



**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

APPROVED

DATE: May 6, 2026

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Laura O'Donnell, Dennis Roberts, Trent Shepard, Angela Urban

MEMBERS EXCUSED: David Hays, Kathryn Holliday, Andrew Weiss

STAFF PRESENT: Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services; Evan Alvarez, Principal Planner; Kate Himick, Planner I; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II; Vince Gustafson, Director of Public Works; Troy Richmond, Public Facilities Supervisor

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Appel, Christopher Evans, Phyllis Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Urban called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 February 4, 2026 Regular Meeting

The minutes of February 4, 2026 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Minutes of February 18, 2026 Special Meeting

The minutes of February 18, 2026 special meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from E R Cardman regarding preservation of the Urbana Civic Center

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Phyllis Williams approached the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to remind them of the Mid-Century Modern House tour coming up on May 23, 2026. She stated the window to volunteer is quickly closing on the website, to declare your t-shirt size, and to get a \$40 ticket. It is an amazing educational experience and will open your eyes to mid-century modern construction right in our midst, or as Richard Williams called it, *mid-continent modern*. It is wonderful, and we are going to see a lot of places that most people have not been to.

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

Mr. Shepard reported on the Royer House. He stated that the “For Sale” sign has been removed, but he is not sure what is going on. Chair Urban added that she is hoping to have a contract on the Royer House at 801 West Oregon by the end of the week. Kate Himick, Planner I, pointed out that she had received an email inquiring about replacing the roof. She responded to the email by saying that staff could not give a determination on whether permission would be granted to replace the roof without the owner applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness and the Historic Preservation Commission review of it. Mr. Shepard recalled that the Royer House currently has the original clay tile roof.

He mentioned that he attended an open house at 611 West Oregon Street, also known as the Huff House. There was a nice program with speakers and a tour of the house. It was nice to hear all the positive things that have gone on in the past and to see a house that is being taken care of.

K. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Himick reported on the following:

- **Citizen Planner Workshop held on April 29, 2026**

She stated that staff and Chair Urban attended the workshop put on by Champaign County Regional Planning Commission and the American Planning Association's Illinois Chapter. She noted that slides of the workshop were included in the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

packet for this meeting. Chair Urban said she thought the workshop was really useful and contained good reminders. One reminder, in particular, is that as commissioners when reviewing a case, they have a lot of information from the public and may hear different things on email. However, it is important that the members of the Commission base their decisions on facts. If the same training comes again next year or whenever, she highly encouraged everyone to consider attending.

Mr. Roberts stated that he noticed there was a discussion about the need for a commission member to recuse themselves if they have a business or financial relationship. He has the understanding that the HPC has different regulations for recusal than other boards and commissions. He asked if he would or would not need to recuse himself if he helped prepare an application that would go before the HPC in which he would not have a financial relationship. Ms. Himick replied that she would need to check with the City Clerk. Chair Urban recalled that Mr. Roberts was a co-applicant. She asked the question at the workshop, and the speakers said that you should recuse yourself. The speakers highly recommended that any member of a board or commission who recuses themselves should also step out of the room where the public hearing is being held. Mr. Shepard recalled the previous Chair of HPC, Alice Novak, would recuse herself from cases before the HPC in which she had so much involvement. Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, recalled a case for a local landmark designation for the First United Methodist Church, Dr. Holliday had worked closely with the applicant and the First United Methodist Church congregation and a student to develop the application. As a result, she recused herself; however, since it was one of our earlier meetings as a new team, there was some confusion as to whether she should stay at the dais or sit in the audience. In hindsight, she should have physically walked away from the dais and sat in the audience at a minimum if not actually left the room. This is just a recent example that comes to mind that might help bring some clarity to this conversation.

Chair Urban stated that the speakers at the workshop did not say it was a hard and fast rule that the person who recuses themselves leave the room, but she recalled that Dr. Holliday was part of the discussion before she recused herself from the actual vote. In that case, we should have asked her to step out even while we had our discussion.

