

**PLAN COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

- Present:** Butch Trevor (Chairman), Bill Fitzsimmons (Vice Chairman), Mike Crotty, Dan McConaghy, Matt Puck, Cindy Wermuth, John Wetzel
- Absent:** Dennis Kelly, Peter McDermott, Jeff Nelson
- Staff:** Shawn Christ, Jeff Anderson
- Others:** David Birdsell, D.C.; Melissa Birdsell, D.C.; David Howard; Leona Peterson; Dick Potter; Barbara Sandberg

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Trevor called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**2. Reading and approval of Minutes – July 12, 2017**

Commissioner Wetzel stated that the Minutes should be corrected since he did not make the motion to approve the final plat for Vanacker Addition (PC 17-04) as he was not in attendance at the July 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Minutes were corrected to reflect that Commissioner Kelly made the motion to approve the final plat for Vanacker Addition. With the correction noted, Commissioner Wermuth made a motion to approve the Minutes for the July 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. Commissioner Crotty seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

**3. Public Hearing 17-05 – Request from Dr. David Birdsell for a variance to Sec. 3-2103(3) to allow installation of a dynamic display sign in the Downtown Historic District at 1201 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager).**

Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager, swore in those present who were interested in providing testimony and Chairman Trevor opened the public hearing. Mr. Christ acknowledged that the hearing notice had been published and was contained within the case file. Mr. Christ requested that the staff report and associated attachments be entered into the record. Mr. Christ then reviewed the staff report with the Plan Commission and displayed location and informational graphics associated with the subject site, building, and proposed signage. Mr. Christ stated that staff's recommendation was to deny the requested variance.

Commissioner Wermuth asked Mr. Christ if it would be acceptable to install the static portion of the proposed sign without the dynamic display element and Mr. Christ stated that it would be acceptable to do so.

Commissioner McConaghy asked Mr. Christ if there were criteria for signs within the downtown Historic District and, for example, would backlighting be acceptable. Mr. Christ indicated that backlighting would be acceptable.

Commissioner Crotty asked Dr. Birdsell if the businesses providing letters understood that the subject site is within a historic district as the letters did not seem to address that fact. Dr. Birdsell introduced himself to the Plan Commission and stated that he understood the main issue being considered focused on the hardship criteria and that he did not understand the historic district aspect as an item to be covered within the letters.

Commissioner Wetzel asked if the dynamic aspect of the proposed sign were removed, would it be acceptable in terms of being consistent with the building's architecture. Mr. Christ indicated that he would be more comfortable approving the proposed sign without the dynamic component.

Commissioner McConaghy commented that a painted sign, possibly lit with light, could be compatible with the historic architecture.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons inquired as to whether the Historic District came about via Resolution or Ordinance and are the previously mentioned Moline Centre Design Guidelines (see staff report – analysis section) adopted or more of an advisory document? Mr. Christ said that the Moline Centre Design Guidelines are “guidelines” and their development preceded the designation of the downtown National Register Historic District.

Commissioner Wetzel asked about Christopher D's sign, and if it is the same or a similar situation to Dr. Birdsell's request. Mr. Christ stated that the Christopher D's sign is being addressed through code enforcement.

Dr. Birdsell then introduced David Howard, of Signtronics, and his daughter, Dr. Melissa Birdsell. Mr. Howard stated that the top portion of the proposed sign would be 2' x 8' rather than 4' x 8' and the message display portion of the sign would be 18" x 7' as opposed to the dimensions from the application material. Mr. Howard discussed aspects of LED lighting and indicated that the sign would be compliant with City standards for dynamic lighting. Mr. Howard also alluded to a sign permit being issued after the adoption of the current regulations pertaining to dynamic display signs.

Dr. Melissa Birdsell stated that she would be the future owner of the building and provided additional graphic information pertaining to the proposed sign. She also stated that the sign would be able to provide the public with information on the variety of services provided within the building.

Dr. David Birdsell thanked the City and the Historic Preservation Commission for their support throughout the years. He then provided information associated with the building's history and his tenure with the property. Dr. Birdsell referred the Plan Commission to the application criteria and his responses to said criteria. Dr. Birdsell also stated that the proposed sign was a dynamic sign and not a flashing sign. Dr. Birdsell stated that he intended to maintain the beauty of the building and he does not believe that the proposed sign would compromise the building's appearance. He also said that he would like to see the vitality of the building continue.

