

**MINUTES  
CITY OF AMES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Date: January 13th, 2025	Scott Huffman	2026
	Melissa Goodwin	2026
Call to Order: 6:02 PM	Robert Ewald	2026
Place: Council Chambers	Michael Murphy	2025
	William Walker	2027
Adjournment: 7:32PM	Dévon Lewis	2027
	Kate Gregory	2027

[\*Absent]

CALL TO ORDER: Scott Huffman, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

MOTION: (Gregory/Goodwin) to approve the agenda for the meeting of January 13, 2025.

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF December 9, 2024:**

MOTION: (Ewald/Gregory) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of December 09, 2024.

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

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**PUBLIC FORUM:**

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**CLG ANNUAL REPORT REVIEW (WORK PLAN)**

Ray Anderson, Planner for the City of Ames, and Staff Liaison to the Commission, stated the CLG Annual Report was initially brought before the Commission at the December 2024 Meeting. The Commission needs to approve the CLG Annual Report and finalize the 2025 Work Plan. The 2025 Proposed Work Plan was presented with changes included, as directed by the Commission at the December 13, 2024, meeting. A handout was provided with activities from

the 2024 calendar year. Mr. Anderson stated that the item numbering changed to reflect the change in this year's report format.

Kate Gregory, Commission member, stated that there are additional changes that should be made to Chapter 31. She requested adding continuation of revising Chapter 31 to the 2025 Work Plan. She suggested using the wording from the 2024 Work Plan regarding the editing of Chapter 31 and adding it to the wording she used from the last HPC Meeting.

Ms. Gregory commented their efforts as a Commission, as well as City staff, appear to be focused on the appearance of infrastructure. The State Code also encompasses historic resources such as the George Washington Carver house. Ms. Gregory stated there is a larger discussion to be had.

Ms. Lewis, Commission member, was in favor of recognizing historic resources such as the history of the underground railroad in Iowa.

Mr. Huffman asked if Ms. Gregory and Ms. Lewis were advocating for celebrating historical resources outside of the Old Town District in the form of an event, or if they were advocating for the Commission having jurisdiction over certain historical resources. Ms. Gregory stated she was advocating for the Commission appreciating resources beyond just infrastructure.

Mr. Anderson asked Ms. Gregory how she envisioned the Commission would appreciate such resources. Ms. Gregory thought such appreciation would take place through Commission and public education, preservation, etc.

Robert Ewald, Commission member, questioned whether the Ames History Museum would be available for such events.

Ms. Lewis asked if there could be a collaboration between the Commission and the Ames History Museum.

Ms. Gregory suggested the Commission ask the museum staff for ideas regarding protection of non-infrastructure historical resources.

Ms. Lewis commented that could apply towards the Work Plan goal of providing education of Ames History.

Mr. Huffman noted the idea discussed may possibly align with Goal Number Four. If the Commission requests Planning staff to allocate their time to projects that are outside their purview, it may not get approved. The Commission could certainly pursue it and see what happens.

Ms. Gregory suggested there be two bulleted items under Goal Number Three on the 2025 Work Plan. The first bullet would state, "Review Chapter 31 References within the 2025 Work Plan", and the second bullet would state, "Continue Review of Chapter 31." Ms. Gregory went on to say that using the noted language for Chapter 31 would allow the Commission to review other things besides energy savings and renewal.

MOTION: (Huffman/Gregory) approve 2025 Work Plan as Amended and recommend for approval by City Council.

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

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**2025 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS PROGRAM**

Mr. Anderson requested that the Commission decide if they wish to proceed with the 2025 Historic Preservation Awards Program. If so, a press release and notice will be published. Award nominations would be due late February. The awards will be presented at the second meeting of the City Council in April.

Mr. Huffman proposed the Commission proceed with the 2025 Historic Preservation Awards program.

Michael Murphy, Commission member, agreed and noted if the awards program motivates property owners to preserve and maintain the historical significance of their property, the Commission should encourage it.

Ms. Gregory asked if there is an award category for energy efficiency improvements. Mr. Huffman said there may not be one specifically for that. Ms. Gregory suggested adding it next year.

MOTION: (Huffman/Lewis) to proceed with the 2025 Historic Awards Program

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

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**COMMISSION COMMENTS: DISCUSSION OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION'S LETTER SENT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REGARDING A ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT**

Mr. Ewald inquired if the Mayor or City Council responded to the letter the Commission sent.

Mr. Huffman replied the memo derived from the last Commission meeting, asking for clarification. has not received any official response from the Mayor and City Council.

