



CLARK COUNTY

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Public Service Center
1300 Franklin St., 6th Floor
Vancouver, WA
www.clark.wa.gov/planning/historic

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, July 11, 2018 - 6:00 p.m.

These are summary, not verbatim, minutes. Audio recordings are available on the Historic Preservation Commission's page at www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/historic-preservation-commission.

Members Present:	Robert Hinds, Sarah Fox, Alex Gall, and Roch Manley
Members Absent:	Sean Denniston
Staff Present:	Sharon Lumbantobing and Jenna Kay (Clark County); Jan Bader and Mark Person (City of Vancouver)
Guests:	Holly Chamberlain, Lisa Bayautet, Eric Lanciault, Andrew Heinrich

Roll Call & Introductions: Commission members and staff introduced themselves.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes from June 5, 2018. Fox moved to approve the minutes with minor edits and Gall seconded. Meeting minutes were approved.

Public Hearing: Historic Preservation Commission Rules and Procedures By-Law Amendment to change the date and location of the Historic Preservation Commission monthly meetings. Lumbantobing read the staff report and recommendation.

Hinds opened the discussion to public comment. No public comment. Public comment was closed.

Manley made a motion to approve the nomination to amend the bylaws. Fox seconded. The Commission members voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the Historic Preservation Commission Rules and Procedures By-Law for the date and location change to the first Wednesday of the month at the Public Services Center, 6th Floor Hearing Room, 1300 Franklin St, Vancouver, WA.

The hearing was closed.

Public Hearing: Certificate of Appropriateness – Carnegie Library (Clark County Historical Museum) Proposal to replace front stairs.



Person stated that the library is on both the national and Clark County Historic Register. Bader clarified that the city of Vancouver is the applicant for the Certificate of Appropriateness and Eric Lanciault is the architect the city is contracting with for the project.

Lanciault stated that the library stairs are over 100 years old, and the concrete patches are failing and unsafe. The top two stairs are directly at the threshold of the door, are a potential hazard, and do not meet current code. The door swings out and there is less than a foot before the step goes down. He has been asked to redesign the stairs to make them compliant with current codes. There is a rear door that is ADA accessible, so there is no need to provide a ramp on the front stairs for ADA accessibility. He presented two options for consideration: C1 and C2. Both options replace the stairs in their entirety. The top set of stairs would need to be twice their current length in order to be ADA accessible. The city has reviewed and approved the designs as proposed. The accessibility standards require handrails and guardrails, which is a lot of metal that would be in front of the building, which were never there previously. The handrails are 36 inches away from the plinths. The city agreed to leave a 36 inch gap between the top of the stair and the doorway, without a hand rail but with a cement strip guard rail. The proposal meets the city code. Option C1 lengthens the two plinths and creates an awkward relationship between the top of the plinth and the landing. Leaving a trench (a 4 inch gap) between the building and the landing is important so that it doesn't cover the original terra cotta. Water will pool in the 4 inch gap and then filter out through a discrete channel. Option C2 focuses on the relationship between the plinth and the water table.

Manley expressed a concern about people getting their ankles caught and trash getting caught in the trench. Manley asked about putting a decorative cover over the trench. Lanciault said they looked into it, but the cover would have to be attached to the building somehow and it would have to be cleaned out.

Manley stated that Lanciault handled the difficulty of the design with sensitivity, but he doesn't like the 4-inch trench as it is a potential maintenance issue and from the street view, no one will see the relationship between the plinth and the water table, which the design is trying to preserve. Fox agreed that the trenches are a maintenance issue.

Lanciault presented the handrail design. The handrails must be 36 inches high. The simplest way to frame the handrails is using top, middle, and bottom bars. The ADA requirements are that the handrail has to be independent from the top rail. The top rail cannot be the handrail. The hand has to be able to grip the handrail that is separate (an inch and a half) from the supporting structure. The question is do you just put middle and top horizontal and vertical bars for structural support or do you integrate a pattern that is inset into the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the railing. The railing that is proposed is a rosette with a floral pattern. There are actually four rosettes on the existing building at the top corners of the front windows. There are also floral ornaments on the façade on the existing building. The proposed pattern is consistent with the existing building. Lanciault brought several patterns from simple to complex patterns for the stairway railings for the HPC members to consider.

Lanciault stated that in 1909 there were no stair railings. In 1970, a pipe railing was installed. Now we have the challenge of deciding on a railing design that either fades to the background or stands out in a decorative way.

