



MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

APPROVED

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE: July 1, 2026

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: David Hays, Kathryn Holliday, Laura O'Donnell, Dennis Roberts, Trent Shepard, Angela Urban (via audio and text)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: 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: Susan Appel, Phyllis Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Hays called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared with a majority of the members present.

There was a technical issue with Ms. Urban calling in remotely, so there was a brief pause before proceeding to the next item on the agenda. Vice Chair Hays stated that Ms. Urban could hear the meeting; however, we cannot hear her, so she will text Dr. Holliday when she wants to provide comments.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Vice Chair Hays questioned why previous approval of the August 6, 2025 and the December 3, 2025 minutes were not valid, and what does "revised" refer to. Kate Himick, Planner I, explained that approval of these two sets of minutes was not valid due to there being no motion to approve them at the May 6, 2026 meeting. Both sets of minutes were stated as being approved without going through the motion and voting process. There must be a motion for each date of minutes in order for a roll-call vote to be taken and the minutes to be approved and valid.

With regards to the minutes being revised, Ms. Himick stated that these two sets of minutes were from the backlog of minutes, and other staff transcribed the minutes in general context while Ms. Andel was out of the office on medical leave. Ms. Andel returned and fine-tuned the minutes to provide more detailed discussion and formatting in the minutes as usually provided.

Vice Chair suggested that in the future, the minutes not be presented until they meet standards for approval. He noticed in the revised August 6, 2025 minutes, there is a substantial change. If there is concern about the change, he asked, "If the Commission would continue to move to approve the minutes or foreclose the moving to approve?". Ms. Himick replied that they would move to approve and proceed as usual with making amendments to the minutes. Vote would be taken, and the final ruling would be that "the minutes are approved as corrected or amended." If the Commission moved to approve without changes, then it would be "the minutes are approved as written."

Vice Chair Hays asked if the Commission could propose changes and delay vote at this meeting. Ms. Himick explained that the Historic Preservation Commission can proceed with each set of minutes as follows: 1) approve as written, 2) approve as amended, or 3) deny approval.

Revised Minutes of August 6, 2025 Regular Meeting {Previous Approval Not Valid}

Vice Chair Hays stated that the revised minutes of August 8, 2025 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Shepard moved to approve the minutes. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion.

Mr. Roberts stated that the minutes are from the August 6, 2025 regular meeting; not the August 8, 2025 as Vice Chair Hays mentioned. Vice Chair Hays recalled that one of the original amendments was the date, so he said August 8, 2025 instead. He then confirmed the minutes are from the August 6, 2025 regular meeting. Mr. Shepard moved to approve the revised minutes from the August 6, 2025 regular meeting. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion.

Dr. Holliday recommended striking the paragraph under Written Communications that reads, "Chair Urban noted that Phyllis Williams sent the Historic Preservation Commission members an email regarding Section 106 for the Urbana Civic Center. In the communication, the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) provided their recommendation/position on the matter." Dr. Holliday said that this did not occur during the Written Communications section of the agenda and was not included in the packet as written communication. She stated that Chair Urban announced this at the very end of the meeting. She said that she would strike this paragraph entirely.

With no further amendments or discussion, a voice vote was taken, and the revised minutes of the August 6, 2025 regular meeting were approved as amended by unanimous vote.

Revised Minutes of December 3, 2025 Regular Meeting

Vice Chair Hays stated that the revised minutes of December 3, 2025 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Roberts moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the revised minutes of December 3, 2025. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion.

Dr. Holliday suggested that in the future if there are revisions made several months after a meeting, then staff track the changes made so the Commissioners can see what changes are made. This really helps with transparency of the editing process.

She requested a correction to the spelling of her students' names:

- Page 5, Paragraph 5 – Should say “Dale Mize” and “Ke Li”

Mr. Shepard asked why the minutes were revised. Ms. Himick replied that her understanding is the revisions were made to make the minutes more like they had been done in the past. There certainly was no intention of being misleading or non-transparent. Ms. Andel added that she had been out on medical leave, that someone else transcribed the backlog of minutes, and that since approval of these two sets of minutes were not valid, she thought she would add more detail to them.

Vice Chair Hays asked if any Commissioners wanted more time to reflect on the minutes and review the videos. None of the Commission members said yes. Vice Chair Hays called for a voice vote on December 3, 2025 minutes, and the revised minutes of the December 3, 2025 regular meeting were approved as amended by unanimous vote.

Minutes of June 3, 2026 Regular Meeting

Vice Chair Hays stated that the minutes of June 3, 2026 regular meeting were presented for approval. Ms. O'Donnell moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes of the June 3, 2026 regular meeting. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Hays requested the following amendments to the minutes:

- Page 2, Section E, Paragraph 1, Line 3: Change Board of Trustee to “Board of Trustees”
- Page 10, Paragraph 2, Second line from the bottom: “However, he stated, Ms. Williams’ testimony shows that the building was hugely successful, being rented over 50% of the time.” Amend to say, “However, he stated, ~~Ms. William’s~~ 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. Shepard requested an amendment to the date mentioned On Page 1, Section B. Changes to the Agenda. December 18, 2025 should be December 3, 2025.

