

IDAHO FALLS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

June 2, 2011

Noon

City Annex Building Conference Room

680 Park Avenue

Attending: Graham Whipple, Chair; Nancy Boland; Julie Braun; Roxane Mitro; Hereschell Mynarcik; Stephanie Rose. Renee Magee and Debra Petty, staff.

Call to Order at 12:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Rose, seconded by Mynarcik, to approve the minutes of April 7, 2011. Motion passed.

Plans for Walking Tour: Ridge Avenue is the focus of the annual walking tour on the morning of July 9, 2011. There are a number of local events scheduled in the downtown that may increase attendance. With this particular tour comes an opportunity to say goodbye to the historic Linger home, soon to be demolished. This is a heartfelt loss to the commission, but their goal is to present the loss in a positive and educational manner to the public. In addition, the commission could to present options that may have worked for the property, discuss the interaction between the commission and the church, and the future of the adjacent Hitt (Harbor House) home.

Whipple is attempting to acquire preliminary figures from a company in Utah specializing in the moving of older structures and was promised a quote on more than one occasion. It is hoped, if feasible, someone will relocate the home. The church is willing to give the home away as it saves demolition costs. The commission discussed whether there were properties in the immediate area for relocation but admitted time is running out.

Rose believes it is important to applaud those in the community who are successful in preserving historic properties and suggested including examples of 'what works' as part of the tour. The Carr property and the home on the corner of Elm and Placer are good examples. She said there is true financial hardship in having an older property and the state and Idaho Falls do not have programs in place offering funding to property owners for preservation of these properties. Mitro will contact Carr's and ask if they are open to the idea of a tour of their property.

Reconnaissance Survey of Mid-Century Modern Homes: Members will meet at Magee's home (150 Morningside Drive), Thursday, August 4, 2011, 5:00 p.m. to complete a survey of properties constructed in the 1950's.

Concerns of Members: The City of Idaho Falls website page for the Historic Preservation Commission is a good resource and well done. Rose encouraged members to explore the site.

Braun said it was surprising to learn members of the congregation did not know the Linger home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Magee said she struggled to help them understand it is and there is no difference between listing in a district and an individual nomination. Rose said neighbors are distraught over the decision. She said the whole process was kept very quiet even though some of the decision makers were aware of the existence of the preservation commission. This decision, made by a few, was done long ago and was clear they were not open to other options or outside funding.

Braun said the time for concern for properties of historic value is when they are being purchased. Rose said other cities have processes in place to prevent the destruction of historic properties. Whipple would

like to know how the commission can achieve more ‘teeth’ or ‘tools’ for saving historic properties. He wants to explore an ordinance tied into the planning and building process, an overlay of a district, or a required plan review by the historic preservation commission. His hope is the commissioners will be able to mobilize the residents of impacted neighborhoods.

Rose said it is challenging to attract people to an historic neighborhood. She and Boland both believe in many respects COTHNA was a better venue for promotion of preservation. Boland said identity is key for these neighborhoods. Rose noted removal of negative components through enforcement and flexibility with building code requirements is required. She used the clear height requirement in basements to allow living spaces as an example. Whipple said it is the use of a building that triggers certain requirements. If life and safety issues are not at issue in a new use of an historic building, the building official has a great deal of flexibility. Mitro said there are tools in place for dealing with preexisting conditions for older properties, but it requires consideration on an individual basis. Rose responded many do not want to purchase a home with these preexisting conditions and hope they can get a variance. It is a long process in an aggressive market.

Whipple suggested the creation of an overlay district for historic neighborhoods and rallying support from community members. Mitro has strong feelings this may not be possible and the support of the Mayor and Council are needed. Braun strongly believes support for preservation needs to be a grassroots effort, such as when the “ladies” saved and still operate Mount Vernon.

Magee said the city does not have a local historic district. A local district could be patterned in a number of ways; for example, Bozeman has a conservation district where as New Orleans has a very restrictive historic preservation district. For some communities, the only requirement in a historic district is a demolition permit. After attending National Trust conferences, the most effective ordinances do not come from above but from concern by the residents. Rose agrees energy should come from the public. However, they lack the resources to organize and host a charrette, work with the local paper, or generate enough volunteer time to craft a process. Magee suggested talking to the property owners in Ridge Avenue. Rose said the perception is Ridge Avenue and 11th Street are one neighborhood. The zoning may be different, but they function as one and the issues are the same.

Rose said establishing a process or having tools in place prevents the commission from scrambling each time a situation, such as the Trimp or Linger properties, arise. Whipple suggested a neighborhood meeting after the walking tour to assess community participation. An area can be determined at that time. Whipple remembers the use of a listening post, in the past, to solicit open discussion or feedback from the public. He would like to use this type of informational display with a general question on the morning of the walking tour. Mitro questioned whether the commission has now shifted their thrust from the downtown to residential.

Concern was expressed the commission was not permitted to involve the public in the decision by the church. Whipple said the public does not need the permission of the commission to be active and the commission, as a public body, should be encouraged to share their opinions and information. Braun said the church believed the matter was private and one of their members had betrayed their trust by involving the commission. As an employee of the INL, she and others are encouraged to be involved in the community but cannot identify themselves as being under the umbrella of the INL. The purpose of the commission is to recommend or advise and educate. Whipple said members may share opinions but they need to separate their own opinions from those of the commission as an entity. Rose felt the public should have had an opportunity to share their feelings with the church and they did not. Magee said she believes there is a difference between opinions as individual board members and opinions as expressed by the commission with an official action: in her e-mail, she was trying to say the commission had not, as a group, asked the public to contact the church. Mitro said in this case the opinions of the public did not

matter. The decision was made long ago in a closed meeting.

Whipple will compose a letter to the editor consisting of successful historic preservation projects. He encouraged all to send their stories. He is attempting to get a story in the paper prior to the walking tour .

Adjourn: It was moved to adjourn at 1:30 p.m.

Debra Petty, Recording Secretary