Fox stated that her family background is in decorative metals. Wrought iron powder-coated black fades into the background, whereas bronze is fancier and stands out. From a

maintenance standpoint, powder coated black wrought iron is easier to maintain than bronze. Bronze will last a long time and have its own character as it ages, but is triple the expense of wrought iron. Bader stated that this is a city-owned building, but it does not have a much of a maintenance budget. Fox stated that because there never was an original stair railing, we should go in the direction of “fade away” as opposed to highly decorative.

Manley asked Hinds what his thoughts are on compliance with the Secretary of Interior standards. Hinds replied that it’s important that we not mislead people into thinking that the railing was an original element as none of the Carnegie libraries originally had stair railings. Gall reminded the commissioners of Denniston’s previous remark about not faking history. Gall asked Lanciault how other Carnegie libraries have solved this stair railing issue. Lanciault said that all had some kind of railings put in.

Manley said his initial reaction to the rosettes and flowers on the railing is that it looks appropriate. Fox stated that her initial reaction was that the proposed rosettes are too highly decorative.

Hinds asked what Lanciault recommends for the handrail. Lanciault described it as a flat elliptical (not round, not square) with a fitting underneath for attaching it to the guardrail. The ADA standards are specific about what the handrails can look like. The proposal is ADA compliant. The bronze handrail will be what stays bright, but the verticals will dull over time. The light posts are made of cast metal with a small leaf detail at the top and bottom.

Gall asked what is the rationale for going with bronze versus wrought iron? Lanciault replied that the decision is purely emotional. Stainless steel and brass would be ridiculous. It’s a beautiful building and deserves bronze.

Fox noted that the proposed design could be done in different types of metal.

Bader asked what the difference in maintenance is between cast iron and bronze. Fox stated that treatments, like clear coat or wax, can maintain the bronze finish, but it can chip off and wear out, or you can just leave it and let it age over time. A black wrought iron, powder coated railing is more durable, but sometimes they can get chipped.

Lanciault stated that both wrought iron and bronze should not require any maintenance.

Gall stated that the more understated the railing is, the more the building stands out. Fox stated that she loves ornamental railings, but she is inclined to have a low key railing for this building.

Hinds opened the discussion to public comment.

Chamberlain asked if the light posts will be repainted. Lanciault stated that they will be moved forward five feet, rewired and repainted.

Public comment closed. The hearing closed. The commission entered into deliberations.

Hinds stated that he will abstain from voting to avoid a tie vote since there are only four HPC members present.

Gall stated that there are two main points to consider: first is the stair option (C1 and C2) and section is the stair rail design and material option.

Manley stated that there should be a third point to consider: a trench and no trench option.

Fox stated that she is not too concerned about the 4 inch trench and that people are not likely to fall into it.

Gall asked Lanciault what his preference is about the trench. Lanciault said that there are very few buildings like this in Washington State. Once facades get covered up, they never get uncovered. Lanciault doesn't know any of any other terracotta bases and keeping them exposed is important. The spirit of historic preservation is to not do any renovation that damages the existing building.

Manley said the idea of a trench cover was dismissed too quickly. It would keep the leaves and garbage out of the trench. Lanciault said that the gap (trench) is so narrow that any cover would have to be set very exactly and would require maintenance to clean.

Fox stated that we always have the option of adding the trench cover later. Lanciault stated that the likelihood of the city coming back later and installing trench covers is very small; it would probably be an off-the-shelf cover. Bader stated that if it becomes much of a maintenance issue, the city would likely fill it up with concrete which would not be an elegant solution. Fox suggested putting a bronze cover over the trenches and tying the design to the railing to make it look like it was meant to be there. Lanciault stated that the cover would cover up the terracotta base of the building.

Motion 1: Gall made a motion to approve Option C2 without addressing the concrete trench. Fox seconded the motion. Three HPC members approved this (Hinds abstained from voting on all issues related to the Carnegie library stairs to avoid a tie).

Fox stated that the light standards are black cast iron, therefore, she felt that the railings should be the same material (black cast iron), and it could include the rosettes and flowers for detail. Manley agreed that the bright metal (bronze) would be a lot of detail. Gall said that not highlighting the handrails makes sense, but it could also be an opportunity to put a nice railing on the building. Gall agreed that Fox's proposal is a good compromise to use wrought iron with rosette/flower detailing. Fox pointed out that bronze can be blackened before it is installed. Lanciault stated that the blackening of the bronze will wear off over time. Bader said there is a significant cost difference between cast iron and bronze and the city has a defined budget for this project, which includes a new HVAC system. Fox stated that bronze is triple the cost of wrought iron.

