

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

August 11, 2004

6:00 PM

Rockford City Hall, Conference Room B

MEMBERS PRESENT Val Olafson; Laura Bachelder; Vickie Krueger; Frank St. Angel, Scott Sanders; Alderman John Beck

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeanne Ludeke (excused)

STAFF: Ginny Gregory, Jackie Bernard

OTHERS: Robert Swaab, 520 – 7th Street; David and Brenda Saleh, 702 – 7th Street; Gary Anderson, William Mohr (Mid Town District); Larry Morrissey; Vito Addotta (representing the owners of River Oaks); David Hagney (representing 204 South 1st Street – 911 Center); Georgeann Dahm (Fire Dept./911 Center); William Frey (applicant); Jon Cordes (applicant); Alison Ames (applicant); Kris Keyzer (applicant).

PUBLIC HEARING

The Public Hearing for the nomination of the 7th Street Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Val Olafson.

Gary Anderson and Bill Mohr (7th Street Mid Town District) introduced themselves, and proceeded to explain the historic background and criteria of the 7th Street area.

Bill pointed to the map and explained in detail the area that is being considered. Gary said the significance of the area is two-fold, and should fulfill the requirements for both Criteria A and C, for its architecture and historical significance. The latter includes its role as an ethnic Swedish cultural neighborhood that developed there over the years before the turn of the century. The area was strongly influenced by the Swedish culture as several of its institutions, clubs and businesses located on 7th Street. Many of those clubs and organizations are still present. The Swedish culture extended into the industrial base of our community, specifically the furniture industry. One of the unique things about this district is that it not only includes a commercial district, but also part of that early industrial district, which is the furniture factory. In addition, some of the coal bins of the Scandia Coal Company still remain along Railroad Avenue. These are all included as part of the district. There are only a few residential units located within the district boundaries. This area speaks a lot of what Rockford's history is all about and how important and significant the Swedish immigrants were to the development of the community.

Mr. Anderson continued, moving on to a description of the district's architecture. There are basically two periods: the Italian Romanesque and Queen Anne are present from the earlier period, while buildings in the Art Moderne and Beaux Arts styles represent the later period. There are some very significant pieces of architectural detail in all of the buildings that contributed to the uniqueness of the district. The street wall that exists is also very important as there are whole half-blocks of building that contribute to that street wall as part of the original context of the street and its architecture. The period of significance is from 1870 to 1956 for the architecture, and there are quite a few of buildings that are contributing. There are very few non-contributing buildings. Gary concluded by mentioning that the nomination form goes over all of the individual details.

Bill Mohr from the Mid Town District commented that this is an extremely important aspect to the continued renewal of the commercial district along 7th Street. The possibility of a National Historic District being formed here is really integral to the success of how this development will occur and the street is beginning to show some signs of interest in regenerating the buildings. A lot of people are stepping forward with ideas to reconstruct these buildings in a historical fashion.

Alderman John Beck questioned if, when establishing a district, all of the buildings in the district would be considered "historical"? He realizes that AMCORE Bank is not included as part of the district, but would all of the buildings in the district be included?

Gary commented that they would be subject to review by the Preservation Commission. Val interjected that this Public Hearing is only for a National Register district. This is not for a local district, so they would only come under review if they were going to demolish the building. If they wanted to ask for it to be registered as a local historic district, then every building and each property owner would have to come before the Commission before they made any exterior changes. This is just a National Register nomination. Our purpose here tonight is to hear from the public and make out recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Office.

John asked if one of the buildings was in such poor condition that it wasn't realistic to renovate, would they have go to the Federal level to get permission if they wanted to demolish the building?

Ginny responded that part of the application process is to indicate which buildings are contributing to the district and which ones are not. This is shown on the maps at the end of the nomination form in this case. Unless someone is using federal or state funds, they can do anything and everything to the building up to and including demolition. It is only if they are using state or federal funds that they have to go through a review process which includes the State Preservation Agency. The primary impetus behind this nomination is to simplify as much as possible the process of taking advantage of federal historic preservation tax credits along 7th Street. Instead of each individual owner having to go through a process to have their building declared eligible for the National Register and therefore the credits, eligibility is determined for all of the buildings within the proposed district all at once. This is easier for the building owners and easier for the State.

