Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Room 1210

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Members: Scott Dobbe – Chair, Joan Fogarty – Vice-Chair, Andrew Conzett, Brian Magee, Kathryn Aultz, Emma Sundberg, Jaime Suarez, Michael Sharp, and Curt Witzenburg.

Certification of Publication: Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Thursday, April 30, 2020 notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting on Wednesday, May 13, 2020.

Members Present: 
Scott Dobbe – Chair
Joan Fogarty – Vice Chair
Andrew Conzett
Jaime Suarez
Emma Sundberg
Curt Witzenburg

Members Not Present:
Kathryn Aultz
Brian Magee
Michael Sharp

Others Present:
Ivy Freitag, LHPC Administrator
Jennifer Taylor, Attorney - City Law Department
Clinette Ingram, Recording Secretary

Mr. Dobbe called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. He introduced the Commission members, City staff and explained the procedures for hearing the cases. He stated that there would be a few staff announcements after the cases were heard. There were five members present. Mr. Suarez appeared after roll call.

Administrative Items:
Approval of February 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE the meeting minutes. Mr. Conzett seconded the motion.
AYES: Fogarty, Conzett, Sundberg, Witzenburg, Dobbe
MOTION CARRIED: 5-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on May 13, 2020, Thomas McLeay appeared before the commission. Ivy Freitag appeared on behalf of the Planning Department. Mr. McLeay explained that he was presenting on behalf of Melissa Dirr-Gengler who prepared the information.

Mr. McLeay stated that the property was eligible under Criteria A (Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history). This area was the central location for the Czech community. The Bohemian Café was the epicenter of the community across Omaha and possibly Nebraska. There are 42 contributing buildings and 1 contributing object (the Bohemian Café sign). There are several, contributing commercial properties along 13th Street and William Street. The properties at those locations and the surrounding area were originally grocery stores, bakeries, religious institutions, newspapers, community halls and the Prague hotel which is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. McLeay noted that the streetcar line stopped at 13th & William before continuing down 13th Street further into south Omaha.

The Period of Significance began in 1885 when the J.F. Kastl building was constructed and ended in 1959. The Czech immigration began in the 1870's and lasted through World War I. Mr. McLeay presented several pictures of the contributing buildings and their current uses, noting the historic and architectural integrity of many of the buildings. He mentioned that the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office provided assistance with determining the boundaries of the district.

In conclusion, Mr. McLeay spoke briefly about the history of the area and the strong affinity and affiliation that many Czech citizens still have for the neighborhood which helped the Bohemian Café to exist for as long as it did.

In response to Ms. Fogarty, Mr. McLeay discussed his involvement with the area and his work with Ms. Dirr-Gengler on the nomination. He also discussed the support from other property owners for the nomination. Ms. Fogarty spoke about the importance of the nomination.

Ms. Freitag stated that she contacted David Calase, the National Register of Historic Places Coordinator. She explained that because this is a nomination for a district there is typically a neighborhood meeting and notices mailed to the property owners within the district. The meeting was cancelled due to Covid19; however, the notices had been mailed to the property owners. She added that there was mostly support for the nomination. Mr. Dobbe expressed his support for the project.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to GRANT the request. Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

AYES: Fogarty, Conzett, Suarez, Sundberg, Witzenburg, Dobbe

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on May 13, 2020, Paul Nelson (Architect) appeared before the commission on behalf of the applicant, Justin A. Moore. Melissa Dirr-Gengler and David Calease (National Register of Historic Places Coordinator) also helped to write the nomination. Ivy Freitag appeared on behalf of the Planning Department.

Mr. Nelson provided some history on J.F. Bloom whose name appears on the building. Mr. Bloom’s name was originally John Fredrik Nelson. He was born in Sweden but immigrated to Red Oak, Iowa in 1871 and worked as a stone mason while doing monument work on the side. He took the name Bloom from his brother who served in the military. After leaving Red Oak, he moved the company to Council Bluffs, then to 1815 Farnam Street in Omaha where his two sons J. Roy and Alvin joined the business. In 1910 the business moved to 1700 Cuming Street and was eventually moved to 4411 North 20th Street around 1927 so that the business could be close to the Belt Line rail. A significant date for this location was determined to be 1941 when the company was expanded. After the facility closed in 2018, the business was moved back to Iowa.

Mr. Nelson discussed the design and layout of the building. He showed several exterior pictures that showed the original fenestration, glass window panels, transom windows, bays and overhead door. The interior of the building is in very good condition with brick walls, 13’ tall ceiling, a concrete floor and offices at the rear of the showroom. He mentioned that the Reconnaissance Survey for North Omaha cited J.F. Bloom & Company as a neighborhood resource and recommended it for listing on the National Register.

In response to Ms. Fogarty, Mr. Nelson stated that a light-fabrication use is planned for the building.

There was some discussion about the loss of the factory and crane. Mr. Nelson stated that the components of the crane and some of the steelwork was saved and would somehow be incorporated into the site.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to GRANT the request. Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

AYES: Fogarty, Conzett, Suarez, Sundberg, Witzenburg, Dobbe

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0.
DISCUSSION:

Ms. Freitag informed the board that Rosin Preservation from Kansas City, Missouri was currently working on the Streetcar MPDF documentation project and two National Register nominations: Orchard Hill and the Benson Commercial district. David Calease, National Register of Historic Places Coordinator, supported both projects. She stated that Rosin Preservation was tentatively scheduled to present to the board at its July 8, 2020 meeting. Ms. Freitag asked that commission members inform her of any conflicts for the July meeting.

The commission was also notified that the CLG grant project for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 to develop Historic Preservation Design Guidelines had been approved by the State Historic Preservation Office. City staff was in the process of reviewing RFP’s and planned to make a decision soon. Ms. Freitag stated that several public meetings would be held and staff are discussing an alternative strategy for public engagement. She stated that she would advise the commission when she received the schedule for the State Review Board Meeting if any members were interested in attending.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was the consensus of the Board to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:29 p.m.