



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

APPROVED

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: March 4, 2026

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: City Council Chambers, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS ATTENDING: David Hays, Kate Holliday, Dennis Roberts, Angela Urban, Andrew Weiss

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Laura O'Donnell, Trent Shepard

STAFF PRESENT: Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services; Kate Himick, Planner I; Aimirou Sy, Planner II

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Appel, Phyllis Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Urban called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, noted that there are three parts to the Study Session topic: 1) Section 106 Review Process, 2) Section 106 Consulting Party Comment Request – Florida Avenue Roadway, and 3) Section 106 Review Process – MTD Transit Center Discussion (*continued from February 18, 2026 Special Meeting*). She noted that there are many handouts for this meeting.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were none.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Letter from a resident regarding the condition of Woodlawn Cemetery
- Letter from Mayor DeShawn B. Williams regarding MTD Downtown project
- Urbana Design Review Districts handed out by Dennis Roberts
- Staff Report for Study Session 106 Process Review

- Staff Report for Study Session 106 Consulting Party Comment Request – Florida Avenue Roadway

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There were none.

K. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Jovine reported on the following:

- Kate Himick, Planner I, will serve as the Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission moving forward until re-evaluation under the appointment of a Principal Planner.
- Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II for the Planning Division, is on temporary leave of absence and should return in six (6) weeks.

L. STUDY SESSION

Section 106 Review Process – MTD Transit Center Discussion (*continued from February 18, 2026 special meeting*)

Chair Urban reopened this item. Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, presented an update. She noted that upon the request of the Historic Preservation Commission at the previous meeting, staff are providing a copy of the letter dated February 2025 that was transmitted by City staff to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) disagreeing with the adverse effects determination. She mentioned that attached to the letter is a copy of the email in which it was sent showing the cc'd parties and confirming transmittal of the email itself.

Chair Urban stated that this is the first time she has seen this letter even though it was bcc'd to her on February 20, 2025. She pointed out that she was not included in the original email from Anshu Singh dated January 10, 2025, which was when the Eligibility and Effects Report was initially sent

out. She stated that this is the second instance when she and other Commission members have not received important communications. She asked, "Why are we not receiving it?" Ms. Jovine stated that this particular letter was sent to Chair Urban's City email address. If you do not have email forwarding set up, it will not reach your personal email. Ms. Jovine noted that it is the expectation that board and commission members use their city email addresses actively. She said that we should investigate and discuss this process.

Chair Urban stated that she does not use her personal email for Historic Preservation Commission duties. She said that she gets emails from other staff and from the public; however, this is the second time that she did not receive an email sent to her City email address. Mr. Hays said that many organizations' emails work if somebody directly emails a person with an organization email address; however, if a person blind copies a person with an organization email address, the organization's email filter system will put the email in the junk folder and sometimes deletes it.

Mr. Hays went on to say that he is really surprised by the letter in the handout. Marcus Ricci, previous Planner for the City of Urbana, wrote a letter evidently that is consequential on behalf of the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission. He said that he does not remember hearing anything about this. He does not remember his view being solicited, and it is hard for him to believe that something like this would not be brought to the Commission in a public way. He commented that this cannot be the procedure for how things happen because otherwise the Commission is kept in the dark. He suggested clarifying what the working operation is so that a situation like this does not happen again. Ms. Jovine agreed that the process should be refined and acknowledged that this process could have been handled differently. She said that we can learn from this and make informed improvements.

Mr. Hays stated that going forward no such decision should ever be made by a member of staff and be put into a liability situation. Transparency is easier. Chair Urban agreed.

Dr. Holliday stated that the letter does not indicate that an email was sent at all. This is a copy of a printed letter, not a copy of an email. The CC at the end of the letter does not indicate how the letter was sent. Ms. Jovine explained that a copy of the letter was converted to pdf and attached in an email and transmitted that way. Dr. Holliday stated that given the trouble in communication, she no longer has confidence that this pdf is the pdf that was in the email. She added that in the spirit of moving forward, there is a need for input of the Historic Preservation Commission into decision-making about the Civic Center, because it is the Commission's job as sanctioned by the City to provide input into this process. Moving forward means saying, "Hey, you know what? The City is sorry we missed you, and the Historic Preservation Commission is important to this process." She said that the Commission's decision should be informed by a robust discussion by people who know something about historic preservation in this City, and moving forward actually means hearing from everyone here and respecting the opinion of the Commission, and moving forward without it is not moving forward at all.