Larry Morrissey stated that he favors creation of this National Register district. As a developer who has an interest in developing what's identified on the map as the Mid Town Lofts, one of the critical components of financing the project is use of the historic preservation tax credits made available by the federal government. The creation of this District will enable not only their project to reap the benefits of those tax credits as containing contributing structures, but will enable others to follow. As a comparison, it can be thousands of dollars for an individual developer to get an individual building listed on the National Register. Even as significant as the actual dollar amount is the amount of time that it takes to go through the National Register process. This streamlines the process for developers of contributing buildings within the District. He is in support of the nomination of this District.

Jeff Carlson, Zion Development Corporation, spoke on behalf of the District. He agreed with what Larry Morrissey had said. They are developing a project on the corner of 7th Street and 4th Avenue and they could use the tax credits.

Robert Swaab, Colorlab, asked how long this process would take. He has a couple of buildings in the District and would like to take part of this.

Val responded that the tax credits can go back for up to two years, and if improvements were made in line with the Secretary of Interior Standards, he could go back and recoup those tax credits. She said that this

process has been in the works for almost one year. Most people are not aware of a lot of the nomination process. After this meeting, it will go to the State office and then it will be on the agenda for the State meeting in September. As long as it is approved and recommended by the State, it would be listed within 60 days. Ginny commented that it goes to a person called the Keeper of the National Register and that person makes the final determination. Gary expected it to be approved by the end of the year.

Mr. Swaab wanted clarification if any money was spent by that date, would the tax credits be available. Val replied that as long as the renovations stay within the Secretary of Interior Standards Guidelines, i.e. historically correct restoration.

Larry Morrissey suggested seeking a professional for advice on how to take advantage of this. He made mistakes the first time he went through the process. They ultimately received the tax credit for their building at 127 North Wyman Street, which is individually listed on the Register, but found out too late that they had to take it out as a multi-year tax credit. There were unable to take it all in one tax year. There are several rules that apply to an individual taxpayer, so he advised seeking a professional for advice or speak with him directly and after his experience, he is somewhat able to advise.

Val opened the floor for any additional comments.

Robert Swaab asked if people are forced to do things to their building once the district is formed. He added that some people may want to spend a lot of money to make their building really nice and they would be in the foreground. However, others might just let their building sit until it's worth more to sell to someone else who wants to do the same thing.

Val responded no, they would not be forced. Preservation is an established tool in rehabbing a neighborhood in an area and districts only help that. Once one building is fixed up, the adjacent owner looks at their building and starts seeing their building for what it's worth, or people actually buy into historic districts because there are those guidelines that are covered. These people see the investment value in them.

Bill Mohr commented that this can be viewed as being similar to the TIF District concept, in the sense that it is there and available for use, but you don't have to use it. You have the choice of whether or not to use it and it is a tool that will give an incentive to investors. He feels it is a win-win situation.

Mr. Swaab was concerned that investors would have jumped on these buildings by now. Gary Anderson responded that they did not have the district as of yet.

Val commented felt that it would be a huge boon for the neighborhood. Mr. Swaab said that it was the old Swedish neighborhood that was so wonderful with the bakeries, etc. He said the Swedish element was basically gone from there now, so when this district is revived, it won't be the same, but just a vital 7th Street business district. Gary Anderson said that the significance historically is that it was Swede Town, but neighborhoods always evolve, and currently 7th Street is going through an evolution and change and it will be reinventing itself again and that is very healthy.

With no further comments being made, a **MOTION** was made by Vickie Krueger to close the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Scott Sanders and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Val Olafson.

NEW BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **APPROVE** the minutes of July 14, 2004. The motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION for the 7th STREET COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ginny reminded the Commission of the sheet summarizing of the two criteria (A and C) that are included in the nomination. If the Commission decides to approve, the motion should refer to these criteria for complete explanation.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to recommend the **APPROVAL** of the National Register Nomination of the 7th Street Commercial Historic District based on both of the criteria identified in the application as follows:

Criterion A) The District is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, specifically its origin and history as a predominately Swedish settlement and early commercial district, and;

Criterion C) It contains buildings embodying the distinctive characteristics of several architectural styles as listed in the application and in the presentation, including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Queen Anne; as well as the work of leading local architects such as Gilbert Johnson of Peterson and Johnson.

