



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

APPROVED

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: February 4, 2026

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Laura O'Donnell, Trent Shepard, Angela Urban

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Brian Adams, Christopher Evans, Samuel Furrer, Phyllis Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Dr. Hays ran this meeting in the absence of Chair Urban. He called the meeting to order at 7:02 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

There were none.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from Richard Dickerson regarding Historic Street Naming project
- Email from Jo and Doug Kibbee regarding Case No. HP-2025-L-02
- Staff Report on Overview of the Urbana Civic Center (108 East Water Street) Section 106 Review Process
- Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Transit Administration and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District

Downtown Urbana Transfer Center Project, Champaign County, Illinois (SHPO Log # 01053124)

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Brian Adams approached the Historic Preservation Commission to talk about his interest in historic sidewalks in Urbana. He noted historic sidewalks along Michigan Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue that have street names pressed into concrete and noted that some of the sidewalks are starting to crack and show obvious signs of age. He asked the Historic Preservation Commission for clarification on whether there is any recognition or protection that the Commission could offer. He stated that the City of Champaign has one sidewalk segment that is listed in the National Register.

Christopher Evans, Ward 2 City Council member, approached the Historic Preservation Commission to talk about creating an honorary street designation program. He recommended that the initiation of the honorary street designations come from citizens of Urbana to be submitted to the Community Development Services Department and presented to the Historic Preservation Commission for initial approval. The Commission would then submit their recommendation to City Council for final approval.

Mr. Evans mentioned that he sent several documents to the Commission and asked the Commission to consider the idea that honorary street naming designations start with them. He assured the Commissioners that responsibility would be shared among departments. He stated that Public Works could fabricate and place the signs. He pointed out that it would cost about \$300.00 for two signs for each street. He stated that it would be only for one block, and signs would be placed lower and be a different color than normal street signs to avoid potential issues, such as mitigation for first responder accessibility. He stated Public Works' concerns of fairness of who decides potential designee street naming, people reporting the wrong street name in a 911 call, and the program cost.

He encouraged the Commission to discuss whether they would be willing to be the starting place for the process and be willing to review and provide a recommendation to City Council.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Case No. HP-2025-L-02 - A request by Brian Adams to designate the Spencer Elmer ("S.E.") and Louise Peck Drum Huff House at 611 West Oregon Street as a Local Historic Landmark, as per Article XII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Vice Chair Hays opened the public hearing for Case No. HP-2025-L-02. Aimirou Sy, Planner II, presented the staff report for the case. He began by noting the location of the subject property. He described the existing house stating that it was constructed in 1908, and it has Tudor Revival and Craftsman architectural styles. He reviewed the criteria for a landmark from Article XII, Section

XII.5.C.1 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and noted that the proposed landmark nomination meets the following:

- Criterion A: Architectural and historic heritage are met as this property represents how residential development of the city formed and expanded during the 20th century.
- Criterion C: Distinguishing style, and period value are met with a high degree of integrity as it uses Tudor Revival and Craftsman architectural elements in the design, location, context, workmanship, and association.

Mr. Sy noted that Criterion B was considered, but it is not supported by historical evidence. Staff found that Mr. Huff did not rise to the level of “historically significant person” and that the property was not associated with activities that made Mr. Huff a significant person. He presented staff’s recommendation for approval with the following Findings of Fact:

1. The building meets criterion (a) in that it possesses significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community, and
2. The property meets criterion (c) in that it is a representative example of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type that is inherently valuable for the study of a particular period, style, craftsmanship, or method of construction, and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

Vice Chair Hays asked if any members of the Historic Preservation Commission had questions for City staff.

Mr. Roberts stated that Mr. Huff was well known historically for his production factory and contribution to commerce in Urbana but also noted that Mr. Huff did not reside in the property for a long period of time. He asked staff how long Mr. Huff lived in the home. How much influence did he have on choosing the style of the home? Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, replied that staff will defer these questions to the applicant to answer.

With there being no additional questions for Planning staff, Vice Chair Hays opened the hearing for public input. He invited the applicant to approach and speak on behalf of his application.

Brian Adams, applicant, approached the Historic Preservation Commission. He asked, “What is it that qualifies someone to be considered significant locally?”. He thought that since Mr. Huff was a successful businessman and served on many local commissions qualified him for criterion (b).