Vice Chair Hays referred to Page 13, Paragraphs 3 and 4. He asked for clarification on why “Point of Order” was called by Ms. Jovine. Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, replied that after someone seconds a motion, discussion following should pertain to the motion by the motion maker. Then, other members are welcome to chime in and add to that discussion. Her intent was to follow Robert’s Rules of Order.

Vice Chair Hays called for a voice vote on June 3, 2026 minutes. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Postcard from Concerned Citizen regarding Woodlawn Cemetery
- Handout for Study Section – Bylaws Review and Revision, Section 106 Proposal

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There was none.

K. STAFF REPORT

Audit of Historic Surveys

Kate Himick, Planner I, presented an update on the Audit of Historic Surveys. She mentioned that the City has surveys that have been stored since the founding of the Historic Preservation Commission. Staff are working to consolidate, update, and audit these historic surveys. Much of this entails data management - where files live, how they live in file structures, and moving thousands of documents around. Staff are also working to merge existing spreadsheets to best track all the surveys, so they can be best used. Staff are working on the categories we want to use to ask questions about the data and then spatializing the data to better understand what we have, what records exist, and to ask more informed questions going forward. This would be a core bedrock of a preservation plan. This must happen to get us into a good spot to be able to enter data into a geographic information system (GIS) layer, which would be a workable data analytics tool. The categories and what data are being tracked is entered into the spreadsheet, which keeps info regarding location, whether it has been surveyed, whether it is part of the top 100 list that was done several years ago, if it is on the demolition delay ordinance list, current land use, when it was constructed, etc.

Mr. Roberts mentioned that under the previous Chair, many students from the University of Illinois conducted historic surveys by evaluating properties, and if possible, they included floor plans and photographs. He asked if staff is finding photos of the properties. Ms. Himick replied yes. Most of the surveys are scanned, but there is still one drawer of paper surveys that staff will get scanned as

part of this project. The scanned surveys are stored in one big folder, which she would like to be stored in a surveys folder, and in an address folder where a person could search.

She said as mentioned above, most of the surveys are scanned and include a picture that was stapled or pasted to the survey itself. She noted that she has not found a high degree of plans. Mr. Roberts stated that at one point the township's office was disposing of file cards/records of all the many houses and photographs of the houses. The cards were in the database by their property tax number, which is very difficult for a person to look up individual tax numbers to find out where the property is located. He asked if the Historic Preservation Commission wants to be burdened by the repository of such a collection. It might be very valuable historically and become an important digital archive. Ms. Himick responded that this is a valuable discussion because certainly assessor's cards would be a wonderful resource to have for any historic property research. She wondered if the Champaign County Archives at the Urbana Free Library would be a better steward of those records since they are trained archivists and might be better equipped to archive those in an appropriate and up-to-date way.

Dr. Holliday stated that these types of records are highly valued by local history collections. It is very common for those records to go directly to a publicly accessible archive. So, she strongly encouraged Mr. Roberts to reach out to the Urbana Free Library. If the Library does not want them, do not put them in the garbage. Someone will take them.

Vice Chair Hays asked if Ms. Himick has sufficient support that she needs to undertake the audit. Ms. Himick said that it is a joint effort and City staff is hoping to get support as well starting in August 2026.

Mr. Shepard recalled that a few years back, historic preservation and the City's Historic Preservation Commission were a priority for the City Administration and the City budget. He finds it to be refreshing that the Commission is getting a little more attention now.

L. STUDY SESSION

Conversation with Director of Community Development Services

Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, started out by saying that she wants to make sure the Historic Preservation Commission and staff have time to take a moment and just acknowledge and make space for the events that have happened over the past couple weeks as it pertains to the Civic Center and the landmark case. Also, she wants to address any remaining concerns or opportunities. She said, "it is a priority for me and for this department that we maintain a good working relationship, and we are really looking forward to continuing working with this commission moving forward, specifically on Section 106 and refining that process to make sure that we move forward appropriately and correctly and through the best possible procedural steps, which will be discussed more in the subsequent study session."

Ms. Jovine thanked Phyllis Williams for her landmark application of the Civic Center. It was very thorough and very well received.

She shared the internal schedule of meetings for the Historic Preservation Commission, which shows the steps that staff follow for processing cases. She talked about how it related to the Civic

Center landmark case. Ms. Winter Williams's application was received, paid for, and completed on April 27, 2026, which was before the application deadline of April 29, 2026. This triggered the case to be brought to the Commission at their June 3, 2026 regular meeting. The next steps on the schedule show the dates for submitting the legal ad to the News-Gazette, sending out neighbor notices, posting a sign at the Civic Center, and then drafting the memo and preparing exhibits, which involve multiple stages of review with the Principal Planner and the Director of Community Development Services, all by the packet deadline. Staff emails packets no later than Friday before a meeting, so that Commission members have time to review the packet materials. After the Historic Preservation Commission, the case is presented to the Committee of the Whole and to City Council, which the deadlines are listed on the schedule as well. Turnaround time from the Commission's meeting on June 3, 2026 to the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 15, 2026 is tight, but it is standardized.

