

**MINUTES  
CITY OF AMES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Date: January 11, 2016	*Kim Hanna, Chairperson	2016
	Jason Dietzenbach, Vice Chairperson	2018
Call to Order: 7:00 PM	Matt Donovan	2017
	*Roberta Vann	2017
Place: Ames City Hall Council Chambers	Peter Hallock	2018
	Lisa Hovis	2018
Adjournment: 8:39 PM	Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock	2016
	[*Absent]	

CALL TO ORDER: Jason Dietzenbach, Vice Chairperson, called the January 11, 2016 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission to order at 7:00 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Jason Dietzenbach requested a modification to the meeting agenda, placing Item 6 (Update on Historic Building Plaque Program) before Item 5 (Budget Update), reasoning that the historic building plaque update could impact the Commission's budget discussion.

MOTION: (Donovan/Hallock) to approve the amended January 11, 2016 meeting agenda

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 9, 2015 MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: (Hallock/Donovan) to approve the November 9, 2015 meeting minutes

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

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PUBLIC FORUM: Sharon Wirth, 921 9th Street, reported that the January 12, 2016 City Council meeting agenda included an item pertaining to a request for demolition of the Acacia Greek house located at 138 Gray Avenue. Ms. Wirth indicated that the house is located within the East University Impacted Area Overlay District. Ms. Wirth stated that the demolition review process does not include a consideration of the historic value of the property. Given the large number of Greek houses in Ames, she encouraged the Commission to examine the overlay and to initiate conversations with the City Council regarding the process as well as an advisory role for the Historic Preservation Commission in potential future Greek house demolition reviews.

Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock asked staff if this was something the Commission could work on with the City Council. Ray Anderson, Planner, indicated the Commission could write a letter to the City Council to express concern and its desire to amend the code to allow for Commission input in the review process. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if other Commission members would value pursuing the matter and then asked that their affirmative response be noted for the record.

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## **UPDATE ON HISTORIC BUILDING PLAQUE PROGRAM**

Sharon Wirth distributed a written report summarizing the background of the historic building plaque project and its objectives and goals. The project has relied on funding from the Historic Preservation Commission and volunteer labor provided by the Ames Historical Society, the Main Street Cultural District, and the Commission. Roberta Vann, a plaque committee member, recently stepped aside. Ms. Wirth suggested that Jason Dietzenbach be appointed to the plaque committee as the Commission representative, as he has provided assistance throughout the plaque project's history.

Several example plaques were displayed, allowing Ms. Wirth to review standard features, layout variations, and plaque components personalized for each building. She noted the focus on architecture and history and the project's educational value. Three program components were defined and explained: (1) plaque installation on buildings, (2) "trailhead" plaques, and (3) tours. The trailhead plaques and tours are components planned for the future. Ms. Wirth provided an overview of the plaque production processes and related expenses. The total cost of \$684 per plaque includes research, writing, and editing (\$150); materials and fabrication (\$469), and installation (\$65). The Commission grant of \$200 per plaque has been a good incentive for building owners. Ms. Wirth reviewed progress in producing 22 plaques as of December 2015, including: 13 fabricated and installed plaques; 2 plaques fabricated but not installed; 1 plaque with order pending; and confirmed interest in plaques from 6 businesses/owners. Grant reimbursement has been slow for various reasons, she noted, and 4 businesses are not seeking grants. Ms. Wirth shared examples of obstacles and challenges encountered during plaque research as well as noteworthy successes in gathering historic building information, and displayed additional plaque design variations. Future plaque committee plans and activities described by Ms. Wirth include: (1) designing and producing trailhead plaques to install near the east and west ends of Main Street; (2) moving the Cynthia Duff Plaza plaque to the front sidewalk area for greater visibility; (3) a ribbon cutting event; (4) encouragement of additional plaque installations at 5-10 other significant buildings; and (5) various tour components.