Mr. Ewald stated the issue that brought this to light has been an ongoing dispute between the Old Town District and the Planning & Housing Department. Mr. Ewald gave a brief overview of the Zoning Board of Adjustments decision at their January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding this matter. Mr. Ewald stated the appeal was denied but he has yet to see any official ruling.

David Carter, 709 Douglas, stated he brought forth the issue at the last Historic Preservation Commission meeting. He references the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Zoning Board of Adjustment and reiterated his position remains the same. Mr. Carter felt the Municipal Code states the Historic Preservation Commission is supposed to receive notice of any Text Amendments that would impact the Old Town Historic District. Mr. Carter stated that the public was not notified of the text amendment.

David Thielen, 3974 North Dakota Avenue, introduced himself as the Director of the Romero House. Mr. Thielen voiced his appreciation of the civil discussion that has been held on this topic. He also voiced his support for what the Historic Preservation Commission does and what it stands for. Mr. Thielen commented the Romero House Board of Directors feels they will increase the

value of homes in the Old Town District while addressing the homeless need in Ames. There was a notice that went out to Old Town Association Board via email. A full flyer went out in the district prior to the October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. There is a process, and the Planning & Housing Director stated clearly that the Historic Preservation Commission, as much as they respect it, was not necessary. Statements should be fact based and not based on politics.

Shellie Orngard, 928 Burnett, stated at the last meeting she complemented the efforts of the Romero House to restore property on Clark Avenue. Tonight, Ms. Orngard wanted to discuss how the Municipal Code is interpreted. The Planning Director made a judgement that the use of the property was not a factor, and the Zoning Text Amendment would not impact the neighborhood, meaning the physical aspects of the neighborhood. Ms. Orngard read aloud Section 31.1 regarding the purpose of the Historic Preservation Commission. The Chapter goes on to describe the powers and duties of the Commission in section 31.6. Item 7 states that the Commission is to review proposed zoning amendments that affect proposed or designated landmarks and historic districts. Sharon Wirth was at the last Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting, and she used to serve on City Council. Ms. Wirth stated at that meeting it was the Council's intention writing the code that Zoning Text Amendments go before the Historic Preservation Commission. Ms. Orngard served on the Historic Preservation Commission from 2000 to 2005. She felt the Commission needs to know what their powers and responsibilities are. She also recommended Commission members attend the Preserve Iowa Conference.

Mr. Ewald drafted a one-page document that staff displayed on the screen. The purpose of the document is to discuss whether or not these text amendments would apply to the Historic District and if Commission should take a position on the matter. Mr. Ewald proposed that changes in use must be presented to the Commission before going to the zoning authorities. The meaning of words "affect" and "respecting" should be clearly defined. In Section 31.12, the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, it states a property shall be used for its historic purpose. Based on that, Mr. Ewald felt the Commission should take the position that Zoning Text Amendments should be brought to the Commission.

Ms. Gregory said she agreed with Mr. Ewald and commented that when a building changes its use it does impact the neighborhood.

William Walker, Commission Member, said there are many historic structures that have changed uses but that doesn't mean they are invalid. The Commission must understand the use and value it brings. Focusing primarily on the use, may reflect bias against what the use in mind is, rather than being concerned if the use is changing from residential to commercial. The City has made it clear where they stand, and Mr. Walker voiced his agreement with their stance.

Mr. Gregory said she was not talking about Romero house but was referring to the effect of change of use on a community, such as a property becoming a cannabis store. The Commission should be part of the process to make recommendations along with other City Boards.

Mr. Walker said he is more concerned about the structure, not what happens inside the property as homeowners should have a say about what they do to their property. Mr. Walker stated if the Commission determines specific uses are not valid, the decisions may negatively impact certain people groups. Mr. Walker felt the Commission has a commitment to providing value in a real way to the community members.

Mr. Murphy asked if in the history of the Commission if this matter has come up before.

Ms. Gregory spoke with Sharon Wirth and discovered that Zoning Text Amendments uses did go to before the Commission. So, a few have come up over time and eventually they stopped going before the Commission. As a result, a precedent has been set.

Mr. Murphy asked if the Commission was feeling slighted since the recent history was Zoning Text Amendments had not come before them. Ms. Gregory replied if the original intent of the Municipal Code was for the amendments to come before them, they should go back to doing that. If they do not, they should take the word "use" out of the Sections of the Code discussed this evening.

Mr. Murphy suggested going forward with the word "use" taken out of the Code. It should be the exterior of a structure and proper maintenance that should be focused on rather than the use.

Ms. Gregory commented that a Zoning Text Amendment is to change what is legal. Intent is to change use of a building.