The motion was seconded by Vickie Krueger and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

► 1326 Brownwood Drive

Kris Keyzer was present to explain that they are proposing to replace the existing brick front porch. The primary changes are (a) replacing two wood risers with brick; (b) using stone slabs, 2¼ inches thick, for the steps; and (c) using the same type of stone laid in a block pattern for the porch landing.

She explained that they want to replace the existing brick porch, which is in disrepair. A professional mason will construct the new brick knee walls with brick that matches the existing house foundation. The contractor will clean the old limestone cap material and re-install. He plans on using the same brick for the four risers. They plan to use four pieces of solid lannon stone to run the full width as steps. They want to avoid using mortar on the steps again. The stone thickness is to be 2¼ inches. The top landing (horizontal surface) of the porch would be the same stone but laid in a block pattern.

The pillars will remain. The porch will be identical with the same dimensions, but they aren't sure about the footings yet. They will be replaced, if necessary. They have Indiana Limestone caps (four pieces) and the steps will be gray brick instead of red brick.

A **MOTION** was made by Frank St. Angel to approve the application as written with the use of the lannon stone for the treads and the top surface of the stairs, of the brick sample that was presented for the risers

on the walls that stick out, and reuse of the existing caps on the wing walls. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

► **309 South 2nd Street**

William Frey was present to explain his proposed project. He wants to replace the back stoop with a small entrance off the back door. From that area, he wants to build 3 steps down to another deck (he showed a picture of the proposed wood deck, approximately 12' x 22'). Val commented that the picture did not show how it would be attached to the house. He explained on the picture where it would attach to the house, and said that it would go somewhat around the house.

Scott stated that the guidelines and the position of the Commission in the past is that we steer away from decks in historic properties, especially at ground level. Patios are more appropriate materials to use, particularly stone or brick, instead of a wood deck. This is highly visible from the street. Even though there is some balcony work there now, that is less visible. Scott would like to see more of a patio at grade than a deck. That is more appropriate. If, for some reason the Commission went with a deck, it should be screened from public view, so we'd be looking at a fence or some type of landscaping along the property line.

Mr. Frey mentioned that he is considering putting up a hedge and Val said that would be acceptable. She further commented that they always recommend stone patios, especially since it is extremely visible. They are as usable as a deck and less maintenance.

Mr. Frey asked if there would be any opposition to replacing the existing back stoop which comes off the back door. Scott said that would be okay, but he should eliminate all of the grade level deck and replace with patio instead. Val suggested a concrete stoop and going with an all stone patio. From the street, it would not be visible. Scott suggested using flagstone, bluestone, brick pavers, or any other natural materials of this type.

William wanted to get approval for the stoop tonight, if possible. He explained that it is not very wide, and when the door swings out, it comes to a rail, and then to the steps. Val said that is why she is suggesting removing that completely and replacing it with a concrete stoop. With using the paver or stone patio, you eliminate any kind of deck area on the back portion of the house.

Scott mentioned that the porch or stoop would not be an achievable space for congregating. John Beck asked if it would be more convenient to have a landing outside the door before going down the steps, especially for carrying in bags, etc. He feels that we should come up with an idea without detracting from the house to allow some type of a landing. Val reiterated that it would be okay to have the landing at least 4 feet prior to the steps. Frank mentioned that a wood stoop with appropriate railings in the period design would work also.

Scott said he would like to see the 45-degree diagonal taken off and made rectangle. Also, do an appropriate rail per the Commission's guidelines.

William wants to have steps coming down both sides of the porch/landing. Val suggested he make the landing with steps going down either way, and with a railing to match the front part of the house.