She went on to say that part of it is perception. If a member who recuses themselves stays in the room, they can carry extra weight as part of the review process. If that person was part of an application, it could potentially not look so good even if there is no financial gain or if a member is not personally related. Mr. Roberts commented that it was good to clarify it and stated that this is good training.

Mr. Shepard mentioned that he attended the same workshop two years ago, and he found the training to be interesting and learned many things.

Ms. Himick talked about possible Study Session topics. For future meetings, she has received requests to address the following topics:

1. Revisit the Historic Preservation Plan from 1998.
2. Revisit the bylaws which were last updated in 2020; and
3. Discuss the topic of how to partner in the preservation and restoration of Urbana's historic brick sidewalks.

She said that if the HPC members have additional requests to email them to her or write them down on a piece of paper during this meeting and give them to her after the meeting. She also stated staff recently learned that the official procedure to continue a Study Session topic from one meeting to the next would be for a HPC member to motion to continue the topic to the next meeting and then have a vote on it. Mr. Roberts suggested adding the Downtown Overlay District Design Guidelines to the list of topics.

Ms. Himick talked about the calendar of dates that were handed out. She stated that if a Study Session topic is not assigned to a date, the best and most practical way to go about that would be to adhere to the application date that staff uses for public cases. Please send her an email to let her know of the meeting date and topic on or before the application date shown on the calendar. Chair Urban recommended having the Historic Preservation Plan on the June 3, 2026 meeting agenda so the HPC can discuss it prior to the next round of CDBG grants.

Ms. Himick announced that staff received a local landmark application for the Urbana Civic Center. The applicant is Phyllis Winters-Williams. The landmark application will be presented to HPC at the June 3, 2026 regular meeting starting at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

She mentioned that the City Administrator, Darius White, is currently scheduling tours of the Urbana Civic Center for members of City Council in two-by-two sessions. After Council members have finished, the City Administrator will reach out to schedule two-by-two tours for the Civic Center for HPC. Ideally this will happen before HPC's regular meeting on June 3, 2026. She pointed out that all tours of the Urbana Civic Center are private and not available to members of the public.

L. STUDY SESSION

CDBG FY25 Grant Funds – Elm Street Sidewalks Improvement Project

Ms. Himick reported that staff forwarded the HPC comments from the previous meeting to Rita Baker at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on April 8, 2026. She provided Ms. Baker with the construction date of the sidewalk along with a general description of appearance, construction, condition of the sidewalks, and a packet of photographs. Ms. Baker confirmed receipt of the material on April 9, 2026.

SHPO issued a letter addressed to Dr. Eric McCann with a determination of no historic properties will be affected. She noted that a copy of the letter is in the HPC meeting packet. She stated that she also received a response from SHPO regarding the Elm Street brick sidewalks, which was dated April 7, 2026. There was a date mix-up; however, there were no erroneous misconsiderations.

Mr. Roberts reiterated that although the sidewalks are not considered historic properties under SHPO's designation or decision, they are part of the fabric of Historic East Urbana. He also mentioned that the neighborhood association made an agreement with the City Public Works Department to remove brick sidewalks on the north side and replaced by cement to provide an accessibility route from Downtown Urbana to Victory Park. We feel that wheelchair accessibility to Victory Park is important. The Park has raised garden beds for people with disabilities.

He went on to say that there is a section of East Urbana and West Urbana where it is designated by city statute that brick sidewalks can be preserved as long as more than 50% of the residents along the brick sidewalks agree to preserve them. He requests that any bricks removed from the sidewalks on Elm Street be reserved for future replacement of gaps that appear in the brick sidewalks in other sections of our community. The bricks should not be sold but be made available to individual property owners if they wish to repair the sidewalk in front of their homes.

Ms. Himick asked that since he submitted the comment about a partner in preservation of the brick sidewalks, did he have a meeting date in mind? Mr. Roberts replied no. First, he would like to talk with City staff since the City owns the sidewalks. He noted that one of his issues is that the City does not seem to own the responsibility of maintaining the sidewalks, so he is interested in finding out if there is a way of partnering with community resources to make a youth training program for brick laying. Without the participation of the City, the process fell apart and was lost. He wants to hold a discussion about this again because youth training youth workforce training is one of the goals of the City.

