

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

January 12, 2005

6:30 PM

Rockford City Hall, Community Development Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Val Olafson; Laura Bachelder; Jeanne Ludeke; Alderman John Beck; Scott Sanders; Frank St. Angel (arrived at 6:40 PM)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF: Ginny Gregory, Jackie Bernard

OTHERS: Einar Forsman, City Administrator; Michael Bugler, Friends of the Coronado; Sarah and Kurt Bell, Friends of the Coronado & River District, Mary Ann Smith, Friends of the Coronado; Jon Lundin, Elks Club/Abilities Center; Patrick O'Keefe, Friends of the Coronado; Joseph Zimmer, Architect; Gary Carlson, interested party.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM by Chairman Val Olafson.

NEW BUSINESS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Chair and Vice Chair)

Val asked if there were any suggestions or nominations. A **MOTION** was made by Jeanne Ludeke to keep the current officers with Val Olafson as Chair and Frank St. Angel as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the December 14, 2004 meeting were presented and a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** was made by Scott Sanders, seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

OTHER

Alderman Beck asked if the Wednesday monthly meetings could be changed to a different time or day, since he has a conflict – the Edgewater Neighborhood Association meets at the same time each month. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to change the Wednesday meetings from the 2nd week to the 3rd week each month, beginning in February 2005 through August 2005. The Tuesday meetings from September 2005 through December will not change. The new dates agreed upon are as follows:

Wed., Feb. 16, 2005
Wed., March 16, 2005
Wed., April 20, 2005
Wed., May 18, 2005
Wed., June 15, 2005

Wed., July 20, 2005
Wed., August 17, 2005

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

◆ 411 Kent Street (Tinker Bridge)

Laura Bachelder explained that they are just requesting a renewal of the Certificate that had expired in December for the construction of the Tinker suspension bridge. The work had stopped for the winter, but will be starting up again in March, continuing with the work that was previously approved. They anticipate the work to be completed by June 1st.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **APPROVE** the extension of the previously granted Certificate of Appropriateness for 6 months as requested. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0 with 1 abstention (Laura Bachelder).

◆ 210 West Jefferson St. (Elks Club)

Jon Lundin, representing the owners of the Elks Club building, said thanks to the efforts of Pam Hein, the building is now listed on the National Register, making its renovation eligible for Historic Preservation Tax credits. They are in the process of putting together an RFP for someone to redevelop the building which they will circulate locally. Since they are looking for developers, they would like to install temporary canvas promotional signs in the windows facing Wyman Street which would be attached with easily removed screw eyes. He distributed color pictures showing examples of these signs. Their main objective is to attract attention to the building, calling attention to the fact that they are looking for developers. They would not be banners, but colorful signs that would be mounted in the windows for easy removal.

Ginny explained the sign regulations. She said they would have to go to their alderman and ask for a prayer of the petitioner to allow the signs to stay up for the requested time. There was a brief discussion on the time frame for these signs. Ginny said if the Commission grants this request, the certificate would include a stipulation that installation of the signs meets zoning regulations and/or city code and we could take it from there. Ald. Beck suggested as an alternative to the prayer of the petitioner that they apply for a Special Use Permit to allow the signs to stay up for more than the usual 7 days allowed for things of this type. Ginny will check with Zoning and get back to Jon. Scott questioned as to what time frame they are wanting approval for. Jon said they are really looking for local developers, so whatever time frame is approved, they would be happy with it. The purpose of these signs is to raise interest in the building and get it restored once again. They would not install the signs until the spring.

A **MOTION** was made by Scott Sanders to **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the installation of the banners/signs in the archway brick openings subsequent to their compliance with applicable Zoning regulations for a renewable period of one year. The motion was seconded by John Beck and **CARRIED** by a vote of 6-0.

◆ 314 North Main Street (Coronado Theatre)

Einar Forsman explained he was representing the City of Rockford as the owner of the theatre and gave a brief history of the proposed project.

