

CITY OF AURORA
OHIO
LANDMARK COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2009

The Aurora Landmark Commission met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2009, in the Council Chambers of Aurora City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Vice Chairman Richard Fetzer.

ROLL CALL:

Present: *John Kudley (*arrived at 6:10 p.m.)
Sue Sutton
Richard Fetzer
Tom Spape
Absent: Melanie Miguel-Courtad
Also Present: Ron Lowe, Advisor to Landmark Commission
Councilman Tom Dreher
Susan Dombeck, Secretary

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

Mr. Fetzer noted that the minutes of September 22 were not approved because there weren't enough members present that attended that meeting. He asked that the minutes be added to the agenda for approval.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of September 22, 2009 as printed.

Mrs. Sutton moved for approval; Mr. Spape seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0, on a roll call vote.

Yeas: Mrs. Sutton, Mr. Spape, Mr. Fetzer
Nays: None

The minutes for the October 27, 2009 meeting could not be approved because not enough members who were present at that meeting were in attendance. They will be considered at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

PRESENTATION BY LARRY SELZER – MAINTENANCE REVIEW OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN AURORA

Mr. Selzer said that Councilman Dreher spoke to him about a year ago regarding drafting a

proposal for strategic preservation maintenance plans for properties that are owned by the city, those being the Hartman property, the Chesney property and the two Harmon farms. He had also been contacted by George Yanda of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. He gave much information on his experience, background and education.

Mr. Selzer stated that prior to doing the March 3, 2009 proposal he viewed each of the four properties. He said it speaks to the city's concerns about maintenance of the properties and stewardship towards the historic structures as well as the potential of the land holdings. Mr. Selzer said it is a starting point toward protecting the city's assets and he commended the city. He said that the properties do require stewardship, otherwise the city runs the chance of losing the historic character and having an impact on the cultural fabric of Aurora.

Mr. Selzer felt that the city would be well served by having someone objectively review the current condition of the properties and move forward with a phased approach to provide a maintenance plan or a plan driven by a budget, and suggested having a prioritized list of issues on how to make improvements and maintain the properties. He gave a breakdown of what type of issues could be listed and how those issues would be addressed. He commented that the city would be better served by knowing what the final use would be. Mr. Selzer stated that some decisions that will be made might affect the intended final use of the facility. He thought that he could offer guidance to the city with both a planning and architectural perspective as well as hands on preservation. He gave some examples in other communities where his services were used and how he achieved results.

Per an inquiry by Mr. Lowe, Mr. Selzer explained that his initial site visit gave him a general introduction, but the only way to really discover the buildings is to visit the site several times to understand the evolution of the building and evaluate the current condition. He said that he starts with the exterior of the building from top to bottom, and then he begins a study of the inside for a total evaluation.

Mr. Selzer said that, if the budget is an issue, he could break it down into smaller components with the understanding that he would only be able to give a general perspective rather than a more detailed one. If there are allocated funds back to a capital improvement budget or such, then he could look at tasks associated to discretionary funds available. He suggested, as an end product, the development of a matrix that has a prioritized approach to the repairs that need to be done. He thought it would be good to communicate simultaneously with the players that would be involved with the future use of the properties. That way everyone has a voice in the protection of the city's assets.

Mr. Lowe stated that he was in agreement with Mr. Selzer's approach.

Mr. Selzer added that, in the stewardship of a structure, stabilization for a later use is important. Mr. Lowe spoke on use, preservation and ranking the buildings.

Mrs. Sutton asked about the status of the buildings, and Mr. Seltzer replied that he was on the sites only briefly and is unable to answer in detail regarding the condition of the structures. A long conversation followed on the current use and condition of some of the structures.

Mr. Lowe gave some background on the city hall building and the Church in Aurora building.

Mr. Fetzer wondered about the commission's role in directing the plan, and Mr. Lowe responded that the commission can only provide a recommendation. He suggested that the commission now deal only with the needs for stabilizing the buildings and not the use of the buildings. Mr. Fetzer and Mrs. Sutton agreed.