Mr. Shepard asked if the City has a stockpile of bricks that they saved from sidewalks to use for repairs? Ms. Himick replied that she did not know and would need to check on this.

Chair Urban commented that the City does maintain sidewalks; however, she feels it gets complicated. Mr. Roberts mentioned some examples of where maintenance has not been done. He noted any maintenance that has been done was completed years ago. There has been no maintenance on the brick sidewalks since.

Ms. Jovine announced that this topic will be removed from the agenda.

Urbana Civic Center Existing Conditions Presentation – Public Works

Vince Gustafson, Director of Urbana Public Works, and Troy Richmond, Public Facility Supervisor, approached the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to discuss the Civic Center.

Mr. Gustafson gave a brief background of his history with the City of Urbana and the Civic Center noting that he started his career in building maintenance and his office was located in the Civic Center. He stated that Mr. Richmond has been assisting me as Building Maintenance Tech and now as the Public Facility Supervisor.

Mr. Gustafson stated that the information that they put together was initially for City Council a few weeks back. We appreciate the opportunity to come and speak with the HPC on the information and entertain any questions that Commission members may have after their presentation.

Mr. Gustafson and Mr. Richmond presented the following:

- Background
 - Built in 1960s
 - Low-cost option for events and meetings in the community
 - Venue for City-sponsored functions
 - Previously staffed by 3 part-time employees and Facilities Manager

- Fiscal
 - Urbana Civic Center operating as a low-cost meeting venue with the City subsidizing a lost of approximately \$40,000-\$50,000 annually.
 - Additional expenses, such as the Facilities Manager's salary and related facilities expenses (mowing, pest control, etc.) were not charged to the Civic Center operating budget.
 - While revenues for the Civic Center had been trending upward, these increases were far from sufficient to meet the required capital expenditures and increased operational costs.
- Deferred Maintenance – in 2018, required an estimated \$750,000 to \$1 million in replacement, including:
 - Roof replacement
 - Curtain replacement
 - Water Heater replacement
 - Stove and Range Hood replacement
 - Sound System replacement
 - Lighting upgrades
 - Replacement of tables and chairs for 300 guests
 - Updating electric service panels
 - Periodic professional deep cleaning
 - General remodeling of front office, conference space, restrooms and kitchen
 - HVAC units' replacement
 - Showed photos of some of the deferred maintenance
- Cost Analysis
- Options/Council Action
 - Evaluation of Rental Rates
 - Determination to await the upcoming Facilities Master Plan and its findings regarding the Civic Center
- Timeline
 - 2018 Structural Budget Deficit
 - Option 1 – recommendation provided by staff to potential close the Civic Center
 - City Council passed Option 1 on June 18, 2018
- Facilities Master Plan – April 2018
- Capital Improvement Plan FY2025 – FY2029

Mr. Shepard asked if the roof leaked back when it was still in use. Mr. Gustafson said yes. Mr. Richmond noted that Facility staff are keeping up on the maintenance on the roof. We have not abandoned the building. The air conditioning is still running. The heating is still running. City staff are checking on the building twice a week. As staff find leaks, we patch those. He said that really all the City can do is patch. Leaks are springing up every week.

Mr. Shepard asked if the water leak had done any major damage to the structure. Mr. Richmond replied that there is significant staining and there is water damage on some of the beams in the building. It is dark in the Civic Center, so you have to really pay close attention and use a flashlight, but you can see the staining all over inside where it has leaked prior to where it's currently leaking now.

Mr. Gustafson stated that in 2016 or 2017, the City hired a roofing consultant to perform an analysis of all the city roofs, including the Civic Center. The consultant took a core sample of the rubber membrane and a tapered insulation down to the deck. The consultant determined that insulation was fully soaked based upon their scanning. The consultant's determination confirmed that roof replacement was not just a simple tear off replacement.

