



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

APPROVED

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: June 3, 2026

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Kathryn Holliday, Andrew Weiss

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Brian Adams, Susan Appel, Madison Bowman, Liz Cardman, Paul Debevec, Christopher Evans, Heather Grossman, Alicia Haggin, John Haggin, Ronald Langacker, Diane Marlin, Bruce Michelson, Theresa Michelson, Aseel Mohammed Ibrahim, 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

Ms. Himick noted that the minutes of December 3, 2025, regular meeting were not ready to be presented for approval. City staff were in the process of revising them. She pointed out that the previous approval is not valid, because there was no motion or second prior to roll call to approve them. They will be presented at the next regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of April 1, 2026 Regular Meeting

The minutes of April 1, 2026 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approves the minutes. Mr. Hays seconded the motion.

Mr. Hays recommended the following changes:

- Page 5, Paragraph 1, Last Full Line – It should read as follows: “..., he stated that they had questions about how widening would be possible in ~~those~~ some areas.”

The minutes were approved as amended by unanimous voice vote.

Minutes of May 6, 2026 Regular Meeting

The minutes of May 6, 2026 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Hays moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion.

Ms. O'Donnell made a change to the following:

- Page 7, Paragraph 3, Line 8 – “raised” should be “razed”

Mr. Hays made the following changes:

- Page 3, Paragraph 4, Lines 2-3 – “~~So, even if there is no financial gain, if a member is not personally related, or~~ 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.”
- Page 4, Paragraph 2, Line 5 – “Urban recommended having the Historic Preservation Plan on the June 3, 2026 meeting agenda ...”.

The minutes were approved as amended by unanimous voice vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from Kathryn Holliday re: Case No. HP-2026-L-01 – Dated 06-02-2026
- MTD Memo from Ashlee McLaughlin re: Case No. HP-2026-L-01 – Dated 05-27-2026
- Email from Dennis Roberts re: Mayoral Vision 2025 for the Urbana Civic Center – Dated 05-29-2026

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Paul Debevec approached the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to speak. Mr. Debevec mentioned that he served as a member of the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) Board of Trustees from mid-2024 to mid-2025. He stated that during his time on the Board he learned that MTD is an exceedingly well-run organization. Mr. Debevec also noted that MTD has been successful in the competition for significant federal grants for transit infrastructure.

Mr. Debevec explained that MTD has had a long-time interest in developing a Downtown Urbana facility. MTD spent considerable effort in consideration of the site of the Urbana Civic Center, which is on hold pending action of the HPC and City Council. He noted that the position of MTD is stated in their recent May 27, 2026 board meeting notes: if the Urbana City Council votes against the landmark nomination of the Urbana Civic Center, then MTD staff intends to submit a grant application. Mr. Debevec stated that if the Urbana City Council votes in favor of the landmark nomination or if the vote has not taken place by the time the grant application is due, MTD will not submit the grant.

Mr. Debevec noted that during the February 18, 2026, April 1, 2026, and May 6, 2026 HPC meetings, a good deal of discussion was directed toward the possibility of adaptive reuse. He said it is fair to ask what of the Urbana Civic Center can be reused. Based on the presentations by Vince Gustafson, Director of Public Works, and Troy Richmond, Public Facilities Supervisor, to the City Council and to the HPC, he pointed out the following issues with the Civic Center building:

- Entryway railings are too rusted
- Entry walkways not ADA compliant
- Unique rooftop cupolas require complete replacement
- Roof must be torn down and replaced
- The building envelope, the extent of single plate glass walls must be completely replaced
- Electric utilities must be completely replaced
- The plumbing, much of which is in the building slab, must be excavated and replaced
- HVAC must be completely replaced
- Kitchen facilities must be replaced

Mr. Debevec asked what was left of the building to use and stated that there was not much, except maybe the brick corners and cross beams.

Mr. Debevec said that, understandably, the HPC values the history and the memory of the Civic Center and would prefer adaptive reuse of the building. He stated that however, unfortunately, the message from the building was DNR (Do Not Resuscitate).