After the theatre opened, the City attempted to market the corner space for a complimentary use for the theatre and found that there are several limitations on what could actually be put in there. They have looked at restaurants, champagne bars, and a number of other things, either through people soliciting the use of the space or by doing formal RFPs. In each case, they have had difficulties either from an economic standpoint or a standpoint that made sense to the theatre.

Einar said they have been working with the Friends of the Coronado in their interest in establishing more of a visible position for their support of the Coronado Theatre. Using this space attached to the theatre would open up possibilities for promoting the theatre, celebrating its history, and having either events or a mini museum arrangement within the storefront space to inform people about the theatre. This would be the beginning point of the tours to help celebrate the theatre.

He said the big issue is that there is a desire to have access into the theatre from this space and there currently isn't access. It's part of the City's desire to build out a vanilla box structure within this space for any kind of use beginning with this proposal. He said they have worked out some designs to try to accommodate both of those features, but the problem they have run into is when the new stairwell was put into the theatre, it runs 30 inches or less close to the doorway in question tonight. This violates ADA and triggers other kinds of problems. The City, obviously, is supportive of ADA requirements and any codes that are in line with both historic buildings as well as the general codes. This is an obstacle and the Friends have engaged the services of architects van Dijk Pace Westlake for suggestions, as well as Joe Zimmer, to look for alternatives in trying to meet this obstacle to make this a successful venture between the City and the Friends. Both parties will split the costs of the renovation of this portion of the facility.

Joe Zimmer referred to the 8½ x 11 drawing and said that it is the most descriptive of the issue at hand. The space between the fire stair leading to all four levels of the theatre is positioned such that its distance to the exterior door alcove is only 2 ft. 4 inches. There is no other physical option for access from the tenant space to public spaces in the remainder of the theatre, except this path. The only other option would be to go into the backstage area. This would pose a programmatic problem, having the tenant in the backstage area when there could be performers there. Secondly, the floor level in the backstage area is about a foot and a half below the tenant space floor. The only truly accessible route to the public space is from the tenant space. In order to create adequate width to do that, there are only two options – relocate the door or eliminate it. The general feeling was that eliminating it is the better option. One thing to note on the overall façade is that it originally had a total of five storefront bays. The center one, which is immediately left of the small entry canopy, has been modified in the past. It was not originally done that way. Both the glass and the glass framing have been modified prior to the renovation and also as a part of the renovation. Joe said he understands that this committee does not have any jurisdiction over the interior, but the intent of the build-out space for the Friends is to include very large murals of the interior of the building so that anyone who has never entered the building will know the greatness of its interior. That will be visible from the street, so it will have some affect on the exterior of the building. The original drawings that van Dijk Pace Westlake prepared did not include murals in the space that they would be modifying. Joe noted on the 8½ x 11 drawing that he suggests including murals in that location as well. No other physical changes are proposed at this time to the Coronado building or the Liebling building, otherwise known as the Jackson Piano building.

Einar said the City is very excited about the project for a couple of reasons. Firstly, they have a viable tenant coming forth with the finances to do something there and it justifies having the City match the investment. What the Friends have already pursued and agreed to is to keep the Coronado lit every night rather than only for event nights, which is a major change. They are paying for the electrical timer installation for the marquee and the city is absorbing the electrical costs to keep it lit. Filling up this corner space and creating more activity there is a good use and celebration of the space.

Patrick O'Keefe of Friends of the Coronado commented that they are excited about the prospect of taking that space and making it a portal for the Coronado and exposing wider and greater audiences there. The door cut would help them reach their goal and is a pivotal issue for their project to move forward.

Mary Ann Smith said that she did not want it to be thought this was going to be an office space. There will certainly be a desk in that space, which will be staffed by a person who would be primarily focused on marketing the Coronado. They intend to reinvent their vision of promoting and being more active in marketing and activities there.