Chair Urban stated that she appreciates the letter that Mayor Williams sent to the Commission. She believes that we are all on the same team. The Commission members support Mayor Williams and are happy to be part of this Commission and the City of Urbana. While she does not necessarily disagree with what the Mayor wrote, she agrees with Dr. Holliday that the Commission has a purpose and a role to play in this. Ms. Jovine stated that the Historic Preservation Commission's

powers and duties are outlined in the Zoning Ordinance. She said that the Commission could take a portion of this meeting to look at those and discuss a path forward for how to best communicate or the Commission could continue the discussion at hand.

Dr. Holliday addressed the letter dated February 20, 2025 from Mr. Ricci to Mr. Singh. She said that there are several points of disagreement that she has as a Commissioner with the assessments and opinions that were afforded about historic preservation regarding the Urbana Civic Center. Normally in an assessment process, the Commission would have been invited for a site visit to walk through the Civic Center when the consultants were making their assessments of the building. The Commission would have been deeply involved in the process all along the way so that none of this would be a surprise to the Mass Transit District (MTD), to Mayor Williams, and to the Planning staff because there would have been involvement from the beginning.

Dr. Holliday stated that she disagrees with the determination that there are no adverse effects on historic properties and disagrees with the idea that the physical condition of the building is poor. She disagrees with the idea that the potential cost for rehabilitation of the structure costs more than other possibilities. She disagrees that the way the project was approached adequately considered what a rehabilitation could be or emphasized it as a strong possibility. She stated that she strongly disagrees that the Civic Center has outlived its usefulness. So, there are many points in the letter that she believes, if it had been brought to the Commission in February, there would have been an ability to work through these statements rather than presenting to both United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) and to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) that the Historic Preservation Commission was actually in agreement in the content of this letter, which again the Commission has seen for the first time at this meeting.

Mr. Roberts stated that he feels the Mayor's letter allows some wiggle room for considering a creative solution to include the existing building in a plan presented by MTD. Through a discussion held previously at a study session, the Commission learned that MTD has not yet purchased the property but is considering it. They also learned that MTD has not drafted a plan for the proposed three-story building because they have not hired an architect. MTD is currently just imagining what their facility might look like to include not only service to the community and an appropriate bus turnaround space, but also an opportunity to pay for the building and on a more of an ongoing manner by creatively adding office space facility in the building structure to have an income to support the operation of the structure itself. He said this is his interpretation of what the Commission heard from the representative of MTD. So, the Commission is not at the point to respond to a proposed plan and possible use by the MTD of the Civic Center property.

Mr. Roberts went on to say that meanwhile, during the previous study session, the Commission saw a slideshow presented by Professor Joseph Altshuler, in the Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, that students of his proposed creative and inventive ways of using the existing structure as it is or by modifying it doing some alteration to the structure, such as raising the roof, eliminating one quarter of the building for a different use or outside amenity. The Commission also talked about the possibility of the appendage/annex to the back of the building being removed without damaging the central structure or use of the Civic Center. Mr. Roberts stated that doing so would allow more room for passage of buses to the back and to circle through the property. He said that it seems MTD could be approached with encouragement to think in a broader sense when they talk to an architect to see what creative process might occur to include the existing building to

increase the height of the proposed building from three stories to four so the City can have a win-win situation. We can preserve most or all of the building as it stands, and we can incorporate it into a new structure that serves the community.

