

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA  
Lower Level – Room 41, City Hall/Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard  
**May 23, 2013**

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**Present:** Richard Dana, Robert Ferguson, Matt Hill, Michael Justin, Rich Laffin, Matt Mazanec, David Riehle, Diane Trout-Oertel, David Wagner, Renee Hutter Barnes

**Absent:** Steve Trimble (excused)

**Staff Present:** Amy Spong, Christine Boulware, Renee Cohn

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**PUBLIC HEARING**

- I. **Call to Order:** 5:04 p.m.
- II. **Approval of the Agenda:** Commissioner Riehle moved to approve the agenda; Commissioner Dana seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- III. **Chair's Announcements:** None were stated at this time.
- IV. **Staff Announcements:** None were stated at this time.
- V. **Public Hearing/ Permit Review:**

**A. 1516 Summit Avenue, Summit Avenue West Historic District,** by John Wiik, Sussel Builders, for a building permit to demolish the contributing two-stall garage and construct a three-plus stall garage. **File #13-025** (Boulware, 266-6715)

Staff read the report recommending denial of the proposal to demolish the garage.

Chair Laffin requested confirmation that the garage is not sitting on new concrete. Ms. Boulware stated that garages of this era are normally on contour (concrete) block, and the foundation of this garage is consistent with mid-century style concrete block.

Chair Laffin inquired as to if the current own is the same owner as eight months ago. Ms. Boulware stated that she was not sure. Jen Wieland, the property owner, was present and confirmed that they are the same owners.

Commissioner Justin inquired as to if the chimney is attached. Ms. Boulware confirmed that it is at that there is currently a Code Compliance order to repair the chimney.

Commissioner Wagner inquired as to if this is a property of the Lindeke Family. Ms. Boulware stated this is one of several Lindeke Family properties on Summit Avenue.

Dennis Jarnut, the applicant from Sussel Builders, was present to discuss the proposal. Mr. Jarnut stated that the company encourages rehabilitation of garages, but did not consider this garage salvageable. Mr. Jarnut presented photos of the structure. Mr. Jarnut stated that it has been determined that it will cost approximately three times more to rehabilitate the garage than it would be to remove and build new. Mr. Jarnut noted that the design for the new garage would be historically appropriate.

Chair Laffin referred to the drawings included in the report, and requested confirmation about the width of the current and proposed doors. Mr. Jarnut clarified that there is currently a double-wide door, but the owner would like three single doors on the new

garage. Chair Laffin inquired as to what a new garage may cost. Mr. Jarnut stated that a new building would cost approximately \$40,000, and rehabilitation and a new addition would cost approximately \$100,000 or more.

Chair Laffin asked Mr. Jarnut if he agrees that the concrete is from the 1950's; Mr. Jarnut replied that he believes it is much older. Chair Laffin inquired as to the possibility of pouring new concrete for the structure; Mr. Jarnut replied that anything is possible.

Commissioner Dana requested confirmation on the drainage issue of the garage. Mr. Jarnut clarified that the pitch of the slab is not high enough and water ponds in the rear of the garage.

Commissioner Riehle inquired as to if there are drawings available for the proposed garage. Ms. Boulware confirmed that the drawings included in the Commissioner's packets are the most updated drawings. Chair Laffin requested confirmation that although the drawings show two doors, the final design is proposed to have three doors; Mr. Jarnut confirmed that this is correct. Ms. Boulware stated that single doors are required for street-facing garages, but both single and double-doors are approved for alley-facing garages.

Commissioner Riehle inquired as to what style of siding is proposed for the new garage; Mr. Jarnut responded that they will be proposing four-inch wide Hardie board. Mr. Jarnut noted that the main residence currently has aluminum soffit and fascia, and that the proposed new garage will reflect this. Chair Laffin inquired as to the possibility of a future owner rehabilitating the main residence to the original historic character, removing the non-original aluminum wrap and if the new garage design should support this. Chair Laffin called out the exposed rafter tails of the original residence, and Mr. Jarnut responded that he is not a proponent of open rafters.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel noted that the roof structure does not seem to be in bad shape and requested elaboration on the condition. Mr. Jarnut stated that the shingles need to be repaired, the roof is sagging, and new decking is required. Commissioner Wagner inquired as to if the roof had been previously re-shingled; Mr. Jarnut confirmed that it had. Commissioner Wagner stated that the layers of shingles may be producing an excessive load on the structure.