Ginny explained that if the Commission wants to approve the application, the motion to do so should state why they are approving a Certificate of Appropriateness that is contrary to the guidelines requirement to retain all existing doors. She pointed out that the Friends also need to get permission from the State Preservation Agency for both the exterior and the interior changes because the building is on the Illinois Register.

Einar did confirm that these will be tenants, but it is a development agreement; they will not be owners, but they will be a tenant for a nominal lease. They are currently exchanging proposals, but he thinks there is a several year commitment.

[John Beck left the meeting at 7:00 PM]

Joe Zimmer said that moving forward with this project is good for the long term for this building, from a physical standpoint. Jeanne asked if this space was presently being used for anything. Einar said just for an easel display.

Joe Zimmer said it is currently part of the exiting for the building, including the stair. However, the door to the box office swings toward the box office. In turn, the door from the box office swings out. It is just a matter of determining that they have enough doors to satisfy the number of people exiting. They would have to do that for building codes as well. Joe has not completed that study as of yet.

Joe said that in the front, there were portions of stone that were replaced as a part of the renovation.

There was a comment regarding the door in question that it is dead space. Einar said there were limited choices of where the stairwell could go to meet modern standards, so it ended up being very compressed there. Joe said that if someone entered the theater on the other side of the stairway from what is being proposed, they would be circulating through the backstage area. Part of the standard agreement with performers is that only the people they authorize can enter the backstage area. There is no possibility of moving the doors down because there is a ramp that goes from stage level up to the level along the wide corridor (between the elevator and the men's room). The reason the stairs are where they are is because of a combination of limitations on the lower level, the size of the elevator required, serving the stage, size of pianos and etc.

Ginny asked how they could ensure that no one coming in the other way could go through. Joe said that it is not the exit side and that side of the doors would be locked and they are already keyed that way, locked from the outside. You can get out those doors, but you can't get in. Joe said the performance group would be the ones to police the door to keep it shut.

Einar said they are still in discussion with the Friends. We know that the operator of the theatre (currently the MetroCentre, possibly someone else in the future) has control of the building during events and we need to insure that they retain that control. They will have to establish a policy regarding controlling events, staffing, etc.

Mary Ann said that one of the purposes of this corner is to support marketing of future events and if one were in the theatre and wanted to know what is happening in the future, this would be the place where there would be concierge that tells what is happening. She said we are sadly missing that in the operation of the Coronado right now.

There was a brief discussion on the positive aspects of this proposed project.

Ginny reminded the Commission if approving, to specifically state in the motion the reasons for giving the approval, since the guidelines clearly state that existing original doors cannot be given up. It must be

clearly stated as to why this particular case is being approved. If someone later on wants to do the same thing, we have something on record as to why this was approved.

Einar suggested conditioning this change based on the use proposed. For example, if the Friends decide three years from now to vacate the premises because it's not viable space for them and we have a champagne bar operator lease the space instead, then the HPC's condition would be that we would have to restore this door. The cost is actually low to do this. They would carefully remove and retain what was there.

Scott asked if it ever was retained, that would eliminate the option of interconnectivity between the spaces. Einar said they did not know what other interconnectivity they would want, except for the patrons that want to support the Coronado. They would not want to give a club type access or sandwich shop access into this theatre.

Val said this would also have to be approved by the State.

Joe said when the overall renovation came about, the project had to go through the Building Board of Appeals because of various circumstances. Many things were done to improve the life safety of the building as a whole.

Scott commented that the mural continuing over into the space really interconnects and makes the buildings look like one.

There was a brief discussion on the murals.

Mary Ann said that looking at the building from the street, it is difficult to convince anyone that this is an \$18½ million investment. It is one of Rockford's greatest landmarks and they want to start marketing the building better and the community has to start marketing performances better.

Joe said his understanding is that in addition to the murals, the ceiling is to be more contemporary and abstract. It will be done with metal mesh ceiling that reflects and sparkles. This is intended to emulate the interior in an abstract way.