Mr. Hays stated that when relating Dr. Holliday's four points to the letter, the letter is pretty general. He said that no one would reasonably object to about 90% of the statements in the letter from the Mayor. He then talked about the content in the letter. He said that it is often the case that historic preservation is put on the defensive through false oppositions. In this case, the idea is that if you support the preservation of the Civic Center that represents a significant opportunity for the community, then you must be against the MTD and a future transportation center, and you must be against supporting the community having a bus shelter. He gave an example of Burnham Mansion. People said, "We support education." If a person said that the City should not tear the Burnham Mansion down to put in a parking lot, then it meant that person was against public education. People shouted this at people like him who are educators, and they would reply, "We are educators. This is about education." So, he is sensitive to false opposition because the Commission also does not want to see the Civic Center left vacant and unused for several more years.

Mr. Hays commented that he relates to the statement in Mr. Ricci's letter in that City staff believes the Civic Center has outlived its usefulness as an event venue. He said that he completely disagrees with this. He was told there were events scheduled when the City decided to close the Civic Center, and many people went there for the events, only to find it closed. So, it was the City's decision to leave it vacant and unused despite the fact that it has use.

Mr. Hays stated that one of the lessons from *Imagine Urbana* is that we want to celebrate who we are, where we are, and why we are here. He mentioned that he heard several times that one of the virtues of the Civic Center was that it was a lower cost place for community members to have a larger space. It was cheaper than going to a restaurant or a club when you wanted to have an event. They made similar arguments for Burnham Mansion. So, if you care about the community and you care about the civic aspect of everyone having a place, a transit center with rentable offices for private or government is not a civic space.

He feels there are aspects of the letter that structure a win-win-win logic, but it also hints at the opposition that if you support preservation, then you are against MTD. It really is a question about values. What does the community value? The community has articulated pretty strongly what it values: community, such as community centers and community gatherings.

Mr. Hays stated that he does not like the MTD's logic that they do not have money to adapt the Civic Center; however, MTD has money to demolish the building and build something bigger and more expensive.

Ms. Jovine stated that her understanding is that it was a City Council vote that determined the closure of the Civic Center. So, it was not just a mayoral action. She went on to say that MTD's transit center would be funded in portion hopefully through federal funding and also in part by MTD's funding and not with City funds. Mr. Hays stated his message is that it is just as easy to appeal for money to support the adaptive reuse of an interesting building as it is to support something that tears the building down. It is a question of values.

Dr. Holliday added that she is curious how MTD came to be sitting at the table in front of the dais at the last meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission when they were not on the agenda. She also stated that when the MTD came into this process, they did hire an architect to do schematic design for the site; therefore, they are working from an operational understanding of how they intend to use the site. While Professor Altshuler's presentation was very inspiring, none of the students' creative projects had anything to do with MTD's plans. Ms. Jovine stated that she failed to amend the agenda, which she feels is a process that City staff need to learn to either include people's names who will be presenting or to just keep the topic general. In this case, last meeting's agenda was topic-specific since Professor Altshuler's class and MTD representatives were in partnership in the students' project. With that said, she acknowledged that it quickly turned into something else. So, this is something that she would like to also discuss in terms of setting best precedent for how to handle study sessions generally and then also specifically presentations from external parties within that.

Mr. Hays asked who contacted Professor Altshuler. Ms. Jovine stated that Professor Altshuler had contacted her because the students' project seemed like it would add color to the conversation and structure. Similarly, MTD contacted her before last meeting and stated that they could participate in the presentation.

Mr. Hays stated that Professor Altshuler and Ashley McLaughlin from MTD did not propose giving a presentation together. Then Ms. McLaughlin did not give a presentation, and it was extremely confusing that they both approached for the presentation. This is important because MTD is a certain kind of stakeholder in this situation, and Professor Altshuler is a totally different kind of stakeholder in this situation. So, to attach them as presenting together is problematic because it both conditions what he was trying to accomplish, and it sort of conditions what MTD may be trying to accomplish. It is really important to keep those separate. Ms. Jovine stated that staff will definitely make an effort to err on the side of having more segmentation in the agendas in the future.

Dr. Holliday agreed that it does provide a very confusing picture to the public about what the relationship actually is. While Professor Alschuler certainly coordinated that studio, there are multiple instructors, and MTD is not an instructor. MTD came as guests. So, the reality of what that partnership looks like was not addressed there. She stated that she does not want to speak for her colleague (Professor Altshuler), but the way it was presented was confusing.

