

**City of Portage
Historic Preservation Commission
Tuesday, December 18, 2012, 6:00 p.m.
Municipal Building, 115 West Pleasant Street
Conference Room One
Minutes**

Members Present: Doug Klapper, Chairperson; Richard Beebe, Erin Foley, Stephanie Miller-Lamb, Destinee Udelhoven

Members Absent: Marlena Cavanaugh, Mary Ann Harding

Guests: Mayor Ken Jahn, City Attorney Jessie Spankowski, Fred Galley, Bill Tierney

1. Roll call

Chair Klapper called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

2. Approval of previous meetings minutes

Udelhoven moved to approve the minutes as written; Miller-Lamb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

7. Discussion and possible action on Black's building

Agenda order was changed to use guests' time wisely. This point was moved to the third item of the evening, following approval of the minutes.

- Mayor Jahn and City Attorney Spankowski discussed possible movement on purchase by the city of the Black's building.
 - When the Rhyme Building burned and was subsequently torn down this summer, the Black's building also suffered some damage to from the heat. The building is currently in a stage of foreclosure.
 - The city has considered purchase of the Black building, as well as the property where the Rhyme Building stood, but there are concerns about liabilities that the City could not assume.
 - The current owners of both properties are in favor of the city taking possession of the properties under eminent domain. With both owners in agreement of eminent domain, the city could purchase under terms of Friendly Condemnation.
 - The city would need to go through the narrative appraisal process with CDA. CDA would then do an approval and make an offer on the properties. Once/if the offer is accepted, purchase of the properties would follow standard procedures on its way to purchase. The City would then own the properties, but would not have the liabilities that were of original concern.
 - General Engineering has done a study of the Black Building and estimates that it would cost approximately \$125,000 to bring the property back to usable condition from the fire damage.
 - The Black Building is on the National Register of Historic Places; approval for any plans for the property must go through the WI State Historical

Preservation office. A letter and other materials were sent by the city to that office around Thanksgiving.

- Mayor Jahn stated that there are developers interested in the Black Building location, given that the County offices will remain downtown. The city hasn't decided what they would do if they did indeed purchase the two properties; sell to a developer, develop it themselves, rehab the property?
- Developers are interested in creating retail space on a lower level and high end apartments on the upper level(s).
- The Mayor asked what the PHPC would think of having a new facility on the location that would look historic. The best case scenario from the Mayor's point of view would be to have someone purchase the properties and rehab the Black's Building and built new on the now empty Rhyme's lot, bringing the two properties together. That said, no such developed has appeared at this point in time.
- The downtown TIF district is seeing lower property values, some upside down and no developer has come forward with a plan to rehab the property. A new facility would bring additional tax revenues to the city.
- The PHPC members voiced their feeling that the building should be find new life as a re-purposed building and that it would not be acceptable to raze the Black's Building and replace it with a new "old" building. The property is indeed historic and the PHPC would like to see the building stay.
- The Mayor thanked the PHPC for sharing their views and said they would take that information back with them as they looked as the next steps in potentially purchasing the properties.

3. Discussion and possible action on claims

Agenda order was changed to accommodate guests' time. This item was discussed following the Black's Building discussion and was the 4th agenda item.

- Udelhoven made 5 additional copies of the PHPC forms and documents to bring the total number of copies to 15. She presented a claim from Portage Printing in the amount of \$49.90 for the 5 copies.
- Udelhoven moved that the PHPC pay Portage Printing \$49.90 to cover the printing costs. Beebe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.
- Klapper presented a claim for \$480.00 from the PATHs organization for creation of 4 street sign toppers at a rate of \$120.00 each for designation of the Society Hill historic district. Miller-Lamb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.
- Additional signage will be required in the future to complete the Society Hill street sign toppers.

4. Discussion and possible action on Historic District/parking lot signage

Agenda order was changed to accommodate guests' time. This item was discussed following the claims discussion and was the 5th agenda item.

- Klapper stated that the city has set aside \$2,000.00 for creation of the parking lot signage, but it has not moved forward on getting the signs created. If those funds are moved from the 2012 budget to the 2013 budget, the signs may still go ahead.
- Fred Galley talked about the PATHs organization and the types of signage they have for informational/interpretive panels, historic districts, etc. He brought several types of signage with him, and talked about where they are currently located, their costs and how they are constructed and installed. Signage systems include street sign toppers and Best-Ex (aluminum framed) signs with Lexan fronts.
- Group discussion started on signage indicating the Society Hill district, as has been discussed in previous meetings.
- Udelhoven moved that the PHPC purchase 4 street sign toppers at a rate of \$120.00 each (total of \$480.00) from the PATHs organization for the Society Hill district. Klapper seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.
- Galley also spoke about DNR Trailways grants that provide matching funds; this may be an option to help offset the costs of additional signage in the future.

5. Discussion and possible action on HPC Commissionership

This item was tabled until the January meeting.

6. Discussion and possible action on Municipal Register

This item was tabled until the January meeting.

8. Discussion on visit to the portage

This item was tabled until the January meeting.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie Miller-Lamb
Secretary