Bruce Michelson approached the HPC to speak. Mr. Michelson stated that he is the Vice-Chair of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Commission for the City of Urbana. He stated that he had taught cultural history for most of the past 40 years, and that he believes strongly in knowing and conserving the past. He explained that he and his wife provide financial support for preservation of other historic sites, including structures in Hartford, Connecticut and Hannibal, Missouri. Mr. Michelson stated that, however, they understood the difference between buildings with architectural and historical significance and buildings that are merely outmoded and mediocre. In his opinion, the Civic Center fits that description. He explained that it had never consistently met its purpose as a site of vitality and community connection and that its awkward design had been compared to rest stops along Interstate 57. He further stated that when the Civic Center was first opened, it was not recognized as a structure of special interest, and its closing created no groundswell of regret. According to Mr. Michelson, the building's prospects as an environmentally sustainable asset are poor. He explained that refurbishing and maintaining it now would constitute a financial burden with little to be gained. If there were solid reasons to make that investment, he stated that he would be in favor of the proposed landmark nomination. But in his view, those reasons are not there.

Theresa Michelson approached the HPC to speak. Ms. Michelson stated that she has been involved with the Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Association for the last 20 years and that she also served on the Community Development Commission for the City of Urbana. She stated that she understands that MTD has a well-developed plan to create a new transportation center at the site where the Civic Center stands. It was her opinion that the benefits of a fresh addition to Downtown

Urbana would go far to help revitalize the downtown. She expressed hope that we can encourage and cooperate with the MTD to bring this plan to completion rather than encumber them with redesigning to accommodate the adaptive reuse of the Civic Center, essentially the remains of a false experiment. She expressed that the City of Urbana needs to balance history with innovation and to avoid burdening ourselves with public properties with no distinction other than their oddity and obsolescence.

Diane Marlin approached the HPC to speak. Ms. Marlin stated that she served on the Urbana City Council from 2009 to 2017 and served as Mayor of the City of Urbana from 2017 to 2025. She asked the HPC to vote against the request to landmark the Urbana Civic Center at 108 East Water Street. She stated that over the past 20 years or more, she had direct experience both with issues related to the operation and maintenance of the Civic Center facility. Ms. Marlin explained that she had also participated in several different community attempts over the years to locate a bus transit center in Downtown Urbana. She expressed that the current collaboration between the City of Urbana and MTD for use of the parcel at 108 East Water Street gets the City closer than we have ever been to achieving that goal.

Ms. Marlin spoke about the community impact of landmarking the Civic Center and stated that doing so would effectively block MTD from submitting a grant for a transit center at that location. She stated that it was not feasible to build a transit center around the Civic Center building or incorporate the existing building into the new design. It was her opinion that Civic Center cannot be repurposed as a lobby, an atrium, or a plaza for the transfer center. She expressed that there simply was not enough room on that parcel for the vehicle circulation that is required for a modern and efficient transit center.

Ms. Marlin stated that the thing that makes this incredibly important is that there were no other feasible sites available in Downtown Urbana. She explained that over the past 20 years, multiple sites for a transit center had been considered, including at Lincoln Square and the Champaign County Jail on Main Street. Ms. Marlin stated that the City made the very difficult decision to close the Civic Center in light of the dire financial situation the City was in, plus the absolute deteriorated condition of the Center. She further explained that after it was closed, conversations began to coalesce around the site on Water Street, and the City, MTD staff, and potential community partners began to evaluate the possibilities of the Civic Center site. She stated that landmarking the Civic Center closes a lot of doors, possibly permanently. It represents a lost opportunity to provide at long last a clean, safe, and comfortable facility to serve the thousands of transit customers and drivers throughout the community. She stressed how important this is at this time.

Ms. Marlin spoke about how woefully inadequate the current parking deck at Broadway and Elm, serving as an informal downtown bus transit point, is. Families, students, senior citizens, people with mobility issues, and everybody who must transfer buses currently has to wait outside when it is 100°. She stated that the only nearby public restrooms are in Lincoln Square and that sometimes people use the portable potty in the parking deck. Ms. Marlin expressed to the Commission that landmarking the Civic Center represents a lost opportunity to reduce the bus congestion surrounding the parking deck in courthouse; a lost opportunity to provide a permanent and convenient location for the community for Urbana School District central administration and staff; a lost opportunity to meet transportation needs of residents, businesses, and government services; and also represents an enormous loss of funding.