Mr. Roberts asked if the Commission is going to make any kind of formal statement to the Mayor or is there an idea of how the Commission should let MTD know that the Civic Center is vital to the community and to ask MTD to reconsider their planning. The Commission cannot control the MTD's planning process, but they can encourage them.

Mr. Hays asked, "Is there an arrangement between the City and MTD for MTD to purchase the site?" If MTD does not own the site and if no arrangement has been made, then addressing MTD is insignificant. The Commission should address the City. Ms. McLaughlin had stated at the previous meeting that MTD does not have any plans, but Dr. Holliday said that they do have a schematic plan. Ms. Jovine said that staff could ask if MTD has a schematic plan. She did not feel it was appropriate for her to speak on behalf of MTD. She stated that the City owns the Civic Center property, and there is no binding agreement between the City and MTD regarding the sale of the

property; however, previous and current City Administration supports MTD's project for a transit facility in Downtown Urbana.

Mr. Roberts stated that MTD obviously has interest in the Civic Center site, which is great. They looked at other sites, and this site appeals to them the most. So, MTD has an expressed interest in the Civic Center site, and they have a concern about how they visualize what they want to make and what they see on the property. However, they have not approached the community yet with a plan of what their vision is. He said that maybe if the community knew generally what MTD's vision is, this would be a more interesting topic to talk about. He said that he feels if the Historic Preservation Commission objects to MTD's plan, then their interest in the site may diminish because it is not how they are picturing it. The Commission does not know how flexible MTD is committed to a pre-ordained image of what is going to happen to the property.

Mr. Weiss said that the Commission does not know the schematic. So, when reading the Mayor's letter, it is both vague and ambiguous. If the Historic Preservation Commission has not seen a plan, then they can presume that there is no plan, but that that may not be the case. So, it is hard to comment on something ethereal.

Mr. Hays added that it would be terrific to say that we value this site, and therefore that means we ought not to develop this site because it has a value we have not seen before. This would mean that the opinion of the Commission has consequences. His worry is that the Commission articulates something like this and then the message people receive is false opposition that the Commission does not value public transportation or value people being able to get to work in affordable ways.

Mr. Hays went on to say that this might be something to discuss even with the Mayor, because there is such a great opportunity here. If there is a schematic, maybe that explains MTD's statements about turning radiuses of buses. MTD saying that they have no plans, but in fact there is a schematic plan is some sort of dissimulation, and that is not fair. That is not transparency, which is probably why he feels like he is not sure what really is going on.

Mr. Roberts stated that the Commission should address the City Council, because the Council agreed that the Civic Center should be torn down and that it is beyond its use for various reasons which were presented to them. He noted that if there are repairs that are needed to the Civic Center to make it more advantageous, the City would have an obligation to make the repairs just like any landlord would have to make repairs to an apartment complex that they owned. He thinks there might be a few members of City Council who could be convinced that this is probably worth looking at differently.

Dr. Holliday mentioned that she heard there may be members of the community interested in landmarking the Civic Center. She encouraged them to apply and noted that it is not necessary for the property owner to want their building to be landmarked. Landmarking would need to be approved by City Council if the owner does not agree. Ms. Jovine stated that is correct. A landmark nomination would originate before the Commission first, and then the Commission would make a recommendation to City Council for final approval.

Chair Urban stated that the letter written to the DOT came to the Commission over a year after the fact. She agrees that going to City Council would be beneficial. She said that, as a planner herself,

she can understand where the City sees an opportunity for a potential agreement for the Civic Center lot to be used and/or maybe the building could be revitalized. She said that the Commission is walking a tightrope because they are coming at this from the past and trying to catch up. She stated that the letter from the Mayor mentions that MTD has a thoughtfully planned facility or idea for this site. It also mentions the MTD's BUILD grant application, which she imagines would have some kind of information indicating what MTD envisions.

