

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF SUPERIOR

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

The HPC meeting for the city of Superior was called to order by Tim Meyer at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at City Hall in room 270 and by web and phone conference.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Kathleen Laakso, Tim Meyer, Matt Osterlund, Brian Finstad

Staff Present: Jeff Skrenes

Others Present: Garner Moffat, Robert-Jan Quene

There being a quorum present, the meeting was in order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Board Member Laakso, seconded by Osterlund, to approve the August 10, 2022 minutes, carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

1. Princess Theater

Jeff Skrenes updated the committee on recent developments. Several tours have taken place with committee members, local media, and others with a knowledge of the site and historic structures. Many significant architectural and historic features have been discovered either intact or with enough clues to help put together a picture of what the theater was and could be. There are also three rooms in the theater portion of the site that have not yet been accessed. One basement area below the back stage, one second floor area above that, and what is believed to be the projection booth. Residents have already reached out after the Superior Telegram article about recent discoveries, and staff expects to either retrieve or at least document several intact items from the interior of the site.

Asbestos testing has come back and there are portions of the site that contain asbestos. This is not surprising given the age of the building and the age of certain aspects of remodeling. The City has requested bids on abatement. We will want to move carefully with whoever does the work. Obviously there are portions of the theater that must be preserved if possible, and properly documented prior to any necessary demolition or removal of items. But since prior remodeling has led to some interior features being relocated throughout the site, it's not a clear cut decision of one area can be treated like any other abatement job while the rest of the site is historic. A consultant or design team may be necessary, and staff has reached out to the Wisconsin Historical Society in that regard.

Other members had updates as well. Kathy Laakso and Teddie Meronek have found old newspaper articles describing the interior. Matt Osterlund has reached out to plaster workers in Milwaukee who specialize in historic recreations of plaster molds. Brian Finstad has met with a granddaughter of an owner, who has a seating chart of the theater. Finstad also recommended removing the façade facing Tower as an early part of restoration. That will reveal what original exterior features remain intact, and spur more community support.

2. Carnegie Library

The City has closed on the transaction. A bid for design work of the roof has been placed and accepted by Meyer Group Architecture. Once a design is complete, an RFP will be issued to put a membrane on the roof. Staff consulted with Meyer Group about whether a membrane itself would be sufficient for potentially a long period of time. This was to keep costs down by avoiding placing shingles or other material on the roof, and also to allow a new developer to add that detail in the manner consistent with the time frame most appropriate for that party's historic restoration. The concern staff had was whether that membrane alone would deteriorate over time faster than a membrane and additional coverings. That is not expected to be the case. We are also exploring adding an internal heat source over the winter, as even keeping the temperature at 50 degrees would mitigate effects of freezing and thawing.

The committee pointed out that other areas of the roof structure may need patching. And there are sandstone gaps in the window sills that will need to be patched by stone specialists. Garner Moffat is working on an application to the National Register.

3. Historic Designation of the Meteor, Fairlawn, and Old Fire Hall Museums

The Superior Public Museums board had city staff lead a discussion at their most recent board meeting, regarding the designation of these sites. The board was receptive of these designations and passed a motion in support. That motion also called for the nomination of the fire hall prior to the end of 2022. Staff expects to have that ready by the October 2022 HPC meeting.

4. CLG Status

Staff has gone through the recommendations from the Wisconsin Historical Society for necessary and advised changed to city code. A long-standing stated concern was that CLG cities must allow the designation of properties, objects, sites, or districts even if the property owner objects. However, per code, the nomination process powers seem to lie almost exclusively with the HPC, with final decisions and appeals reviewed by the Common Council. Property owners may request the removal of a property from the local register if the designation hinders the sale. But the most potentially contentious aspect does not seem to exist, at least in the way staff and HPC members had thought. Staff has asked WHS for clarification on this matter. There are still other parts of code that will need to be changed, such as designating the HPC as a commission and not a committee. Some of those aspects may need review by the City Attorney. The WHS may be able to help with costs associated with legal reviews.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jeff Skrenes