

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Date: December 9, 2019	Peter Hallock, Chairperson	2021
	Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock, Vice-Chair	2022
Call to Order: 6:00PM	Lisa Hovis	2021
Place: Ames City Hall Council Chambers	*Edith Hunter	2020
	*Barry Snell	2020
Adjournment: 7:27PM.	Susan Minks	2021

[*Absent]

CALL TO ORDER: Peter Hallock, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Grevstad-Nordbrock/Minks) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of December 9, 2019.

MOTION PASSED: (4-0)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF November 14, 2019:

MOTION: (Minks /Hovis) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of November 14, 2019.

MOTION PASSED: (4-0)

PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

REVIEW OF THE AMES COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Peter Hallock, Chairperson, opened by saying that the primary item for review is the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, which was adopted in 2009. He said over the last year the Commission has periodically looked at the plan. He said since it is the 10-year anniversary of the plan, he would suggest doing a review so the Commission can recommend changes or say if the plan is still appropriate.

Mr. Hallock noted that when he was looking through past meeting minutes, he saw implementing Action Items was discussed. He said one item was talking with neighborhoods about different areas that would be appropriate for a Historic neighborhood, but they did not discuss it. He said it was documented in the minutes that goal three was to update Chapter 31. He said that was accomplished back in 2015. He noted that Objective A of Goal #3 could be indicated as accomplished. Mr. Hallock said he would like to go through goal-by-goal and action step by action step, and see if the Commission feels there are things to work or be dropped.

Mr. Hallock read aloud Goal #1 & the Action Steps. He said he knows the City has Neighborhood Summits but did not know if that fits the Action Step. He said he believed some kind of structure is in place for the neighborhoods.

Ray Anderson, Planner, said Neighborhood Associations register with the City Clerk's Office. The Neighborhood Chairperson is notified if a zoning action, or subdivision is proposed in their neighborhood. The Chairperson is then asked to notify residents of their neighborhood of pending zoning, or subdivision proposals that have been submitted to the City. The owners of property

within 200 feet of a zoning, or subdivision proposal receive individual notices of public hearings for the proposals that come before the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Mr. Hallock asked if those include legislation on zoning or occupancy.

Mr. Anderson replied that legislation that involves text amendments to the Municipal Code typically affects properties throughout the community, and does not involve an individual applicant, as is the case with applications for rezoning, variances, or special use permits. In those cases, notices are not sent out to neighborhoods, nor to individual property owners, but a notice is published in the newspaper, and reports that go to the various boards, commissions, and city council are available to the public.

Susan Minks, Commission Member, asked if they have an annual joint meeting of the associations.

Mr. Anderson replied that there is an annual Neighborhood Summit held in the City Council Chambers. Julie Gould, Planner, works closely with the neighborhoods.

Ms. Minks asked if there would be something about Historic Preservation they could bring to the agenda.

Mr. Hallock said he has attended many of the meetings and they do not usually discuss historic preservation, but it could be an opportunity to sponsor a summit on neighborhood preservation. He said the structure is there but the focus is not on historic preservation.

Mr. Hallock went on to discuss the next Action Item and steps.

Mr. Anderson said intensive and reconnaissance surveys have been completed for selected areas of the community, such as the Old Town Historic District, College Heights, and others. The Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan recommends that historic surveys be done for other area of the community.

Mr. Hallock spoke about supporting the Ames History Museum. He noted there is a lot that they accomplish with partial support, which addresses some of the steps. He said it may be appropriate to try to set some expectations so that there is coordination with historic preservation.

Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock, Vice-Chair, asked if there are neighborhoods that are threatened, or opportunities that they do not see.

Mr. Anderson replied that there are, and Historic Preservation addresses those in Chapter 4 of the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. He noted it also prioritized certain areas that need to be surveyed and might be threatened if they are not preserved.

Mr. Hallock commented that in the minutes there was an initiative that never went anywhere. He said it was in regards to bringing in neighborhoods that were interested in pursuing something. He said the idea was to help if the neighborhood is interested in research and working with the Commission. He explained that does need to happen, as well as meeting with neighborhoods and broaching the topic of the possibility of a district or designation. He said they were going to put together a meeting and it fell through the cracks.