She stated that she is available to answer any questions or to have a conversation regarding any areas of discussion the Commission would like. She mentioned that she is listening as well as other staff.

Dr. Holliday asked if the Commission had the option to continue a case to provide more time for additional conversation. Ms. Jovine replied yes. The Commission does not have to vote on a case the same night it is presented to the Commission. However, the Zoning Ordinance requires a case to be forwarded to City Council within 60 days following the date of the closing of the public hearing. Dr. Holliday felt it was important for staff to remind the Commission that they can continue cases during future meetings, to gather more information, and to allow additional public participation in the process, if it is warranted.

Mr. Shepard asked if Section 106 review has been around for a long time. He does not recall hearing much about it until this year. Can staff tell the history of it? Kate Himick, Planner I, explained that the Section 106 review originated as part of the National Historic Preservation Act, which was first passed in 1966 and last amended around 2016. Section 106 review is a federal review process that is required in all states. It gets administrated through State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) as part of a pass-through process. There are multiple stakeholders or players involved. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation at the national level has some input. SHPOs have a role in the review process, and then consulting parties or concurring parties would be invited as stakeholders to share comments to continue in the process a Section 106 review proceeds through each step/phase of the process. When the Historic Preservation Commission is invited as a consulting party, it will be as an expert local body for their municipality's historic and cultural character. Ms. Jovine added that the City of Urbana now has two qualified personnel on staff that have training and expertise in the Section 106 review process. The City will continue to support professional development to receive appropriate training specifically for Section 106. She believes there may also be an opportunity potentially for the Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, Angela Urban, to take the training as well.

Dr. Holliday stated that the Section 106 review process is triggered when federal dollars, federal properties, or federal permitting is involved. Local projects usually do not require Section 106 review. So, it is not super common. She noted that local departments of transportation are always requiring Section 106 review because they thrive on federal grants and federal budget dollars.

Mr. Roberts stated that he appreciates this clarification, and he thinks the public will also because when we talk about Section 106, it seems amorphous. It is a statute within the federal law for historic preservation.

Vice Chair Hays inquired about the role of City staff communicating, not on behalf but rather in place of the Historic Preservation Commission. When he saw the letter sent to SHPO saying that the Historic Preservation Commission, as a consulting party, disagreed with the assessment that the Urbana Civic Center was a merited nomination, he said that he was really shocked. He completely disagreed with the assessment and was never consulted about the Section 106 review for the Civic Center. He is still trying to understand how or why this would have happened.

He mentioned the letter from the Illinois Department of Transportation, which was shared with the Commission in October 2025 about work being done with streetscapes, in which the Commission was asked to give input. The Commission provided valuable input. So, it remains astonishing that the Section 106 process for the Urbana Civic Center is considered somehow to have unfolded correctly when the Commission members were not given an opportunity to weigh in. At a recent City Council meeting, Ms. Jovine and Mr. Alvarez were speaking to the Council on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission. The way Ms. Jovine phrased one of her answers implied that she is a political appointee. You have a certain role to play.

Vice Chair Hays said that he has many questions about this and why it played out the way it did and how it should have played out. He said that he will hold his questions until the appropriate time to ask them during this meeting. Ms. Jovine stated she agreed that more robust conversation certainly would have benefitted the process. Discussion would have brought a lot of value to the process and for the Commission's ability to discuss amongst themselves, so she completely acknowledges that there was a need for that.

Vice Chair Hays said that in his view, the process is not complete, because in his opinion, the process was not followed. It appears from the timeline that the Commission could have been invited to participate, but they were not invited. He has always thought of the role of City staff being to help the Commission do its best work, informing the Commission of opportunities, doing research that can help the Commission understand their roles and responsibilities. He said that somebody got an email, but there are so many ways to communicate that it is really concerning to him. He asked Ms. Jovine if any City staff members ever had been asked to withhold information from the Historic Preservation Commission, to edit information, or to sculpt what the Commission sees, reads, and understands in order to do their work well? He understands that it is a blunt question, but it is something that has been on his mind. He is hoping for transparency, because it looks like that is not the case. Ms. Jovine replied that during her time with the City, she has not been asked to do this. She stated that she can only share and operate with the information and the resources that are available to her. She noted that she and most of the Planning staff are a new team. So, there are moments when staff come into information that they did not previously have. She stated that she has not been directed in any way from a leadership perspective.

Ms. Jovine stated that it is important to clarify and warrants specific clarification in this context that she personally, in her role, cannot operate exactly as staff can operate. The recommendation came from the Planning Division, which happens to be a division within her department, Community Development Services. She serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and the City Council. She is

limited to a two-year term, but she can be reappointed. This comes with certain realities in terms of her involvement in the Section 106 review process. She explained that when she responded to Councilmember Evans' question at a previous City Council meeting, she was responding as the Director of Community Development Services Department. Given the scenario that was presented at that time, weighing a variety of different pieces of data, she has been conflicted through this process and remains conflicted, but given what she had in front of her at that time, as the Director, she responded authentically for her position.