Chair Laffin noted that this building is very charming and stated that there would be a loss of quality and character to the neighborhood if the building were to be replaced. Mr. Jarnut inquired as to why this building has more character than other garages; Chair Laffin noted several distinct building characteristics including the windows. Mr. Jarnut stated that they will be able to include specific elements in the design. Chair Laffin noted that Sussel Builders has been receptive to HPC suggestions in the past. Ms. Wieland noted that they have spent a considerable amount of time on the design, and that they want the new building to mimic the main residence. Chair Laffin noted that the Commission can only respond to what is currently proposed on the drawings.

Commissioner Dana inquired as to the purpose of the lean on the north side of the current garage; Ms. Wieland responded that this is a "Cadillac-extension" and is currently not in use. Commissioner Dana inquired as to if this space is open to the garage; Ms. Wieland confirmed that is it.

Commissioner Barnes inquired as to if the applicants had met with staff prior to submitting the currently proposed drawings; Mr. Jarnut stated that they had not.

Commissioner Barnes noted that every property is different and requested confirmation that the applicant will be willing to work with staff to produce final drawings; Mr. Jarnut confirmed that they would.

Chair Laffin inquired as to if the dormer on the rear is false; Mr. Jarnut confirmed that it is. Chair Laffin inquired as to if this false dormer has typical windows; Mr. Jarnut responded that it likely does.

Ms. Spong, in response to the comments made by Commissioner Barnes, clarified that staff is able to review garages that are three stalls and under, and anything above that automatically is reviewed by the Commissioner. Ms. Spong continued to say that this project is being reviewed by the commissioner because the current proposal is to demolish the contributing garage. Ms. Spong clarified that staff did not extensively comment on the proposed design as it is not a priority until the decision has been made for the proposed demolition. Ms. Spong also noted that staff has previously worked with Sussel Builders on other designs before an application was submitted.

No written testimony was received and Chair Laffin closed the public hearing.

**Commissioner Wagner moved to accept the staff recommendation to deny the application for demolition. Commissioner Trout-Oertel seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Riehle stated that he believes the request should be granted with a condition that the final design be confirmed with staff, and that he will vote against the current motion.

Commissioner Dana noted a previously denied application for the demolition of a contributing garage on Portland Avenue, and that the project was revised and completed with assistance from HPC staff.

Commissioner Wagner commented on the high level of detail on the current garage, and that the proposed new structure will not match the current character and would result in a loss to the neighborhood. Commissioner Wagner stated that the current structure is not beyond repair. Commissioner Trout-Oertel agreed with Commissioner Wagner and noted that rehabilitation is not exorbitantly expensive.

Commissioner Riehle inquired as to what would be envisioned for a one stall addition. Chair Laffin suggested that the addition would be constructed so as to connect with the current roof plane. Commissioner Wagner noted that this type of addition can be designed in a sensitive way.

Commissioner Wagner emphasized the comments made by Ms. Spong, noted that the current question is in regards to the proposal for demolition and what may be lost. Commissioner Wagner noted that review of the new garage design will be a future question. Ms. Boulware noted that staff has worked with various applicant to produce sensitive garage additions. Chair Laffin noted that is not the position of the Commission to design, but that the Commission is suggesting that there are options.

***The motion passed 8-1 with opposition from Commissioner Riehle.***

Ms. Wieland stated that she will allow the building to further deteriorate. Chair Laffin responded that there are several options to rehabilitate the garage.