Ms. Marlin stated that it would be a loss of downtown construction investment of at least \$32 million, which is the grant that MTD is looking at today. She explained that this would be \$25.6 million in federal grant funds and \$6.4 million in the local match. In addition, she said, MTD to date has spent over \$133,000 for consultants to conduct the complicated multi-year National Environmental Policy Act review for the project, which is required for projects like this, as well as over \$30,000 for the demolition mitigation plan required by the State of Illinois Historic Office (SHPO). Ms. Marlin stated that the demolition mitigation plan ensures that the Civic Center will be memorialized in photos, blueprints, written history, and physical description of the structure. These documents will be archived both at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois and in the Champaign County Historical Archives at the Urbana Free Library. She added that there were ways to evoke and memorialize the Civic Center and some of its design in the new transit center that would be built, much as the way the blueprints and photos from the Urbana Lincoln Hotel are now visible and on display at Hotel Royer. She urged HPC to prioritize the overall community benefit. She stated that there were many other options for event and meeting spaces in Downtown Urbana but that there were no other options for the transit center that is desperately needed.

Ron Langacker approached the HPC to speak. Mr. Langacker stated that he owns the building at 210 North Broadway Avenue, which is next door to the Civic Center. He stated that he does not have a position on whether it should be considered a historic property or not. However, he expressed that he would like to see the property used in a proactive way. He informed the Commission that since he purchased 210 North Broadway Avenue, the Civic Center building has been empty. He explained that when he served on the Historic Preservation Commission in Wisconsin, one of his biggest concerns was if landmarking a property would end up encumbering the building later because of unintended consequences.

Brian Adams approached the HPC to speak. Mr. Adams said that he strongly supports the nomination for landmark status for the Civic Center. He stated that when he thinks of historic preservation, it is normally of buildings from the 1800s, early 1900s, but there really does seem to be interest amongst the community for architecture of this time. He expressed that the Civic Center does represent a very unique building that fits into the Mid-Century Modern type of architecture.

Mr. Adams stated that when looking at the historic landmarks on the City of Urbana's website, he noticed that all 21 landmarks date between 1850 and 1940. He explained that there is nothing past 1940 and there is nothing from the time period, Mid-Century Modern, in the inventory of historic properties. There is a gap between what the City has recognized as historically significant in our inventory in Urbana and other historically significant architectural types. In addition, he noticed that most of the buildings that are currently on the local historic list are dwellings or residences. He noted that there is a church, a lodge, and a theater, but there was nothing that fit the classification of the Civic Center. He stated that the building was not only unique for its architecture, but also for its function.

Mr. Adams pointed out that there was one other Mid-Century Modern structure in town that has been recognized, the Lincoln Square Mall, but that the building is not a local historic landmark but instead on the National Register of Historic Places. He expressed that that was another reason why it would be important to recognize the Civic Center as a local landmark — to bridge that gap. Mr. Adams strongly urged the HPC to approve the proposed landmark nomination.

Susan Appel approached the HPC to speak. Ms. Appel mentioned that she chairs the Advocacy Committee for the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County (PACA). She stated that PACA was in full support of this nomination. She believed the nomination was well put together and covered a very rich history even in the relatively short time that this building has been around compared to some. She reminded the HPC that their concern is whether the landmark nomination application fits the criteria and whether the Civic Center building deserves recognition for its value to the community's history, not about MTD and their potential plans for the site.

Madison Bowman approached the HPC to speak. Ms. Bowman stated that she is new to the area and thanked everyone for providing information on the existing condition of the Civic Center and for the criteria information. She stated that people are questioning what is left of the building rather than what it can do for the City of Urbana. She noted that adaptive reuse and/or landmarking the Civic Center may or may not be a clean solution but demolishing it will represent a loss of education and cultural and civic value. She expressed that she has worked in forensic engineering, architecture, and historic preservation and has worked on nominations, which she expressed were not easy and take a lot of work and effort. Ms. Bowman expressed that the Urbana Civic Center is not just an architectural oddity but also a chance at Urbana renewal. She explained that there were not a lot of Mid-Century Modern style historic properties built in the 1940s, so the proposed landmarking would do the Champaign-Urbana area good much more than demolishing it and then plastering something on a wall of a new building in its place as a recognition of history.

Heather Grossman approached the HPC to speak. Ms. Grossman stated that she is an architectural historian and teaches in the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois. She stated that she supports the landmark nomination for many of the reasons that others have already spoken of but also because Mid-Century Modern style is something that new to the idea of historic preservation. Ms. Grossman explained that 50-year threshold has always been held, and that the Civic Center just passed the 50-year threshold with historic preservation. She said that there are many different buildings in Urbana that have deep significance to the community and that have architectural significance as demonstrations of what was being built in the United States and serving communities in the middle of the century and just after. She noted that these buildings are rapidly becoming part of our historical fabric just as a building from the 1880s might have been.