Chair Hays asked if Ms. Jovine had felt pressured to incline it in a certain way by anyone at the Mass Transit District (MTD). Ms. Jovine said no. She stated that the way she chooses to run the Community Development Services Department is with integrity and honesty and that includes being transparent with information. We are primarily here to serve the people of Urbana. We are a City government, and staff have a responsibility to the taxpayers and our citizens, so a majority of the information is publicly accessible and available through the Freedom of Information Act. She said that she never wants to be in a position where she feels pressured.

Ms. Jovine went on to say that the reality of her role is that there are usually points of conflict and tension where there are outcomes that are positive and scenarios that are positive in both directions, and sometimes the City must make really challenging calls. She does not take that lightly, and appreciates that it can be conflicting, but it is something that she hopes to navigate as best as she can. She also wants to support and empower her staff to always make recommendations that are technically appropriate, always take all information into consideration, and she feels that this starts with a staff culture that is supportive and embraces integrity in the decision-making staff will be engaging with.

Ms. Jovine clarified that the role of the Commission Secretary warrants discussion and codification and is something that will be addressed through revisions to the bylaws. She also hoped to clarify the Commission's expectations for communication so that in any future situation there is no ambiguity as to what position the Commission Secretary is put in.

Dr. Holliday reminded everyone that Ms. Urban can hear the meeting, but her voice cannot be heard due to technical difficulties, so she has been texting Dr. Holliday. Ms. Urban expressed concern that minutes and YouTube videos of the Commission's meetings are not publicly available within the time frame allowed, and this presents an additional challenge for the City Council members, because they are not able to fully grasp the context of what happened in the Commission meetings...particularly, the February Commission meeting minutes were not available for the June 15, 2026 meeting, so Council did not have the larger context that the Commission was excluded from the Section 106 conversation that was held.

Dr. Holliday said that Ms. Urban asks where in the Zoning Ordinance does it state how the City Council makes their decision based on Commission recommendation. Ms. Jovine replied by saying that she would clarify with the City's IT Department to find out how long the live stream is available before IT staff transitions it to be permanently located on YouTube.

Ms. Jovine read Section XII-5.E.2.a-b on Page 197 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, which reads as such, *"(a) If the City Council determines that the proposed historic landmark should be designated, it shall do so by enacting an ordinance by majority vote of alderpersons then holding office. In the*

event of a tie, the Mayor may cast the deciding vote. ^{b)}No application relating to the same property may be filed during the 12 months following such a denial by the Urbana City Council.” It does not state, as in the Section XII-5.E.1 on “Historic Preservation Commission Authority,” which specifically states that *“the Preservation Commission finds that the property conforms to one or more criteria set forth in Section XII-5.C.1 ...”*.

Mr. Shepard asked who the Historic Preservation Commission Secretary is. Ms. Jovine stated that she had been serving as the Secretary. The fact that the City’s Planning Division had no staff, except for Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant, for several months has been quite difficult and challenging. She said moving forward she will be speaking to the Commission as the Director of the Community Development Services Department and Zoning Administrator. Evan Alvarez, Principal Planner, will be serving as the Plan Commission Secretary. Kate Himick, Planner I, is now serving as the Historic Preservation Commission Secretary. Aimirou Sy, Planner II, is now serving as the Zoning Board of Appeals Secretary. Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II, serves as the Recording Secretary and helps to keep the Planning Division organized.

Mr. Roberts commented on the role of staff being influential in guiding the materials or the opinion of the Historic Preservation while making deliberations. He felt this happened, especially while touring the Civic Center. Commission members were shown the interior of the property, which was valuable. They were also given a long list of problems that Civic Center building has, which did not really address the substantial question of whether it is a valuable structure to be considered for a landmark nomination. He pointed out that for local landmarks, the interior of a building is not the main concern of making it a valuable landmark, because historic preservation in the City of Urbana is more about the outside of a structure. If changes are made to the outside of a historic landmark, the City requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Therefore, the Commission does not talk about whether a room can be changed, or whether the use of the room can be changed or whether there needs to be an upgrade to the electrical system; however, this is the kind of information that the Commission was mostly provided with. Tour of the Civic Center did not include looking at the outside. He acknowledged that as a Commissioner, it is up to him to determine the relevance of information they are provided.

Mr. Roberts stated that he appreciates that when the Commission minutes are given to them for approval, the minutes are generally in wonderfully precise detail. The level of detail in transcribing the conversations and representing them is well done and is of a very high standard and is valuable to the Commission.

Mr. Roberts said that when City Council makes their decision on a landmark, they apparently have a wider scope of consideration than the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission bases their determination on how a landmark nomination meets the seven (7) criteria listed in the Zoning Ordinance, whereas the City Council seems to base their decision on the criteria of their opinion. He asked, “What is the public’s protection for Council making decisions based on fact rather than on assumption or need?”. Ms. Jovine stated that Council members are presented with a wide range of facts, and it is possible for there to be multiple pieces of information that at some times can conflict with each other. So, City Council, since they are elected, are responsible for making decisions that serve their constituents and the City of Urbana. They are presented with a wide range of information, and their authority is not limited to a certain section of the ordinance as a result. She added that the information that was presented in the application and in the written staff memo

was presented in its full scope and breadth, and a person can be confident that City Council was informed in their decision. Mr. Roberts stated that the Historic Preservation Commission did their job as a commission.

