Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Legislative Chamber
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Members: Joan Fogarty – Chair, Scott Dobbe – Vice Chair, Carrie Meyer, Regan Pence, Kathryn Aultz, Jaime Suarez, Brian Magee and Curt Witzenburg.

Certification of Publication: Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Wednesday, Aug 1, 2018 notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting on Wednesday, August 8, 2018.

Members Present: Joan Fogarty, Chair
Scott Dobbe – Vice-Chair
Kathryn Aultz
Regan Pence
Jaime Suarez

Members Not Present: Brian Magee
Carrie Meyer
Curt Witzenburg

Others Present: Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager
Ivy Freitag, LHPC Administrator
Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department
Rikki Flott, Recording Secretary

Ms. Fogarty called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. She introduced the Commission members and other City staff and explained the procedures for hearing the cases. There were five members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Dobbe moved to APPROVE the minutes from the July 11, 2018 meeting. Mr. Pence seconded the motion.

AYES: Dobbe, Aultz, Pence, Suarez, Fogarty

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL (COA):

CASE NUMBER: 18-24-H3  
NAME:   Blackstone Hotel  
APPLICANT: Tom McLeay  
LOCATION: 302 South 36th Street, 68131  
OWNER: Blackstone Hotel LLC  
REQUEST: Omaha Landmark: COA:  
Part 2 of Historic Preservation Tax Credit rehabilitation project application.

At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on September 12, 2018, David Hawes (Architect - Leo A. Daly) and Tom McLeay (Clarity Development) appeared before the Commission.

Mr. McLeay stated that the building was being renovated back to its original use as a hotel. He stated that there had been communication with the State Historic Preservation Office about the design of the building. There will be 163 rooms in the existing hotel and with another 42 rooms in the Annex Hotel building that would be constructed. The Cottonwood Room of the existing hotel would be restored along with the main lobby and the 8th floor ballroom. Conference room space would be added to the main floor and more ballroom space would be added in the Annex Hotel Building. A swimming pool and elevator tower will be added to the rear of the hotel adjacent to the Annex. The two existing, metal stair towers that sit at the back of the hotel would remain; however, they would not be used as the primary exit points for safety reasons. A new enclosed, fireproof stair tower would be added to the rear of the hotel. Mr. McLeay presented renderings to show the proposed plans for the site.

The Annex Hotel building would be built with some French Renaissance characteristics which is similar to 2 existing homes that sit approximately 100 yards from the site. That style would also complement the original hotel. The existing hotel windows will be repaired, painted and re-glazed as necessary. Mr. McLeay indicated that the overall look of the original hotel would not change; however, a new entranceway, windows and doors were being proposed for the front façade of the building. The existing porte-cochère, the entrance that leads directly into the Cottonwood Room, the historic trim-work and pillars would also remain.

In response to Ms. Fogary, Mr. McLeay stated that the proposed plan was presented to the Blackstone Neighborhood Association with a very positive response. He indicated that the association also provided a letter of support for the project.

Mr. Dobbe inquired about the integrity of the ceiling in the ballroom. Mr. McLeay stated that the ceiling was mostly intact and would require minimal restoration work. He added that the wood floors are also intact.

There was some discussion about the materials to be used for the proposed stair tower, which probably would be some form of stucco. Mr. Dobbe supported the decision to design the Annex building in the French Renaissance style. He suggested that instead of asphalt shingles, slate or clay tile would be more fitting. Mr. McLeay responded that those were not realistic options due to the cost and weight load of both materials. He added that asphalt shingles were more common in that area. Mr. Dobbe also asked about the trellises on the upper levels. Mr. McLeay stated that although they had been enclosed in the past, they had been open for approximately the last 20 years. He added that both the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service preferred that the trellises remain open. Mr. Hawes stated that the existing wood trellis is decaying and would need to be replaced, possibly with aluminum.
Mr. Pence moved to APPROVE the request, subject to the conditions as noted in the Planning Department’s recommendation report. Ms. Aultz seconded the motion.

AYES: Dobbe, Aultz, Pence, Suarez, Fogarty

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on September 12, 2018, Sheila Ireland (HDR, Inc.) and Brian Hansen (Omaha Housing Authority) appeared before the Commission.

Ms. Ireland stated that the Omaha Housing Authority had purchased the building and planned to move their existing offices and client services to the location. Most of the work would occur in the interior of the building with some modest revisions to the exterior that would create an accessible entrance for clients. The structure was open to the public in 1894. It was designed by Omaha architect Thomas Rogers Kimball. It is made of brick with a sandstone base, terra cotta ornamentation and decorative, ornamental iron near the entrance on Harney Street. She presented photos which showed that very little has changed with the exterior of the building since its construction.

The Omaha Public Library moved out of the building in 1977. In 1982 a renovation was completed that created 10 office spaces. Although the interior was altered at the time the main, ornamental iron staircase remained intact. The Omaha Housing Authority intends to turn the backdoor service entrance off of Harney Street which will require marking it as an entrance and improving it so that it looks like a front door. The existing mechanical yard at the rear of the building will be relocated to the east of the site. She mentioned that the elevator addition appeared to have been constructed in the 1920's or 1930's. The proposed entry canopy and signage for the 19th Street and Harney Street entrances would be independently supported and would not be affixed to the exterior of the building. The fire escapes that were probably added sometime during the 1950's will also remain. The screening for the mechanical equipment will match the stone base of the building. She displayed several renderings of the proposed changes and some historic and current photos of the interior. The historic stair would remain and the existing book shelves that are scattered throughout the building would be reused or stored by the Omaha Housing Authority.

Ms. Fogarty stated that she would prefer that the library cases on the entry level remain because it speaks to why the building was constructed. She talked about the importance of the building and its architect Thomas Rogers Kimball. Ms. Aultz stated that it was very important to keep those parts of the building that reflected it use as a library.

Ms. Ireland stated that the construction of a parking garage to the south of the library impacts their scope of work. In response to Mr. Suarez, Ms. Ireland stated that the mechanical and plumbing lines would not be going into the limestone of the structure.

Mr. Hansen stated that he was very sensitive to the historical nature of the building. He confirmed that the vestibule with the books would be preserved. He stated that some of the bookcases would be stored in some of the unused areas of the building.

Jed Moulton stated that the Planning Department was recommending approval with 7 conditions. With regards to the elevator, he stated that the Planning Department believed that it could be put back into service. If for some reason it could not, he suggested that that issue comes back before the commission. Some minor issues would be handled administratively.
For the record Jennifer Taylor, Attorney – City Law Department, disclosed that she is the Chair of the Commissioners for the Omaha Housing Authority. She stated that it did not have a bearing on the case before the Commission.

Ms. Fogarty stated that she wanted some verbiage in the recommendation report reworded to state as a fact that the property was donated by Byron Reed.

Mr. Suarez moved to APPROVE subject to the condition as noted in the Planning Department’s recommendation report. Mr. Dobbe seconded the motion.

AYES: Dobbe, Aultz, Pence, Suarez, Fogarty

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

It was the consensus of the Board to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:37 p.m.