Chair Urban said that the Commission needs to consider what their next step is. Is it to write a letter to the Mayor? Is it to approach City Council? The Commission cannot change what happened in the past, but they need to show they have given this careful consideration, and we do not want to lose MTD's interest. Now that the Commission is aware of the situation, the Commission members need to continue to be present to show what they can support and show their stance to the City and to get a better understanding of what MTD has already brought to the table. She suggested maybe even inviting MTD to one of the Commission's meetings to continue conversation in an approachable manner, one that shows that the Commission supports MTD as well.

Mr. Hays stated that the Commission going to City Council provides an opportunity to articulate values that have to do with community and with historic preservation as it should properly be understood, which is a way of moving forward. It is also to push back a bit on the logic that says the Civic Center costs more money than it makes so the City has to demolish it. This is also the logic about MTD's plan. MTD has invested in this project, so they have to get their money back. MTD has to make money; therefore, they have to manifest a new transit facility building. In one case, it tears the building down, and in the other case, it puts up a different building. So, it is really about value. He gave the example of City Hall costs more money than it makes, but the City is not tearing it down. So, the question becomes, "What do you want to invest in?"

He stated that it is heartbreaking to him to think that the wonderful City of Urbana, where he has chosen to live since 2001 and where he loves to be, would take a building like the Civic Center (given its history and use) and not value it, especially given what was articulated recently through the *Imagine Urbana* Plan. It seems like there are so many other available sites that this cannot be the only place where MTD's plan works. He stated that he feels the Commission should fight to save the Civic Center.

Mr. Hays talked about the true meaning of historic preservation and about false opposition. Ms. Jovine stated that she cannot speak for the Mayor. She is a Mayoral appointee, which is why she does not serve as the Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission in case there is a conflict. She noted that both the Mayor's office and the Historic Preservation Commission are often consulting entities through the Section 106 process. She pointed out that the City's Administration staff is also new to the Section 106 process, and this project predates the new Administration by almost ten (10) years and has been in discourse for a very long time. She believes the current City Administration wanted to make sure that there is no ambiguity and avoid making a statement and that was the motivation for the Mayor's letter to the Historic Preservation Commission. She stated that they can talk about the letter more and how to address it if the Commission would like.

Mr. Weiss stated that he is having difficulty digesting this. If the Civic Center is to be razed, he does not see how that would honor the integrity and spirit of the Civic Center. There are a lot of words in the letter that are ambiguous; however, he thanked the Mayor for the letter.

Chair Urban asked how the Commission should approach the City Council. Ms. Jovine replied that direction can be found in the Zoning Ordinance. Chair Urban suggested also inviting MTD representatives to one of the Commission meetings to better highlight what they envision. Dr. Holliday added that she feels it to be important for the Historic Preservation Commission to be able to see MTD's schematic plans. She said that when a determination is made to enter into the Section 106 or NEPA process, MTD has already decided that this site is one that they want to engage with in a particular kind of way or MTD would not pay to go through the review process. She has experienced the process many times. Given the extremely low level of information sharing and the lack of inclusion of the City's own Historic Preservation Commission in the review process, it would be a show of faith by the City, MTD, and the duly appointed commissioners of the Historic Preservation Commission, who have expertise in this area and who should be treated respectfully in the process, to go ahead and do what should have been done a while ago. Ms. Jovine stated that she would make this request of MTD and see if they can attend a Commission meeting in the near future.

Mr. Roberts stated the Zoning Ordinance says, "To testify before the City Council and all boards and commissions, including the Building Safety Code Boards of Appeals, the Community Development Commission, the Plan Commission, the Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals, and the Zoning Board of Appeals on any matter affecting historically or architecturally significant building, structures, sites, objects, and areas, the Chair or the Chair's designee shall give such testimony on behalf of the Preservation Commission." He said that the Historic Preservation Commission members who are going personally to make comments are very powerful to the City Council, because they can see one's intent and enthusiasm. Also, the Commission can engage the City Council members for questions if the Commission members have them on a personal level, which is very powerful.

Chair Urban asked if the Historic Preservation Commission members can be added to the agenda and if so, which City Council meeting would that be? Ms. Jovine said that she would need to confirm with the City Clerk, because she does not know the process for a commission specifically. Otherwise, every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. there is an opportunity for people to speak to the Council.