Mr. Hallock said the Downtown area has historic looking streetlights, but he does not know if anything else was done, as described in the third Action Step of Goal #1, Objective A, . He said that partially addresses the issue, but it does not rise to the same level as some of the other items and is probably a low priority.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented if the document were to be amended, he would be in favor of striking it all together.

Mr. Hallock said he proposes to drop the third Action Step under Goal #1, Objective A, which refers to developing design guidelines for the installation and use of historic street lights in national or local historic districts.

Mr. Hallock said the second Action Step under Goal #1, Objective B is to sponsor a summit. He said the Commission could plan the next cycle to sponsor a summit and talk about historic preservation resources and make an offer to work with neighborhood associations on something. He said he would propose that as something to target in the next year.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented he thought it would be an opportunity to get back to focusing on the website. He said a summit is nice, but an updated website would go a long way to solve the lack of data problem.

Mr. Anderson asked if illustrated design guidelines is one of the items he wants to see included as we continue to update the website.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock replied that he would like to see that, and the City of Dubuque does that very well.

Mr. Hallock said that including links to completed surveys on the City website is the next update he would recommend. This is the first Action Step under Goal #1, Objective B.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said he would caution to clarify that "potentially eligible" does not mean it is final, and is tentative.

With regard to the Action Step under Goal #1, Objective C, Mr. Hallock said that he is aware that when the Old Town Historic District did a walking tour, a brochure was sent out through the Visitor's Bureau and they distributed them. He has not heard if they have run out or not.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if he had seen people using the guides and walking around Old Town. He commented that if they focus on tourism, they might focus on the Lincoln Highway, the University and Main Street.

Mr. Hallock replied that occasionally he has seen people walking in Old Town, and using the walking tour brochure. He said one potential step would be to work with the Visitor's Bureau to encourage other neighborhoods to develop a walking tour of other neighborhoods with the use of grant funding.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if the City has the money.

Mr. Hallock replied that there is a grant project, but he does not know it is marketed to neighborhoods. He said that maybe a walking tour does not need to be an Action Step.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if we could solicit information from the Convention & Visitors Bureau about tourists that come to Ames. What type of tourists are they trying to attract to Ames?

Lisa Hovis, Commission Member, said it seems like a Neighborhood Summit is key point of the Action Steps and it could introduce so much of what they do.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said there are studies that support the hypothesis that say properties are not suffering from historic designation. He went on to say he would rather see evidence to encourage other neighborhoods to engage in preservation and get on the local Historic register as local landmarks, or local districts.

Mr. Hallock said they could keep the Objective and come up with an Action Step directed to promoting the idea.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock noted when looking at how preservation has been analyzed, it has been in context of economic benefits or impacts. He asked if there is anything else the Commission would want to know about.

Mr. Anderson said with the current Land Use Policy Plan, historic preservation is one of 10 goals in the current plan, and it will be addressed also in the new 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that the Historic Preservation Plan was written 10 years ago and sustainability was just starting to be on people's minds. He suggested using it to promote preservation. He said they should do it in a quantitative, measurable way that will sway people.

Mr. Hallock went on to discuss Goal #2 and said it concerned providing financial support to the Ames Historical Society which is now the Ames History Museum. He said the strategy is to fund one full time equivalent employee. He said the City of Ames is providing about \$44,000 a year to the museum. He said the funds are not for a staff person, but are annual funding that has gone up recently. He noted that one thing to suggest could be having the Society put a proposal in the budget process to be approved and awarded for an amount based on their proposal. He went on to say that, he does not know if there might be some effort to get some specifics, but it is not a specific task in their operation.

Mr. Anderson said that maybe the wording of "full time staff" is too specific and not relevant anymore. He said they could continue the financial support but that it would not be specifically for a staff member.

Mr. Hallock said there is potential to formalize a connection with Historic Preservation, and he would say that goal has substantial accomplishment. He said it may be appropriate to rework the Action Step.

Mr. Hallock commented that there is property tax abatement in designated historic districts, but he is not aware of what is out there.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that there are already State and National abatements. He asked if the City needs one and if it should be a goal. He said he would be inclined to say they should encourage financial incentives rather than a program that does not exist.

Mr. Hallock said he thought the idea of promoting what is already available is appropriate

Ms. Hovis asked if they would be informing or promoting.

Mr. Hallock said he would agree with reworking the Action Step since nothing has happened in ten years.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock replied that there are tools available, and that it is just a matter of getting the information out.