Ms. Grossman stated that HPC's charge for this meeting was to think about this building as a historic place that contained the memories of the people of Urbana. She noted that it had the potential to think about what Urbana was striving to do when it was built, which was to create a sort of civic core and identity for town. She hoped that it would be something again in that vein and could be something that could bring together innovation.

Ms. Grossman encouraged MTD to move forward with their plans to have a downtown transit station because it was deeply needed in town. She stated that there may now be a possible location where there was not one before. She hoped the HPC would vote to landmark the Civic Center.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

HP-2026-L-01 – A request by Phyllis Winters-Williams to designate the Urbana Civic Center at 108 East Water Street as a local Historic Landmark, as per Article XII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Urban opened the public hearing for Case No. HP-2026-L-01.

Kate Himick presented the staff report. Ms. Himick began by stating the procedure for a landmark nomination application. She noted the location of the Civic Center and gave a brief description and history of the building. She reviewed the criteria from Section XII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance as they pertain to the proposed landmark nomination. She read the options of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and presented City staff's recommendation for approval based on meeting criteria a, c, d, e, and f of the designation criteria. She welcomed the applicant, Phyllis Williams, to approach the HPC to speak.

Phyllis Williams approached and gave a presentation on the Civic Center. Ms. Williams thanked Dr. Brian Adams for allowing her to borrow some of the history of Urbana. Ms. Williams spoke about the history of the Civic Center and presented materials from her research. She presented historic photos relating to the Civic Center, including historic aerial imagery, historic photos of nearby Downtown Urbana surroundings, photos of the Civic Center's construction and groundbreaking, and photos of students involved in the Tiger Den. Ms. Williams also presented historic newspaper clippings and spoke about the funding process for the Urbana Civic Center. She explained that the Civic Center had been only \$25 dollars per quadrant to rent and \$10 for non-profits.

Ms. Williams spoke about why the Civic Center should be landmarked and gave highlights from her application for landmark status. She noted that Ruth Brookens had announced her run for Mayor at the Civic Center and that Tim Johnson had announced his run for state representative there. She explained the many political and religious uses of the Civic Center and that it had been available for everyone as an affordable and viable opportunity. She noted that the Civic Center had also been a popular place for art shows and craft fairs. She then gave an overview of news headlines from the time of the Civic Center's closing. Ms. Williams spoke on the uniqueness of the Civic Center, why it should be valued, and the meeting of the 50-year mark for historic status. She stated that such a civic building is unique in our community.

Mr. Hays asked for a point of clarification about proponents and opponents presenting evidence; he asked whether the audience could give items that were more in the realm of comments and opinions. Ms. Himick replied that the HPC bylaws do not define evidence as such in any sort of certain terms of what evidence may mean. The Commission is not bound by strict rules of evidence meaning the HPC may exclude irrelevant or repetitious material. It is up to HPC's discretion as to what would be considered evidentiary for a public hearing.

With there being no additional audience input, Chair Urban closed the public input portion of the hearing. She opened the hearing for discussion and/or motion(s) from the HPC members. Ms. Himick reviewed the procedures for a public hearing.

Chair Urban noted that there were a couple of speakers during Audience Participation who reminded the HPC what their duties are in this case. She reiterated that what the HPC is considering is based on findings of fact and the various criteria that have been presented in the meeting packet, rather than any discussions over the past several months regarding MTD and potential plans and potential grant applications. She urged the HPC members to keep in mind that these are separate issues.

Chair Urban expressed her appreciation for the email from Mr. Debevec noting there was a meeting of the MTD Board of Trustees that just happened a few days ago where there was discussion about this case. She said that it concerned her that the landmark status of the Civic Center was tied in with the decisions being made by MTD and their potential plans for a proposed transfer station. She stated that they were two separate issues and that she did not believe it was contingent on the landmark status. She hoped that MTD, a great partner in the City of Urbana, would be willing to come to the table in the sense of better understanding of how the City and MTD could work together. She said that she is certainly not against any forward movement, especially for what we need. She mentioned that she rides the bus frequently and has waited in that parking garage during all types of weather. She stated that she is certainly in favor of MTD being able to use whatever space is feasible. She expressed that the landmarking of this historic structure was not tied to a transfer station as much as it seemed to be reiterated in these meetings. Chair Urban reiterated that these were two separate issues and that the HPC's only decision at this meeting was based on the landmarking of a building and its historic significance. She stated that it was not based on decisions related to a developer.

