to how the windows on the historic hotel would be treated. Staff informed that the plans are not to that level of detail yet. Harriss replied that they plan to work with SHPO.

Commissioner Manning listed three concerns: 1. The increase in the bulk of the building overall and at the NE view; 2. The earlier precedent of stepping back the building with the transition from institutional to residential; and 3. The use of stucco on the rear elevation (alley side). Harriss replied that historically a common/cheap brick would have been used on the back and that changing the material from stucco to something else would not be a deal killer. He reminded that the new footprint is only 5% larger than was approved at the prior review and that they couldn't afford to lose a floor, but would look at a step back at the east elevation.
Commissioner Wagner stated his concern with the Mackubin elevation covering much of the south elevation of the historic hotel. Harriss stated they want to keep the arched window and stair landing uncovered. Wagner stated there was more overlap at the ground floor. Harriss replied that they were exposing more of the elevation than the last plans. Commissioner Wagner had questions about the dimensions of the second floor terrace.

The commissioners began their discussion:
Commissioner Trout-Oertel noted that the east elevation of the new construction has more volume than what was reviewed previously and that the prominence of the fourth floor, as viewed from the east, should be reduced.
Commissioner Manning stated that setback and materials could help adjust the volume and make it slightly lower and less intimidating. He added that the lower three floors could be the same color and the fourth could be a different color.
Chair Laffin stated that the massing is heavy and suggested addressing the parapet to lessen the severity of the design carrying the banding of the hotel.
Commissioner Manning added his concern about the stucco on the alley elevation. Chair Laffin noted the use of cement/fiber panning on the alley elevation at the Lofts at Farmers Market in Lowertown and the success with the color of the panels. Staff reminded the difference between a warehouse application and the proposed residential area. Stucco isn't as prominent in the Hill Historic District as it is in the Summit West Historic District. Commissioner Manning stated the rear elevations looks "budget" and should better relate to the vocabulary of the other elevations. It was reminded that all elevations of Ashland Hotel were of the same material... the rear elevation was not treated differently.

Commissioner Dana stated his appreciation of not complicating the Mackubin elevation with a ramp and added that he thinks the set back is good and doesn't advertise the Mackubin side as the main entrance. Chair Laffin suggested making the elevation "lighter" and consider giving the entrance a canopy for more height. Commissioner Wagner agreed and stated that it looks like the addition is "slamming into" the historic hotel. Maybe using more glass at the entrance would be a more sensitive material than brick and lighten up the connection.

Commissioner Dana stated that the alley elevation will never read as an alley side, as it's more prominent and visible; the hotel did not have a "lesser" side.
The next step is to take the HPC feedback and go before the BZA for the variance process. The HPC and zoning staff will communicate. If the BZA approves the variances, it will most likely be with a condition of HPC approval.
Chair Laffin stated that a second Pre-Application review would be helpful.

Commissioner Manning asked that the entries be articulated. Commissioner Ferguson added to consider the privacy of the residents. Staff stated that BZA review can be concurrent with the second Pre-Application review. There will be public notice sent out with a second Pre-Application review to all property owners within 350 feet of the project site.
Chair Laffin asked staff to sent draft minutes to the applicant. Commissioner Trimble asked for them to be detailed.

Commissioner Wagner asked that the south elevation of the historic hotel be kept intact and that the overlap be altered from 45 ft to ~61 feet. He added that the proposal is a significant impact and he would prefer to see the impact to the elevation reduced on as many levels as possible.
Commissioner Manning stated that the last decision for the site was haunting the meeting. The attachment at the Mackubin helps to create the rhythm along Ashland. Commissioner Wagner replied that he was not suggesting a trade-off, but would like to see more of the south elevation of the hotel without changing anything along Ashland. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked that the east elevation of the historic hotel be investigated. Harriss interjected that it would not be possible without causing damage at this point but that he was confident that if the condition were not good, it could be restored.

Commissioner Wagner revisited the rear elevation of the historic hotel and suggested retaining the rhythm of the openings at least two bays past the arch-topped window in order to not lose the pattern.

Harriss stated that the guidelines discourage storefront framing/curtain wall construction. Staff added that there is a Preservation Brief about new additions to historic structures. Commissioner Wagner stated that a transparent link wouldn't have to be an aluminum storefront; it could be wood and glass too.

VIII. Old Business

IX. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee (Ferguson, Trout-Oertel)
B. 3M Advisory Committee/Workgroups update (Trimble, Mazanec)

X. Adjourn: 7:10

Submitted by: C. Boulware