He noted that many individuals at the time were buying property, building houses, not residing in the houses very long, selling them, and then moving on. He believed that Mr. Huff sold the house to a University of Illinois professor in the English Department. From then on, it went from one professor to another over the years.

Ms. Holliday responded that her understanding of the person of significance criteria is that while she finds Mr. Huff to be a significant individual for the City of Urbana, the house is not representative

of him as an important individual. However, the design of the house and its association with the growth of the neighborhood during that time period makes the house significant. She stated that we do not need criterion (b) because the nomination meets criteria (a) and (c).

Mr. Roberts agreed with Ms. Holliday that Mr. Huff was a significant individual to the City. It almost sounds like the professors or the wealthier people in the community were buying lots, building houses, and flipping them. He stated that the proposed house is worthy for other reasons. Vice Chair Hays concurred and stated that professors and others were buying lots, building on them, and flipping them. This is part of the story of that area. He knows of places where members of the faculty department would purchase lots because they intended to live in a row. It is interesting in how it webs out and also relates between the City and the University. Mr. Adams noted that the house across the street, located at 701 West Oregon, was designed by Joseph Royer for a local businessman, Arthur Bierly, who ran a grocery store in Downtown Urbana. Mr. Bierly lived in the house for a year, sold it, and then moved to High Street. Vice Chair Hays went on to talk about the larger story of property acquisition and sales in general and Upton Sinclair's read, *The Goosestep*.

Ms. Holliday stated that she appreciates the owner's statement about the care that went into the restoration and in the thoughtfulness, especially in trying to preserve the stone foundation and attention to detail in the work that was done on the house. Mr. Roberts added that he went by the place and noticed that the house is very strong and well taken care of. He asked if all of the windows are still double hung and work. Mr. Adams replied that most of the windows are original. He said that some of the dormer windows might be new. He mentioned that the house appears to have always been kept in good hands over the years. It retains a lot of internal and external integrity. If there are elements that are not original, the owners have gone to great efforts to make sure that they stick to the look of the Craftsman and Tudor Revival architecture. Mr. Roberts noted that it is also an important contribution that the house remained as a single-family home rather than being converted into a duplex, triplex, or some other student housing.

Samuel Furrer approached the Historic Preservation Commission to speak. He stated that he lives across the street from the Huff house. He stated that he is appreciative that the Huff house has been well maintained and is in support of the proposed nomination, because he expressed interest in preserving and protecting the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Hays asked if staff had any comments on the Commission's previous discussion regarding criterion (b). Ms. Jovine stated that when reviewing the criteria, there was some ambiguity regarding criterion (b) and staff had questioned Mr. Huff's involvement in the design of the house. Because staff could not determine Mr. Huff's role in the design of the house, they felt criteria (a) and (c) are stronger. Therefore, staff felt comfortable moving forward with these two criteria only.

Phyllis Williams, of Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA), approached the Commission to speak. She shared commentary of her work with the Urbana Development Group, particularly Carolyn Baxley, on the Huff house. She stated that the house deserves recognition. She stated that they did replace the radiators and that the home now had forced air.

She mentioned that people would come and spend hours talking with Mr. Huff on the porch. When Mr. Huff passed away, it was trauma for the neighborhood.

Mr. Roberts sought more information on the Urbana Development Group. Ms. Williams gave a brief overview of the not-for-profit group and its goals for the community, which is to help troubled properties and turn them back into single-family homes. Mr. Roberts commented that it is good that we have such an organization within the City of Urbana that is working parallel on an individual commercial level to preserve things just as the Historic Preservation Commission tries to. Vice Chair Hays recalled that Ms. Baxley was surprised when she purchased the house about the spatial quality. The scale of the foyer and other areas in the house are really big, so it would be challenging living in it because of the scale of it.

With no additional input from the audience, Vice Chair Hays closed the public input portion and opened the hearing for discussion and/or motion(s) by the Historic Preservation Commission members.

