

****DRAFT and EXCERPT****
MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA
Lower Level – Room 41, City Hall/Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard
September 20, 2012

Present: Michael Justin, Renee Hutter, Matt Hill, Richard Dana, Robert Ferguson, Rich Laffin, John Manning, David Riehle, Steve Trimble, Diane Trout-Oertel, David Wagner

Absent: Matt Mazanec (excused)

Staff Present: Christine Boulware, Amy Spong

Joint Business Meeting/Public Hearing

I. Call to Order: 5:06 PM

II. Approval of the Agenda -

III. Conflicts of Interest - none stated

IV. Chair's Announcements -

V. Staff Announcements -

VI. Public Hearings

A. 2410 University Avenue, University Raymond Commercial Historic District, by Ironton Asset Fund LLC/Exeter Realty Company, for a sign permit to paint new signs on the east, west and south elevations (~1900 sq.ft. total). **File #12-043.** (Spong, 266-6714)

[not included]

B. 366 Jackson Street, Merchant's National Bank Building - Heritage Preservation Site, by Gleeson Architects, for a permit to replace the existing sidewalk with a new concrete pattern, colors and a plaque. **File #12-044** (Boulware, 266-6715)

Staff read the report recommending conditional approval. Staff indicated that two pedestrian ramps would be required at the corner instead of the one proposed. The current side walk was installed in the 1980s. The sidewalk that was installed in the past few years around Galtier Plaza was reviewed and approved by HPC staff. There has been concern that the stamped concrete slabs around the building are slippery and would not be approved again in the future. Current photos show that the existing concrete curbs were colored, possibly to replicate the historic sandstone curbs but that is unknown. Public Works staff have indicated that they do not want a wide, troweled finish on the sidewalk.

Commissioner Riehle asked for clarification about the trowel vs. the broom finish. Commissioner Dana asked if the troweled finish were more slippery and how the proposed sidewalk would compare to the sidewalk around Galtier Plaza. Commissioner Ferguson asked about the historic paving around Mears Park and a photo shows stone slabs.

Staff explained that there have not been discussions about the infrastructure in Lowertown. A 1907-1910 photo shows stone slab sidewalks with granite curbs in Mears Park. There would need to be research into the historic materials and features

as well as a plan to restore features. The Greater Lowertown Master Plan calls for a comprehensive infrastructure study/plan. Commissioner Manning asked why there isn't a downtown sidewalk plan and if it is up to each individual owner to do what they want. Staff responded, yes and continued that the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District completed an infrastructure study that was funded by a Legacy Grant. Commissioner Wagner asked if the cost is the building owners' responsibility. Staff explained the cost is assessed, but was not sure if it's the full cost or the above standard. Chair Laffin asked about finding #6 regarding the entrance paving.

Dan Gleeson, architect/applicant, was present to represent the owners and tenants. He explained they want to replace the concrete sidewalk that is in poor condition. He added that the building owners will pay for the improvements up-front. He stated that they want a unique sidewalk for a unique building and the sidewalk could add to the quality of Lowertown. Mr. Gleeson noted that the two colors would differentiate the pedestrian area and the design would respond to the building's architecture. He clearly stated the owners do not want to continue the same sidewalk pattern as the rest of the block. He found it odd that staff would disapprove the surface pattern. And the owners would resist change to the proposal. He also expressed that they were not in agreement with installing granite curbs.

Staff read the recommendation again for the application and explained that the pattern was not an issue, but the two colors. Staff recommended that only one color be used on the sidewalk. Staff also clarified that nowhere in the recommendation were granite curbs mentioned and the recommendation does not require matching the sidewalks on the rest of the block. Mr. Gleeson replied that he doesn't agree with the single color recommendation and that his clients want the sidewalk color to match the building color. Staff indicated concern that the sidewalk would visually compete with the architecture of the building if it were the same color and that the building should stand out on it's own without blending into the infrastructure. He replied that the sidewalk and building will not compete.

Chair Laffin stated that the building needs to stand out from the mass and that a sidewalk matching the color of the building is not warranted. Mr. Gleeson responded that his clients may go along with the change to the color proposal. He stated that the original concept is utilitarian and they need to put life into the sidewalk. Chair Laffin stated that the entrance proposal and pattern adds life.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked if the colored portion of the sidewalk next to the building were the same color as the stone. Mr. Gleeson replied that the plinth at the base is a different color stone than above.

Commissioner Dana asked if he had gone through the staff findings and recommendations. Mr. Gleeson replied that he had.

There was no further testimony and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Dana moved to approve the staff recommendations with the findings. Commissioner Hutter seconded the motion.

Commissioner Riehle stated that Mr. Gleeson's presentation is somewhat persuasive, as the building is a jewel box. He would vote against the motion as he did not believe that the sidewalk, as proposed, would detract from the building.

Commissioner Trimble stated he would vote for the motion, as it would set bad precedent to allow for the two-tone sidewalk.

Commissioner Justin stated the sidewalk would add to the vitality of the city and would not be a direct continuation of the buildings color since there is a change of color at the base.

Commissioner Wagner stated that he appreciates the nature of viability in the design, but there needs to be consistency of cityscape features; the sidewalk should not match the architecture on the buildings in the historic district. He added that the pattern was okay, but the color should be neutral to the building. He continued that the sidewalk would be okay with a slight tint to the concrete that would be subtle and could be reviewed by HPC staff. He added that he was comfortable with a differing treatment outside of the entry.

Commissioner Manning commended the owners and architect on their plan for improvements and the HPC appreciated investment in Lowertown. He stated his support for the pattern to remain at the entrance.

Commissioner Ferguson added that the proposal was thoughtful and confirmed his support of finding #3 and the need for a historic study and infrastructure guidelines.

Commissioner Riehle opined that historically people put up what they liked and added that there are still marble sidewalks in the Hill Historic District.

The motion was approved 6 – 3 (Ferguson, Justin, Riehle).

C. 1920 Summit Avenue, Summit West Historic District, by Michael Noel, owner, for a building permit to replace original wood windows with vinyl windows. **File #12-045.** (Boulware, 266-6715)

[not included]

VII. New Business

A. Great River Passage Plan, by Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation, to adopt a resolution with recommendations for the City Council. (Spong, 266-6714)

[not included]

VIII. Old Business - There was none.

IX. Motion to Adjourn: 7:56 PM

Submitted by: C. Boulware