Scott Sanders made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the landing constructed off the rear exit (rear door of the house) with the following modifications: A maximum 5-foot depth away from the house, a 5' x 7' wood landing with new stairs heading down south and north to a future patio space, and with the rail to be constructed so it is consistent with the rails on the front porch of the house. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0

Mr. Frey asked about the siding on the house and what the Commission could recommend. There was a discussion regarding the type of siding that could be used on houses of this vintage. Val commented that since the house was clapboard, covering with vinyl or aluminum siding would create severe moisture problems and water damage. When the house was built using clapboard, it was done so the house breathes. Once covered with plastic or manmade siding, the house stops breathing and there are moisture problems inside the walls and throughout the house. Any kind of siding could buckle. Val said the Commission is definitely opposed to synthetic siding, especially on the top of clapboard.

William said the house is drafty and he is looking for solutions. Frank said that cement board siding, or Hardi Plank siding, which is like cement, has been used on a lot of historic buildings and it seems to work well. Ginny has checked on this type of siding previously with the State Preservation Agency, and they don't endorse it, but they don't say a definite no on cement board either. She will investigate other Commissions to find out how they deal with Hardi Plank. Brief discussion followed.

► **204 South First Street (911 Center)**

David Hagney was present to give an updated report on this project and seek a Certificate of Appropriateness for it. Val commented that due to previous discussions between herself and David, she will not be voting on this particular item.

David said that they are adding another floor, basically doing two new 911 Centers for the City and County. The second new center will be built on North Main Street. In looking for a primary location downtown and after doing the studies on the fire station, it was noted that the building had originally been designed with two additional floors. They want to use the existing building and add one additional floor to the building. They are ready to go out for bid on this project in September 2004.

In adding a floor to the building, they will also add a mechanical penthouse on the top floor to accommodate the cooling tower needed for the call center. In order to screen that, they want to put a sloped roof on the building instead of adding an entire 4th floor. Many but not all of the windows are still original and if budget permits, they would replace those that are not to match the originals. He mentioned that they would like to replace the doors as well, even though that is not in the budget. He continued to go over various items as he displayed the drawings.

The upper floor will be set back a couple of feet so as to avoid interfering with the existing parapet on the building. With 911, there are new criteria and concerns with safety issues, so all of the windows have to be "explosion-proof" windows. They will be fixed windows, not true double-hungs, but they will be built to look like double-hung windows.

As for the tile roof, David said they had originally talked about a green tile roof, but now they are thinking of red tile to minimize its impact on the view of the building, and trying to pick up some of the vertical elements on the corners of the building. Brief discussion followed.

Val questioned the slope of the roof and if the pitch could change somewhat so that it is not so much of an overhang. David responded that he could try to do that, but he had to look at a cross-section before

making any decision. Currently, the overhang is about 4 feet, but it overhangs the building, so it is only over about 2 feet.

Frank was concerned if it was cut back too much, then it might look strange. David will check into this. Brief discussion followed.

Frank also asked if there were two garage doors on the north elevation. David responded that they are not replacing any of the garage doors at this point.

Ginny asked if would fair to say that any of the changes in the building at this point would be from the top of the current structure and upward. David responded that these are the only changes, except for the front entrance.

Scott Sanders made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the application as submitted. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0. Val Olafson abstained from voting as mentioned earlier.

► **319 South 2nd Street**

Alison Ames was present and explained that they plan to construct a 6-foot high wood panel fence in the back yard and referred to the photograph.

Val commented that she had driven around Haight Village and she did not see any wood panel fences there. Scott said that the Commission had previously approved others.

Scott stated that he is generally okay with the fence, but the picture shows a nice 25-foot white pine tree in the southwest corner, close to the existing power pole. He thinks that the right-of-way is most likely right on that pole or close to it, and he would like to make sure to not damage or disturb that tree. Scott also said that he would prefer to see the fence come back right at the corners of the house rather than returning into the side exteriors of the house. He feels that would preserve the view of the side of the house better, as well as prevent any damage to the tree.

Alison showed the picture of the stairs to their back door and the tenant's back door. She said that they have dogs, and would like to be able to open their back door to let them out in the fenced-in area. She also said that when they rebuild the porches, they would like to have the stairs come out the opposite way (referring to the picture). There was a brief discussion on the back porch and the direction of the stairs.

