

Moline Historic Preservation Commission Minutes of the Special Meeting, January 29, 2014

Introduction of guests: Moline Planning and Development Director Ray Forsythe, Diann Moore, Dawn Neuses, Moline Mayor Scott Raes, Craig Sommers

In the absence of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair, Commissioner Richard Potter chaired the meeting.

COMMISSION MEMBER	PRESENT	ABSENT
Jolene Keeney	X	
Craig Mack		X
Dan Mizner	X	
Scott Perkins	X	
Dick Potter	X	
Curtis Roseman	X	
Barbara Sandberg		X
Jeff Anderson - Staff	X	

Davis Building/Collectors Center

Potter began the meeting by pointing out that the Commission was not consulted as part of the process in which a contract was written for the sale of the property from the John Deere Foundation to the City. The contract, which has been signed by the Foundation but not the City, specifies that the City would raze the historic Davis Building after purchasing the property from the Foundation. Commission members first learned of this just three days before January 14, when the City Council was to have voted to accept the contract. At the meeting on the 14th, the Council gave the Commission until February 11 to provide a report on the issue.

In an attempt to gather information about the process that led to the contract, the Commission arranged this public meeting for January 29. Although representatives of the Foundation and of Renew Moline were invited to attend this special meeting, none appeared. Potter noted that it will be difficult for the Commission to prepare a thorough report for February 11, because we do not have adequate information on the process that led to the proposal to raze the building.

Commission members emphasized the historic importance of the building and the acknowledgement of that importance by the Foundation and the City in recent years. In 2000, the Foundation received a \$995,000 tourism grant from the State of

Illinois, according to the State's July 14, 2000 press release "...to purchase and renovate a historic building that will become the site of the John Deere Collectors Center..." The press release goes on to point out that "John Deere has always been a leader in the business community...and the John Deere Foundation is following that lead in terms of tourism and historic preservation." Also, the Moline center master plan 2001, pp. 16-17, refers to the Davis building as having historical significance.

Ray Forsythe said that Deere closed the Collectors Center in 2005 because it had not been as successful as they hoped. Since then it has been for sale and has been considered by "at least ten developers." Various options for the site were explored; however, no potential developer could find a way to use the historic building. Forsythe said that the building is "functionally, structurally, and economically obsolete." He went on to say that the Historic Preservation Commission did not propose the building as a Historic Landmark and no one from the Commission contacted him about the building.

Commission members pointed out that the Davis building has been on the Commission agenda for months and concern for its future had been discussed. They also stressed that the historic significance of the building is obvious, and had been clearly recognized. Commissioner Mizner noted that the Historic Block would have been razed were it not for actions by preservation-minded citizens, and that it has been successfully developed. He advocated the initiation of discussions between all parties, including the Commission, to resolve that matter before the City Council accepts the contract to raze the building.

Commission members expressed concern about the lack of a process through which proposals to redevelop or demolish historic structures would be brought before the Commission in a timely manner before any action is taken. Jeff Anderson explained that no such formal process is in place. Two possible actions, to be discussed at future Commission meetings, were mentioned: a revision of the Historic Preservation Ordinance to mandate involvement of the Commission on matters related to historic properties, and an inventory of historic resources which can be used to guide the City in its treatment of such resources.

Diann Moore pointed out that a representative of Landmarks Illinois is willing to visit Moline, at no cost to the City, to examine the historic building, talk with parties involved, and suggest alternatives for the building.

Commissioner Roseman moved (Mizner second): the Commission recommend to the City Council that a representative from Landmarks Illinois be invited to visit and discuss the Davis Building situation with the John Deere Foundation, City representatives, and the Commission members; and recommend alternative actions. The motion passed with five yes votes and no dissenting votes.

Anderson agreed to add the motion to the February 4 City Council agenda and ask that a representative of the Commission be allowed to speak at that meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 pm.