



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

APPROVED

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: June 4, 2025

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: David Hays, Kathryn Holliday, Dennis Roberts, Trent Shepard, Andrew Weiss

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Linda O'Donnell, Angela Urban

STAFF PRESENT: Marcus Ricci, Planner II; Teri Andel, Planning Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Appel, Stewart Berlocher, Carmen Franks, Phyllis Winters-Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Hays served as Acting Chair for the meeting in the absence of Chair Urban. He called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of January 8, 2025 Rescheduled Meeting

The minutes of January 8, 2025 rescheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes. Mr. Weiss seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Hays recommended editing the language on Page 4 to read as follows:

- Paragraph 3, Line 4 - "We are always making history in the present, and the past is a given condition. History is not preservation of the past, and the existing Plan actually does not directly preserve the past. It preserves the history, and the history it invites us to preserve is basically Native American people ~~who~~ were transient...".

- Paragraph 3, Line 18 – “People do not talk about preserving trees like they talk about preserving buildings, and he thinks they should ~~be~~.”
- Last Paragraph, Line 2 – “... 2) antiquarian history, which you do not know the relative value, so everything is important, and 3) critical history, which says that we have a ~~the~~ right to look at and judge how people did things in the past and disagree.”.

Mr. Roberts commented that the preservation of trees (as a forester) and tree removal (as safety issues) were conflicting components within how the Tree Commission works; he elaborated on a preserved historic tree where Lincoln addressed a large crowd and the route that the Historic Preservation Commission took in this instance. Dr. Holliday mentioned that there are CLG models which can be used for tree landmarking within cultural landscape designation.

The motion with amendments as corrected was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Minutes of March 5, 2025, Regular Meeting

The minutes of March 5, 2025 regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission were presented for approval. Mr. Roberts moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as submitted by unanimous voice vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Carmen Franks, resident of West Main Street Historic District, approached the Historic Preservation Commission to speak about needs to revisit financial incentives for investment of historic properties. Ms. Franks specifically mentioned the 1998 Preservation Plan and how her neighbor lived with family who owned the home and did not opt-in to joining the historic district and has since passed away. This neighbor is now in need of roof repairs, which he is financially unable to obtain regardless of status within the historic district. Ms. Franks sought to also enhance educational outreach for resident property owners who were not aware of requirements for historic district properties. Ms. Franks mentioned *Imagine Urbana* Big Idea 4, Objective 4.5 and suggested setting up local incentives to preserve historic properties. Ms. Franks shared that there is a fear of losing these homes to rezoning.

Vice Chair Hays asked procedural questions regarding dialogue in public and non-public hearings, and whether Commissioners could speak with the public.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There were none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Vice Chair Hays opened this item on the agenda.

Dr. Holliday stated there were no properties assigned to her.

Mr. Shepard stated that the owner of the Royer House and the Danly Cottage had been doing stabilization work. Boyden House looked in good shape, painting and scraping had been done, looked well cared for. Mr. Shepard spoke with Kathleen Jones (108 Webber) who engaged two masons to do foundation work. Ms. Jones was still searching for a suitable carpenter. Mr. Shepard gave her two names directly. Mr. Ricci made comment about obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness, and Mr. Shepard stated that no work had been done yet and both agreed no Certificate of Appropriateness was needed. Mr. Shepard stated the property would be repainted in summer 2025.

Vice Chair Hays stated that he did two passthroughs of the 800-Block of West Main Street and reported that everything seemed orderly and fine.

Mr. Weiss observed properties in April 2025 and updated the spreadsheet, noting that 8 Buena Vista Court has the same information that is included in the report.

Mr. Roberts mentioned that the status of Canaan Baptist Church on Main Street was the same as last meeting and that the Royer District signage purchase had not yet been completed. Mr. Roberts stated that Hotel Royer looks wonderful and is open for business and offered his congratulations. He stated that the Halberstadt House has a stairwell issue on the east side of the house and needs to be looked at.

K. STAFF REPORT

Items of Interest

▪ CLG Grants Update

Staff were notified by the City that the website reconstruction was approved for \$8,400.00. Staff were waiting for the memo to be finished and for Council to move forward on this. Mr. Weiss requested clarification on when this grant memo would be completed. Mr. Ricci stated that it should be completed by the end of June. An intern, Adeline Evans, would be hired using existing budget line-item for temporary staff. Staff to discuss further with HR and Finance on how to move forward with budget regarding intern pay. He noted that the Joseph Royer Education Project CLG application was not approved. Mr. Ricci stated that he requested review comments from Jon Pressley from the State Historic Preservation Office to create a stronger application, with the option

for the City to provide a matching grant. Mr. Ricci mentioned “In kind work” with donors needing further discussion, which would show commitment to the Project Application regarding funding.