Ms. Holliday moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve Case No. HP-2025-L-02 based on the following: *The landmark nomination conforms to criteria (a) and (c) of Section XII-5.C.1 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance: The building meets 1) criterion (a) in that it possesses significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state or community and 2) criterion (c) in that it is a representative example of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type that is inherently valuable for the study of a particular period, style, craftsmanship, or method of construction, and retains a high degree of historic integrity.* Mr. Weiss seconded the motion.

Ms. Holliday stated that she appreciated the nomination being thoroughly researched and well put together. A really clear case for a really beautiful property. Mr. Roberts commended Mr. Adams for making a quality nomination. Even though the nomination strongly meets criteria (a) and (c), the Commission recognizes that Mr. Huff was an important individual in the community. He said that he plans to support the nomination. Roll call was as follows:

Ms. Holliday	-	Yes	Mr. Roberts	-	Yes
Mr. Weiss	-	Yes	Mr. Hays	-	Yes

The motion passed by unanimous vote 4-0.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There were none.

K. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Jovine reported on the following:

▪ ***Introduction of New Staff Member***

Ms. Jovine introduced Kate Himick as the new City Planner I. She noted that Ms. Himick has a background in Planning and Historic Preservation, to the Commission. Ms. Himick had been with the staff for two weeks.

▪ ***MOA Agreement between the Federal Transit Administration and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer regarding Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District Downtown Urbana Transfer Center Project (site of Urbana Civic Center)***

Ms. Jovine brought the Commissioners' attention to a recent News-Gazette article from January 30, 2026, that announced that the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) was pursuing the federal BUILD grant for a proposed transfer center at 108 East Water Street, the location of the former Urbana Civic Center. Ms. Jovine stated that the Section 106 process was underway for the structure and noted that staff had been working to determine the Historic Preservation Commission's level of exposure to the Section 106 process over the years. She stated that the goal was to bring the Commission up to speed with staff's understanding of the process to date.

She mentioned that MTD has had various iterations of a proposal for the subject site. Discussions began as early as 2014. Next, there was a formal study performed by a contracted architecture and design firm in 2017. She referred to the handout titled "Overview of the Urbana Civic Center (108 East Water) Section 106 Review Process" and mentioned that Ms. Himick would talk more about this handout.

Ms. Himick reviewed the handout of MTD's proposed transfer center at 108 East Water Street. She explained that a Section 106 review identified 12 historic resources and found the former Urbana Civic Center to be eligible for the National Register under criteria A and C, resulting in an executed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with SHPO (Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer) and MTD that required HIBS (Historic Illinois Buildings Survey) Level III documentation. Ms. Himick reported that the Historic Preservation Commission was listed as a concurring but unsigned party.

Mr. Roberts stated that he knew members of the public who were very concerned about losing the Civic Center and noted that the Civic Center was originally designed to serve as an entry foyer to a larger complex that was going to be a civic community center with a theatre, meeting rooms, gym and/or other athletic rooms or a multi-purpose building. However, the City never purchased the adjacent properties to expand the design. He said that people are concerned with losing the building, because it is a significant example of Mid-Century Modern construction and is rather unique in the community.

He noted that there should be more conversation about preserving the Civic Center as a foyer for a central bus terminal. He asked if the Sheriff's jail, which is adjacent to the Civic Center and practically on the same block, is also a potential location for a bus terminal. He asked if City staff, the Historic Preservation Commission, and public had opportune time to discuss preferences in the location of the bus terminal. He stated that he had not previously seen any documentation on the project, and they are all concerned about development in the historic downtown district. Ms. Jovine replied that staff are also coming up to speed on what level of

discussion the Commission has had on this, so Planning staff feel it is important to bring the information we have in a transparent manner to the Commission. She also noted that there were an administration and staff change while the Section 106 process was working its way along in the background. She stated that this is only a staff report topic for this meeting; however, she invited Commissioners to consider discussing the topic further in a future study session.

Mr. Roberts stated that the Commission strongly supports adaptive reuse, and this could be an opportunity to consider that as a possible development with the plan as it goes forward. He agrees that the Commission should have a thorough study session on this.

Ms. Holliday stated that she appreciates staff bringing this to the Commission. She asked how the Section 106 process had gone to the end of the process without the Historic Preservation Commission being involved and how this could be avoided in the future. She went on to say that the Section 106 review requires the involvement of the Commission, particularly if there has been a finding by the State Historic Preservation Officer that a building is eligible for the National Register. With regards to the Section 106 review of the Civic Center, this step was skipped; however, there is a statement that there is concurrence from the Commission even though the business of this evaluation was never brought to the Commission.

