

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

October 5, 2004

6:30 PM

Rockford City Hall, Conference Room B

MEMBERS PRESENT: Val Olafson; Laura Bachelder; Frank St. Angel; Scott Sanders
MEMBERS ABSENT: Vickie Krueger, Alderman John Beck, Jeanne Ludeke
STAFF: Elizabeth Kinsinger, Jackie Bernard
OTHERS: Holli Palmer and ?? (Burpee Museum of Natural History), Bill Keith

The 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 September 14, 2004. The Motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

► **737 North Main Street (Burpee Museum of Natural History)**

Holli Palmer, Director of Visitor Services, was present and explained that wish to keep their green roof which was installed on the top of their Solem Wing canopy. Burpee Museum started a project called Windows to Wilderness this year that is a new biology exhibit on the 3rd floor. With that in mind, they wanted to look at environmentally friendly ways to enhance the museum. They decided to look at the lawn as well as some of the big grassy areas and prairie plants that have been established with the museum in the past. One was a compost bin, and they also added a worm bin. The worms eat the leftovers from the kids' lunches. In looking out the window from the 3rd floor, they kept seeing a "black runway" – the canopy of the driveway on the 1st floor. They thought it would be nice to have plants there that would resemble an extension of this new exhibit that they plan to build. After looking into it, they thought about a green roof.

Holli presented all of the Commission members with a packet of information explaining the green grid roof system. They checked into ways to add plants there that would not be difficult, hurt the roof or change anything dramatically, so that is when they found the green grid roof system that is produced by ABC Plastics in Beloit. The plantings are purchased through a company called Western Solutions, who puts together modules across Chicago, Seattle and the east coast. She said the Apple Building in Chicago has a green roof. She said they found someone who would donate this entire project. They wanted to have as many native plants as possible on the Burpee property. When investigating, they found that native plants of a certain height with a lot of wind exposure would not work as well as other plants, even though they have two native plants on the roof. They went with plants that are hearty and will be ground growth. The highest plant will be about 16 inches in approximately 4 years. They are succulent so they are thicker hardy plants and able to withstand winds. They will freeze in the cold months and re-bloom in the spring each year. They only have to water them after 3 weeks of no rain.

She explained that Western Solutions brought in the 82 plastic modules, which most of which are 2 feet wide by 4 feet long with the root system being 2 feet deep. They are not nailed, glued, screwed, or tacked on in any way to the roof system. They just set within each other and the weight of the matrix that the plants are in holds them in place. There are rocks in 18 of the modules that are 2 feet by 2 feet square and these are decorative. Other elements include driftwood and some small boulders. The plants attract birds and butterflies. At this time, she proceeded to show a brief video of the installation from start to finish of this project. They started this project at 8:00 AM on Sept. 17th and completed it by 4:00 PM that same day. There were 9 people handling the installation (staff and 2 volunteers). As the video was shown, she explained that they planted first since they used a scissor lift to put up the modules. This made sure everything was laid out naturally. Dr. Paul Sorenson from NIU came up with the idea of a green roof, and they followed through by finding a system that would work. They did get the proper City permits. She said there are over 2,000 plants there.

Scott Sanders commented favorably on this project and said this was an incredible use for the facility. He asked if there was any fear of winds picking up the plants. Holli said no, and the reason was that there is a 2 inch drop, so all of the plants are actually sitting 2 inches down, so they are flush with the top.

Frank wanted to know how the water would drain off the roof. Holli said the water drains off the roof through a gutter system in the front, and she pointed that out in the video. Each of the modules have small perforated holes in the bottom of them, so, hopefully most of the water would not run off. This is the main reason for doing this project, they would be using the water. The plants will soak up most of the water, and the little that remains will run through the gutter.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to approve the application for the green roof as submitted for Burpee Museum. The Motion was seconded by Frank St. Angel and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

None to report

OTHER

◆ 119-123 South Main Street (Chick House)

Bill Keith was present to discuss the Chick House (Hotel). He said the City has purchased this building and he went through the building and would like to take care of a few items to prevent any structural damage until this building can be redeveloped. Val wanted clarification if the City had purchased both parts. Bill said the City owns 2/3 of the building and there is a common stairway between. Rockford Office Supply currently still owns the other part. Bill said this is somewhat difficult since part of the hotel is over the top of his business and his building used to be part of the hotel. There is a possibility in the future that the City could acquire the entire building.

He said there is currently visquene in the windows and it is very thin. He has checked into replacing that with glass or plastic, but there are too many windows and the cost would be too high. What he would like to do is go through the top floor and reinstall a thicker mill of visquene on the windows to get through the winter. He would also like to put a metal cap on top of the parapet wall to keep the bricks from continuing to fall off. The cap would not take away from the structure of the building, since it would be temporarily clipped on and easily removed when the building is developed.

Bill mentioned that he has shut the gas and water off. Also, the boiler is very old and would not last through the winter heating season. Also, currently in the basement, in order to keep the pipes from

freezing, small space heaters were being used and these were illegal. In light of this, it was decided to shut off the heat entirely. The electricity will stay on.

He is checking to see if there is lead paint on the outside of the building. If not, they might wash the building down in the spring to get off all of the old paint. If it is lead paint, they will not touch it. He said they took off the signs for the restaurant. They plan to repaint the facade on the lower section green since it would eventually be torn down. The facade is not on a historic building, it is steel paneling that was added on and sticks out. Painting this green would match Stewart Square. He is planning to do all of this work before winter this year.

Frank wanted to know when they plan to begin to architecturally start to fix up the building? Bill said that could be a long ways down the road. It would definitely not happen until the D.J. Stewart parking garage comes down. That has to be torn down prior to the Chick House being developed. Also, they cannot do much unless they buy the entire building. He said his job with the City is to maintain the building until it is decided what to do with it.

Val had a concern with not heating the building. Her thoughts were that the building would deteriorate faster if it was not heated during the winter months. She gave as an example the Elk's Club. Bill said that the City would have to spend a minimum of \$50,000 to install a new boiler and also install new glass windows. The cost could be over \$100,000 to heat the building. Bill pointed out differences with the Elk's Club. He said the key would be to make sure the roof does not leak, therefore, keeping moisture out of the building. It is not an ideal situation, but it will buy time until developed.

Val commented that the windows were open and the second and third floor had bird droppings all over. Bill said there were pigeons in the building, but they are gone now. Val said that as long as the City maintains this building and makes it secure. Frank questioned if visquene on the windows was acceptable or against the City codes? Bill said in an occupied building, yes it is against code. However, this building is not occupied, it is shut down, in a dormant state. He would not put the visquene on the first level, mainly for security reasons. The bottom floors all have glass and that will not change. If they were broken, he would fix them and replace the glass. He mentioned that there was plywood over the windows in the back by the alley since they are not exposed. Frank asked what he plans do with these windows when the parking garage is torn down and they would be exposed. Bill said they would put up glass at that time. Val said there were homeless people living in the building when she went through it. They gained entrance into the building by climbing up the back of Curt's part and climb through the windows where there was visquene. Bill said he would secure that part by putting up plywood first and visquene on the top of it.

Bill said the City purchased this building to preserve it for future development. Val commented that the block facade is so wonderful because there are so many architectural designs there. Bill said if the facade was pulled off on the lower level, the building would look much better as is. He also said if the brick was sandblasted it would definitely be repairable. Liz reminded everyone that he does not have an application and that this is just basic information of what he plans to do.

Bill said that there was a bungee cord on the fire escape, but has fixed that. Val commented that the fire escape was very nicely detailed, especially the brackets which are lion heads.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Bernard
Senior Clerk