Val said she felt the fence should come to the corner of the house. Alison said that the neighbors on both sides have children and they have four dogs. This is primarily why they are trying to get the fence done so quickly. She said it would be a natural dog-eared fence. Val questioned if the fence needs to be treated or stained. Scott said that typically, all dog-eared fences are cedar and do not need to be sealed.

John Beck made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the application to build the fence as requested, with the exception that the ends of the fence need to be in conjunction with the back of the house. The owners will need to bring in another request if they want to modify which direction the steps off the porch would go. The motion was seconded by Vickie Krueger and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

► **305 South 2nd Street**

Jon Cordes explained that he has installed new windows on the back half of the house that are shorter than the original windows he replaced. He is seeking approval for the change after the fact.

Val said that the guidelines refers to not changing the fenestration or the window placement or window opening size in the home. In looking at the picture, she stated that he had drastically altered the exterior of the home by changing all of those window openings.

Scott said that he thought that as a new owner Mr. Cordes unfortunately was not familiar with the requirements or the approval process, but he is definitely not in compliance with the design guidelines. Also, the Commission recently ruled against a submittal asking for this exact same thing. There was a real regimented pattern to the windows and their height, and this has definitely been altered. This is inappropriate to the style of the building. Hopefully, this will be reversible since we cannot approve this.

Val said that in regards to the kitchen counter, they suggested to a previous owner who had requested to do the same thing that there are different ways of creating wells behind the kitchen counter in historic homes that make it possible to retain the longer or lower windows and accommodate the counter as well. They are shallow, but on the exterior of the house the window placement remains the same, and you have a functional modern kitchen on the interior. She is hoping that Mr. Cordes will make this change to the interior, rather than the exterior of the house.

Jon said he was under the understanding that the previous owners had already removed doors from the house.

Ginny said the previous application was more than 20 years old. Val said the Commission's job is to maintain the historic architectural integrity of the buildings as they are. Also, if possible, always encourage property owners to rehabilitate in a historic manner and actually hope to bring the properties back to their original appearance.

Jon asked if he could remove the awning over the door in the back on the second level. Scott said he would support that. Ginny thought that at one time, there may have been a set of stairs that went up to the second floor; this canopy would have been left behind when those were removed.

Jon mentioned that the house was previously a four-family, and he is now converting to a two-family. He asked if he could still use the vinyl clad windows. Val said that as long as they matched the profile, with the same overall dimension and same type of window as the original opening. The type or size of the opening of the windows cannot be changed or the placement of the windows. Also, he can't turn a double hung window into a casement window.

Jon asked if there were any funds available for this type for work. Val said that it is in a historic district, so tax credits would be available, but he would have to invest a lot more money to eligible. Ginny said that with even the State property tax freeze program, the cost of the work would have to equal 25% of the market value. Scott suggested that Mr. Cordes inquire about trying to exchange the windows he has installed for the proper ones. Jon said he purchased them through Stringer, which is by Sportscore. Val reiterated that he should contact them and explain the situation to see if they will exchange them for the correct size. Jon said that it will take some time for him to take care of this.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **DENY** the application to replace the windows on the back half of the house as submitted because of the shape and dimension of the existing window openings, and **APPROVE** the request to remove the awning on the second level. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

► **307 Grove Street**

Since the owner was not present, Ginny said that the application was for the temporary installation of a

satellite dish in the side yard, to be removed and placed on the roof after the roof is replaced. She also noted that the satellite dish is already there and the application was submitted in response to a violation notice.

Ginny said she spoke with the owner, and they explained that they are replacing the roof, but not changing anything, just replacing it. Once that is done, they plan to put the satellite dish on the roof in the appropriate place. Ginny said that she has received complaints from neighbors about the location of the satellite dish. Val wanted to know the timeframe since she stated in the application that "she is currently looking for funds and estimates to get the roof repaired." Ginny said that the owner said today that they are going to begin within the following week. Vickie commented that Rachael's father built the log home on North Prospect and he is used to working with the Commission. Vickie was under the understanding that her father was helping her in getting the house restored.