Mr. Selzer said his proposal was not focused on dealing with the use of the buildings, but only developing a document that would assess and prioritize the issues for the sites and structures.

Councilman Dreher stated that, in the interest of conditions, he was in attendance as the Chairman of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. He said they toured the 50 facilities that the city owns, and said that the Ray Harmon house is in horrible shape. He gave some details on the problems with the structure and placed the Ray Harmon house at the top of the list for consideration. Mr. Dreher explained that the Parks and Recreation employees that use the Margaret Harmon house have taken care of the interior. He added that the exterior of that property has two barns which are also in terrible condition, and he placed those two structures at second on the list.

Mr. Dreher stated that he frequently hears questions about what the city plans to do with the properties and buildings it owns. He said that the Buildings and Grounds Committee cannot answer because they do not have the knowledge in terms of antiquity, historic and landmark matters. The committee felt that Mr. Selzer has the knowledge, experience and ability to give the guidance the city needs. Mr. Dreher said that his proposal came to \$24,000, and in relation to the city's overall budget, it is just change. He stated that the city can afford it and needs to hire someone with Mr. Selzer's background and abilities to give the necessary guidance to preserve the historic treasures of the community. Mr. Dreher commented that Mr. Selzer is the first person that proposed an approach and method that not only reflected his expertise, but made sense. He stated that Mr. Selzer is the man who can give the path the city needs to follow.

Mr. Kudley said that it is certainly something that the Landmark Commission needs to look at and it also needs to get an understanding about the status of the buildings and how they can be used. He supported the committee's feelings.

Mr. Spape asked about the commission's budget and wondered if anything was earmarked for historic sites. He suggested thinking about this when preparing the budget and having an appropriation that accumulates from year to year to cover projects of this type.

Mr. Dreher had a copy of the budget and told the commission that his committee's capital fund has \$45,000 for the maintenance of city buildings, and there should be additional monies in other areas for that same use.

Mr. Kudley asked Mr. Lowe if money was put in the commission's 2010 budget, and Mr. Lowe replied that it was not. Mr. Kudley suggested adding funds for this use, and Mr. Lowe didn't know if it could be done since the budget was already complete. He explained that, in the past, the commission was asked to submit capital project requests, but the last few years the

commission was not notified and has only a few line items in the building department's budget. The secretary was asked about it and responded that all she knew was that Mr. Wehrenberg and Mrs. Conkling worked on the department's budget and set the line items.

Mr. Dreher announced that the Planning, Zoning and Building's budget does not list any capital funds for the commission and told the members that it should be addressed. While he checked the line items under the department's budget to see if there was anything for the commission, Mr. Lowe stated that some historic markers should be considered for the budget, and Mr. Kudley explained that, even though there are no funds listed currently, it could be considered during budget hearings. He recommended having a request for a historic marker program as well as funds for the study that was discussed earlier and assured the others that both he and Mr. Dreher would support the additional fund request.

MOTION: To request that the study by Larry Selzer in the amount of \$24,500 be put in the 2010 budget for the Landmark Commission.

Mr. Fetzer moved for approval; Mr. Spape seconded, and the motion carried, 4-0, on a voice vote.

Mr. Lowe explained that, since the Streetscape plan did not happen, the commission should follow through with the historic marker program.

MOTION: To request that \$10,000 for a historic marker program be put in the 2010 budget for the Landmark Commission.

Mr. Spape moved for approval; Mrs. Sutton seconded, and the motion carried, 4-0, on a voice vote.

MISCELLANEOUS:

There is no miscellaneous business.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Spape moved to adjourn at 6:25 p.m.; Mrs. Sutton seconded, and the motion carried, 4-0, on a voice vote.

John Kudley - Chairman

Susan Dombeck - Secretary
AUDIO TAPE ON FILE