

Heritage Preservation Commission
January 13, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers – City Hall

Call to Order and Roll Call

President Jess McCullough called to order the meeting of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) at 12:01 p.m. on Monday, January 13, 2025.

Attendance:

Attending: Chris Adatte, Ken Buehler, Jess McCullough, and Kal Randa

Absent: None

Staff Present: Chris Lee, Ariana Dahlen, Aaron Soderlund, and Duncan Schwensohn

Consideration of Minutes

November 12th, 2024 HPC Meeting

MOTION/Second: Buehler/Randa approved

VOTE: (3-0)

Adatte arrived at 12:04pm

Consideration of Matters Regarding Commission Action

PLHCDP-2412-0002 Alteration of Interior Walls and Corridors at 132 E Superior St (Oliver Inn/Old City Hall)

Staff: Chris Lee addressed the commission. This project proposal is for some replacement work of interior walls at the Old City Hall. The applicant is proposing to replace some walls and renovate the building's 2nd level (Superior Street level) to include sleeping units. The scope of work includes some of the elements that are called out in the preservation plan, so before this work can proceed, the Heritage Preservation Commission needs to review the project, and then the HPC may make a motion to approve the zoning application (Certificate of Appropriateness) allowing the demolition and reconstruction. The motion will have to include findings to support the motion. Lee explained that when memos come before the HPC, staff does not typically make a full recommendation to the commissioners, but instead staff will present the facts so the commissioners can make their own informed decisions and motions. Lee then shared some project images with the room.

Commissioners: Commissioner Buehler asked staff if the original walls on the interior of the building were solid and then later opened up, or were they always open and are now going to be closed. President McCullough asked a clarifying question to staff regarding which walls would be filled in, as well as the timeline for this project.

Staff: Lee responded that he believed that the original walls were once solid. The walls are currently open, and the applicant is looking to fill them back in. Lee confirmed that the security doors and some of the bar space in the photos is where the filling in will take place. The applicant has submitted a building permit for this project, but the permit is currently on hold and cannot move forward without HPC review and approval. The timeline for this project will likely go through spring of this year.

Applicant: Not present.

PLHCDP-2412-0005 Electrical Upgrades to the Interior of 8131 Congdon Blvd (Lakewood Pump House and/or Surge Valve Building)

Staff: Chris Lee addressed the commissioners and presented some photos of the project site. This application is brought forth by the City of Duluth Engineering department for modifications being made to the Lakewood Pumping Station and its grounds at 8130 Congdon Boulevard. The property is known as the Lakewood Pumping Station. The Lakewood Pumping Station is locally designated under file 97053 and designated as a historical property in 1998. The scope of work includes repairing the roof and installing a man-door in the place of a window on the Surge Valve Building. These improvements are necessary for updating equipment and providing means for emergency back-up equipment as part of a FEMA grant. This review is also a requirement that FEMA has as part of the grant agreement. Similarly to the previous agenda item, staff is presenting the facts of this project to the commissioners so they can make their own decision as to whether they will approve or deny this application.

Commissioners: Vice President Randa asked staff if the project plans include sealing the existing door on the exterior of the building and putting a new door where the window is located. He asked what this building is currently being used for and what staff hopes to see with the improvements. Commissioners also asked the applicant if the glazing on the windows will be maintained throughout this project.

Staff: Lee responded that to his knowledge, a second door will be added for safety purposes. He believes that the existing door will stay as it is, but encourages commissioners to ask the City Engineering department representative for specific project details.

Applicant: Aaron Soderlund, a Senior Engineer with the City of Duluth, addressed the commissioners. The existing door will remain and there are 2 points of egress, which is required per the building code. currently, there is not much inside the space other than some historical electrical gear that was previously torn out. Soderlund described the other pieces of equipment that are housed in the building and the functions that take place there. The building is currently in a state of disrepair, and this project will allow city staff to make the necessary repairs to help preserve the building. Soderlund explained that the original plan was to have permanent on-site generators, but their change of scope request eliminates the need for permanent on-site generators. They will have the ability to bring in generators on trucks and drop them off in the event of a long-term power disruption. Soderlund stated that it is their intention to preserve the look of the building as much as possible.