Einar said they did at least one RFP and they had several people come and look at it. But the size of the space and the fact that when you have more than 10 people in a restaurant or a bar, you have to have two bathrooms made it cost prohibitive for any vendor.

Joe continued to go over the details on the framing of the windows. The two sides would not be altered, except to just replace the glass. They want to stick with single pane since they are more reflective.

Scott said his understanding is that there will be two bays on the façade that are just storefront windows without a door or alcove on any kind and they don't appear to match.

Joe explained the reason for the horizontal element is there is a concession counter behind it and that is the height of the counter. What is below is clear obscure glass with painted finish behind because the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency frowns on the use of spandrel glass. They prefer clear glass with the painted surface behind. In looking at the Chicago style windows on the second floor of the Jackson building, the double hung windows are actually backed up by a wall with a painted surface. They prefer the color appear to be clear glass.

Jeanne mentioned for this project to go through, this change is an essential sacrifice to enhance, develop and promote the Coronado. It would be a temporary fix for a great promotion of the theatre at this time.

Gary Carlson commented that if you are going to do something to a historic building, it needs to be done with sympathy to the building's original architecture. He doesn't feel anyone would have a problem with putting up a plain piece of glass with marble on the bottom it. It would look like that was the original, but the storefronts could be restored very easily whenever necessary.

Scott wanted an explanation as to why the door could not be brought 8 inches closer to the sidewalk. Ginny said it would not be wide enough and there wouldn't be enough clearance to open the door.

Einar also said that once you tamper with the door, you have to make it full ADA compliant, which we could not do. The only way to accomplish that would be to make the doorway wider for access. He believed that once you do it to one, you have to do it to all.

Joe said building code requirements say that doors are not allowed to swing into the public right-of-way. If they move it out and the swing goes past the face of the building, that would be a violation also.

A **MOTION** was made by Frank St. Angel to **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness as drawn, to remove the door and install glass and storefront in its spot, with the stipulations that as much of the existing window system as possible be retained, filling in the area where the door was with the new piece of glass while reusing as much of the frame as possible. Furthermore, in the event of any tenant change for the Jackson building space, they would have to come back to review the situation at that time, with the possibility of retrofitting it back to what it was originally. This approval is also pending the other reviews that are needed, including the State. The reason for allowing the change and not following the guidelines is that we were presented with alternatives that were not workable, and this is the only possible solution. The motion was seconded by Laura Bachelder and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

◆ Staff report

Ginny mentioned that she had e-mailed everyone the preservation links that she had for the HPC portion of the City's revamped website. She added a couple, one of which is National Park Service, directing people directly to the page where the tax credit information is. Another one is IHPA's section on the tax freeze program and their section on tax credits. The hope is that the City's new website will be up and running by the end of January 2005. It will have, in addition to what is already there, applications, process, criteria, application instructions and other pertinent information for both landmarks and historic districts. Everything will be able to be downloaded from the website. She is currently writing up the FAQ's and will e-mail everyone for any additions or changes, if any.

Ginny asked if there was any news with the Graham-Ginestra House. Laura said the last she heard was they are still on holding pattern. Ginny was directed to send a mailing to the heir who is in Wisconsin. Their attorney did respond to her. People are still working on the home.

Ginny said she had received the latest information from the National Association of Preservation Commission. She referred to page 11 on the *Alliance Review*, regarding Summer CAMP. On April 16, it will be in Springfield. She went a couple of years ago and it was excellent. As soon as she gets more information, she will forward it to everyone.

Ginny also referred to an article which was in the *Register Star* on the Burpee expansion as well as an article in the LPCI Newsletter.

OTHER

Ginny said she got an e-mail from Vickie Krueger recommending Sally Faber for the vacant position. Sally, who is with Dickerson Nieman Realtors is coming in to speak with Ginny later this week. The Mayor wants to see her resume prior to making any commitments. Hopefully, this will get resolved in time for the February meeting.

Val suggested reading a book she found fascinating titled, *Devil in the White City*. It is about building the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jackie Bernard
Senior Clerk