

Heritage Preservation Commission
August 24, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes
Web-Ex Meeting Format

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, the HPC members participated through video conference from home. The meeting was held as a Special Meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.021 in response to the Covid-19 emergency.

Call to Order and Roll Call

President Jessica Fortney called to order the meeting of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) at 12:02 p.m. on Monday, August 24, 2020.

Attendance: (Via WebEx video conferencing – all votes conducted via roll call)

Attending: Ken Buehler, Stacey DeRoche, Jessica Fortney, Brandon Hartung, Mike Poupore, and Sarah Wisdorf

Absent: Meredith Anderson

Staff Present: Steven Robertson

Unfinished Business

1. Amendment to PL 20-054 Historic Construction Permit (Exterior Signage), Temple Opera Building at 201 East Superior Street. Senior Planner Steven Robertson gave an overview. Bell Bank is the occupant, but the building is owned by the original owner. Two wall signs and a corner sign are being proposed. Ken Buehler had a question about the flag sign, but it was answered in the staff packet. Michael Poupore asked if city staff had any comments. Robertson stated at first city staff didn't think it would meet HPC approval. Poupore asked if there were any pitfalls in the current design. Robertson noted it is still pending UDC sign review. Poupore asked if this is not the final design, why should they weigh-in now? Robertson explained the permit review flow. The HPC needs to weigh-in first. If HPC approves, or approves with conditions, it would go to city planner, Chris Lee for sign review. Buehler asked about the signs' lighting. Are they front or back lit? Robertson stated the lighting will be in cabinets directed outward. Poupore objects to the corner sign. The applicant is invited to comment.

Applicant: Steve Terman addressed the HPC. The parapet sign would be installed above the cornice. It would not interfere with the building's important architectural elements. The square footage of the sign is roughly only ½ the size of what is allowed. Robertson noted the entry sign and walls signs are within size limits. Terman stated the sign anchoring will be in mortar joints to preserve the historic stone.

Commissioners: Buehler stated he is comfortable with the corner sign and feels it is less intrusive. Poupore noted the type set of the flag sign is changing the streetscape of the historic district. Chair Fortney stated if the sign is bright and glaring, would it fit into the HPC Preservation Plan? It may be out of the surrounding areas' character. Poupore stated it is intrusive in the historic district. Buehler noted the casino is across the avenue. Stacey DeRoche noted the sign's font and modern design are unfortunate, but the company is not going to change their logo. She asked if it could be less obtrusive? Poupore noted a solution could be to minimize the signage. DeRoche suggested a vertical sign might be more appropriate. Buehler asked the applicant if it is an all or nothing proposal. Can they remove the side sign? Terman stated the first proceedings for the lease is signage. This is what determines the location of their business. He can't

emphasize enough the importance of signage. He explained the letters of Bell Bank are the only part of the sign that is illuminated. They did their best to preserve the historic aspects of the building. It is a commercial building, but they will end their lease and move on, if it is not successful. Buehler asked the applicant rep why they decided on this area. Terman stated Bell Bank wanted to enter the Duluth market and has a business relationship with the property owner. Terman agrees it is a challenging area, and this step is one piece of the puzzle.

Public Comment: No speakers.

Commissioners: Buehler noted the signage and the need for the bank to mark its territory. He feels the bank would be a welcomed addition. He is concerned about the next business coming in. Will there be another flag sign for a new business? They are setting a precedent. Chair Fortney noted the parapet and entrance signs are okay, but has hesitation on the protruding sign on the building. Sarah Wisdorf noted the flag sign and asked if the applicant would agree to actual flags. She referred to Wells Fargo's flags. Terman shared a memo he had which shows old brackets attached to the building and that there was already a precedent set from a previous tenant. He noted there would be a maintenance issue if they used real flags. Chair Fortney agreed with Buehler about future businesses going in and what their signs would look like. Terman stated Bell Bank has rented the entire building, so there won't be additional tenants.

MOTION/Second: Buehler/Wisdorf support the historic construction permit for Exterior Signage, for the Temple Opera Building at 201 East Superior Street.

VOTE: (5-1, Poupore Opposed)

New Business

2. Discussion on RFP for Design Guidelines for the Duluth Commercial Historic District. Robertson stated he will share with the commissioners a draft of the RFP language for them to review when ready. Buehler noted how all projects have been moving slowly due to the pandemic and wished staff good luck. The HPC is okay with the proposed timeline.


Communication and Other Business

3. Consideration of Minutes: July 13, 2020
MOTION/Second: Wisdorf/DeRoche approve the minutes

VOTE: (6-0)

Adjournment at 12:52 p.m. (Next meeting scheduled for Monday, 9/14/2020 or Monday, 10/12/2020, unless there is no new or pending items to discuss)

Respectfully,

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Adam Fulton – Deputy Director
Department of Planning and Economic Development