**B. 336 Robert Street North – Pioneer and Endicott Buildings**, by Eric Anderson, Serigraphics Sign Systems, Inc., for a sign permit to install a 120 sf. banner on the south elevation of the building. **File #13-026** (Boulware, 266-6715)

Staff read the report recommending approval of the proposal to install a temporary banner.

Ms. Boulware clarified that the proposal will require review by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) if the Commission approves. Chair Laffin requested confirmation that BZA review is required for signs or banners exceeding twelve feet; Ms. Boulware confirmed that it is. Ms. Boulware noted that there are also options for the banner to be divided to obviate the need for a variance.

Commissioner Riehle requested confirmation that this is only a proposal for a banner on the south side; Ms. Boulware confirmed that it is. Ms. Boulware noted that there will likely be a larger sign proposal in the future. Chair Laffin requested confirmation that the applicant is seeking both Federal and State Historic Tax Credits; Ms. Boulware confirmed that they are.

Commissioner Ferguson inquired as to if the time limit is imposed by the applicant; Ms. Boulware confirmed that it is imposed by conditions proposed by staff. Ms. Boulware noted that zoning code does not require a time limit, and the time limit imposed by the Commission will allow for better control of “for lease” banners and signs on designated properties.

Jaime Torgerson, the Community Manager at Pioneer Endicott, was present and stated that management agrees with the imposed time limit.

No written testimony was received and Chair Laffin closed the public hearing.

**Commissioner Dana, based on the findings that appropriateness of the proposal and he desire to draw attention to the building at this stage of the development, moved to adopt the staff recommendation to approve the temporary banner. Commissioner Ferguson seconded. The motion passed 9-0.**

## **VI. Public Hearing/Designation:**

**A. Saint Paul Gas Light Company Island Station**, generally bounded by Randolph Avenue, Shepard Road and the Mississippi River, Public Hearing to consider the site and accompanying Preservation Program a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and make a recommendation to the City Council. (Spong, 266-6714)

Staff presented a summary of the report recommending that the Commission recommend the Saint Paul Gas Light Company Island Station be designated as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and a Preservation Program be adopted. Ms. Spong summarized the process necessary to complete the designation and the history of the evaluation processes for this property.

Staff presented a PowerPoint of historic and recent photos of the property and the site.

Commissioner Riehle inquired as to the reasons for the property not meeting the eligibility requirements for the National Register of Historic Places. Ms. Spong spoke to the lack of integrity relating to how coal moved through the building and significance at a national scale as determined by previous reviewers.

Commissioner Dana inquired as to the visibility of the water tower in a recent photo presented, and if the water tower still stands. Chair Laffin noted that the structural report states that it is.

Commissioner Wagner inquired if any of the developers had come forward to the HPC with previous plans. Ms. Spong responded they have not and would not have needed to because it's not designated. Chair Laffin spoke to the potential impact this building could have on the future of the site and the surrounding area.

Carol Lansing, an attorney representing the owner, was present and spoke in support of demolition and against designation. Ms. Lansing summarized a letter written March 8, 2013 stating the lack of significance of the building determined by previous studies and the rise of dangerous activities occurring on the property and within the building.

Paul Breckner, the building owner, was present and spoke against the designation of the building and property. Mr. Breckner presented the history of the ownership of the property. Mr. Breckner described multiple attempts to market the building for redevelopment. Mr. Breckner noted several problematic aspects of rehabilitating the building for development including structural inefficiencies and prohibitive costs.

Mr. Breckner presented a slideshow of images showing the deterioration of the building. Mr. Breckner expressed concern for the safety of those currently involved with the building and frequent trespassers. Mr. Breckner detailed partnerships with various organizations to develop options for the building. Mr. Breckner emphasized the problem of saving the building and then having no options for redevelopment.

Commissioner Wagner requested confirmation on the proportion of land that the building occupies on the property. Mr. Breckner stated that a portion of the property is within the 100 year flood zone, but the footprint of the building is outside of the 100 year flood zone. Commissioner Wagner restated his request to inquire as to how much of the property that Mr. Breckner deemed sufficient for redevelopment with the building remaining; Mr. Breckner replied that he believed it to be less than half. Mr. Breckner noted that the Army Corps of Engineers would like the basement of the building be shut down, and the closure of which may allow for some fill.

