

**ACTION MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA  
Online MS Teams Meeting  
December 14, 2020**

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**Present:** Paul Nelson, David Wagner, Teresa Kimker, Joseph Peroutka, Steve George, Barbara Bezat, Leetta Douglas, Stuart MacDonald,

**Absent:** Robert Lubke

**Staff Present:** George Gause, Allison Suhan Eggers

**Number of Public in Call:** 40

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**I. Call to Order 3:30pm**

*Commission Chair Kimker announced that the agenda had been updated. The CLG review of 170 Western has been withdrawn by the applicant.*

**II. Adoption of the Agenda**

*Commissioner Bezat moved to adopt the updated agenda. Commissioner Peroutka seconded the motion. **Motion passed 7-0.***

**III. Conflicts of Interest None**

**IV. Minutes**

*Minutes for November 30, 2020 HPC meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Bezat moved to recommend approval of the minutes. Commissioner George seconded the motion. **Motion passed 7-0***

**V. Public Hearing**

**A. 540-542 Portland; New Construction (Suhan-Eggers)**

City Council remanded the action back to the HPC due to technical difficulties alleged by the appellants and to make sure the appellants, and any neighbors, have an opportunity to be heard.

Commission questions to staff

*Haven't heard from the owners next door.*

*Can we review a fence?*

*Is there an easement issue with this property?*

*How did the landlocked parcel occur?*

Applicant

*Tried to reach both neighbors one neighbor lives in France.*

*BZA discussed the easement.*

*1916 Maps show larger structure at 540 Portland once existed.*

The commission chair recognized the six letters of public testimony that have been received by the commission in advance of the meeting.

The commission chair opened public testimony and heard from five members from the public.

The commission chair closed the public hearing as there were no further speakers.

Commissioner Bezat began to state a proposed motion but was interrupted by the public which stated that there was a technical issue.

The commission heard from five more members of the public.

It was pointed out by staff that most of the speakers had submitted letters in advance.

Commissioner Bezat withdrew her motion, so the public could be heard.

The commission heard from five more members of the public.

- Continued -

Commissioners

*HPC only looks at design, not zoning issues.  
There have been numerous meetings to consider this application.  
Looks like it fits perfectly into the neighborhood.  
Is the issue because of the inconvenience with construction?  
A lot of the issues have been blended, many of these are not HPC.  
There is reason to be concerned about the procedures.  
It is in the interest of the developer to discuss this plan with the immediate neighbors.  
Give both parties a chance to talk, but not endorsement of any reductions of size.  
Mass, scale and appropriateness comments on porches, front doors, primary entrance are considerations to go back to the drawing board.  
Another round at the drawing board would benefit this project.  
More sensitive façade development is considered it would help fit in context.*

Commissioner Bezat moved to approve the application for construction of a three-unit structure at 540 Portland Avenue as per the findings of fact and conditions in the draft resolution, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report. Commissioner George seconded the motion.

**The commission began to vote on the application.**

Commissioner Wagner question the vote due to technical issues with Commissioner MacDonald's and Commissioner Nelsons microphone.

Commissioner Nelson verified that he had attempted to participate in the deliberations. Commissioner Wagner stated concern that the HPC did not have full discourse due to technical issues, making the vote suspect.

Commissioner Peroutka voiced concerns that not all commissioners could access the meeting.

Commissioners Bezat suggested suspension of the vote until Commissioner MacDonald can rejoin the meeting.

Commissioner MacDonald rejoined the meeting and verified that he listened to all the deliberations. He stated that he felt that there was enough of an issue with neighborhood input to vote against.

Commissioner Wagner asked to restart the vote because it appeared that deliberation was cut short with two commissioners having technical difficulties.

**Vote on motion was 2-5 (Wagner, Nelson, MacDonald, Douglas, Peroutka)  
Motion failed.**

The application for the next application for Loras Hall was called by the commission chair. The motion for previous application had failed, but action on the project had not occurred. After the staff presentation for Loras Hall, the commission returned to the unfinished action with 540 Portland.

Commissioner Wagner moved to deny the 540 Portland Avenue application, Commissioner MacDonald seconded the motion.

Commissioner Bezat recommends a friendly amendment that the applicant communicate with the neighborhood on any revision of the project.

Commissioner Wanger and MacDonald accept the amendment.

*Intent of denial is not to deny the project, but to get the developer and neighborhood together and hopefully find a mutually acceptable project.*

**Motion passed 5-2 (George, Bezat)**

- Continued -

**B. Loras Hall-University of St. Thomas; Demolition (Gause)**

The demolition of campus building; Loras Hall.

Commission questions to staff

*Where do the renovation costs come from?*

*Was new construction considered in the staff comments?*

*Has the University of Saint Thomas renegotiated the CUP to build the steam building?*

*Three other seminary buildings still stand, one letter says that all three will be demolished?*

Applicant

*Loras was converted to an office and does not contribute to the student experience.*

*We will honor Cass Gilbert in the new building.*

*\$10,000,000 estimate was the restoration and modernization of Loras Hall.*

*1.7 million is just exterior work 8 million is HVAC and other interior work.*

*Our contractor has a Historic Preservation background and has worked on other campus structures.*

Commissioners

*Architecturally, Loras Hall does not have a lot of detail, but it does not limit its historic aspect.*

*Haven't seen enough of the analysis of the numbers.*

*University should invest in a determination of eligibility.*

*Very little has been said to the alternatives to demolition.*

*Why is this the only location for the new building?*

*University of Saint Thomas is missing an opportunity.*

*Loras Hall still has architectural integrity.*

*The presented options never took into account historic preservation guidelines or standards.*

*Building may be sparse because of the seminary, 'Closer to God'.*

*Historic context about Loras and slavery should be explored and explained to the public.*

*We don't tear down buildings because of its name. The original name of this building is North dormitory.*

*Is the University open to a deferral of the application for a determination of eligibility and to expand on the alternative options? Can you make that determination tonight?*

*University of Saint Thomas made a strong argument.*

*A Cass Gilbert designed building isn't enough, but this building tells a remarkable story of Cass Gilbert, JJ Hill and Bishop Ireland.*

*There is an imbalance with economic factors towards this demolition.*

Commissioner Bezat moved to deny the application for demolition of Loras Hall at the University of Saint Thomas as per the findings of fact and condition in the draft resolution, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report. Commissioner Douglas seconded the motion.

**Motion passed 6-1 (Nelson).**

**Pre-Application**

**A.** 300 Ryan Avenue; New Infill Construction (Gause)

Pre-application for a new, single family residential structure with attached garage proposed for the lot.

Commission questions to staff

*There is a wide variety of structures in the area.*

*Is it OK to add a new window style into Irving Park?*

*What is going on with the other two lots?*

*Did the client want this particular styled structure or is this speculative?*

- Continued -

Applicant

*Couple of homes in the area do have bay windows.*

*I can do whatever windows the Commission wants 1 over 1 or 6 over 1 windows.*

Commissioners

I like the design and the Bay window.

This is a modest neighborhood; design should focus on being a modest infill.

This design may be overwhelming for infill construction.

Detailing needs to be toned down.

This is a new building in a historic district focus on scale massing materials to fit into that context.

Simplify to an elegant design.

**VI. Adjourn 7:06pm**

- End -

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