Ms. Jovine stated that staff will send all of the handouts for February 18, 2026 and for this meeting via email to the Historic Preservation Commission's City email addresses to ensure that each member has copies of the documents.

Section 106 Review Process

Ms. Jovine referred to the handout titled, "Section 106 Process Review" and stamped, "Iterative." She talked about how the Section 106 process is usually initiated and about the roles of the Historic Preservation Commissions, staff, and the municipality itself. She reviewed the different stages of the Section 106 process. She noted that in the case of the proposed MTD transit center, the review process is in Stage 3 – Resolving Adverse Effects.

Staff, then, came up with some suggested paths moving forward for improving the review process. When reading the Zoning Ordinance, it seems that the Ordinance is written so that the Zoning Administrator and the Historic Preservation Commission Secretary would be separate entities. Also, in some cases, there is an appeal process. The Zoning Ordinance also requires the Zoning

Administrator to notify the Historic Preservation Commission if there are other cases happening that may or may not have any impact on historic structures. She mentioned that there is an opportunity for a dedicated staff member, likely the Secretary of the Commission and the Chair of the Commission, to participate in training courses available online, and there are resources that can support those trainings. She noted that the Commission and staff could also edit the bylaws to be explicit in how to handle Section 106 consulting party invitations. She added that staff could introduce a notice period. So, upon receipt of a request for comment or an invitation to be a consulting party, staff should notify the Commission or the Commission's Chair within a certain number of business days, being mindful that there is typically a thirty (30) day window to provide an initial response.

Ms. Jovine said that she is very passionate about treating Section 106 invitations as cases. The City's Planning staff have an internal case management structure where a case number is assigned and there is a set schedule of steps. So, similarly to how staff have local landmarking cases or designations, Planning staff could create a case process for handling Section 106 reviews. They could also create a written checklist for staff to follow in processing Section 106 reviews. She mentioned that there are more internal steps that should be revisited and more resources and opportunities for engaging in different work, such as how to most efficiently sort and use data and use official correspondence.

Ms. Jovine said that staff would like the Commission to weigh in on how official correspondence should be signed and the routing process basically for handling any correspondence. She believes it could be essentially codified in the bylaws. The Commission has full control over the bylaws. She suggested that the Commission take these ideas as a working document and continue it into the next study session.

Dr. Holliday stated that she thinks this is really helpful and positive. She loves the idea that it becomes a case so that it can be tracked. She thinks the 30-day window that consulting parties have to review and provide input can be difficult considering the cycle of the Commission meetings. She said that the Commission's consulting discussion should be part of a public meeting of the Commission so that the public can be made aware of the Section 106 Review process happening, and the public has an opportunity to participate as well.

Dr. Holliday stated that she also would like the Commission to have an opportunity to do a site visit. The City of Urbana is not so large that the Commission would not be able to travel to the affected property of Section 106. A site visit is essential because otherwise the Commission will not know what the condition of the property is and what the Commission is dealing with. Ms. Jovine said that in order to arrange a site visit without violating the Open Meetings Act, staff would have to notice the event forty-eight (48) hours in advance, and a staff member would have to be present at the event.

Mr. Hays stated that he feels this is a great list and a great conversation. He said that if the municipality is a separate consulting entity, it means that the Historic Preservation Commission is a separate consulting entity. So, it is really important to understand that and then to develop steps and best practices that support that. This is a path to a healthier process.

Chair Urban said that she agrees. She suggested that the Commission and staff should consider updating their bylaws to amend them to include a process for Section 106 and how the Commission is involved. She suggested that they review the bylaws at the next regular meeting. She stated that the bylaws are something that the Historic Preservation Commission can control, and the Commission has not reviewed the bylaws in a few years.

Ms. Jovine stated that it would be helpful to determine where the Section 106 process would appear on the agenda. So, she recommended adding it in the bylaws.

Dr. Holliday stated that HARGIS and other data, like surveys, that exist are outdated and should not be considered definitive. This is why the voices of the Commission and public are helpful. Our surveys very much emphasize early Urbana history, which is fine and normal. However, an updated survey would begin to emphasize areas that historic preservation has really made an effort to bring into its purview ... areas of ethnic history, especially more recent architecture such as modernism and mid-century modernism. Just because these are not in HARGIS or in our available data does not mean they are not important. This is a big issue in historic preservation in general.

