

DIXON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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Minutes of the Commission meeting of October 27, 2014

- 1. Call to order.** The meeting was called to order by John McLane in Council Chambers at City Hall at 135p.
- 2. Roll call.** Commissioners present were James Higby, Greg Langan, John McLane, and Duane Paulsen. Also in attendance was Amanda Bradshaw, Administrative Assistant to David Nord.
- 3. Approval of minutes.** Minutes of the meeting of June 9, 2014 have been distributed electronically, and printed copies have been distributed to all persons present at today's meeting. **Greg Langan moved, and Duane Paulsen seconded, that the minutes be approved as printed and read. Voting Aye: Higby, Langan, McLane, and Paulsen. Voting Nay: None. Motion carried.**
- 4. Notices and communications.**

Several items were included in the Commissioners' meeting agenda packet:

- a. a short summary by James Higby of his findings upon walking the perimeter of the stone retaining wall that surrounds the grounds of the Old Lee County Courthouse; with this were a Google Earth aerial view of the Courthouse and nine closeup photographs showing various forms and degrees of deterioration and failure of the wall
- b. a copy of the full text of the latest iteration of the Ordinance that establishes the Dixon Historic Preservation Commission and defines its purview

Distributed at the meeting were 1) a three-page document prepared by James Higby which quotes the proposed text of historical signage for ten addresses in the current Streetscape Project:

- a. 123 East First Street
- b. 111 West First Street
- c. 202 West First Street
- d. 212 West First Street
- e. 214 West First Street
- f. 215-217 West First Street
- g. 221 West First Street
- h. 302 West First Street
- i. 105-107 South Peoria Avenue
- j. 108 South Peoria Avenue

and 2) twelve histories-in-manuscript by Greg Langan which quote the proposed text for historic signage for twelve additional addresses in or near the current Streetscape Project:

- a. Midland States Bank
- b. former Lee Theatre Building
- c. Commerce Towers
- d. Salamandra Restaurant / Union Block, 105-107 West First Street
- e. City Hall
- f. former Dixon Evening Telegraph Building, 124 East First Street
- g. Fifth Third Bank
- h. Ford Hopkins, 125 West First Street

- i. Mellott / Hamill Furniture Store, 214 [sic]-218 West First Street*
- j. Union State Bank Building, 223 West First Street
- k. Villiger's Drug Store, 115 West First Street
- l. Historic Dixon Theatre

* A number of city directories assign address 214 to two separate buildings; we believe this to be in error. This should be designated as 216-218 or simply 216.

Both Higby and Langan emphasized that these documents are early drafts and subject to revision. Questions remain as to how many signs of what sizes can be purchased out of Streetscape or other funds, as well as the procedure for getting permission from property owners for the attachment of signs to buildings. It is likewise noted that the Town Square block was not included in either report, as historical signage for buildings that no longer exist requires special, more elaborate treatment, and will require intervention and assistance by individuals outside the Commission.

John McLane indicated that he would look into prices for bronze plaques of various sizes and capacities.

Higby, Langan, and McLane reviewed the status of a previously-discussed self-guided tour brochure. The work presented by Higby and Langan might be parlayed into text for such a brochure, while a local pen-and-ink artist might be found who would volunteer to make line drawings of sites described in the brochure.

Amanda Bradshaw, Administrative Assistant to City Administrator David Nord, brought the Commissioners up to date as to recent communications and discussions among City, County, and State officials regarding the serious deterioration of the stone retaining wall surrounding the Old Lee County Courthouse grounds. So far there has been no assumption of responsibility for the wall's repair or restoration by any of the involved parties. She believes that there are pieces of the wall in storage in Dixon, leftover from a previous rebuild of parts of the wall.

5. Public comment. There were no comments by the public.

6. Old business. There was no old business.

7. New business. Discussion of Ms. Bradshaw's report ensued. Commissioner McLane observed that, at the time of the most recent re-alignment of the intersection of Second Street and Galena Avenue, either the project engineering or the project execution, or both, were faulty, resulting in the observable, sometimes spectacular, deterioration of the wall. McLane also indicated that the engineering drawings should be on file with IDOT and that he would take steps to procure them.

Commissioners also discussed their own role in the affair. They allow that, while the Ordinance does not give the Commission purview of interior modification of buildings in the Historic District, it most certainly does give the Commission purview of façade modification of such buildings. Furthermore, the Commission considers the retaining wall to be an integral part of the façade of the Old Lee County Courthouse. Indeed, it is the wall, not the Courthouse itself, that occupies the prime focal area to drivers and passengers alike who are hurrying along those two busy streets.

All Commissioners agreed that the crumbling wall represents a hazard; a loose and migrating capstone, or even an entire segment of the wall, could topple on a passerby without warning, causing great bodily injury, with the inevitable lawsuits and negative publicity that would follow.

Inasmuch as the meeting agenda indicated "discussion" as opposed to "action", there was no motion made under new business. However, the Commission did reach consensus on a number of points:

- a. The urgency of dealing with the problem cannot be overstated.
- b. The preferred outcome is a restoration of the wall to its original specifications as to design, materials, and construction.
- c. Anything short of a restoration will require application to and approval by the Dixon Historic

Preservation Commission.

8. Adjournment. Duane Paulsen moved, and Greg Langan seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. Voting Aye: McLane, Paulsen, Higby, and Langan. Voting Nay: None. Motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 308p.

Respectfully submitted by James Higby, Secretary
Dixon Historic Preservation Commission