Chair Urban spoke about there not being any Mid-Century Modern buildings that have been nominated or landmarked locally. She stated that the proposed landmark nomination represents what is to come — there are other Mid-Century Modern houses in the area, but they have not come in for nominations yet. She expressed that the HPC's decision in this case could impact what may be received in the future regarding these buildings and that this is a big change in a lot of cities. She explained that this is a different type of architecture that HPC has not dealt with and that maybe it had been ignored or maybe it just was not quite there yet as far as historic significance, but things have changed. She asked her fellow Commissioners to keep in mind that this was a different type of building than what the HPC had considered in the past. However, it did not mean that it was less historic or less meeting the criteria than other buildings that they had considered in the past.

Mr. Hays expressed appreciation to everyone in the room for caring about the City of Urbana and stated that this was meaningful to him. He expressed his belief that everyone there cares about civic culture and transportation.

Mr. Hays stated that he is sensitive to false oppositions and how these get constructed and can become expensive. In this case, he explained, we have the sense of historic preservation versus equitable transportation. He stated that this has underscored a lot and that this affects lower income people in part because they are more likely to use the bus. He stated that he is also sensitive to the false opposition between historic preservation and education. He gave the example of the Burnham

Mansion in the City of Champaign being demolished when in fact they could have made money because the building could have been moved one block to the east onto Westside Park or left it exactly where it was and used as a vocational educational center.

Mr. Hays stated that he is also sensitive to differences in understanding and that some people believe that historic preservation is a kind of freezing of conditions. He noted that preservation has evolved a lot in the last 50 years and that principal way to think of historic preservation right now is as a form of adaptive reuse. He explained that preservation is about taking stock of the assets that we have inherited and making decisions about how to move forward in ways that are to our advantage. So, he stated, historic preservation as a form of adaptive reuse is about win-win situations. It is a progressive position, not an ossification or a freezing of something precious.

Mr. Hays went on to say that a false opposition in this case, based on differences in understanding, is if the City Council votes in favor of the proposed landmark nomination, then suddenly MTD's plans for locating a transfer station are shut down. He stated that he believed that many sites were considered, but the Civic Center site would make a great location to make a transfer station happen. He stated that he also believes that the Civic Center building is worth preserving.

Mr. Hays states that he finds the MTD memo to be disturbing in that it creates false opposition. He stated that there was nothing in the 2026 US DOT Build Program that says if you include an adaptive reuse component, the application is null and void. He expressed that the MTD memo admits as much by saying that MTD will not submit a grant application for the project to avoid the risk of receiving an award that cannot be used for its intended purpose. He stated that in other words, it meant that if the Civic Center gets landmark status and MTD submits an application, MTD could get the grant but would not accept the grant. He asked why MTD would not accept the grant and stated that they have heard over and over that a bus could not go around because there is not enough of a turning radius. Mr. Hays noted that when he visited the site, he noticed there was a lot more room than he thought. He stated that students did a study and showed that a turning radius is possible when working with MTD making a plan and that there would be even more room if they demolished the kitchen annex. He expressed that there is a win-win potential here.

Mr. Hays stated that because of false opposition — because of that sense that historic preservation means you have to restore the curtains and the railings and restore 90% of the building — the seeming best approach is to demolish the whole thing and restore it with a new building, which would be very expensive. He stated that this is where people kept stumbling over things that are based on these false oppositions and differences in understanding. He noted that no one has yet to convince him on this site that there could not be a terrific building right next door to it. He continued that Ms. Michelson had commented that MTD has very well-developed plans, but that according to MTD, they do not have well-developed plans. Mr. Hays noted that it was interesting to think about what MTD has and knows, and what was known was that there is plenty of room to have a turning radius, especially if the kitchen was demolished.

Mr. Hays stated that he knew sometimes things have to be torn down, but that he does not like tearing down buildings that have value. He explained that he does not like throwing out assets and does not set fire to money. He stated that he would love for someone to explain why the Civic Center would need to be torn down for MTD to move forward with their plans and that no one has convinced him that it is reasonable to spend a lot of money to demolish an asset that has huge

adaptive reuse building potential. He noted that during his recent visit, he found the building to be in remarkably good condition.

Mr. Hays stated that there is a line in the MTD memo that says the City should pass a resolution to assure MTD that the City will support their project financially in the City's own scale. He stated that the memo also says that failure to pass Resolution 2026-11 would give MTD's grant application a disadvantage. He asked what this disadvantage was.