Mr. Huffman presented the hypothetical scenario of an individual purchasing a residential property in the Old Town Historic District. If the buyer sought a Zoning Text Amendment to convert the property into a restaurant, the Historic Preservation Commission would review the proposed amendment. They would assess for any potential changes to the exterior of the structure and determine if they would have a visible impact on the historic character of the district.

A scenario such as that would make sense, the Commission would make a recommendation when that type of change of use comes forward. Referring to the letter Mr. Ewald wrote as well as the original letter sent to Council, Mr. Huffman noted the Commission is not attempting to vote at this time. The Commission sent a memo to the Mayor and City Council, and nothing was sent in response. Mr. Huffman expressed his concern that the Commission is only in existence so the City of Ames can be a Certified Local Government, and beyond that the City has no concern. Mr. Huffman went on to say the Commission does not need to determine answers but wants to be involved in the communication process. Mr. Huffman feels the Commission deserves an explanation from City and is in support of sending a response saying they would like some kind of explanation.

Ms. Lewis shared insights from her many years of experience as an Administrative Law Judge and arbitrator. A significant issue she observed was poor communication and lack of clarity often led to disputes in contested cases. Ms. Lewis noted the Zoning Text Amendment for the Romero House was submitted several months ago and there has been a delay in the process, which is not serving the citizens of Ames. There needs to be clarification of the duties and responsibilities of the Commission. Had this matter gone to the Commission earlier in the process, this matter could have been resolved by now. Ms. Lewis urged that, at minimum, the Commission should communicate with the Council to push for a response that clarifies the situation.

Ms. Gregory felt they should make their thoughts known to Council, even if the Commission Members had differing opinions on the matter.

Mr. Ewald asked what if a Zoning Text Amendment requested a bar be allowed at a property, or a property be turned into a preschool. It is unlikely such requests would arise, but there should be a process in place allowing the Commission to provide input early in the review process.

Mr. Walker expressed concern that there may be biases involved if the Commission restricts the potential uses of a property/structure. If they go back to historic uses, the City would be far more

walkable and more pedestrian friendly. The Commission should identify why they want to focus so much on the use and historic nature of a property. Who would the Commission be preventing from these areas and Planning justice should be pondered as well as why Commission members are so invested in the word "use."

Mr. Ewald commented the main focus of the Commission is the exterior of a structure and the issue they have been discussing is secondary.

Ms. Gregory suggested the Commission make a recommendation to City Council to change the word, "use."

Mr. Walker stated the Commission needs clarity on "use" and what is permissible.

Ms. Gregory suggested the Commission send communication to City Council asking for a response. The Commission could have further discussion involving what uses would be allowed.

Mr. Ewald asked if the Commission could take an official position on the matter.

Mr. Murphy suggested they table it.

Ms. Lewis said the Commission needs clarification on wording and felt it would be best practice to have such items come before the Commission early on to make their input know. By the Commission being excluded, it limited what the public could say and limited knowledge in the instance of the Romero House Zoning Text Amendment.

Mr. Huffman suggested they put this topic on the Agenda for the next meeting. Verbiage could be discussed, and the Commission could collectively state how they interpret it. The Commission could also make suggestions as to how the ordinance should be amended.

MOTION: (Lewis/) to table issue for further discussion at next month's meeting to gather ideas how to clarify and define role and process

*MOTION: Failed due to lack of a second.*

Ms. Gregory said they should have a deadline for this, such as March.

Ms. Goodwin asked the Commission if the suggestion is to ask Council for a response before the next Commission meeting so the response can be discussed at that time. Mr. Huffman replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Lewis felt if the Commission needs a legal opinion to clarify the Municipal Code, which shows the Code is not clear enough.

Ms. Gregory suggested they also find out what the intent was when the Code was written.

MOTION: (Lewis/Ewald) Postpone the final decision on this matter until the next monthly meeting; gather additional information regarding developing definition of Commission roles and procedures; formally request supplemental documentation and context from the City to inform Commission discussion.

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

Ms. Gregory commented she did not receive any training before joining the Commission and asked if there were any materials she needed.

Mr. Huffman replied before a Commission Member attends their first meeting, they attend an informal training session hosted by the City Attorney. The training is broad overview and is not specific to a certain board.

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STAFF COMMENTS

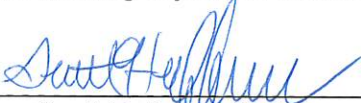
No comments

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Murphy/Gregory) to adjourn the meeting.

*MOTION PASSED: (7-0)*

The meeting adjourned at 7:32PM.



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Scott Huffman, Chairperson  
Historic Preservation Commission



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Laura Colebrooke, Recording Secretary  
Department of Planning & Housing