Commissioner Wagner noted the development of the Mill City Ruins as a possible option for redevelopment of Island Station. Mr. Breckner noted that there have been some proposals for saving some elements of the building. Commissioner Wagner noted that there is value in retention of the building for the history and character of the neighborhood. Mr. Breckner noted that there have been some proposals to memorialize certain aspects of the building. Commissioner Wagner inquired as to the timeline for demolition if the building is not designated; Mr. Breckner stated that the goal for demolition would be this summer.

Commissioner Wagner noted that if the building is not designated that there would be no requirement to save any part of the building if demolished and inquired as to if Mr. Breckner would be personally committed to retaining aspects of the building. Mr. Breckner replied that he would and that several ideas have been explored to

memorialize the building. Commissioner Wagner noted that there is a distinction between stabilization of the building and complete redevelopment. Mr. Breckner expressed concern for the cost and feasibility of stabilization.

Commissioner Hill requested confirmation from Mr. Breckner that he has explored every option for redevelopment. Tim Prinsen was present and spoke to multiple attempts made to redevelop the building. He noted several organizations and groups that he consulted, but deemed a successful proposal unfeasible. Commissioner Hill stated that there are more pressing issues for the Commission to address and that further efforts to designate the building are not warranted.

*Commissioner Hill left the public hearing.*

Chair Laffin inquired as to what Mr. Breckner would have done nine years ago if he knew then what he knows now about the process; Mr. Breckner responded that he would have done nothing. Mr. Breckner noted the timeline of the process in relation to the economic environment. Chair Laffin inquired as to whether Mr. Breckner was aware of the history of the loss of the interior features of the building. Mr. Breckner stated that most likely the majority of the features and equipment was sold for scrap metal. Mr. Breckner noted that some interior building features were removed for asbestos removal and other abatement

Chair Laffin requested clarification on the position of the consultants in regards to the cause of the damage in the building. Mr. Breckner suggested that water infiltration and natural settling have contributed to the damage.

Commissioner Wagner inquired as to the condition of the roof at the time of purchase of the property. Mr. Breckner responded that the roof has deteriorated since their purchase. Commissioner Wagner inquired as the possibility of replacement of the roof; Mr. Breckner suggested that the cost is prohibitive. Mr. Breckner noted that there were no roof repairs made but other minor repairs were made to improve the safety of the building.

John Yust, a member of the community, was present to speak in support of designation of the building. Mr. Yust discussed the history of the property before the current owners were involved and suggested that there has been neglect since then. Mr. Yust presented a graphic of the site that suggested the building be part of larger development plans. Mr. Yust stated community support for the rehabilitation of the building.

Mr. Yust discussed his involvement with the *Great River Passage Plan* and the potential possibilities for the building in regards to this Plan. Mr. Yust noted other recent development within the surrounding neighborhoods including the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the Schmidt Brewery. Mr. Yust encouraged the Commission to designate the building and work with community organizations to develop redevelopment strategies.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel inquired as to the potential of redevelopment on the site in regards to it's location on a flood plane. Mr. Yust stated that the location on the flood plane is a significant issue of the site. Mr. Yust discussed his long-term involvement with the West Seventh Fort Road Federation and the designation of the Irvine Park Historic District. Mr. Yust emphasized the importance of preserving the building.

Ms. Spong stated the role of the Commission at this stage is to make a recommendation to the City Council based on the significance and integrity of the building for designation purposes. Ms. Spong expressed appreciation for the presentation made by Mr. Breckner. Ms. Spong responded to the questions stated by Commissioner Trout-Oertel and clarified that it is possible to build on the site after demolition given compliance with the City Flood Plain and Critical Area Overlay Districts and cited articles 68.4 and 72.4. Ms. Spong read aloud a sentence addressing the development concerns previously discussed during the Planning Commission's considerations that was added, and then stricken, from the resolution in regards to the designation of the building. Ms. Spong emphasized the role of the Commission to focus on the significance and the integrity of the building at this time.

