Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Room 1210 – 12th Floor
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Members: Eduardo Santamaria – Chair, George Killian – Vice Chair, Carrie Meyer, Regan Pence, Scott Dobbe, Kathryn Aultz, and Joan Fogarty.

Certification of Publication: Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Thursday, April 30, 2015 notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting, May 13, 2015.

Members Present: Eduardo Santamaria, Chair
George Killian, Vice-Chair
Kathryn Aultz
Scott Dobbe
Joan Fogarty
Regan Pence
Jaime Suarez

Members Not Present: Carrie Meyer

Others Present: Trina Westman, LHPC Administrator
Jennifer Taylor, City Law
Clinette Warren, Recording Secretary

Mr. Santamaria, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm, introduced the Commission members and staff. He explained the procedures for hearing the cases. Roll call was taken with seven members present.

Approval of Minutes:
Mr. Killian moved to APPROVE the minutes for the April 8, 2015 meeting. Mr. Dobbe seconded the motion.

AYES: Aultz, Dobbe, Fogarty, Killian, Pence, Suarez, Santamaria

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on Wednesday, May 13, 2015, Julie Walker appeared before the Commission.

Trina Westman, LHPC Administrator, presented past and present photos of the building along with renderings of the proposed signage showing a total of 3 signs with arched tops. She noted that if the request was approved the applicant would then proceed to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a waiver to the sign budget. The Planning Department felt that the proposed design was appropriate for the historic building and recommended approval of the request.

Ms. Walker stated that the theater preferred the design with the arched tops since that was how it was originally installed. In response to Mr. Killian, Ms. Walker stated that the existing tree that sits in front of the signs would be replaced with another that would grow no taller than 15’. Mr. Pence noted that the historical photo of the building showed three signs; however, there appeared to be space for an additional sign.

Rob Tomanek, Signworks, explained that the sign will be an aluminum frame system with banner type material stretched over the frame. There will be no visible grommets. The anchors for the frames will be attached into the mortar so that repairs to the building can be easily made. In response to Mr. Killian, Mr. Tomanek explained that, with the proposed system, the frame lies flush against the brick and the banner material is pulled tight against the frame which reduces the chances that wind will get under the sign and damage it.

Mr. Santamaria suggested that the signs not cover or be attached to the historical lines of the building which would include the ornate banding that encircles the building and the columns along the sides. The Board agreed that the applicant should request a higher sign allowance from the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow the 4 wall signs, since they were part of the original intended use of the building.

The applicant stated that there were no plans for lighting of the signs at that time. Mr. Killian suggested that the recommendation from the Commission should not preclude the applicant from being able to illuminate the signs in the future.

Mr. Killian moved to APPROVE subject to the following conditions: 1) the sign design incorporates an arch as depicted in the historic photograph; 2) the bottom of the signs shall not go below the architectural banding at the column base; 3) the applicant is not precluded from back lighting the signs in the future with internal lighting system; and 4) the applicant shall be allowed up to four sign panels as depicted in the historic photograph.

AYES: Aultz, Dobbe, Fogarty, Killian, Pence, Suarez, Santamaria

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on Wednesday, May 13, 2015, Ruben Acosta appeared before the Commission.

Trina Westman, LHPC Administrator, stated that the Planning Department supported the nomination and agreed that the structure was significant for both Criteria A and C as proposed. The Planning Department recommended approval of the request.

Mr. Acosta showed a slide presentation about the building to the commission. He explained that on April 30, 2015 the nomination was presented before the State Historic Preservation Review Board who voted to have the nomination forwarded to the National Park Service contingent upon approval at the local level. He discussed the significance of the building location, building materials, and the façade which used multiple varieties of brick and stone accents. Some of the interior features mentioned included: floors; paneling; ceilings; balcony; the original woodwork including the doors and transom windows. He also showed pictures of the three storefronts which are not original, but contain some of the historical materials original to the building. He mentioned that there were traces of a 2-lane bowling alley in a portion of the basement that had sustained a significant amount of water damage over the years.

He explained that the building was being nominated under Criteria A for the buildings association with social history, specifically the Druids which was a camp of Woodmen of the World. The building was the center of social life for various groups and organizations. The period of significance for the building ends during the 1940’s when the Druid camp combined with another camp and the building was sold to another party. The building was also being nominated under Criteria C for its architectural design. It was designed by architect J. P. Guth who designed several other buildings in the city and surrounding communities. Many of Mr. Guth’s later works incorporate architectural elements from Druid Hall.

Linda Williams appeared in support of the request. She stated that the building was personally significant to her because of its location in the northern part of the city.

Ms. Fogarty was concerned about whether the owners of the building had the financial security to fix the building. Freddie Clopton responded that the roof had been recently repaired and that the owners were attempting to get enough revenue to make the necessary repairs to the structure. Ms. Fogarty attested to the importance of the building, not just for the city, but the nation. She commented on how important it was that resources and funding be acquired to preserve it. Mr. Acosta mentioned some options that may be available to assist the hall financially. Mr. Santamaria stated that there should be a plan in place for restoration and preservation of the building. Mr. Killian suggested tabling the case to give the applicant time to present a long-term solution for the building. Mr. Acosta explained that the nomination is based on how the building is presented at the time and its history.

Ms. Aultz was concerned about the expense and burden of a building the size of the Hall. She felt that the status of being on the National Register was almost meaningless if the building continued to
deteriorate over the course of time. Mr. Clopton stated that the Hall had established a building fund that would be used to make repairs on the building. In response to Ms. Aultz, Mr. Acosta stated that there were some organizations that he could connect the owners of the Hall with who could possibly assist with the preservation efforts.

Mr. Pence moved to APPROVE the request. Mr. Dobbe seconded the motion.

AYES: Aultz, Dobbe, Fogarty, Killian, Pence, Suarez, Santamaria

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Adjournment:

It was the consensus of the Board to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:41 p.m.