

**MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING**  
**OWOSSO HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
APRIL 18, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS / CITY HALL

**MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER** at 6:03 p.m. by Vice-Chairman Vincent Gonyou.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vice-Chairman Vincent Gonyou, Secretary Phil Hathaway, Commissioners Lance Omer, Matthew Van Epps, and Gary Wilson (arrived 6:10 p.m.).

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Chairman Scott Newman and Commissioner James Eaton.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sarah Warren-Riley, Housing Program Manager; Adam Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development; Tom Nemitz, and Jennifer Sutton, Cornerstone Architects; Charles P. Rau, Building Official; and several audience members.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** Motion by Commissioner Hathaway, supported by Commissioner Omer to approve the minutes for the meeting of January 18, 2012 with the correction of showing Commissioner Omer in attendance; and to approve the minutes for the meeting of March 21, 2012.

**Yeas:** All. Motion was passed.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

- 1) Staff Memorandum
- 2) Meeting minutes of January 18, 2012
- 3) Meeting minutes of March 21, 2012
- 4) Cornerstone Architects Presentation Agenda

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** None.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None.

**ITEMS OF BUSINESS:**

- 1) Presentation by Cornerstone Architects per their agenda.
  - A. Introduction  
Mr. Tom Nemitz and Ms. Jennifer Sutton were introduced from the Cornerstone Architects. Mr. Nemitz presented a slide show. He noted that the company has been around since 1989, and they have done various projects all over the state. Many of their projects have been of a mixed use nature where they take on old buildings and keep them useful.

6:10 p.m. Commissioner Wilson arrived.

- B. Urban Preservation Projects
  1. Sustainable Design  
Mr. Nemitz and Ms. Jennifer Sutton continued with the presentation of many pictures of buildings they had renovated – most of them with mixed use.
  2. Initial Cost of renovation compared to new

Mr. Nemitz compared the initial cost on some of the structures compared to building a new structure. Some projects were done with remarkably lower costs than a new structure would have cost.

3. Life Cycle costs of historic structures  
Discussion continued with the costs of upkeep of the historic structures after the renovation which extends the life of the buildings.

4. Preserve a building while making alterations to accommodate a new use.  
The slide show revealed factories which had been redesigned to accommodate residential and office alterations.

C. Process

The first step in the process is to encourage early and honest assessment of the project. Early assessment turns into financial feasibility

D. Financial Options

There are several financial options such as traditional private financing and governmental incentives. Right now they are waiting to see what will become of the MEDC. There are creative financial incentives such as brownfield, MSHDA, private investments and other combinations.

E. Next Step – discussion

Mr. Adam Zettel stated there are projects coming. Without knowing the level of expertise, how is that determined? Mr. Nemitz replied that the Internet is a great resource. You need to gain as much knowledge about the building before hand. Gain access to people who know.

Mr. Zettel asked other sources? Mr. Nemitz said the Michigan Historic Preservation resources can put you in touch with professionals.

Commissioner Van Epps asked what the first step would be. Mr. Nemitz stated they should talk to the organized groups. They can put you in touch with websites and the right people.

Commissioner Hathaway said that commissions were established on the tax credits. Now we don't have them and it's harder to keep our standards up. Mr. Nemitz said it's no different from a traffic law. The standards are a guide. You need to ask the National Park Service (NPS). It's not a one size fits all. He has had to write local standards that were approved by State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and NPS.

Commissioner Omer asked how does that get funded. Mr. Nemitz replied through the DDA, CDBG revolving funds and several other different ways.

Mr. Chuck Rau, Building Official, asked about handicap accessibility. Mr. Nemitz commented that they have gone to an appeals process on some of the smaller buildings. If there is a barrier free unit on the lower level, an elevator isn't necessary. Mr. Rau mentioned that a residential unit can't go in the first floor in a retail district and Mr. Nemitz stated yes, it depends on the zoning.

Commissioner Hathaway said we have a lot of sign applications. Mr. Nemitz said that first it goes to the zoning; then it proceeds through the process.

Mr. Zettel thanked Mr. Nemitz and Ms. Sutton for their presentation. He advised those in attendance that he had some reference material from the city available if anyone wished to pick it up.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting closed at 7:10 p.m.

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Phil Hathaway, Secretary

mms