Ms. Holliday asked to have a future study session to understand how the City's Section 106 review process can be dramatically improved for any future cases that come up. Ms. Jovine noted that staff had been asked to sign on Page 15 of the Memorandum of Agreement, but that she was uncomfortable signing without discussing the matter with the Commission. She stated that she talked with Dan Diguseppe, Lead Environmental Protection Specialist for Region 5 of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and he assured her that the process would continue to move forward with or without our signatures. She said that he told her by not signing the agreement, the City and the Commission would not be left out of being notified of further steps in the process. She said that she chose not to sign the agreement on behalf of the Commission as it had not come forward to the Commission. Mr. Diguseppe also had told her that the Historic Preservation Commission could sign the agreement at a later date, if they choose to do so. She said that Page 4 of the agreement describes the recordation that is being defined and prescribed for this particular site.

Ms. Jovine said that staff will look into the City's general participation in the Section 106 process and bring their findings forward for a Study Session in the future with the Commission.

Ms. Holliday said that it is her understanding that there is already a plan for an outside consultant to do mitigation documentation. She imagined that a good mitigation plan would also involve the Historic Preservation Commission, which has more local knowledge of the property that is being affected and has access to community members who could contribute to making sure it is a good mitigation plan. She suggested that any review of a mitigation plan occur much earlier in the process and with a greater degree of transparency. She said that her understanding is that demolition has been decided to occur. There needs to be participation by the Commission in that mitigation process for it to be meaningful.

Mr. Roberts stated that he feels somewhat outraged that this process could go so far to already have a demolition decree considered without even the Commission's participation. Ms. Jovine said that she would need to confirm that demolition has been finalized before speaking on it. Mr. Roberts talked about the City's Demolition Delay process, which the Historic Preservation Commission can use to file landmark designation.

Vice Chair Hays asked if staff know why the Mayor of Urbana and Phyllis B. Winters-Williams, on behalf of Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA), did not sign the agreement. Ms. Williams approached the Historic Preservation Commission to respond. She stated that the prior City Administration seemed determined to get rid of the Civic Center. She feels that attitude has come forward into the current City Administration. She stated that she does not know how citizen groups can get any power in the Section 106 review process.

Ms. Williams said that she believes the Civic Center has true value for the community. She noted that the City had to cancel reservations the day they closed it. She said that the City never really marketed the Civic Center well, and wedding venues started becoming a thing. She talked about some of the history of the Civic Center. She stated that bus riders in this town deserve a transit facility, so she can see both sides. She offered to provide documents on the Civic Center for future study sessions.

Mr. Roberts requested that the Commission have a study session very soon due to the pace of the project. Ms. Jovine replied that we can have a study session at the next regular meeting. She said typically if there are no cases, meetings are cancelled; however, the City could move forward and hold a Historic Preservation Commission meeting and include a study session.

Vice Chair Hays said that he did not understand the practice of cancelling Commission meetings in the past. Sometimes there are topics that they need to discuss even if there are no cases. Ms. Holliday agreed. She said that in order to maintain the City's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG), the Historic Preservation Commission has to meet more frequently than just when there is a case. Vice Chair Hays stated that this should not be the procedure anymore.

Vice Chair Hays asked City staff to try and schedule a special meeting of the Commission on February 18, 2026. Ms. Jovine stated that staff will check the calendar and confirm availability of Commission members to schedule a special meeting around this date.

Ms. Holliday noted that an article in the News-Gazette commented that "the Section 106 review process is something we had to go through". This speaks to a larger issue of the need to take the Section 106 review process seriously at the City. It should be treated as a meaningful and informative process rather than a procedural requirement. It is a productive process that helps the community make decisions in an informed way.

Ms. Jovine asked Commissioners to email staff their key questions by early next week to assist staff in preparing materials for the upcoming study session.

L. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roberts moved to adjourn.

Vice Chair Hays adjourned the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Submitted,

Olivia Jovine

Olivia Jovine

Historic Preservation Commission Secretary