There was a brief discussion about sending her a letter with a designated timeframe to get this resolved as well as informing her of the proper location on the roof for the satellite dish. Scott mentioned that there was a small area above the roof line which would be a good location for the satellite dish.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **APPROVE** the application for the temporary placement of the satellite dish for a period not to exceed 30 days from issuance of the Certificate, after which time the satellite dish is to be located on the rear southern façade of the house on the horizontal eave portion of the roof. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

► **Proposed demolition of 2400 South Main Street (River Oaks)**

Ginny said she had given everyone a copy of the letter from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) concerning this project and that Mr. Vito Addotta was present to answer any questions regarding this proposed project. Ginny also explained that whenever there is a project involving expenditure of federal funds, and apparently they have been requested for this, we send project information to Springfield for review by IHPA. They sent back the letter which she mailed to the Commission members. IHPA is asking for the Commission's opinion on whether or not this building should be demolished. Ginny said she had asked the group doing this project to come to the meeting and explain in writing why they feel it should be demolished.

Scott wanted to know how it was in our jurisdiction. Ginny explained that it is in the City of Rockford and the City is involved in this project and proposes to use federal funds for the demolition. Whenever that occurs, we send papers to Springfield. They, now, have asked us to give them the opinion of the Commission regarding the potential demolition. This is because we are a certified local government.

Vito Addotta, a realtor representing the developers, said that the plan is to build a series of townhouses and four-unit ranches on the river with exposed basements. He did not have any of the plans with him. There will be five four-units with exposed basements on the riverfront, one duplex, and six-unit townhouses; a bike path; brick and wrought iron fence along the front; and landscaping. They will be all market rate units.

Vito went on to explain that he began this project 2½ years ago. He was born and raised in this neighborhood and this building was dear to his heart. When it was vacated, he made it his business to see what he could do to preserve the building. They have worked with the Rockford Catholic Diocese as well as three different groups out of Chicago to retain this building as an assisted living facility or nursing home. This was his original intent, because he felt the neighborhood needed this type of facility, but he has run into several problems. He wanted to point out that the building was originally designed as a

woman's shelter, so he refers to the rooms as "cells" since there is only enough room for a bed and dresser and they are adjoined by a bathroom in between two of these cells. Some of the apartment areas also had a common area bathroom. Because of the way the building was designed, when looking at the front and side, it appears to be a massive building to everyone they brought in from the outside to look at it. Then, all of a sudden, when you walk around the back, you see this narrow strip with four legs going out which destroys anything that could be done with the building. From a financial standpoint, they have tried everything possible, but it is impossible to come with something that would make this project work. He has documentation of everything he has done to attempt to reuse this building. Scandrol Construction came to look at the building along with people from Chicago. The roof had been leaking, but that has gotten worse. The water has been going down into the walls between the brick. The building is brick block and plaster with terrazzo floors. The water has been running between the walls and has deteriorated the plaster as well as the red blocks in between. Also, where the concrete has broken away, they found rust in the re-rods, and that is a big concern. It will cost no less than \$200 to \$250 per sq. foot to renovate. The heating, which was a common boiler, has to be completely replaced. The HVACs would all have to be redone to meet code. He believes he has done everything he can do to avoid demolition.

Val commented that she doesn't like the old concept of tearing down buildings once they become vacant. This seems to be an initial response. When she saw the floor plan, she liked the idea of townhouses. She thought the interior could be gutted and there would be incredible living spaces with the historic exterior as well. She mentioned that there have been other buildings that were in horrible shape, almost near condemnation, but were renovated and refurbished and are now viable buildings. She hates to see this building torn down because it is a beautiful structure, and there is so much talk in the community about South Main revitalization. She feels this building is definitely one of the jewels on South Main Street.

Scott asked Vito if he had looked into all options, especially of gutting the interior, etc. Vito responded that yes, he had, and it is solid concrete and block and terrazzo. They have studied and had an architect in there, and they did exactly what he was asking. They looked at the possibility of doing that, but, again, the cost is astronomical.

Val thought the estimate was somewhat out of line. In most cases, rehabilitation is cheaper than new construction, especially with what you end up in the finished product.

Vito said the roof alone will cost in excess of \$300,000. Vito also said they have researched it over and over trying to make this work.

Frank wanted to know if the interior corridor walls were bearing walls. Vito said they are not bearing walls, because they are not very wide. Many years ago, they made their own pre-cast concrete and they used 1' x 6' and 1' x 8' and poured the concrete in there and formed them as they went up. It is a solid building, but that makes it a problem as far as renovation is concerned. And the water that has been leaking in there has created a major problem in the building all the way around. Even the exterior is beginning to fall apart and that takes a lot of money to bring that back in shape.

Val felt the deterioration was also due to neglect. The State of Illinois is coming to us for our opinion on whether or not it is a viable landmark within the City of Rockford if it is architecturally significant. We have to answer in that way. We are not being asked if it's economically feasible, only if it is architecturally significant enough to be a landmark. If we see that there is enough integrity in the architecture of the building, we have to answer it in that way.

John questioned if we could state that it would be a landmark if it wasn't in such poor shape, or it is not feasible for anyone to fix it up. Val doesn't think we could ever say that. She gave an example of the

Paragon which had a hole in the roof and in the floor. This was in the Four Squires building. That was placed on the Local Register and made part of the District. That building is now a restaurant and has been for years and is very viable. She doesn't think you can say it's beyond repair.

Ginny mentioned Hall School on North 6th Street. In that particular case, a big chunk was missing from the roof and had been for a long time. This came to the Commission for an opinion, and it was with great regret that – because of the very poor condition of the building and its location – the Commission agreed that it was highly unlikely that anyone would be willing to undertake its renovation. Photos of the building showed that the walls, stairways and floors had collapsed.

John Beck wanted to know if maybe we did not have enough information on this especially to the dollar amount as referred to in the letter dated 8/1/04 from Thomas Walsh. Val said we are not supposed to consider the financial situation, since our job as a Commission is to preserve the architectural heritage of Rockford. Finances do come into play in individual projects, but they should not be included as part of our comments.

Vickie commented that she has mixed feelings about this project. She likes the idea of the condos and homes that are being proposed, and that there would be some revitalization in that particular area along the river. On the other hand, she would like to see the building used as part of it as well.

Vito reiterated that they have been working on this for a long time, and they want to create a community. This is the start of the first phase of what they intend to do. Their plan is to go all the way down to the river as well as taking out both of the trailer parks with it. The townhouses and ranches represent the first phase of what this will be. The wrought iron brick stone wall will go all the way down South Main Street, with the public bike path included.

Val likes the idea but is hoping this building would be the anchor for that project. It mirrors the Poor Claire's across the street. She thinks it is wonderful historic Rockford architecture and could serve as the anchor for that development. That sets the entire tenor of the design.

Vito said the town homes and condos will match the character of the area and they will have the Bostonian look. Val said that she thinks the building should be kept because it works perfectly with that plan. Vito said the building sits on approximately 7½ acres out of 30 acres total.

Scott Sanders said his individual opinion is that the building would merit consideration for a nomination. If he had to cite criteria, he would go right to architectural styling and significance and also, with additional research, there could be more criteria listed. In the letter, he would also acknowledge the conditions of the building.

John Beck agreed with Scott's comments. He wants the City to be unique and doesn't want the South Main Street area to resemble Perryville. He also believes in building new things that have value and are esthetically pleasing and architecturally consistent with what we want. He thinks that we would not have to keep the old building, if we can be assured that what is going to be in its place is as high quality. He does feel that if there is a way to use this building, that would be the best solution. He understands the business aspect, and if the cost of using it would be so astronomic, then we have a piece of property like this sitting unused, and that is not good for our city.

Val reminded everyone that if this would be eligible to be on the National Register, they could get the 20% tax credits that pay for 20% of the project. So, if that takes up whatever the cost difference from new and preserving this building, wouldn't that be an advantage of keeping the building?

There was more discussion regarding this issue.

A **MOTION** was made by Vickie Krueger to layover making any decision on the letter regarding the River Oaks proposed demolition and set up a time for the Commission to tour and view the River Oaks Building prior to making any recommendations. The motion was seconded by Scott Sanders and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

Ginny stated that the final product or outcome would be a letter to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency giving them the Commission's comments on this property. Val said that there are other Commissions that are commenting on this. Vito said that the inside of the building is nothing like the exterior. The estimate he received for demolition was approximately \$90,000 plus the fill. Val said that the Commission can't comment knowledgeably on the cost of preserving the building, but we can comment on the condition. Both Scott Sanders and John Beck felt they should state all the facts and acknowledge the condition.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed to tour the building on August 31 at 12:00 noon and everyone who is able to attend should meet Vito at the front entrance. Ginny will bring a camera to take pictures.

OLD BUSINESS

▶ 326 South 3rd Street

Ginny said that she met with Attorneys John Giliberti and Jennifer Cacciapaglia of the Legal Department and with Building Inspector Jim Vronch. The Building Department initially took the owner into Code Hearing several months ago, but with little success. At this point, they are unsure if the bank has taken complete ownership of the property or if they are in the process. Atty. Giliberti's advice is for the Commission to take the violation notice that was written up by Inspector Jim Vronch (Ginny referred to the photos taken), and decide if these problems, as shown in the photos Ginny passed around, constitute a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of Haight Village. Ginny advised the Commission to use the wording in the Ordinance, because if this is taken to court, we have to be able to show that we have followed the proper steps. Also, the Commission would need to adopt the Inspector's report as its own inspection and findings, and direct staff (meaning the Legal Department and Ginny) to pursue this by following the steps outlined in the Ordinance under the provisions requiring maintenance and repair.

Ginny reported that the owner is incarcerated and there is most likely no family income. She said that if the Commission does adopt Jim Vronch's violation list, they should strike out "rubbish in the yard" since Neighborhood Standards is already handling that.

A **MOTION** was made by John Beck to adopt Jim Vronch's violation list and determine, based on that list, that there is a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of the building and the neighborhood. That list specifies the following work that needs to be done on the property:

- ▶ Protective treatment of the exterior to take care of siding and window trim chipping and peeling paint;
- ▶ Repair front and side porches, including repair/replacement of posts on the front porch;
- ▶ Repair/replace siding where it is missing or has holes in it;
- ▶ Repair/replace rotting overhangs;
- ▶ Replace missing handrails on front and side porches with railings to be approved by the Preservation Commission; and
- ▶ Remove boards from all windows and replace with glass where it is missing or broken, retaining the size and style of all windows.

It is the determination of the Historic Preservation Commission that these conditions constitute a state of disrepair which may result in the deterioration of any exterior appurtenance or architectural feature so as to produce in the judgment of the Commission a detrimental effect upon the appearance, life or character of the house and on the character of the Haight Village Historic District as a whole.

The Motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

OTHER

VIOLATIONS

◆ 303 South 3rd Street

Ginny reported that the owner has completed the changes to the front porch he was supposed to do, and that he has removed the railroad ties from the yard.

◆ 1656 Ethel Avenue

Ginny also mentioned the violation at 1656 Ethel Avenue. This is the one where the previous owner had requested permission to replace a concrete stoop with wood steps and take out the railing. The Commission denied his request, but he (or someone) did it anyway. Even though the realtor's photo used in the MLS is not really clear, she could still tell the railings were gone and the steps were probably wood at the time the house was put up for sale.

STAFF REPORT

Ginny reported the Elks Club Committee had a meeting with Jon Lundin and others. They are still looking for ways to finance the renovation of the building. They had Chandler Anderson's group remove the false ceiling from the ballroom so the original ceiling is now visible. The area has been cleaned out, so now you can see what other possibilities there are.

Also, Ginny said on August 28th, there will be a trade show of Rockford civic and neighborhood organizations at Trinity Learning Center. Ginny wanted to know if the Commission would like to have a table or booth there. If so, we could set out basic information on HPC and she would be there to answer questions. The consensus was that this would be a good thing to do.

Ginny referred to information she had distributed to everyone regarding the NAPC conference she attended in Indianapolis. She said they only have it every other year. She highly recommends this national conference to anyone involved in HPC, as it is very informative and geared strictly for Preservation Commissions.

Ginny reminded everyone that beginning next month, the meetings will be on Tuesday. Therefore, the next meeting will be Tuesday, September 14th at 6:30 PM. In October, the meeting will be on October 5th because of Columbus Day.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Bernard
Senior Clerk