Chair Urban thought the Civic Center was constructed in either 1969 or 1970 because the question came up asking why is this just becoming a thing? Why was not the state of the Civic Center and possible demolition mentioned at least to the Historic Preservation Commission? If a building is less than 50 years old, then it's not really something that comes onto our plate to consider at all. Mr. Richmond stated that the exact date of construction is muddled. There are quite a few different articles and pieces of paper written down. There was some kind of a dedication in the fall of 1970. So, City staff assume the building was built by then. There are some documentations for the original plans in 1968/1969. Many of the pictures are not dated so it is tough to tell when the construction happened. Chair Urban said that this brings us back to the question. We are now in 2020, and no one had brought up the Civic Center in discussion or as a case with the HPC.

Mr. Roberts commented that the timing, the economy, the use, and the repair certainly showed that the Civic Center was starting to need significant attention, which wasn't possible during that period of time by the city government. He imagined that it certainly would be true that the condition of the fire stations, the city building itself, and the Public Works building would supersede fixing the community center. He does not question the decision making at the time, but the future possibility of adaptive reuse by an individual may be a completely different kind of discussion and concept about what is possible with the existing material and how it might be incorporated into something different rather than just completely razed and placed into the landfill. So, the HPC has yet to learn whether there is an agent or organization in the community to purchase the property. He stated that he feels it is interesting to wait to see what potential future it may hold. Whether the building is a viable historic property under the new terms of the 50-year period and whether there is another way of using the building is still an open question which the HPC will be trying to explain and understand in the future.

Chair Urban pointed out that MTD or the developer is not necessarily against the reuse or incorporating the design into whatever becomes of that space. So, she said that it is important to be mindful of this. She commended Mr. Gustafson and Mr. Richmond and the Public Works staff for continually checking on the Civic Center. She said that having the air conditioner on is important. She talked about the fall of the Civic Center where she grew up, and she mentioned that it was replaced with a new community center that cost \$300 million.

Chair Urban asked if the demolition was estimated to cost \$545,000. Mr. Gustafson stated that the funding for demolition would come from the Central TIF fund. He said that he would need to re-evaluate it, but \$545,000 is what was allocated and programmed this fiscal year. He believes the FY25 was the allocation for the demolition of the Adult Education Center with the Central Tif FY26 for the demolition of the Civic Center site. Chair Urban commented that the City does not have estimates for current costs, so we cannot compare dollars of adaptive reuse to dollars of demolition.

Mr. Roberts stated he appreciates that the City Council and HPC members being offered in-person tours so they can assess what is happening and get an idea of the state of the building. Mr. Gustafson replied that it definitely offers a real perspective, and they are glad to provide the tours.

Urbana Civic Center Discussion

Ms. Himick explained that this second Study Session on the Civic Center is for the HPC if they want additional time to ask questions or provide comments or concerns.

Mr. Roberts recalled a conversation with various people about seven or eight years ago about the revitalization of Lincoln Hotel. No one believed at the time that anyone would be interested in renovating the hotel because it was a mess with the interior being outdated. It had water damage. The ceiling had fallen in the hallway near the swimming pool due to a water leak. It was old and musty, and full of old-fashioned furniture. The owner was not maintaining it. The Mayor of Urbana at the time said that she would rather it be demolished and proposed that the site be used for a bus terminal in the downtown area. With the right synergy, the City found that not only was somebody interested in the old building, but they actually pulled it together and opened it up. Now, it is a very beautiful boutique hotel. So, it is always possible to turn the fate of a building around if you have the right vision and you have the right agents to pull it off. Before we demolish the Civic Center, we should see what the potential is for inventive reuse. Maybe there is none, but maybe there is. It is a discussion yet to be fulfilled.

Chair Urban stated that Urbana High School held their prom at the Hotel Royer this season. She mentioned that she spoke to a young person who was attending, and they told her how excited they were because that was where their parents got married many decades ago. To be in the same space for their prom was very special. It reminds her that a person being able to renovate or to reuse an existing building can become very special because they are part of our community's fabric. Perhaps the same applies to the Civic Center. There may be people who have good memories of the Civic Center, and the memory goes away when the building goes away.