Mr. Hallock suggested it would be guidance for improving and preserving properties to those interested in preservation. He said he would be okay with it, but thinks staff needs to be prominent because people do not come to get that kind of technical advice.

Mr. Hallock discussed outbuildings on properties and auto garages. He said Chapter 31 was revised to include garages to be covered that can apply beyond the local districts.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that if people want to invest in their homes, the Commission should not be too idealistic about it. He said homeowners might want to do things to their garage to make it useable and the Commission should be flexible with reuse.

Mr. Hallock brought up the subject of cultural landscaping

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said instead of saying natural resources they could say cultural landscaping. He said the Commission could assist where possible or appropriate.

Mr. Hallock noted the subject of archeology and said he did not know if anything in that category has happened in Ames.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said it could be good to recognize that there could be artifacts in Ames.

Mr. Hallock said the Commission would discuss the Goal #3, then address the rest at the next meeting. He said Goal #3 is about protecting historic resources. He said he thought Objective A could be deleted. He said he did not know whether the second action step of historic provisions for building codes is accomplished.

Mr. Anderson confirmed that they were.

Mr. Hallock said that Objective A could be set aside.

Mr. Hallock said they could note that the Historic Preservation Commission would prioritize potential reconnaissance surveys and strategize funding mechanisms to achieve them. He said he thought it would be appropriate to keep something along those lines.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said getting Main Street listed on the register was a big green check mark. He suggested adding something to identify places they want to survey and revisiting key neighborhoods that were surveyed ten to twenty years ago. He suggested they work with data that they already have in updating it and identifying new neighborhoods.

Mr. Hallock suggested they get link to those surveys on the website and make it part of the Neighborhood Summit meeting and publicize that.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that he went back and looked at the surveys and said that although they are well done, they are not be intended for public consumption. He said it would have to be rendered in a format the public could use and be easy to digest.

Mr. Hallock said he would suggest making it more graphic so it is easily understood. He said they should use examples that are easily recognized by the public.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said he would like to see an Action Step tying older neighborhoods to newer neighborhoods in the City of Ames.

Ms. Minks said she would suggest also tying it to the Ames 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Hallock discussed if there had been any effort to identify any other properties as landmarks.

Mr. Anderson said there had not been.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said he thought they were talking about National Historic Landmarks, not just the local registry.

Mr. Hallock said that incentive programs respect the historic character of properties. He suggested having a liaison between the Historic Preservation Commission and the Façade Grant Program.

Mr. Hallock said that expansion follows good preservation practices but that he did not know if any actual project had been done.

Mr. Hallock discussed protecting the value of neighborhoods and deterioration of homes. He said there was a proposal for owner occupied maintenance standards that did not go anywhere. He said there is an ongoing effort with the rental code and would say those are both appropriate action steps.

Mr. Anderson suggested they continue the discussion next month.

Mr. Hallock said he would like to go ahead and hold a meeting next month, even if no properties were on the agenda.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Ms. Hovis said homeowners in the Old Town District say they are going to go ahead and get a deck put on their house, and not go through the Historic Preservation Commission. She asked how they could make Commission not seem scary and not complicated. She said the word on the street is that it is difficult. She asked that the Commission encourage people to talk with the Commission.

Mr. Hallock said his experience was that it is realtors telling people it is difficult, and anything they can do to clarify might make it not so scary.

Ms. Hovis suggested having some quick easy answers to cases they see often.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said they should find a way they can lay all this concern aside and explain the Commission Members are not difficult to deal with and they want to see continued use of properties.

Mr. Anderson suggested putting FAQ's on the website.

Ms. Hovis suggested also placing something on resident's doors or mailing something, because people are not even looking at the website

Mr. Hallock said a welcome packet is sent out to the downtown area. He said the commission could include that and get that up and running.

Ms. Minks suggested having a non-threatening neighborhood contact person.

Ms. Hovis brought up the idea of doing a video giving some basic information. She said that could help people see that the Commission is comprised of people wanting to help achieve their goals, not stop them from doing what they want to their property.

STAFF COMMENTS:

None

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Grevstad-Nordbrock /Hovis) to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED: (4-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:27PM.



Peter Hallock, Chairperson
Historic Preservation Commission



Laura Colebrooke, Recording Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing