MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, February 15, 2018, 1:30 p.m., Conference Room 214, 2nd Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Liz Bavitz, Melissa Dirr Gengler, Jim Johnson, Greg McCown, and Jim McKee; (Jim Hewitt and Greg Munn absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Zimmer, Stacy Groshong Hageman, and Amy Huffman of the Planning Department; Tony Persons and Jim Graham, Nebraska Sign Company; Trevor Hull, Erickson Sullivan Architects; Diane Laffin, Preservation Association of Lincoln; Gill Peace and Ashley Taff, Peace Studio Architects; and Matt Olberding from the Lincoln Journal Star.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

Acting Chair Jim McKee called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

McKee requested a motion approving the minutes for the meeting of December 21, 2017. Motion for approval made by Johnson, seconded by Bavitz and carried, 5-0: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee voting ‘yes’; Hewitt and Munn absent.

The opportunity was given for persons with limited time or with an item not appearing on the agenda to address the Commission.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR SIGNS AT 803 Q STREET (“SCREAMER’S”) IN THE HAYMARKET LANDMARK DISTRICT (UDR18003). PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 15, 2018

Members present: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee; Hewitt and Munn absent.

Tony Persons, NE Sign Company, stated the owner of Screamers is now requesting a modification to what was originally approved by HPC late last year. In the last design, there were piano keys painted on the front of the building. The proposal today is to cover the front panel with the keyboard design.
Zimmer said the mural and projecting sign are up. Johnson noted the Staff comment that painting on the front fascia is not normally done. Zimmer said he discussed with the applicant that this proposal is taking a step too close to turning the entire façade into a sign.

Gengler asked the reason for the proposed change from what was already approved. Persons said the business is not very visible from the sides, since it is set back. The owner also wants to distinguish his business from others by making it clear it is a music-themed restaurant.

Trevor Hull said that, although he did not work on this project, he can see why a business in that location would want to stand out more, due to the prominent setback. Zimmer said that setback was at 15 feet, but it has been moved forward. Hull said the building itself is rather invisible compared to those surrounding it.

McCown asked if any lighting is proposed for the piano keys. Persons said no.

Gengler wanted to know if any other alternatives to spanning the keys across the entire width of the façade have been considered. She noted that the design was originally only incorporated into the mural. Zimmer said that is correct and the mural was approved.

Bavitz wondered if they would consider something smaller. Persons said that could be considered. Gengler expressed her concern that the design and placement start to look like an awning and the building gets lost. She suggested a door hood as an alternative. Zimmer pointed out the door also serves another establishment. Gengler said she is troubled that the entire façade is becoming one large sign. Persons said awnings are cost prohibitive. Gengler said she hates to deny the proposal outright, but she would rather see alternatives, or hear from the applicant as to why this is the best option for them. McCown agreed the entire span of keys seems gratuitous and the space loses its charm.

**ACTION:**

Gengler asked if a vote is required, or if the item could be tabled until the following month. Zimmer explained that there is leeway in the motions that could be made. If the proposal lacks four votes in either direction, it will automatically be carried over.

Gengler moved that approval for the design of the mural, as approved at a previous meeting, still stands, but reconsideration of this new proposal should come before the commission again. Motion seconded by Johnson and carried, 5-0: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee voting ‘yes’; Hewitt and Munn absent.
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AT 801 P STREET (“ALCHEMY”) IN THE HAYMARKET LANDMARK DISTRICT (UD18004).

PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 15, 2018

Members present: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McKee, and McCown; Hewitt and Munn absent.

Zimmer stated this application is for a sign at the entrance to the west, under the roof of the dock in the location formerly known as Doc’s Place. The sign is inside the window and would hang from welded chains. This is a form that HPC has seen versions of, but the applicant has requested to do a couple thing differently. The sign will have an opaque front and the letters are not illuminated; there will only be a glow from the light behind them. The language allows for more variation when the sign is inside the window. The design is closer to the shadow or halo signs approved at other locations, which makes it easier to recommend for approval. Plastic-faced, interior-illuminated signs are not allowed, and those have been turned down by this body on numerous occasions.

McKee asked how many inside window signs have been approved. Zimmer said there are neon signs hanging inside some locations, such as some of the “open” signs, which may or may not have been officially approved. This will be the main sign and identification for the business.

ACTION:

Gengler moved approval; seconded by Johnson and carried, 5-0: Bavitz, Hewitt, Johnson, McCown, and McKee voting ‘yes’; Hewitt and Munn absent.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT 625 N. 16th STREET, SIGMA NU FRATERNITY HOUSE, A DESIGNATED LANDMARK.

PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 15, 2017

Members present: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee; Hewitt and Munn absent.

Trevor Hull, Erickson Sullivan Architects, stated they are undertaking a complete renovation of the Sigma Nu fraternity house, which was shut down a few years ago. At that time, they had started the process and are just now getting started again, looking specifically at the exterior of the building; the only thing of historical significance on the interior is the lobby. There is significant work to be done on the exterior including reroofing the whole building. The Spanish tile will be reinstalled, and the copper flashings, gutters and downspouts will be redone to eliminate water intrusion issues. A large percentage of the clay tile can be reused, though some will be damaged during the removal. The intention is that any new tiles will be used at the back of the house. On the façades, a complete window replacement will be done. The intention for the primary, east façade is to replace with historic replica aluminum windows with as much of
the same pattern as possible. A company out of Minnesota can do a very narrow profile, replicating the mullion and muntin treatments. They are a bit cost-prohibitive so the request is do only the front façade with those windows, with fiberglass windows for all secondary facades. There was an addition done in the 1950s where a different color brick was used, with similar steel, single-pane windows which are in very bad condition. They would like to replace those altogether, mostly for energy efficiency. A bit of tuck pointing and repair will also be done. The basement windows wells get significant water intrusion. There are no living spaces in the basement, so they are asking permission to close the windows and remove the wells to waterproof against the building. They agreed the front deserves a different treatment, and staff suggested that they respect the fact that there were windows there. They agreed to avoid attempting to match with the brick infill, and will do an accent color instead. Once the other wells are backfilled and brought up to grade, only a few courses of brick will be visible. Due to the significance of the front façade, it would be best to replace those window wells and windows. They can’t be seen from the street, but a bit of daylight will not hurt in the basement. Staff suggested the possibility of filling up to grade and then doing a glass block window. That is another thought, but they lean more towards replacing the windows in the four front (east) wells.

McKee asked how much of the front windows in the wells will be glass block infill; it looks to be almost no material effect. Hull said the windows on either side of the stairs are covered at grade with a metal grate and are almost at completely below grade. There are wells on either side that are around a foot above grade, so a bit of glass would be visible. McKee it looks like there would be advantage to having some natural light. Commissioners agreed.

McCown asked how deep the window wells are. Hull said they are around four feet deep. The ones along the driveway are collapsing. McKee asked if there is egress through them. Hull said no. Bavitz asked if there are the proper amount of exits from the basement. Hull said yes, there are two exits.

Gengler noted that the windows and roof are clearly significant features. She wondered if any research has been done as to whether any of the front windows could be salvaged or supplemented with an interior storm window. It can be quite challenging to find replacements for the steel windows. Hull said that because the preference was to go to a more energy efficient window, a window-by-window survey has not been done regarding saving the existing windows. Going from room to room, most of the other windows are in bad shape with most having some broken glass.

McCown asked if the replacement windows will be sealed. Hull said the taller, narrower windows would not meet egress even if they were operable, so they did consider sealing those, if that would be allowed. On the main floor there are no bedrooms where airflow might be needed. On the second floor where bedrooms are proposed, the windows around the corners
would be operable and egress-sized. The windows in the center of the main façade will also be operable for egress.

Bavitz asked if the window company is able to do windows of this size. Hull said yes. Gengler wondered how the appearance of the divided window will be kept. Hull said grills would be applied to the inside and outside. Gengler asked if there would be space for the muntin between the panes of glass. Hull said he did not know for sure.

McKee asked if the operability of the windows is something HPC needs to consider. Zimmer said this topic has been dealt with in some of the Haymarket warehouses. On the Grainger Building at 8th & O, the Park Service approved a change from two hoppers, stacked, to one giant hopper that hinged from the top and allowed a wide enough opening for egress. It had a relation to the original operation but was not the same. This seems somewhat parallel with this replacement of dual casements with a single casement.

Gengler said she believes that the under Secretary’s standards, the functionality is not as critical as the appearance of functionality.

McCown asked what the second level windows open to on the interior. Hull said there are bedrooms across the second floor. That creates issues in keeping those particular windows since they are required to be egress windows.

Gengler said replicas of these particular types of windows are difficult to find. The detail is critical. There have been a lot of studies that say historic windows are more energy efficient than people give them credit for because energy is lost throughout the building. By the time you insulate the walls, ceilings, and the roof, the windows are not as critical; it is what is happening around the windows in the wall cavities. She understands the reasoning for going with more energy efficient windows on the other facades, but on the front, she would like to see more attention or supporting documentation about retaining/repairing the original windows. They are so important to the detail of the building, so if they need to be replaced, she would like to see more supporting documentation. Hull said it is his understanding that one company has a way to remove the windows and can do an insulated glass in the steel frames, though they have not looked into that in detail. His biggest concern would still be the egress. Gengler said she understands the egress issues; however, she hesitates because there is no detailed information or comparison provided about the original windows vs. replacement windows. Bavitz agreed.

McCown asked if contrasting brick was requested for all of the window wells. He wondered if Commissioners were being asked to approve a glass block over a contrasting brick. Hull clarified that he is requesting that any wells not on the front façade be completely filled. They do not come much above grade and closing them will also to help with water issues. He is suggesting
the windows in the front wells be completely replaced.

McKee asked how much HPC can speak to the other facades. Zimmer said very little, other than in a friendly, discussion way. McCown said it would be nice to represent that there were windows in the wells by insetting the brick somehow.

Gengler asked how extensive the repointing will be. Hull said it is minor. There are a few cracks, but the brick is in pretty good condition. He confirmed the sealant will just be in the joints and not all the way across the stone.

Commissioners all agreed that this is a beautiful building. Bavitz expressed her appreciation for the consideration given to the roof. She added that she agrees with Gengler about the windows and is not convinced replacement is the way to go without more information.

McKee asked if it would be appropriate to take no action today and to ask the applicant to come back. Zimmer said that it is an option to defer for more information. Hull offered that he could easily come back to provide more information about the windows as long as it is not a wasted pursuit. His main concern is the egress windows and achieving the necessary bedroom count on the interior. Bavitz said it does matter if it is completely cost-prohibitive, but Commissioners would like more information on whether or not that is the case, and about what is possible with replacement. Zimmer said that if there are other elements that Commissioners are comfortable with approving, those aspects could move forward. The applicant could still come back to provide more information about the east windows.

Gengler said that given the functionality requirements as a residential facility, they may need to be replaced, but she would like the assurance that the proposed replacement is appropriate. It would be helpful to see the existing dimensions vs. the proposed. She would also like to see a comparison of the energy efficiency and what the overall improvement is.

McKee asked the applicant if there is any benefit to approving the changes to the other facades. Hull said that if they can proceed with getting bids for that work, it would be helpful.

Gengler asked what the timeline of the project is. Hull said they are trying to finish up the exterior bid package to get to the contractor. They would like to move forward as quickly as they can. One extra month for the windows will not be a problem, but if more issues come up, it would start to affect their intended schedule.

**ACTION:**

Gengler moved for approval on the project as proposed, including the window replacement, provided that more information is provided at the next meeting of the existing vs. the proposed
dimensions, including material and functionality. The motion was seconded by Johnson. Motion carried, 5-0: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee voting ‘yes’; Hewitt and Munn absent.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT 6117 HAVELOCK AVENUE IN THE HAVELOCK AVENUE LANDMARK DISTRICT.
PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 15, 2017

Members present: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee, Hewitt and Munn absent.

Zimmer said this building and its neighbor look like a double store, but they are separate and were built a few years apart. This building fell under hard times and that is the starting point today.

Gill Peace and Ashley Taff of Peace Studio Architects came forward. Peace said the building used to have a brick façade with stone elements. The only piece remaining of the façade is the steel beam. The current owner inherited the building in this condition. The goal is to replicate as much as possible, given the current conditions, of the building next door. Peace asked staff when these buildings were constructed. Zimmer said Arnold’s was built around 1890 and the neighboring building was built a few years later. Peace said there is a photo of the buildings with dirt streets and horses.

McCown asked why the stone failed on one building and not the other. Peace said it could be that it was not installed correctly, and then the lack of maintenance contributed.

Taff said they plan to keep the steel beam and some half-columns. Thin brick will be applied to the plywood. The existing windows will remain and the parapet will also be brought back. Peace noted that at one point, the parapets of the two buildings matched up. The building has been roofed so the proposal is to raise it up to nearly its previous height, but in a way that does not cause the entire building to be reroofed again. They are unable to put brick back on the upper level because the new wall is too far out. The owner has asked that we use the thin brick to give the same appearance, while preserving any structural integrity that is left. Taff said Arnold’s brick is painted so it will be a thin brick, painted to match. The lines of Arnold’s will also be matched with the stone coming across.

Bavitz asked where exactly the thin brick will be placed. Gill said it is color coded on the artist rendering to distinguish the different treatments. Everything from the steel beam up will be thin brick, with the exception of an area of existing brick. There are also small pilasters that are existing brick. Gengler asked if a cornice is also shown. Peace said yes. They will match the same materials. Taff said they are matching the fascia of Arnold’s. The same goes for the storefront, but with a lowered awning to allow more light. An 8-foot door is also shown.
McCown said he is not familiar with the thin brick. He wondered if there will be a good color match and if the border joints will be the same width. Peace said the goal is to give as seamless an appearance as possible. The thin brick comes in modular sizes so it will be the exact same size. They also plan to paint it to match Arnold’s, which is necessary to get the right look.

Gengler noted there are apartments on the second floor. She wondered what will be on the first floor. Taff said it will be a dining/restaurant use. Peace said there are two apartments. The first floor is already fitted with a commercial kitchen and restrooms. The owner would like to attract a storefront restaurant and has already had interest, despite the building’s current appearance and the small footprint.

Taff said Arnold’s has a blade sign. Something similar is shown for this location, though not in neon. The goal is to make sure it is visible up and down Havelock.

**ACTION:**

Bavitz said she likes what has been proposed. It is very appropriate and moved for approval; seconded by Gengler and carried, 5-0: Bavitz, Gengler, Johnson, McCown, and McKee voting ‘yes’; Hewitt and Munn absent.

Zimmer said it is extremely welcome to get this problem solved and the building occupied. Bavitz asked how long it has been in this state. Zimmer said he thought around ten years. The City is glad to see this owner taking a hold of the project and getting it done.

**DISCUSS AND ADVISE:**

- **Review draft Annual Report (2017) of Historic Preservation Commission.** Zimmer said this has been a noteworthy year, particularly in historic designations with the big National Registry district and five local designations. That is not a typical year in number, and also in the striking variety of designations, from Trabert Hall to mid-century fraternities. Many people were surprised that the old University Place City Hall was not already designated. We also want to celebrate the work of Stacey Hageman in getting our historic story map presentation of all of our landmarks online. A link to the new materials will be featured on the Planning Dept.’s front page. A lot of work has been put into the individual descriptions and the completeness of each site. We have made a consistent effort that on every entry, similar and complete information was provided, including the listing of spouses, which is information that has often been left out. The district descriptions are not yet finished, but all of the individual 150 to 160 designations are done. Zimmer also mentioned the “Place Makers” website. With newspapers.com,
he can now identify a much larger number of designs, including architects he had not heard of until recently.

Commissioners congratulated Staff on their work.

- Zimmer said he went to Fayetteville, Arkansas at the request of Garner Stoll, who was the Planning Director who hired him in 1984. The presentation was to citizens about how preservation is done in Lincoln. Mr. Stoll had retired, but last fall he took the job as Development Services Director there. They have wonderful historic resources in their community, but they only have local review of one building. Their community is not quite willing to accept stronger ordinances at this time. There are also several big corporations in their small city, creating considerable wealth which is leading to purchase of historic properties at high prices, followed by demolition to build new. He is glad that Lincoln does not face that dynamic in our real estate market as it can be very challenging. Overall, it is a very exciting community, with high sustainability goals.

- Zimmer requested a count of Commissioners who would like to attend the Nebraska Historic Preservation conference. Grant funds are available to pay for entrance and mileage.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.