Mr. Hays stated that he appreciated Dr. Holliday's email. He noted that in her email, she points out that the Urbana Free Library, the Aquatic Center, and the Park District's structures also do not turn a profit or pay for themselves — these are provided by the City as needed public goods. He stated that the operating expenses for the Civic Center building was losing the City of Urbana \$40,000 to \$50,000 annually to keep open. He asked how much the City Building is losing annually. He also asked how much the fire station was losing or how much the Urbana Free Library was losing. He expressed that perhaps \$40,000 to \$50,000 for a building with the level of use it was getting might have been the most profitable, least-losing building in the City's portfolio. He expressed that the real issue was not the fact that the building was losing money, because every City building is losing money. The question was if it was worth investing in the Civic Center. He stated that the real issue was that people did not value the Civic Center's importance as a civic resource and that one person said that it was never successful. However, he stated, testimony by Vince Gustafson, Public Works Director for the City of Urbana, at the City Council's Committee of the Whole meeting on April 6, 2026, shows that the building was hugely successful, being rented over 50% of the time. If you wanted to have an event there on a Friday or Saturday, you needed to reserve it a year in advance.

Mr. Alvarez clarified that the disadvantage to the grant application was that the memo was internal from MTD staff to MTD's Board and was asking for permission to apply for the funds. So, that was referring to if MTD's board did not authorize it, then they would have been at a disadvantage in terms of how the grant application works. He explained that it was not in reference to the Civic Center site specifically.

Chair Urban added that she listened to the meeting as well, and it was brought up that several people in the public asked why MTD cannot continue the grant even if the building is landmarked. She stated that the person responded that while MTD has been successful submitting federal grants in the past, there is fear that the City of Urbana, maybe even the HPC, would block their plans for the Civic Center site (possibly by not approving a Certificate of Appropriateness for their plans if the proposed landmark nomination is approved), so MTD will not submit the grant application.

Chair Urban stated that HPC has been told multiple times that MTD does not have any plans yet. So, the HPC does not have any visual of what the plans are for a future transit station. She appealed to MTD and to their Board of Trustees that the City and the HPC are not here to freeze their plans, but instead to help the community and City achieve the goals set in the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the Plan mentions multiple times the need for civic space and for preserving historic downtown properties.

Mr. Roberts stated that he went on a tour of the Civic Center. He talked about different events that he had attended in the past at the Civic Center and noted that he has a strong sense of its utility within the community, which related to one of the criteria for being landmarked. He stated that it is

an interesting representation of the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture. He went on to describe the perky peaks on top of the roof, the big eaves, the partitions that divided the room and were cumbersome, the speaker system being a little off and loud, the old curtains, and the kitchen being no longer serviceable. He discussed what MTD might need inside and stated that the electrical system, lighting system, and plumbing system would perhaps need to be replaced.

Mr. Roberts stated that when he went outside, he saw a bus parked in front of the building in a parking space and that it fit in one parking lane. He stated that at the back of the property, there are four lanes of parking to the west and five lanes of parking to the east. He stated that there was plenty of room to construct a building and keep the Civic Center building as an entry port or bathroom facility and shelter for people to sit. He noted that MTD would still have the whole eastern side for buses to pull in and move out. He continued that he could not see the detriment of reusing the Civic Center building or how it would be an impediment in supporting the dream that MTD has. He noted that MTD has never shown any concept plan that they might have of a building, and that MTD is far from creating or forming a concept plan of what they might envision for the site. Often developers come before Plan Commission with designs and imagery for proposed development.

Mr. Roberts spoke about Professor Altshuler's class project of doing a conceptualization of how this property might be used by reusing the Civic Center building. He noted that the students came up with some wild and interesting formulations, and he suggested that MTD refer to some of these ideas in their conceptualization of a bus transfer station.

Mr. Roberts noted that HPC is not there to solve MTD's issues. Rather, he explained, the HPC was tasked with looking at the existing Civic Center building and evaluating it to determine if it has value for being landmarked. He stated that he has strong values and that Ms. Williams made a very strong, very thorough, and very human presentation. He shared that the features about the people who were involved in the building are very personalized.

Mr. Roberts expressed his support for the landmark nomination.

Mr. Shepard stated that he is trying to pay attention to the nomination and the criteria that the HPC is using, not potential future developments and not whether the City ought to continue to have it function as a meeting center.

Mr. Shepard spoke about his experiences at the Civic Center. His review of how the Civic Center relates to the criteria provided in Section XII-5.C of the Zoning Ordinance was as follows:

- Criterion a – Does the Civic Center shape the civic life of Urbana?
 - Mr. Shepard stated that he cannot convince himself that it does. So, it does not meet this criterion.
- Criterion c – Is the Civic Center inherently valuable for the study of the period it was constructed in?
 - He stated that he has some sympathy for this, but not a strong one.
- Criterion d - Does the individual genius of the architects reflect in the design of the Civic Center?
 - He said that he knew Delbert Smith, but he was not familiar with the other two architects. He does not feel it meets this criterion.