Dick Potter introduced himself as the Chairman of the Moline Historic Preservation Commission and acknowledged the Historic Preservation Commission's recent unanimous vote to recommend that the Plan Commission deny the requested sign variance. Mr. Potter cited the recently installed signage on the LeClaire Apartment building as a good example of working towards an appropriate sign within the downtown Historic District. Mr. Potter also said that the Historic Preservation Commission is concerned that approving the requested variance may open the floodgates for other such sign requests. Mr. Potter stated that City Code does not allow the requested type of sign within the Historic District and he urged the Plan Commission to deny the request.

Barbara Sandberg introduced herself to the Plan Commission and stated that she had drafted the National Register Historic District nomination for the downtown area and also stated how proud they are to have Dr. Birdsell's building within the area. She also thanked Dr. Birdsell for rebuilding after the recent fire. Ms. Sandberg said that the downtown is flourishing and the historic buildings and their signage contribute to that, but a dynamic sign does not go along with the subject building and the positive strides taking place downtown. Ms. Sandberg urged the Plan Commission to follow the Code and deny the requested variance.

Leona Peterson of First Lutheran Church, Moline, noted that the church is part of the Historic District and has taken great care and expense to keep the original look of the church. Ms. Peterson stated that the church is moving forward with plans to improve an adjacent lot for parking and they intend to maintain the historic look and appeal of the property. Ms. Peterson said that the church does not believe the proposed sign would contribute to the historic look and feel of the downtown.

Chairman Trevor closed the hearing.

Commissioner Wermuth asked for clarification in regards to what impact a denial of the request would have in terms of installing a sign without a dynamic display component. Mr. Christ indicated that denial of the requested variance would not impact a subsequent request for a code-compliant sign.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons asked about the comment made by Mr. Howard regarding the issuance of sign permit after the adoption of the current dynamic display regulations. Mr. Christ

stated that the permit was possibly issued in error, but the permit application was not checked in the box acknowledging that the property was located in a Historic District.

Commissioner McConaghy asked if the Moline Centre Design Guidelines are specific to the sign in question. Commissioner Fitzsimmons asked about the manner in which the Design Guidelines were or were not adopted (e.g., by ordinance, other). Mr. Christ stated that the Design Guidelines were not adopted by ordinance, but developed in the form of guidelines to help establish appearance standards for the Moline Centre District and further implement the Moline Centre Plan. It was also mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by ordinance, also contained design guidance.

**Motion made by Commissioner McConaghy to deny the request for a variance based on the information and recommendation contained within the staff report and based on the City Code's prohibition of dynamic display signs within Historic Districts. Commissioner Wermuth seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved on a six (6) to zero (0) vote.**

Following the above motion and second, but prior to the vote, Commissioner Fitzsimmons stated that it is disturbing that two properties within the downtown Historic District have installed dynamic signs and he would like to note, for the record, that the Plan Commission had not approved either of these signs.

#### **4. Other Business**

##### **a. Comprehensive Plan review/update**

Mr. Anderson stated that work done to date focused on staff reviewing the existing Official 2001 Comprehensive Plan. As part of this review, Mr. Anderson indicated that staff has begun a list of items, issues, etc. that the Plan Commission could discuss in regards to updating the Comprehensive Plan should it elect to do so.

Commissioner Wetzel suggested consideration for a work session on the Comprehensive Plan at the Plan Commission's next meeting. Commissioner Fitzsimmons suggested that either the full Plan Commission or a subcommittee could proceed with such an effort. Mr. Christ indicated that it would be appropriate to take time to review the existing Plan and winter might work out better than summer in terms of scheduling time for the Plan Commission and staff to work on the project.

##### **b. Other**

Chairman Trevor stated that he spoke with the Mayor regarding the vacant Commission seat and stated that the Mayor is open to suggestions for an appointment.

**5. Review of upcoming meetings**

Commissioner Wetzel asked if there would be something coming forward to the Plan Commission at a future meeting for the project located at the former Mills Chevrolet property. Mr. Christ provided an update on the proposal to redevelop the site, but stated that the project would probably not require Plan Commission consideration.

**6. Public comment**

There was no public comment.

**7. Adjournment**

Being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Anderson, AICP, City Planner & Recording Secretary Pro Tem