Dr. Holliday shared Ms. Urban's text comments. Ms. Urban texted the issue is that facts were not fully provided, there were missing minutes, the lack of knowledge and the exclusion of the Commission from the process, and the representation that the Commission was included in the process.

Dr. Holliday added that this like vetting of how the case is presented is important. She understands there is a 30-day window that may make it challenging but given that the case was presented differently than the Commission saw the case, she said it feels like there are potentially a lot of differences in the way the case was viewed moving forward and the facts surrounding the case shifted quite a bit as well. It presents a real challenge. Staff reports, the way the case is presented, the way the options are presented to the Commission and to the City Council, these shape potential actions. The omission of participation of the Historic Preservation Commission in the assessment of the building and its local meaning has a huge impact on the way that that case moves forward.

Vice Chair Hays stated that he does not understand why City staff would present decisions in place of the Historic Preservation Commission without consulting the Commission. Even though the Commission will be looking at it, he wants to understand why because he feels like understanding will help the Commission members know what they can do moving forward.

He asked Ms. Jovine what her relationship is to *Imagine Urbana*, the City's Comprehensive Plan, in her work. The Historic Preservation Commission participated in the process of creating the Plan; however, none of the feedback provided by the Commission was included in the Plan. So, there was some push back on that. He asked if *Imagine Urbana* is a guiding document for Ms. Jovine and her work, or is it something separate from what she does? Ms. Jovine answered saying that she views *Imagine Urbana* as a guiding document for the work of Community Development Services. It is a 20-year plan, but she thinks "plan" is perhaps misleading because it really is a vision document. She said that one of the goals of Kevin Garcia and Andrea Ruedi's work on creating *Imagine Urbana* was to make the Comprehensive Plan more usable by implementing metrics and guidelines and a series of Little Moves and Big Moves that could be easily tracked and measured against. She stated that it is a guiding document; however, she cannot take it to the letter of the law because it is not actually written so that it could be interpreted that way. Staff is working through their interpretation of the Comprehensive Plan to keep the vision aligned with the Big Moves and Little Moves.

Vice Chair Hays expressed his concern. He said that the Commission has a role and has done what they were asked to do. He appreciates Council member Evans' comments stating so. However, he said the Commission was villainized by people saying that the Historic Preservation Commission was being obstructive, when in fact the Commission was doing exactly what they were supposed to do and was consistent with *Imagine Urbana*. One of the things that the Commission is asked to do is to collaborate with all of the other units of Urbana government, including all the commissions, the City Council, the Mayor, etc. and the community members towards a holistic vision. Big Ideas translate into Big Moves, which translate into metrics.

Vice Chair Hays stated that under Big Idea #4, Urbana Embraces its Cultural Vibrancy and Character, there is Objective 4.5, which states, “*The City's historic architecture and features are used to enhance its eclectic character.*” The barometers of success are increases in grant funding and increased community participation in workshop events and collaborative projects. Vice Chair Hays recalled Council member Evans stating in a City Council meeting that it was not only the Historic Preservation Commission that was excluded, but also the public from specific discussion about the Mass Transit District (MTD) and the Civic Center. Vice Chair Hays mentioned that Mr. Evans believes this was intentional.

Vice Chair Hays talked about Big Move 11, which states “*Advance a Clean and Green Community.*” Point 11.14 states, “*Encourage adaptive reuse and historic preservation of existing buildings that contribute to the city's architectural heritage.*” He pointed out that it is not just the Historic Preservation Commission that is asked to advocate for something, but so is City staff. He understands that it is a careful balance, but so is City Council, the Historic Preservation Commission, and other agencies.

Vice Chair Hays talked about the 11.14.2 Associated Metric that states, “*Dollars invested in reuse/preservation projects.*” He stated that he is caught off guard when MTD said “if you do this one thing, we won't apply for a grant” that City Council, the Mayor, nor City staff did not look to the *Imagine Urbana* and say, “Wait a minute, there is a holistic...,” even when the Commission kept saying that there is a win-win-win-win. He stated that Dr. Holliday gave a presentation that illustrated a win-win-win-win. Nevertheless, it felt like this agency and that one remark meant everything else fell by the wayside.

He explained that he put this out there, because it is very confusing from a Historic Preservation Commission perspective and from his individual perspective. When he was asked to be effective and to manifest something in, he helped contribute as did so many others in our community, and then doing that one thing, nobody stood up for the Commission, except Council Member Evans by saying that the Commission and Phyllis Williams did the right thing. Vice Chair Hays said that as they go forward with discussions and conversations regarding Section 106 review and bylaw amendments, he is really watching that. He said that he is sensitive to that because as a citizen of Urbana, it has profoundly affected how he feels about the community. The way he talks about the community to people in other places has changed recently.

Vice Chair Hays stated that it felt like backroom dealing trumped everything. He believes the best use for the site is as a transit hub, maintained by MTD. But the fact that he said that as well as other people did not matter. *Imagine Urbana* had nothing ... no legs, no teeth, nothing at any point in the discussion. So, he is concerned about this, and he hopes that Ms. Jovine, in her role moving forward, will be mindful of that. He said that he believes we have a role to play to support the vision of the community that was generated by the community. To many community members, this is very confusing. Some people view it one way, some people view it another, but we have an accountability to that.