She said that she is empathetic about the role of the Historic Preservation Commission Secretary being in the middle between the Commission and the City Administration. She did not believe that this is what was happening. She believes that the Commission signing correspondence rather than staff would be helpful. Ms. Himick noted that staff are currently having conversations about how to best utilize the data that we currently have. Staff are discovering what exists and how it has been structured within our files. She believes there is a potential for an audit in the near future to find not only what we have but to also ask “what do we need to add?” and “what do we hope to gain by adding those things?” This could be part of a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant.

Ms. Jovine stated that it is very important to clearly define the role of the Secretary so that there is no ambiguity. She explained that she feels it is inappropriate for herself to serve as the Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission since she is a Mayoral appointee. Therefore, she made the decision that moving forward Kate Himick would serve as the Secretary.

Mr. Roberts stated that he would love to see a study session in the future to consider creating a design overlay district for the Downtown Historic District, because it is important for the Commission to provide guidance for renovations and new construction within the district; not to stifle development but to guide it so that it harmonizes with the current buildings in some manner whether by mass or a facade pattern.

Chair Urban added that the Commission has often been blindsided when the meetings are cancelled. It is not due to lack of a quorum, but instead due to not having a case. This has really challenged the Commission with how to have conversations about what the Commission envisions moving forward, for example, updating the Historic Preservation Plan.

Section 106 Consulting Party Comment Request – Florida Avenue Roadway Improvements

Ms. Jovine presented a summary of the project. Ms. Himick added that Emilie Land, Architectural Historian and Cultural Resource Specialist with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT),

sent Planning staff the area map provided by the Lochmueller Group that is attached in the handout. She noted that the Lochmueller Group is a consultant for this project area. She mentioned that she is unclear as to whether the project area and the Area of Potential Effects (APE) are the same, but she plans to confirm this with Ms. Land. She noted that the letter from Joseph Galloy, the Project Area Map, and the potential historic districts were the only documents provided by Ms. Land.

Dr. Holliday asked if Planning staff can get more information about what the intended project is, because being able to determine impact depends entirely on what the project is, not just knowing what street it is supposed to be. She stated that the map is missing street names that are critical for this. So, it feels incomplete, because Florida Avenue is not labeled on the map. The Commission needs more information to be able to provide comments. Ms. Himick said the project is still in the early stages, and Ms. Land would like to know if the Commission is interested in reviewing the project. Ms. Land would like any addition of the Commission's local knowledge, their preservation expertise, and their insight into what may exist in this area that she could possibly have missed. The Commission will still have an opportunity to comment throughout the process if it comes to a point where the Commission has additional comments on an effect. She said that the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has not seen the list of resources from IDOT, so there has been no official discussion of adverse effects as of this moment.

Ms. Jovine stated that Planning staff have reviewed the surveys that we have available and prepared the list on Page Two (2) of the handout to provide the Commission with some support. She pointed out that the three bullet points at the bottom of Page One (1) are suggested steps moving forward.

Chair Urban responded saying that staff answered the first bullet point, because this seems to be a list that shows the potentially affected resources. From the Lochmueller Map, it appears that Florida Avenue is mainly affected by the proposed project. She wonders how that would encroach on Delaware Avenue with the resources that are on that road. The Commission members might have comments about the second bullet and also the third bullet with regards to the Commission having continuing interest in reviewing the project.

Mr. Hays said that there is huge interest in reviewing this project more. He said that he is trying to make sense of the Lochmueller Map. Ms. Himick reiterated that she plans to confirm with Ms. Land that the APE is the exact same boundary as what is shown on the project area. She noted that she extended the area on West Delaware Avenue out of an abundance of caution.