Vice Chair Hays concurred saying that this was “a wonderful idea”.

Mr. Ricci then stated that Mr. Roberts spoke in reference to a Royer exhibit at either the Hotel Royer or the Urbana Free Library.

▪ ***Preservation Month Activities***

Mr. Ricci stated the Mid-Century Modern Open House Tour occurred on May 31, 2025, and the Mid-Century Modern Architecture Exhibit at the Krannert Art Museum continues through July 12, 2025. He stated that the tour was completely sold out with over 250+ tickets sold. Representatives of Landmarks Illinois, Preservation Futures, and Burnham Group were panelists, with Dr. Holliday moderating.

Dr. Holliday noted the opportunity to engage with the audience and get them curious about their commissioners, saying, “It was a very large crowd, and they were eager to know how to engage *[with preservation]*”. She continued, stating that it was not about the crowd being curious or engaging with the commissioners themselves, but “about preservation”. She gave three ideas for next year’s tour to include 1) Yankee Ridge; 2) neighborhoods like Carver Park; 3) LGBTQ History in Champaign and Urbana. Dr. Holliday suggested that for next year’s tour, they should think broadly and culturally and that this list was not exhaustive or complete.

Vice Chair Hays and Dr. Holliday were grateful for the collaboration and efforts this allowed. Mr. Ricci reminded commissioners that the Dr. Ellis subdivision in Carver Park previously sought them out on whether they were a “neighborhood conservation district” or a potential “historic district”. Mr. Ricci then said that for the LGBT Tour, the potential to offer this during the PRIDE month celebrations might be something of note.

Historic Property Activities

▪ ***Landmarking and Districts***

There were no new inquiries, but Mr. Ricci noted that the Erlanger residence at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was a potential candidate for local Historic Landmark status should they choose to move forward.

Dr. Holliday and Pastor Freeman are working on creating a National Register nomination for the First United Methodist Church. Dr. Holliday updated the Commission, stating that the draft for the National Register nomination is being worked on and should be ready very soon.

▪ ***Certificates of Appropriateness in Progress or Review***

Mr. Ricci talked about the following:

- Buena Vista Court utility work requiring no Certificate of Appropriateness is completed. Mr. Weiss logged this update.

- Buena Vista Court #8 had the following three Certificates of Appropriateness:
 - 1) Window restoration occurred in previous years and was closed out.
 - 2) A 2021 Certificate of Appropriateness for an access ramp removal and concrete step replacement is not complete.
 - 3) The porch stucco, framing, and screens, and porch “door” as a doorway are not completed. Mr. Ricci stated that he is working with the new owner on transferring or terminating these permits as incomplete at new owner’s request.
- Hotel Royer’s Certificate of Appropriateness #2 for exterior repairs is completed and closed out.

Vice Chair Hays brought up audience participant Ms. Franks’ concerns about homeowner knowledge of historic district status and restrictions with new owners and requested clarification on the mechanisms and agency that the commissioners have regarding this communication. Commissioners Hays, Shepard, and Weiss discussed this further, noting that the title of the property could have a disclaimer when inspected, and Champaign County records and landmark decision sheets could potentially be flagged. Mr. Ricci added that staff can increase owner education and that PACA has offered to volunteer with this as well. Potential issues regarding districts would be that landmarks have a visible plaque posted to the house, but historic districts have signage at the end of individual streets and not on individual houses, so user error is likely. Dr. Holliday suggested that a sheet, which the owner signs (among many), could have this information on it; potential setbacks include the owner not reading this document and only signing. She further stated that positive flagging is necessary, especially if PACA gets involved in realtor education regarding historic properties/district disclosure.

Mr. Ricci shared that CitizenServe permit software does include a checkbox/field for listing whether a property is in a historic district or is a historic landmark. He stated that the interface process needed to be updated/synced to reflect this more easily for the homeowner/realtor.

Mr. Ricci and Mr. Shepard noted inconsistency of historic signage. West Urbana citizens paid over \$10,000 for brown, individual street signs saying “Historic Urbana” to be put up more than 7+ years ago.

Mr. Roberts was curious about expansion of West Main Street Historic District and whether this topic was ripe based on homeowner interest for new project/vote in the future. Mr. Ricci suggested that the 800-Block may also be interested in this project as well.

L. STUDY SESSION

Presentation on Gothic Revival Cottage at 118 North Webber Street – Stewart Berlocher

Stewart Berlocher, an emeritus professor at the University of Illinois and expert in evolutionary biology, was introduced, and he approached the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Berlocher noted his involvement with the historic local homes in his neighborhood. He presented an analysis arguing that the Gothic Revival Cottage at 118 N. Webber Street is actually the S. J. Toy house as shown on the Alexander Bowman 1858 Map of Urbana and expressed that surviving bargeboards are rare in Urbana.