Ms. Jovine stated that it is a mandatory section of the Council memos that strategic goals are listed and described as they apply to a case. City staff specifically cited sections of the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Roberts commented that there have been several people who were deeply involved in the vision of the downtown, its development, its historic nature and appreciated trying to promote it and to conserve it in the past who have served on both the Plan Commission and the Historic Preservation Commission and who are members of the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA), who told him that they are done with Urbana because the City of Urbana does not seem to care. Urbana does not seem to have a real backbone to stand up for historic preservation, and the people do not feel that they are effective anymore. So, they have decided to step back and retire from positions that they once held. They cannot look at it anymore, because when this discussion comes forward, it is always sidelined as least important. He said that there needs to be a balance between preservation and progress, because progress can be done in a thoughtful way or it can be done in a blunt way. If each developer who comes forward is the one leading the City in defining out what kind of progress is going to be happening in our community and not the public or if the City Council is not making the decisions in a more balanced way, then there is going to be a loss of potential, a loss of creativity in the community and a loss of conservation of things that other people at an earlier time period valued more highly.

Bylaws Review and Revision, Section 106 Proposal

Chair Urban opened this item on the agenda. Ms. Himick explained that there are two parts to this item. She believes it to be important that the Historic Preservation Commission continue to discuss this item for multiple sessions. There are opportunities to add things that could be introduced, so there are a lot of room for conversation and work.

Part One – Minor Edits

Ms. Himick referred to a strike-through version of the bylaws that was included in the packet of information for this meeting. She noted that a paper copy was handed out to each member prior to the start of the meeting as well. She reviewed the minor changes proposed in red.

Mr. Roberts suggested a correction on Page 5. To be consistent with using they/their/them instead of he/she, #9 should read as such, “*The petitioner may present a summary of ~~his/her~~ their petition.*”.

Mr. Roberts expressed confusion with the wording in #16. Would the Commission be continuing a public hearing to a future date or the same meeting? Ms. Himick said that public hearings come before study sessions on the agenda. Is it possible for the Commission to continue the public hearing for a case to another meeting, and after discussing any study session topics that follow, the Commission decides they want to reopen the public hearing at this meeting? Dr. Holliday stated that is what it says right now, but the question is what the Commission wants. Mr. Roberts commented that by reopening a public hearing at the same meeting, would that deprive the public of awareness that there is going to be further discussion? He said some people might go home after the public hearing was continued to another meeting. Vice Chair Hays stated that when it is continued to another meeting, then it should remain closed for this very reason. This could potentially create a violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Mr. Roberts referred to #17 on Page 5. The proposed language would allow a Commission member to create a Finding of Fact or at least to bring one up. Ms. Himick replied yes. As a Commission member, the member can do that. Ms. Himick suggested removing “their” from that sentence and

clarifying “or of the Commission's creation”. Dr. Holliday suggested, “or of a Commission member”.

Vice Chair Hays discussed the option to reword #16. Ms. Himick stated that she would like to research to find out when this was added to the bylaws to try to get a better understanding of its intent.

Mr. Roberts referred to Article X. He asked how this fits in with the Commission’s previous practice of meeting with a partner to work on projects. This Article states that the Historic Preservation Commission members cannot speak with each other, and that they should conduct their business in the Council Chambers, which prohibits all collaborative interaction. Vice Chair Hays stated that the language sounds like it is referring to lobbying. Mr. Roberts stated that the Commission members should be allowed to talk one-to-one to discuss possible study topics or about introducing a different kind of process that the Commission can use as a tool. Dr. Holliday suggested that staff research to see if this language is used in other City of Urbana board and commission bylaws and in other cities’ Historic Preservation Commissions’ bylaws as well. Ms. Himick added that she would also check the specific language of the Open Meetings Act (OMA).

Part Two- Major Potential Edits

Ms. Himick presented changes to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) bylaws to add language regarding Section 106 review. She started out by saying that the Zoning Ordinance and the bylaws are separate but sort of talk to each other. Article XII. Historic Preservation in the Zoning Ordinance does not specify Section 106, and the HPC bylaws cannot create new powers of the Commission. However, Section XII-3.F.19 the Zoning Ordinance does empower the Commission to: “...*undertake any other action or activity necessary or appropriate to the implementation of its power and duties or to the implementation of the purpose of this ordinance*”, so adding language regarding Section 106 to the bylaws is covered.

She stated that bylaws do tend to lean procedural which is a benefit in this case. Since Section 106 is a large topic, she believes it should have its own article in the bylaws. She focused her discussion on the hypothetical subsection A for initial consultation, invitation, or request for comment. She reminded the Commission members that the language is can be revised so that it is most intelligible.

Ms. Himick presented and reviewed a graphic for the Steps of the Section 106 Process. She reviewed the potential timeline for an initial invitation and/or request for comments. She stated that she will encourage requests be sent to HistoricPreservationCommission@urbanail.gov.