- Criterion e – Is the Civic Center an established visual feature in the community in its location?
 - He said he feels that the Civic Center is lost in the back of Downtown Urbana and not a central feature of Urbana.
- Criterion f – Is the Civic Center a fine and unique example of a utilitarian structure?
 - He stated that he never had anything against the Civic Center, but he has never been in love with it either.
- Was it a hub for community events?
 - He stated that there were many community events held there. It was a great thing that it was reasonably priced and fairly large, but he does not see it as a hub.

Mr. Shepard stated that because of his doubts, he is not going to support the nomination.

Ms. O'Donnell stated that when she was looking at the Civic Center, it was basically not what it could potentially be used for. She stated that HPC's job is to determine whether the Civic Center meets all of the criteria. She noted that it is a good example of Mid-Century Modern architecture. It shows purity of materials used. It is stripped down, but it is not meant to be ornamental. It is meant to be very functional. She stated that then the Civic Center meets at least one of the criteria and that she planned to support the nomination.

Mr. Hays stated that it meets more criteria. He explained that he felt that the range of uses to which the space was put during its open time was one of the most diverse and interesting and eclectic, and the cultural significance comes from that. He stated that he believed that the fact that the community, at significant expense, invested in the Civic Center space as a site of social activity, artistic display, and civic well-being, is why it does meet those criteria. He further explained that the Civic Center is a phenomenally interesting example at national scale of a civic building for this kind of activity. He went on to say that while it is true that the architects are not well-known, these designers were excellent and were mentored by people who were important — the architects of the Civic Center studied with them and were influenced by them. He stated that the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) said that the Civic Center was worth nomination, and City staff had said this as well.

Mr. Hays noted that there is a more logical slip in what was presented: MTD prides itself on reducing greenhouse gases, and there is no better way to do that than adaptive reuse. He stated that the argument that you are respecting the environment and valuing greenhouse gas management by tearing down an asset to put up a new building is part of a modern way of thinking where demolition followed by new construction is seen as a form of progress. Mr. Hays noted that in our day and age, it is actually seen as primitive and wildly irresponsible. Given the context, he explains, including an adaptive reuse component is an ideal way to get a federal grant, which MTD had not yet applied for. In his view, if MTD puts in their application that the City has a landmarked building, it will help MTD get a grant.

Mr. Hays expressed that when you have an asset that is as open and flexible as the Civic Center, it is readymade for a new use like a bus transfer station. He stated that it was a much loved, heavily used, highly eclectic building that is architecturally interesting. So, he will vote in favor of the landmark nomination for these reasons.

Chair Urban said that there had been a lot of talk related to nostalgia. She stated that there is a difference between nostalgia as an individual may see it and the collective memory of a community. She said that she did not believe that the Civic Center is totally personal to Ms. Williams. When she read the nomination, she appreciated all the diversity that was brought forth about the utilization of the Civic Center. Chair Urban noted that this is incredibly important when talking about a community's collective memory and is very different from the nostalgia of an individual. The application shows the collective memory of the City of Urbana.

Chair Urban said many of Urbana's landmarks are houses, none of them had civic use. The proposed nomination is very different than HPC received in the past.

Mr. Hays moved that the Historic Preservation Commission forward Case No. HP-2026-L-01 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation to designate the property as a local landmark conforming with criteria A, C, D, E, and F. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. Mr. Hays asked for clarification on whether his motion should be more detailed.

Ms. Jovine called a point of order. She said that the motion needs a second before discussing the motion. Mr. Roberts stated that he seconded the motion. Ms. Jovine stated that the motion was sufficient, or he can speak to the intent behind his motion.

Mr. Hays stated that he believes the application meets the criteria he mentioned in his motion and that the application was well-argued and composed. He urged the HPC to also consider the larger context, which is the incredible opportunity to basically recognize that a false opposition has been constructed based on differences in understanding. He thought there was a win-win situation here.