Mr. Yust stated that he believes the building may still be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Richard Miller, a community member and member of the West Seventh Fort Road Federation, was present and spoke in support of designation of the building.

**No other written testimony was presented, and Chair Laffin closed the public hearing.**

**Commissioner Wagner motioned to lay over the decision to allow for further discussion and possibly visiting the building. Commissioner Riehle seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Dana inquired as to the feasibility of the layover in the timeline of the designation. Ms. Spong expressed concern for the process timeline and recommended that the Commission not lay over the decision.

Commissioner Wagner inquired as to a possible issue of viewing the building exterior from a prescribed distance; Ms. Spong responded that she does not believe so unless given owner consent.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel discussed the discrepancies with the state of the building and the remaining architectural features, and stated that a visit to the site would delay the designation process without providing definitive conclusions.

Commissioner Barnes stated agreement with Commissioner Trout-Oertel and expressed disagreement with the current motion.

Commissioner Justin requested confirmation on the implications for the owner if the building is designated and demolition is pursued. Ms. Spong clarified that the application for demolition would be processed through the HPC, and that decision could be appealed to the City Council. Ms. Spong also noted that the location on the flood plain may require review by the Planning Commission for site plan review.

Commissioner Ferguson requested confirmation that if the demolition application were to come in front of the Commission that there would be the possibility to impose conditions. Ms. Spong clarified that if the Commission were to approve an application for demolition there would be possibilities for imposing conditions, for example for documentation.

Commissioner Riehle requested clarification on the role of the Commission in an application for demolition; Ms. Spong clarified that the Commission will only have a role if the City Council designates the property.

**The vote was 2-5 with one abstention from Commissioner Justin. The motion failed.**

**Commissioner Dana moved to support staff recommendation to recommend designation of the building to the City Council. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Barnes expressed the concern for the difficulties in redeveloping the building, and stated that designation would allow for the Commission to play a more significant role in the process.

Commissioner Dana requested clarification that the official designation is completed by the City Council; Ms. Spong responded that it is and the current vote is a recommendation.

**The motion passed 8-0.**

## **VII. Notice of Appeal:**

**A. 255 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Lowertown Historic District**, by Dave Brooks, 9 & 19 Properties, LLC, appealing an HPC decision denying the location of a 4-ft x19-ft illuminated sign on the upper east elevation of the building. **File #13-024** (Dermody, 266-6617)

Staff announced that the appeal hearing will be scheduled for June 5th.

## **VIII. Committee Reports:** There were none given.

Commissioner Laffin discussed a meeting with former staff person Aaron Rubenstein and his appreciation of the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Awards Ceremony and the success of various elements.

Ms. Spong noted that Ms. Cohn is present for the summer. Ms. Spong also noted that former intern Caroline Miller has left the position and requested suggestions from the Commission for her replacement.

Commissioner Riehle discussed upcoming convention of the Society for Industrial Archaeology. Chair Laffin suggested that Commissioner Justin attend the convention.

Commissioner Wagner noted the previously discussed application of 1516 Summit Avenue and requested confirmation that there is no opportunity to require homeowners to maintain building elements. Ms Spong responded that there currently is not, but there is discussion of including a Duty to Maintain clause in the HP ordinance and the current enforcement occurs through the City Building Code. Commissioner Dana noted other work that has been completed at this property.

Commissioner Wagner discussed opportunities to reach out to owners in regards to retention of building elements. Ms Boulware and Ms. Spong discussed previous attempts of staff to assist in the application process.

Chair Laffin noted that the owner has been involved in the building for nine years, and deterioration has continued since then. Commissioner Trout-Oertel noted personal projects that have been completed with more deteriorated buildings.

**IX. Motion to Adjourn:** 7:46 p.m.

Submitted by: R. Cohn