Vice Chair Hays asked if it referred to 30 calendar days, not business days. Ms. Himick said that is her understanding. Vice Chair Hays commented that this timeline puts her under pressure. Ms. Himick replied that four days is possible if we can get our historic surveys nailed down, which is why staff are working so diligently on them.

She stated that her main concerns are protecting the two weeks that HPC has for their review. She mentioned that there may be some wiggle room to buy some days in the latter sections. She stated that she is also sensitive to the fact that the Chair might be away traveling or have a family emergency.

Mr. Shepard asked the other Commissioners if they feel two weeks is what they need or is that longer than they need to consider requests and return comments. Dr. Holliday replied that this is the initial response, and so at this point it does need to point a direction. She thinks the timing looks okay for if the Commissioners are familiar with historic resources and have a little something to go on already. She stated that they are missing surveys from 1940 forward and anything dealing with African American history as well as there are big gaps in what has already been documented. Ms. Himick stated some things she can pull together from lists or maps relatively quickly. However, it is local community knowledge that may be more informative throughout the process than relying on survey data.

Vice Chair Hays said that one week is normally enough time to allow people to return from being away, but if someone is unavailable, there is usually someone else to do the work. He asked if Mr. Alvarez would be able to help HPC process Section 106 requests, if needed. Ms. Himick replied yes. She stated that she has only been with the City of Urbana for five (5) months, so she does not know the frequency at which reviews happen. So, she does not know if HPC and staff are going to be able to think about all the things involved, ask questions, adopt new bylaws with Section 106 review procedures, and then try them out often enough. She said that the City may not receive Section 106 requests often enough to test the timeline.

Vice Chair Hays stated that the Chair of the HPC is given the responsibility to make the conclusion or sign the letter on behalf of the Commission given the feedback. Ms. Himick said the process is sensitive to timing, and it is much more difficult to get everyone's signature in five days than it is to get one person's signature in five days.

Ms. Himick continued with her presentation. She reviewed the remainder of the timeline regarding actions taken and review method. She talked about a potential solution for a combined email meeting review where we rely more heavily on digital communication. She explained how it would work.

Ms. Jovine stated that previously Planning staff cancelled meetings when there were no cases to be heard. However, staff has pledged with the HPC to keep meetings as regularly scheduled. So, the assumption would be that meetings would not be cancelled unless there is a lack of quorum or it fell on a holiday and needed to be rescheduled. She mentioned that she adds this to the conversation if it helps the HPC in their evaluation of these timelines and durations.

Mr. Roberts asked for clarification that emails would be sent to the HPC members' City email addresses. Ms. Himick said that is correct. Mr. Roberts stated that is handy for staff, but not for those who do not typically look at a board email unless they know something is coming up. He said that he does not look at his City email every day or even every week. It would be super handy if the secretary would send an email to his personal email address to tell him to check his City email. Ms. Himick replied that one reason why staff is discontinuing using personal email addresses is due to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). If Commission business is conducted through your personal email, your personal email then becomes subject to FOIA requests. Then someone will have to sort through everything that is in your email inbox to figure out what is relevant to a FOIA request. Mr. Shepard stated that he set it up where he gets a notification on his telephone when he receives an email in his City email inbox. He offered to help Mr. Roberts set his up to do the same.

Vice Chair Hays said that he has his emails set up so that they all come to one platform. So, there are definite workarounds. Ms. Jovine noted that the City's Information Technology (IT) Staff would be willing to come an hour before HPC meetings to help Commissioners set up their personal devices to get email to their City email addresses easier.

Dr. Holliday stated that the combined review makes sense even if you fall into a cycle where everything must happen through email is incredibly significant and important. However, the current City email system does not allow logging in from beyond the United States of America. So, there does seem to be some impediments. Ms. Himick said that she can talk with IT about what the implications of this would be and how we can preempt them or predict what might be an issue.

Dr. Holliday stated that Ms. Urban texted that because the Commission email no longer forwards, there is a complication there.

Dr. Holliday referred to the HPC not being allowed to create new powers. She said that creating new powers is not even the way to think about it. Laying out procedures when for Section 106 requests is helpful. If the Commission is named as a consulting party by someone outside of the City, none of this applies because the HPC would have been named as a party by someone else, so the HPC does not need new powers. Ms. Himick stated that the saying "create new powers" is misleading. The bylaws and the Zoning Ordinance should be aligned as much as possible. So, the question would be "Is it useful to codify Section 106 review procedures in both documents?" This would require a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, which is a more in-depth process.

Ms. Himick asked if the HPC would like to continue this study session at a future meeting. Dr. Holliday said yes, it would be helpful to continue discussion, especially when the HPC Chair can be present.

Mr. Roberts asked if staff or the HPC Chair decide what topics appear on the agenda of each meeting. Ms. Himick said that the HPC is different than most boards and commissions in that it is not just case based. It is more topical based and has many ongoing topics. In the past, staff decided what to put on an agenda. Moving forward in the future, staff would like to create an agenda setting process and envisions a more collaborative process. Mr. Roberts suggested using the City Council's format. If two Council members agreed that they would like to have a topic on the agenda, then they can place it on the agenda or they can approve a 10-minute presentation to the City Council. Vice Chair Hays said that this sounds reasonable. He understands that some of the topics in the past were on the agenda because the HPC asked for them to be on agendas.