Ms. Jovine noted that the Hotel Royer example is interesting. She mentioned that the City had to put in around \$5 million investment into Hotel Royal. The City borrowed money, which through bonds will be paid back. This was counterbalanced by \$25 million of private investment. It became possible because there was a private developer at the table who could monetize off of the end product, which is the Hilton Hotel. We are in a slightly different position with the potential transit center and the Civic Center. Our partner at the table is also looking for public funds for the redevelopment of this project. So, although I do completely understand what you are illustrating with that example, the partners at the table are drastically different. Chair Urban confirmed that the City invested quite a bit of money in the renovation of the hotel. She pointed out that the first developer was not successful.

Chair Urban asked if the HPC is not able to take the tour before the next regular meeting of the HPC, could it be possible to push the vote on the upcoming landmark nomination of the Civic Center to the July 1, 2026 regular meeting date? Ms. Jovine explained that the HPC could choose to hold or continue the hearing to the next meeting.

Mr. Shepard noted that the HPC controls the exterior of a landmarked building, not the interior. He believed that it would be nice to see the interior, but he did not know if that would influence the potential for the landmark application. He felt it would be strange to have a Study Session on the same topic that they would be considering a landmark nomination for. Ms. Jovine said that the HPC could always bring it back as a topic at future meetings.

Section 106 Process Review Continued

Ms. Himick reviewed the Potential Best Practices listed in the written staff report from the meeting's packet. She talked about potential next steps. Chair Urban mentioned that they have worked as a group during study sessions and have also worked on a buddy system outside of the meeting. She requested more time to review the By-Laws in case there is more markup that she wants to do. She asked if what the HPC comes up with would be reviewed by the City Attorney. Ms. Jovine stated that the HPC would first review it together and then could submit recommendations to the City Attorney. Ms. Himick stated that if the HPC wanted to continue working on the By-Laws, that they could shift the Study Session topic to be titled "General By-Laws" rather than have them under the scope of "Section 106 Process Review".

Mr. Shepard recalled that in the past, Planning staff were more involved in making amendments to the by-laws. Then, HPC would discuss and edit the changes before voting on them. He said that he would be okay with staff doing this again.

Mr. Shepard talked about rewriting the Historic Preservation Plan. Chair Urban stated that HPC does not have to write the whole plan themselves.

Ms. Jovine recommended, since we have a full agenda for the June 2026 meeting, to place the By-Laws Review on the July 2026 meeting agenda. Staff will continue to work on the Section 106 process with the exception that Staff needs input from the HPC members on how they would prefer to be noticed. Staff have been talking about how they handle the process internally, so staff will take the lead on it.

She went on to say that since Staff is entirely new, they will need the HPC to provide guidance on general bylaw revisions that would go beyond the Section 106 process. Mr. Shepard commented that hopefully we could have a good seven-person discussion at a Study Session. Chair Urban added that HPC would like advance notice of when the bylaws will be on the agenda so the members can do their homework reviewing them and preparing any changes.

Mr. Roberts moved the topic of "Review of the general Bylaws" be brought to the HPC in a Study Session June 3, 2026 or July 1, 2026 regular meeting. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Shepard moved the topic of "Historic Preservation Plan" be brought to the HPC in a Study Session at the June 3, 2026 or July 1, 2026 regular meeting. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

City staff made the following announcements:

- Evan Alvarez, Principal Planner – Ms. Jovine introduced Mr. Alvarez as the new Principal Planner. Mr. Alvarez then gave a brief background on his work experience in the Champaign-Urbana area. Ms. Jovine stated that Kate Himick will serve as Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission and will continue to be the Commission’s main point of contact.

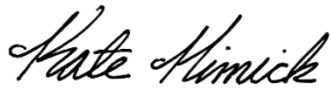
Mr. Shepard asked if the Planning Division was fully staffed now. Ms. Jovine explained that the City has a little bit left in the budget for a part-time position; however, the Planning Division staff is going to get settled and stabilized and then re-evaluate in about six months.

- Historic Preservation Month – Chair Urban announced that there is the Mid-Century Modern Homes Tour on May 23, 2026. HPC will also be hosting a booth at Market at the Square on May 16, 2026 from 8:00 am to Noon. She asked for volunteers.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Urban adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Himick".

Kate Himick

Historic Preservation Commission Secretary