Mr. Ricci asked clarifying questions regarding the reproduction images, noting discrepancies and not “exact matches;” Mr. Berlocher offered reasons as to why this can occur. Mr. Ricci did note that there were reproductions of the original images in the county Recorder’s office at the Community Development office.

Mr. Berlocher noted that the house was moved but was unable to verify when based upon a lack of complete records. Dr. Holliday inquired whether the Sanborn maps were used to determine whether the lot was occupied at a certain date and stated that they were a good resource for people to use.

Mr. Roberts noted that memoirs, old photographs, and written diaries and family documents are invaluable, but tend to disappear over time. Mr. Berlocher agreed, saying that a particular family, the Heard Family, had an entire box of old photos and memories had been recycled.

Vice Chair Hays, Mr. Ricci and Mr. Berlocher further discussed the exact location that was highlighted within the circled area for one of the main images. Mr. Shepard asked Mr. Roberts about Illona’s study of the house at 118 North Webber Street, and Mr. Roberts said she is an invaluable resource which can be used to further this study.

Mr. Berlocher said that should any future work be done to alter the home, a sample of the framing underneath the house would help biologists determine the age because of the oak trees from the grove being used in the architecture. Oak beams would be strong evidence of at least the Webber house being built in the 1850s.

Vice Chair Hays concluded this topic by thanking Mr. Berlocher for his presentation and for his suggestion on the sampling.

Certified Local Government Grant Awards & Next Steps

Mr. Ricci mentioned that the points he mentions next were drafted before they had been notified that they had received the grant. Mr. Ricci and Commissioners engaged in discussion regarding the grant.

Next steps:

- Grant award needed to be processed.
- Start Ms. Evans working on the website.
- Create a spreadsheet of plans received and visited to go in the property monitoring folder for Commissioner feedback reporting.
- Provide Ms. Evans with a City email address with access to ArcGIS (after hire) and start to work on scripts/readings.

- Website content is sparse/blank, but Ms. Evans has access to backed up files. The City does have original files in each respective Division's archives.
- Dr. Holliday spoke, saying full Historic Preservation Commission participation is available in planning the website. ArcGIS Story-Map with historic districts and landmarks, and place-based links to each of the podcast entries will be available through a single interface. She stated that, "this should be simple and straightforward."
- The Commission needed to respond to an inquiry of housing this content at the library or historic museum. A plan to lay out the following information in bullet points was presented:
 1. The Preservation Plan
 2. Replicate the information available on 17 previous webpages avoiding repetition to generate traffic
 3. Previous websites analytics were not promising, and the Commission needs to know if this was because of redundant websites or information
 4. A better website with an intuitive interface is needed regardless

Future and In-Progress Steps:

- Resubmit the Royer Education Grant request.
- Continue historic preservation plan work by "buddying up."
- Look at adjacent plans as templates for how to compile the website.
- Use comments and feedback and buddy up between departments and Commissions after a few months.
- It was noted that Google dislikes searching for City of Urbana email addresses.
- Staff sent an email with 2 folders, "Property Monitoring" and "Historic Preservation Plan."
- Staff emailed the NAPC listserv for more information.

Historic Preservation Plan

Vice Chair Hays and Mr. Ricci talked about focus areas/topics and determined that "looking at everything" was more important.

- Vice Chair Hays mentioned using March 5, 2025, Minutes, p. 7, Section L, last paragraph, to coordinate with respective buddy(ies):
 - Mr. Weiss and Mr. Roberts
 - Ms. Urban, Susan Appel, and Mr. Hays
 - Mr. Shepard, Phyllis Winters-Williams, and Ms. O'Donnell
- Mr. Ricci and Vice Chair Hays agreed to find time within the next month to discuss between buddies and send comments to Mr. Ricci so that this information can be uploaded per Open Meetings Act guidelines.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair Hays noted that the Hotel Royer ribbon-cutting ceremony is June 11, 2025 beginning at 4:00 pm and ending at 6:00 pm.

It was noted that the Mid-Century Modern Tour took place on May 31, 2025 from 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm, and there were twelve (12) volunteers wearing pink shirts.

Vice Chair Hays noted that Roland Realty Building at the southwest corner of Chester and South First Street in the City of Champaign offered an opportunity to open a dialogue with colleagues with the Champaign Historic Preservation Commission.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Hays adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marcus Ricci".

Marcus Ricci, AICP
Historic Preservation Commission Secretary