

Housekeeping Item

Ms. Moermond explained that this matter was laid over by the City Council and will be heard again in mid-June. We will be getting a report from HPC so that it can be attached to the record. We may schedule something for May so that it can be reconsidered here before it's heard before City Council again.

Amy Spong, Historic Preservation Commission, reported that the HPC conducted an historic resource review on February 10, 2011. The staff report made specific findings and recommended to City Council that they delay demolition for rehab options to be explored. The HPC did adopt those findings. The resolution sites an architectural description of the property and it's referred to as the Noun Operson House. It talks about the integrity of the property. The resolution also sites specific strategies in the City's Comp Plan Chapter as it relates to the historic preservation chapter. The resolution states that a more intensive level survey would be required to determine if the building would be eligible for local designation or for the national register. The resolution resolves that the demolition be delayed for the site in order for alternatives to be explored, such as rehabilitating or _____ the property. Staff recommends that a qualified historian be hired to evaluate both the national register and local eligibility not only of the house but its contribution to the context of the historic Railroad Island neighborhood. That neighborhood is being re-surveyed as part of the Legacy Partnership Grant.

Ms. Moermond asked how much it costs to survey individual property, approximately. Ms. Spong responded that this property would most likely be determined contributing to an historic district, so, it really has to do with the neighborhood – you have to have that neighborhood context study. Once that context is completed, maybe the survey wouldn't cost as much. This is going to be surveyed again as part of the Legacy Project. Ms. Moermond asked if that survey would, in and of itself, be sufficient to pursue local designation. Ms. Spong answered, "No." Ms. Moermond asked what additional survey work would be needed to do that. Ms. Spong responded that it 686 Bradley is identified as part of a contributing district, then, you'd have to have another project that would write the nomination form for the district. To be eligible on its own, an intensive level survey would need to be done. Ms. Moermond noted that Councilmember Thune has delayed action on this property and two other properties in this immediate vicinity, so clearly, there's an interest to rehab; and clearly, the interest is based on the historic and the architectural characteristics of the house. The survey being pursued by Historic Saint Paul will take quite a while and yet, this item is pressing. It will be back in front of the Council in June 2011. The City may be justified in doing a survey just on that house, depending on how Councilmember Thune feels about the findings. Ms. Spong noted that the commission has a responsibility to follow federal standards on what is deemed eligible on its own. If it isn't determined eligible on its own, but part of the district, that needs to be the path – looking at the district, which obviously, takes more time. If it's determined eligible on its own, then, one could do a local designation. A national register would be much more expensive. The Schmitt Brewery local nomination form, which was a collection of about thirty (30) buildings, probably was valued at \$20,000. Ms. Moermond asked if the City has recently done a local designation of a building. Ms. Spong responded that the Victoria Theater is in process right now. That was a grass roots effort. The designation form was written pro bono by community members who met the Secretary of the Interior standards for preservation. Ms. Moermond asked what the market rate would be for doing that. Ms. Spong estimated between \$3,000 and \$5,000 (rough estimate). Ms. Spong went on to say that the City Council should receive the same full packet that was presented to the Heritage Preservation Commission. Ms. Moermond noted that all should be attached to the Legistar file.