

MINUTES FOR
SPECIAL MEETING
OWOSSO HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Wednesday, February 20, 6:00 p.m.
CITY HALL BUILDING – COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Newman.

ROLL CALL was taken by Recording Staff Liaison, Josh Adams.

PRESENT: Chairman Scott Newman; Commissioner Matthew Van Epps; Commissioner Gary Wilson, Lance Omer, and Commissioner Dianne Acton

ABSENT: Vice-Chairman Vince Gonyou, Secretary Philip Hathaway

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Steven Teich, City of Owosso Resident

AGENDA APPROVAL:

MOTION FOR APPROVAL BY COMMISSIONER VAN EPPS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OMER.

AYES ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES APPROVAL:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER VAN EPPS, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER WILSON

AYES ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

PUBLIC/COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: Mr. Steven Teich introduced himself. He stated that he has recently moved back to Owosso after living in Saugatuck, MI for 40 years. While in Saugatuck he was the chairman of the City's Downtown Historic District. Mr. Teich stated that he was interested in aiding Owosso's historic preservation efforts. He also mentioned that he was a lead volunteer in the former Marshal, MI Main Street program where he served on the Design Committee.

Committee Reports: None

Public Hearings: None

Items of Business:

- 1) Certified Local Government Audit

Discussion focused on a formal response to SHPO's audit letter for the City's Certified Local Government designation. The commission went through the items of corrective action, one-by-one and determined an action and/or response. The formal responses are listed below:

Corrective Action #1: Identify an architect to either serve on the commission or serve as an advisor.

- The current board chairman, Scott Newman has a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Michigan in History and Architectural History and a Masters Degree from Eastern Michigan University in Geography with a concentration in Historic Agency Administration. At the time of our district's formation we were told that Mr. Newman's education qualified him to meet the architect requirement.

Corrective Action #2: Adopt a conflict of interest policy consistent with the one required by the National Park Service

- The Commission agreed to have the City attorney review the conflict of interest policy that was provided by SHPO. Upon review & approval, the commission will implement the policy.

Corrective Action #3: A local government shall "maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic resources."

- The City of Owosso has a well-developed and robust surveyed inventory of both commercial districts and residential neighborhoods with very few areas available for survey. The commission agreed to look into the following areas:
 - West Main Street, between Downtown & Westtown,
 - The South Washington Street corridor, and
 - Curwood Castle Park Area
- The commission also agreed to develop a survey system that will establish a ranking system and time-frames for completion. They will use the example that was provided by SHPO to start the process.

Corrective Action #4: Operate according to the process provided in PA 169 of 1970, as amended.

- In May 2018 the commission took part in an advanced board training provided by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network. In that training, the proper use of a "Notice to Proceed" and "Certificate of Appropriateness". The clarification provided during that training will aid in how the commission determines future applications.

Corrective Action #5: Take detailed minutes.

- The commission will be allocating city administrative staff to aid in detailed minute taking for all future meetings.

Corrective Action #6: Obtain copies of national register nomination and retain for public access.

- The commission has already collecting all nominations from the National Parks Service Achieves. Copies (digital & print) will be kept in the City's files.

Corrective Action #7: Establish achievable goals with anticipated activities and deadlines.

- The commission agreed to use future meetings to develop goals for its preservation program. These goals will describe anticipated activities (evaluation, registration, and protection) with appropriate deadlines.

4) Historic upper-level business signage

Mr. Adams stated that with future upper level commercial build-outs being purposed in multiple buildings within the district it would be prudent for the commission to start a discussion on what types of upper-level signage would/ would not be allowed. Mr. Adams provided documentation provided by SHPO that will aid in educating the commission on what would be appropriate.

The commission agreed to continue these discussions in future meetings. The commission agreed to start meeting every-other month (if no applications are submitted) and using those meeting times to continue to discussions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

BOARD COMMENTS: Chairman Newman mentioned a recent article in the Argus Press about the Matthews Building (300-312 W Main Street) regarding the future of the historic structure(s). Mr. Newman stated that the article quoted the property owner as saying the project is “no longer viable to do the whole building”. Mr. Newman stated his concerns about other quotes within the article that he believed were not helpful in the City’s efforts of historic preservation. The commission briefly discussed this property and their responsibility of preserving historic structures.

A brief discussion about demolition by neglect also took place. The commission talked about the authority they do and do not have in situations like that. The conversation ended with Mr. Adams discussing the process many property owners have to go through with historic properties and how “blight” can be a qualifying factor in getting grant dollars - facilitating restoration.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER OMER AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ACTON TO ADJOURN AT 7:31 P.M.

Phil Hathaway, Secretary

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