

City of Erie
Historic Preservation Task Force
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 11, 2020

A regular meeting of the Erie Historic Preservation Task Force was held Wednesday, November 11th, 2020 at 3:30 pm via a virtual meeting from the City of Erie Municipal Building, 626 State Street, Erie, PA 16501

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

<i>Member</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Absent</i>
Emily Aloiz	X	
Dave Brennan	X	
Melissa Hake	X	
Melinda Meyer		X
Chuck Scalise	X	
Mark Steg	X	

Also in attendance: Kathy Wyrosdick, Megan Bennett, Tessa Ferraro, Jake Welsh, Bill Callahan

2. Approval of Minutes from regular meeting of October 14th, 2020.

M. Hake made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by C. Scalise. The minutes were approved unanimously.

1. Old Business

a. Review timeline

Prior to the meeting K. Wyrosdick sent an updated timeline to the task force. Items that need to be completed include passage of the amendment to the zoning ordinance, solicitation and selection of a historic review commission (HRC), historic district rezoning, certified local government review and approval, execution of the CLG grant and selection of a preservation planner.

D. Brennan suggested that the timeline may be too tight for City Council approval. He suggested adding a study session for City Council in December and asking for appointments to the HRC as soon as possible. In the draft timeline there is only a two-week review of applicants to the HRC from January 17th to February 3rd.

The board agrees that we can solicit applications for the HRC before the HRC is approved by City Council. The task force can find and vet commission members before City Council approval in order to keep to the timeline. At the HRC's first meeting they must adopt bylaws recommend a historic district. City staff can meet with the property owners before that time. In the best case scenario, April 21st 2021 a historic district is approved.

For the CLG status, B. Callahan mentioned PHMC has 45 days to review the application, but it should take less time. The National Park Service has 2 weeks to review the application.

b. CLG Grant and Certification applications submitted

Both a Certified Local Government Status application and a Certified Local Government Grant application were submitted to the SHPO at the end of October 2020.

Erie's CLG grant application will be reviewed the week of November 9th and be ranked regardless of CLG status. B. Callahan will discuss the April CLG status deadline internally to see if the City could execute a GLC grant application while still in the process of CLG certification. The commission will approve grants in March regardless.

2. New Business

a. Historic Resource Protection amendment review

Prior to the meeting K. Wyrosdick sent a draft amendment to Article 7 of the zoning ordinance.

Recommended edits for the amendment from B. Callahan:

- Demolition review needs an economic hardship component
- There is a reference to penalties, but the amendment needs to explain what they are
- Remove reference to the National Register criteria

B. Callahan recommends using "rehabilitation standards" from the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the design component for the HRC. "Rehabilitation" standards are less complicated and less costly approach than other approaches because they allow a historic building to be repaired and altered as long as it retains its character defining features. However, the HRC and communities in the City should be given the ability to adopt specific design guidelines for their area.

- HRC bylaws need to be mentioned or referenced.

Board/committee operations may be defined in the City Code already. Even if the HRC approves bylaws at their first meeting, something must be in the amendment.

- Define the trigger for review

Board members agreed that contributing and non-contributing structures in a district should be treated the same in terms of review. There are levels of review in the amendment. The board agreed that non-contributing structure demolition should be reviewed as conditional use. Alteration of non-contributing structures and new construction should require conditional use approval.

K. Wyrosdick explained that rehabilitation permits will be need HRC approval, but not conditional use approval. They are separate from existing building permits. J. Welsh confirms window replacement does not require a building permit now, but needs to be reviewed by HRC.

- Reduce the 25% percentage of property owners who need to petition to become a district

K. Wyrosdick agreed that it can be reduced to 1 person.

B. Callahan will share draft ordinance with others at the SHPO to get more feedback, but overall he thinks it is very well done.

Historic District

K. Wyrosdick asked what is needed for the district. B. Callahan explained a map outline and inventory is needed as well as a description. If West 6th Street is the first district, the historic district nomination can piggyback on the national register narrative and description.

There are about 100 property owners in the national register district from 1984. The board agreed that it is easier to make the district smaller than bigger. The district can be expanded later once the HRC is in place. The district can be as small as four buildings, the SHPO does not care.

B. Callahan asked, "What happens if we don't make the timeline?" K. Wyrosdick responded that it will not stop the process. The work will continue but will not be as robust as it would be. M. Steg said that it is very important to have staff support. D. Brennan confirmed the City's commitment to the position. The person hired with CLG grant funds would look for funds to perpetuate his or her position.

Next steps

- Task force members can reach out to people to apply for the HRC

There are 5 positions as defined in the ordinance. They do not have to be City of Erie residents. M. Steg suggested adding someone with qualifications as a lawyer. C. Scalise suggested expanding the criteria to realtor/ lawyer /developer, although the term "developer" needs to be further defined. K. Wyrosdick confirmed that the City's solicitor will be available to advise the HRC.

The most important thing is that the HRC members are willing to serve and do upfront work for things such as agendas and creation of forms. This is especially true if the CLG grant is not awarded.

- M. Steg, C. Scalise, D. Brennan, K. Wyrosdick will meet November 17th at 8am to discuss roles for the historic district nomination going forward.
- D. Brennan suggested a City Council Study session on December 10th at 5:30pm.
- K. Wyrosdick invited task force to the City Planning Commission meeting Tuesday the 17th at 1:00pm via zoom. The draft ordinance will be presented.

3. Adjourn

The meeting adjourns at 4:38pm

Clarifications after the meeting by B. Callahan:

The ordinance does not need to designate a historic district in order to be certified as a CLG.

“The Historic District Act *does* require the creation of an historic district as part of the ordinance creation process. However, *there is no analogous requirement* in the Municipalities Planning Code, and it's the MPC that enables municipalities to *zone* for historic property protection. The historic district(s) and/or other historic properties can be designated through the established zoning overlay *after* certification is achieved.”

Due to this information, the meeting on November 17th at 8am to discuss the district was canceled.