Mr. Alvarez stated that the next regular meetings are scheduled for August 5, 2026, followed by September 2, 2026, followed by October 7, 2026.

Dr. Holliday moved that the HPC continue this study session regarding bylaws review and revision and Section 106 proposal to the August 5, 2026 meeting. Mr. Shepard seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Jovine mentioned that Ms. Himick could prepare a redlined markup of the bylaws reflecting the major edits relating to Section 106. The HPC said that would be nice.

Historic Preservation Plan Continued

Ms. Himick stated that she would like to begin brainstorming for Historic Preservation Plan goals and asked the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) for their thoughts.

Dr. Holliday said that she thinks that going parallel with the discussion of technical revisions to processes is a larger establishment of a new set of goals for historic preservation. She would love to see the Commission have the ability to talk through this. She expressed her appreciation for staff providing comparative plans. She found it interesting to think about what seemed to be applicable or not. She mentioned that she would love to engage with neighborhoods and neighborhood leaders about their perception of preservation and what it may or may not serve in those contexts. It has become clear that historic preservation is needlessly complicated in so many ways, so she would like to talk about preservation in ways that are useful and interesting to the community, not just the Commission's goals. She said that this could be folded into something else happening in Urbana, so maybe the Commission does not lead the conversation. There is a huge need for that collaborative synthetic way of thinking about preservation and its relationship to neighborhood planning decisions that are made about things like transportation. This way it will not sit out on its own but is integral to all of these other conversations that happen. She feels like this is an opportunity for staff to help the HPC since the HPC does not know everything that is happening.

Dr. Holliday read a text from Ms. Urban. Ms. Urban expressed interest in applying for a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant in the next round. There is a need to check to see if the HPC is allowed to apply even though they have a current active CLG grant in process. Ms. Himick replied that it is possible to do more than one CLG grant funded project at a time. However, the State of Illinois deadlines and grant structure are slightly strange because they distribute federal funds at the State level, and federal funds are on a federal fiscal year. She mentioned that when she checked the State Historic Preservation Office' (SHPO) website on CLG matching grants, she discovered that the fiscal year 2026 grant deadline was opened March 2, 2026 and closed April 17, 2026. The grant period is from October 1, 2025 to September 30th, 2027. This means that the start dates of those grants were a couple months after the applications opened.

Ms. Himick stated that our current CLG grant was awarded to us on March 24, 2025, and the start date of the project was on June 2, 2025. It closes June 1, 2027. So, the City needs to spend the grant money down by June, 2027. This means that staff hours must be devoted to getting that grant project up to standard for us to be able to maintain good standing as State grant recipients. She said that she assumes that the fiscal year 2027 grants will open in March of 2027 and then be awarded in June of 2027 for a two-year grant period.

She stated that staff would like to prioritize the grant that we already have in terms of staffing time and being able to sort through the surveys and to devote time to the Section 106 review process and the bylaws revision. So, it is possible to have discussions on a Historic Preservation Plan and be brainstorming, but we need to close out other items staff is working on before we jump into very deep waters.

Dr. Holliday stated that she feels for the Commission to engage productively in a preservation plan, questions about using a buddy system need to be resolved, because it would require Commissioners to work in pairs before bringing it back to the Commission as a whole. Vice Chair Hays added that it would be useful to make decisions about sections of the Plan and pairing of partners.

Vice Chair Hays said that the current Historic Preservation Plan does not serve well, because people generally do not know what “historic preservation” means. They do not know what adaptive reuse means. He asked how you would talk about historic preservation if you could not use the words “historic preservation”? He said that the idea he would like to present to everyone is that these documents are typically written with the aim of defining something like in a sense generally for all time. This practice has privileged certain perspectives that are hegemonic in that way. He likes the idea of developing a document that is a living document with working definitions specific to historic preservation context.

He stated that what the HPC chooses to practice as a Commission may be different from another part of the world, a different context, a different value system. However, the framework provided through *Imagine Urbana* and others is clear about how HPC work could be oriented. To produce a document that shows other people what the HPC understands by this work but also how it fits with their initiatives, he hopes will have great value.

Vice Chair Hays asked what the next steps are for this topic. Dr. Holliday said that she would like the HPC members to read the current Historic Preservation Plan and circle the parts they like and X out the part they think are outdated. Vice Chair Hays stated that he has already done this and noted that he X'd out a lot of the current information. He added that the HPC members should keep in mind “What should historic preservation mean in our current context?”. He said they should not try to define it as absolute but rather articulate it so that it helps the HPC communicate and guide their work.

Mr. Shepard stated that he is amazed at how long every city's Historic Preservation Plans are. Dr. Holliday stated that it is important to circle the parts that you are interested in, because this will help allow Commission members to work on the part that interests them the most instead of each member writing many pages.

Dr. Holliday moved that the HPC continue the discussion about the Historic Preservation Plan update to the September 2, 2026 regular meeting. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Holliday moved to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair Hays adjourned the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

Submitted,



Kate Himick

Historic Preservation Commission Secretary