

WINNESHIEK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Steven Johnson, Chairperson
David Stanley, Secretary
Elizabeth Lorentzen, Treasurer

Julia Rude
Ferneva Brimacomb
Roger Bergan
Mike Meyer
Janelle Pavlovec

**Minutes of the Winneshiek County
Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting
March 12, 2011
8:30 A.M.
Vesterheim Amdal-Odland Heritage Center**

Present: Ferneva Brimacomb, Dave Stanley, Steve Johnson, Janelle Pavlovec, Julia Rude, Kevin Lee and Mike Meyer. Guests included Jim Burns from the Oneota Historic Preservation Alliance (OHFA), Deborah Bishop and Julie Fisher from the Caretaker's Coalition.

Steve opened the meeting by discussing the minutes from the February meeting. Janelle noted one error which was rectified. Ferneva moved to approve the minutes with the change noted by Janelle. Roger seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Elizabeth presented the Treasurer's report noting that we currently have \$19,935.91 in the checking account and \$17,000 in a money market account at Farmers & Merchants Savings Bank. She suggested that we move \$19,000 from the checking account to the money market account which is presently paying 1.35% percent interest. Mike made a motion to do just that and Roger seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Dave indicated that he completed the CLG Annual Report and submitted it to Les Askelson for his signature via the Auditor's office who would then mail it in to Paula Mohr.

Janelle noted some interesting articles in the Iowan magazine and also that there were a number of ads in the magazine selling books. She suggested that we advertise the Vera Harris book in this publication. There was some discussion in pursuing this but no formal decision was made.

Jim Burns had been invited to the Commission meeting as a member of OHFA to discuss the current status on the Caretaker House. Jim opened the presentation by describing the background of OHFA. He explained that the organization registered as a non-profit and originated with the effort to save the Eastside School. In 2008 OHFA approached the Board of Supervisors about preserving the Caretaker's House as well as the North

Building (also known as the Old Dorm). At that time the Board of Supervisors had already contracted to have the Caretaker's House taken down. OHFA asked the Board to postpone demolition and give OHFA an opportunity to find a re-use for the structure. The Board of Supervisors and OHFA then entered into an agreement that OHFA would have two years to nominate the structure to the National Register of Historic Places and find a tenant or a re-use plan. The State Historical Society of Iowa did make a determination that the structure was historically significant but the National Register Nomination did not happen because of the lack of funding. OHFA was not able to find a tenant or an acceptable re-use plan for a number of reasons. Not the least of which was that rehabilitation of the structure was estimated to cost something in the range of \$80,000 to \$100,000. Moving the structure was also cost prohibitive. At that time OHFA agreed to place \$5,000 in an escrow account and agreed to demolition if their objectives were not achieved. At that time OHFA thought that after 2 years if the building could not be saved that the original demolition agreement with the Board of Supervisors would proceed. However that arrangement fell through and OHFA was left with the responsibility of demolition. That cost is estimated to be in the range of \$10,000.

Jim then went on to explain that it was brought to OHFA's attention by Kevin Lee that Northeast Iowa Community College was developing an academic program which focused on the concept of green de-construction. This program would concentrate on minimizing the amount of material going to a landfill, containment of potential hazardous material, and maximize the salvage of re-usable material. OHFA contacted NICC and they were very interested in teaching a class this spring on this topic. The instructor examined the structure and thought that NICC students would be able to dismantle the Caretaker House in approximately 7-10 days. The instructor also thought that the amount of material going to the landfill might be as little as one dumpster.

Roger and Julia both commented that this is probably the best outcome that can be expected unless the Board of Supervisors change their minds on saving the structure.

Steve asked Jim if he felt we should endorse this approach and Jim responded that he thought that it would be helpful.

Kevin mentioned that Northeast Iowa Community Action had expressed interest in obtaining the structure and refurbishing it for low income housing. Steve said he thought that NEIA should approach the Board of Supervisors directly with this idea and that it was not the Commission's place to bring it up with the Board. Dave agreed. Kevin did not know if NEIA had approached the Board or not. Kevin also raised the possibility of mothballing the Caretaker House until a re-use could be achieved.

Dave suggested that we draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors outlining what the Commission sees as four options for the structure. Option 1 being preservation in place and reuse, option 2 would be mothballing and preserving the structure until a re-use plan

can be implemented, option 3 would be moving the structure to a different location, and option 4, if all else fails, utilize the de-construction methods to disassemble the structure.

Janelle felt that option four should not be presented at all. She also noted that in her opinion she thought the Board was wavering on demolition and might be convinced to preserve the structure.

Steve inquired if Janelle had approached the Board and asked for a vote on extending the deadline or preserving the structure. Janelle said she had not. She continued by saying she felt that it was the mission of the Commission to protest the demolition and insist that the Board of Supervisors preserve the structure. Kevin agreed.

Ferneva pointed out that the Commission advises the Supervisors on historic preservation issues but ultimately they are the ones who decide. Ferneva noted that it is not possible to save all historic structures and is particularly challenging when one does not own the structure.

Dave agreed and stated that the Commission is not endorsing demolition and will note in the letter to the Board that the Commission views option 1 and option 2 as the ideal options from the view point of historic preservation. However if the Board decides to demolish the structure it would be the Commission's position that the green de-construction approach would be the best of the worst case scenario. Especially with the emphasis on re-using salvaged materials.

Steve asked for motion regarding sending a letter to the Supervisors. Ferneva moved to do so and Roger seconded. The vote was 7 for and one against with Janelle casting the no vote.

Dave offered to draft a letter and distribute it to the Commission for comments and approval of the final version.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 A.M. Next meeting is scheduled on April 9th at the Old Winneshiek County Jail.