Mr. Roberts asked if it is basically a resurfacing project. Ms. Jovine said that is how she understands it to be. Mr. Roberts commented that they will be looking at opportunities to make the sidewalks at the corners accessible. They are going to put in a different kind of street lighting. There might be some other upgrading of signage controlling traffic, and they might put in curbs. None of these would extend into the private boundaries of any property, because it is all in the City's right-of-way. The thing that might be of interest would be a side path, which might be a bicycle lane, because it could be possibly take part of a property. He said that he does not imagine there will be any historic building that might be endangered, so he does not know what kind of advice the Historic Preservation Commission can provide. Ms. Urban noted that it is similar to a case that we reviewed a few years ago that was related to signage on a historic property. The Commission would review whether new signage or something might block a historic home, then the Commission would want

to give input towards, but we do not have that information. Right now, the question is “does the Commission want to be part of the process?” She believes the answer is yes.

Dr. Holliday stated that typically when dealing with new signals, pull-off lanes, and easement adjustments, there are things like trees, historic stamps on concrete sidewalks, numbers in curbs, brick pavement, cultural landscape elements as well as the historic houses to be considered by the Commission. So, this is an opportunity to think about the process by which we could rebuild landscape fabric so that it is more accessible and safer, because some of these four-way stops are not great. We also want to ensure that there is not any existing historic fabric that would be bulldozed. This is why walking or visiting the site before giving comments is really important. A quick walk along the project area along with the cultural landscape resource survey inventory, they would be able to go check, check, check. The Commission would not be saying “do not do the project”, but instead they would be asking “how do we do this project in a really cool way so that is integrating new infrastructure with old?”, so we end up with a really amazing upgrade that everyone appreciates, because it would be more accessible and doing new things and be pulling in our historic fabric. Mr. Hays agreed and talked about a suggestion he made to improve the safety of cyclists crossing Lincoln Avenue at West Main Street without having to remove any of the existing brick sidewalk. He thanked Dr. Holliday for articulating the landscape aspects of this which give character to the neighborhood even along a busy street like Florida Avenue.

Ms. Jovine said that her understanding is that Ms. Land is still doing research and then all the consulting parties will share what they find. From there, that list goes to SHPO, and then the process continues. So, staff need to clarify with Ms. Land if the area of potential effect is the same as the project area, and that the Historic Preservation Commission would like to participate as a consulting party.

There was discussion on how to proceed with sending Ms. Land correspondence so that all the Commission members receive it. Chair Urban clarified that anyone could share an email with the entire Commission; however, no member can “reply all.” There can be no behind the scenes dialogue. Ms. Jovine suggested sending the email by carbon copy to Chair Urban and by blind carbon copy to the rest of the Commission, so no one makes the mistake of replying to all the Commission and violating the Open Meetings Act. Dr. Holliday and Mr. Hays asked that she send the email by carbon copy to all the Commission. It is upon each member not to “reply all.” This way the Commission can see who else is part of the loop.

There was discussion on whether staff should send emails to the Commission using HistoricPreservationCommission@urbanil.gov address. Mr. Hays suggested that staff periodically test the email to ensure that each Commission member receives emails.

Mr. Weiss recalled that it was mentioned that there are 30 days, and the clock is ticking. What is due or what is expected within 30 days and where are we at? Ms. Jovine explained that the initial letter was sent on October 16, 2025 to an unchecked email address. It was rerouted to another unchecked email address because of staff turnover. New staff found it partially because Ms. Land reinitiated contact because she had not heard from us. So, it became abundantly clear that there was an immense workload on the state side, so this project was delayed beyond that initial 30-day window. The Commission is still being asked to provide comments.

March 4, 2026

Dr. Holliday asked, “would it be appropriate for individual commissioners to walk or drive the project area individually, and then send comments to staff?” Ms. Jovine said yes. She asked that the Commission provide comments by the end of the day on March 11, 2026 to Ms. Himick via Planning@urbanail.gov. Ms. Himick will then compile the comments and information and email it to Ms. Land.

Mr. Weiss asked if the City of Urbana Engineering staff would have a detailed scope of work for this project. Ms. Jovine said that she believes there are more project details that can be shared. Staff will contact Ms. Land and request more information on the project and then share that information with the Commission.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Urban adjourned the meeting at 9:09 p.m.