Motion 2: Fox made a motion to accept the panel ornamentation as proposed (with rosettes and flowers) and that either cast iron black railings or darkened bronze railings is acceptable to the HPC, based on the city's budget concerns. Gall seconded the motion. Three HPC members unanimously approved (Hinds abstained from voting).

Motion 3: Fox made a motion to include the trench. Gall seconded. Three HPC members voted no. Motion failed.

Gall asked if the only way to remove the trench would be to cover up the terracotta. Lanciault replied yes. Lanciault stated that he considered glass and other coatings to cover the trench. The trench is four inches wide and 11 inches deep. Manley stated that in the future, someone can break the bond from the cement if it is up against the terracotta to reveal the terracotta. Manley stated that most people won't be looking at the terracotta. Gall asked if the landing went straight up to the façade, could we protect the façade? Lanciault replied that standard construction techniques can be used to remove the seal between the concrete and the terracotta. Manley is concerned about the safety issue of having the trench. Gall stated that the trench cover seems like plugging a hole that didn't need to be there in the first place. Hinds stated that in this public hearing we are discussing the potential safety issue of the trench, so if there is an incident in the future, the HPC has already raised awareness of this potential safety issue. Gall said he is inclined to get rid of the trench.

Motion 4: Gall made a motion to approve removing the trench and taking the landing right up to the edge of the terra cotta pilaster on the building. Fox seconded. Three HPC members approved (Hinds abstained from voting).

In summary, the Commission approved:

1. Option C2 as presented by the applicant's consultant, EA Architects, with plinths at the same height as the water table of the building.
2. Ornamental handrails and associated structures as proposed in either cast iron black or darkened bronze.
3. No trench being left between the new landing and the existing building. A barrier shall be placed between the existing terra cotta base and the concrete to protect the feature in the event the landing is removed in the future.

New Business Items:

HPC Chair and Vice Chair Elections.

Hinds commented that Denniston had expressed interest in both of these positions, but is not present tonight. At next month's meeting (August 1), Gall and Fox will both be absent, and they both expressed interest in the two open positions. Hinds asked if next month's meeting could be moved to August 8. Person stated that he will inquire if the applicant (Providence Academy) is available. The Providence Academy will be presenting their proposal; it won't be a hearing. If the Providence Academy meeting can be moved to August 8, chair and vice chair elections will be held on August 8.

Old Business & Updates:

1. Historic Preservation Code update: The Planning Commission voted to approve the Historic Preservation code updates with the following minor change of removing the phrase "eligible to be listed" from the Applicability section. The county council will hold a work session on August 15 and a public hearing on August 28 to consider these code updates.
2. The Clark County Historical Museum will be leading walking tours of the 78th Street Heritage Farm on July 20 and July 21
3. The 78th St. Heritage Farm Preservation and Maintenance Plan will be presented to the County Council on Aug. 8 at 9 a.m., 1300 Franklin St., 6th floor Training Room, Vancouver and on Aug. 16 at 4 p.m. to Heritage Farm Team, 4700 NE 78th St., B-1, Vancouver, WA.

4. Gall mentioned the Columbian article about the demolition work in Clark County. Gall stated that the state Wisaard database can be the repository for the documentation of buildings over 50 years old that are being destroyed. It could be a code change or a change on a form (demolition permit). Bader suggested that Gall talk with the appropriate staff person at the city to find out what the right steps in the process are. Fox stated that some of the cities in the county might be willing to modify their demolition forms to include documentation processes. Fox asked if the HPC could send out a letter to each city to ask what the steps are and who to contact. The HPC directed staff to draft a letter to the subcommittee for comment (Fox, Gall, and Denniston).
5. Lumbantobing will send out an email to the HPC members to confirm who is attending the CLG training on Sept 25 in Tacoma. Hinds and Gall are presenting. Fox expressed interest in attending.
6. Oct 4 will be the Hillborn presentation at the CCHM. Michael Houser will be attending. Manley will also give remarks from the architect's perspective on Hillborn's work.

Public Comment: Chamberlain asked HPC members to fill out the survey on DAHP.wa.gov. Gall will send the email with the link to Lumbantobing and she will forward it to the HPC members. Public comment was closed.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.