Mr. Roberts asked that the conversation the HPC had concerning the appropriateness of the landmark nomination be considered carefully by the Urbana City Council. The HPC's discussion was very informative, and he hoped it will guide them in the future. He stated that just because the HPC decides that this should be a landmark does not mean that all hope for working to involve the bus facility and the community at large moving forward should be lost, because we all want to see progress, we want to see construction downtown, and we want to see adaptive reuse. We want to see buildings that have not been opened or used for a while to be reborn and have new life. He explained that the HPC is not voting to prevent something, but to urge it on with clarity, with foresight, with creativity, and to benefit the community.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Roberts	-	Yes	Mr. Shepard	-	No
Ms. Urban	-	Yes	Mr. Hays	-	Yes
Ms. O'Donnell	-	Yes			

The motion was passed by a vote of 4-1.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There was none.

K. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Himick reported on the following:

▪ National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) Email List

She stated that HPC members should start to receive email notifications about upcoming monthly webinars. She asked the Commissioners to please email copies of Certificates for completed webinars to her so that she can add them to the Certified Local Government (CLG) report the City is required to submit to the State of Illinois Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

▪ July Study Session

She mentioned that she plans to add the Bylaws review and Section 106 revisions to the July agenda for the July 1, 2026 HPC meeting. If the HPC members have other revisions to the bylaws, please email their suggestions to her before the next meeting.

L. STUDY SESSION

Historic Preservation Plan Introduction

Chair Urban opened this item on the agenda. She noted that adding this topic to the agenda is intended to keep it on the HPC's radar. She stated that Jon Pressley with SHPO had said that the City could apply for a CLG grant to potentially get support with updating the Historic Preservation Plan. Ms. Himick stated that before they start on an application for another CLG grant, staff would like to finish up the current CLG grant that will close out in June of 2027. She stated that Planning staff is in the process of auditing Urbana's historic surveys in order in terms of what surveys we have, what we need to adjust, and we target new areas.

Chair Urban stated that the HPC has worked in team of two members to write grant applications, and we were successfully awarded. So, this is something that the HPC members would step up to do, rather than putting it on staff, especially since staff is overburdened with plenty of work. Ms. Himick said that she will check to see if they can have more than one CLG grant project underway at the same time. She felt this would be a point of importance moving forward.

For the Historic Preservation Plan, Ms. Himick asked the HPC members to think about what they like in the current plan, what they do not like about the current plan, what was implemented, and what did not get implemented. Because the HPC's memories of this community are longer than the current Planning staff, she asked the HPC members to consider what has occurred and not occurred, how this has developed through community channels, and what the community cared about. She asked HPC to consider whose voices are heard in the current preservation plan and who preservation was for. She said that she also welcomes any additional comments that the HPC members can think of.

Ms. Himick noted that staff and commissioners should also look elsewhere to take inspiration from what other commissions and communities have done. She stated that the NAPC does provide several example preservation plans; however, none of them are directly applicable to a community

like Urbana. Staff have looked at other midwestern college towns for potential context. She mentioned that Iowa City is similar city in terms of population, community focus, and university town type factors. In addition, the State of Illinois also recently adopted the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, which is for the 10-year period of 2024 to 2034. She explained that it might be interesting to think about how state priorities intersect with local action.

Ms. Himick explained that the statewide plan has seven priorities they are targeting, which are enhancing local preservation; spurring economic growth and resiliency; documenting important resources and striving for positive preservation outcome; engaging the public and shaping the preservation message; forging successful partnerships; promoting diverse history through relevancy and inclusiveness; and building Illinois SHPO capacity.

Mr. Hays stated that it would be great to have a preservation plan to which HPC can point to for explanations of what historic preservation is because the current one is outdated and reflects the older way of thinking. He said that he is looking forward to this.

Mr. Roberts pointed out that there is a tool the HPC should craft that is much needed. He mentioned that there is currently a discussion on a proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) on West Main Street. He stated that two members of the Plan Commission appeared to have doubts about the PUD and needed guidance about what they could refer to when discussing the appropriateness of how a building looked that was being proposed by a developer. There is none, so the Plan Commission and could not say anything about it. Mr. Roberts noted that they could not factually point to something and say, "it does not meet this, so I am not going to support it because it is inappropriate." He thinks that the HPC could work on guidance for development, especially when it comes down to the nearby historic areas and how things are compatible or incompatible based on the neighboring structures.

Mr. Shepard moved to keep the preservation plan topic on the agenda. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Urban mentioned the Proclamation for May being Historic Preservation Month and stated that it was nice to be acknowledged.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O'Donnell moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn the meeting was passed by unanimous voice vote. Chair Urban adjourned the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

Submitted,



Kate Himick
Historic Preservation Commission Secretary