Commissioners: Commissioners expressed that they were happy to see this project moving forward and were pleased with the efforts to preserve the building's historical aesthetic. President McCullough asked staff what the next steps are and how the HPC plays a role in providing input into this project. Commissioners want to make sure this project has everything it needs to keep it moving forward while still doing their due diligence to ensure that the historic exterior of the building is preserved.

Staff: Lee answered that city staff are looking for feedback as part of this project plan. Part of the HPC review and approval process includes commissioners providing recommendations of what they would like to see as part of the approval. Planning and Engineering Staff can look into options that would match the historic nature of the building in order to help preserve the visual element in some capacity. Staff recommends support and approval of this application, but it's up to the commissioners if they want to add a condition like that to their approval. Discussion ensued regarding the approval process and which conditions commissioners may wish to make.

MOTION/Second: Buehler/Adatte motion to approve with the following conditions:

- 1. The upper window in the archway on the new door will be preserved.**
- 2. Design features in the new door will mimic the lower window.**
- 3. This item return to the HPC for review after SHPO recommendations are made.**

Vote: (4-0)

Presentations

Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge Rehabilitation – Joseph Litman, PE, LHB

Joseph Litman addressed the commissioners and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Lift Bridge rehabilitation project. Each of the commission members had an electronic copy of the presentation and it was displayed on monitors for the few people in audience attendance to observe. The only question which was raised during the presentation was from one of the commission members who stated they have family living on Park Point so wondered how long the construction would go on for and how impacted they might be in driving on and off the point. It was discussed that the work is scheduled for up to 4 years but will primarily be noticeable during the winter shipping shutdown periods and that vehicle disruptions are to be limited to no longer than a vehicle would anticipate for a ship to pass beneath the bridge so on the order of 15 minutes. It was also discussed that longer, up to 45-minute vehicle closures, will be allowed between overnight hours of 2am and 6am and would be communicated to the public at least a week in advance through changeable message signs posted down at the bridge if they are to occur. Beyond that there were no further questions, and the group thanked the project personnel for presenting the project information

Skyline Parkway/Bardon's Peak – Duncan Schwensohn, PE, City of Duluth

Duncan Schwensohn, P.E. from the City of Duluth's Engineering department presented to the commission about the Bardon's Peak informational signage. Each commissioner was given a paper copy of the presentation. This project will be a significant amount of storm sewer improvements as well as the restoration of the Bardon's Peak retaining wall. They were able to receive a National Scenic Byway federal grant for a portion of this work. Part of the grant application includes adding a historical marker to the project before it's completed. Schwensohn was seeking input from the commissioners on what wording to include in the plaque. The Commission agreed that working with the Indigenous Commission to craft appropriate language would be helpful. It was suggested a joint meeting between Commissions. Schwensohn gave details about sizes and timelines and was hoping to have language before April 1st.

Communications

N/A

Report of Final Disposition of Matters Previously Before the Commission

Chris Lee addressed the commissioners regarding the parking matter that was brought up at the previous meeting. There may be some options available for commissioners, but staff is still looking into it. Staff is also continuing to work with leadership towards appointing new members for this commission. Progress is being made and more information is forthcoming.

Commissioner Buehler spoke to the commissioners about a possible social gathering and tour of the St. Louis County Depot, both of which would be open to the public. He proposes doing this when the new commission members have officially joined the HPC. Buehler also brought handouts of the latest copy of Junction Magazine from the Lake Superior Railroad Museum to share it with the rest of the commissioners. There is an article about the Incline steps as they were recently rediscovered, as well a brief history of the Incline.

Reports of Officers, Staff and Committees

PC Liaison Update – No update from Commissioner Adatte.

Other Business

N/A

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

Respectfully,

Jenn Moses – Manager
Planning and Development Division