Ms. Wirth noted the critical role of Commission funding in the success of the program. After noting the program's origins with the Commission, she encouraged Commission discussion regarding its interest in continued involvement with plaque program, as well as its response to the plaque committee activities/goals. In her view, the educational nature of the plaque activities fits very well with the Commission duties of engaging in educational activities, being involved in collaborative preservation efforts, and building partnerships. She encouraged Commission examination of funding in the current year and upcoming years.

Peter Hallock asked if all funds allocated to plaques are committed. Ms. Wirth indicated that a \$2,800 special rollover allocation approved by the City Council in 2015 would fund 14 plaque grants. Mr. Hallock noted that plaque commitments already exceed that figure and asked if others are hoping for grants. Ms. Wirth replied that additional funding would be needed relatively soon in order to reimburse others with interest in plaques. Mr. Dietzenbach asked if the initial 14 plaques would be installed by the end of current fiscal year. Ms. Wirth indicated that is the intention, therefore the \$2,800 special allocation for plaque grants will be spent by the end of the current fiscal year. Ms. Wirth added that several additional plaques could likely be completed within the fiscal year if the Commission chose to allocate additional funds to plaque grants.

Mr. Dietzenbach asked if the future program activities described by Ms. Wirth would be implemented in the 2016-17 fiscal year. Ms. Wirth indicated she does not have a schedule for upcoming activities, noting it would be a lot for a small volunteer group to accomplish in 18 months. She expressed her hope that during that timeframe more plaques would be installed, and that the trailhead plaque component could move along, if funded. Trailhead plaques would

be larger and may cost \$1,000-\$1,500 each, she estimated. The tour component would not involve great cost but would be labor intensive, and Ms. Wirth stated it is important to be realistic about volunteer time commitments.

Ray Anderson, Planner, added that \$800 of the \$2,800 special allocation had been spent for reimbursement to date, leaving \$2,000 available for plaque grants. Ms. Wirth added that the plaque committee views that \$2,000 as allocated for plaque grants, but not yet reimbursed.

Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock asked how the plaque program has been received and if it has had the desired impact. Ms. Wirth replied that interest in additional plaques indicates a positive response, and that people notice and stop to read the plaques. The program seems to be reaching 'critical mass' in terms of response and interest. Lisa Hovis recalled being instantly interested when she heard about the plaques during her first meeting as a commissioner. She asked if she should abstain from decisions/voting because she is a downtown building owner interested in getting a plaque. Mr. Anderson thought there could be conflict of interest because Ms. Hovis could benefit financially. Ms. Wirth stated that Ms. Hovis could avoid a conflict by not seeking a reimbursement grant.

Mr. Dietzenbach asked the Commission to consider its interest in continued involvement with the plaque program. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked what else the City does tangibly to promote local history. In his view, the plaques are a way to call attention to the physical history of Ames. He asked if there are other programs akin to the plaque program, or if it is unique. Mr. Hallock stated that the City contributes to the Ames Historical Society, but he was unaware of other individual programs like the plaque program. Ms. Wirth recalled past funding to defer costs for brochures promoting tours in the Old Town Historic District.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock spoke about the value of tangible preservation efforts, like the plaques, that can popularize history. Mr. Hallock agreed that the plaques fit the idea of public education. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock added that the plaques may also help stave off potential problems with alterations to historic buildings. Ms. Wirth cited studies illustrating the value of preservation efforts and their contribution to tourism and economic development.

Ms. Hovis asked if the Commission is being asked to administer a program or simply to allocate funds for a certain project. Mr. Anderson suggested addressing that point during the budget update discussion. Mr. Dietzenbach explained the background of the Commission's decision to allocate unused education funds for more plaque grants. Those education funds could have been allocated for workshops and speakers; however, the Commission thought the plaques would be a good allocation that fits the objective of community education.

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## **BUDGET UPDATE**

Ray Anderson, Planner, reported that for several years the City Council allocated \$2,000 as part of the Planning & Housing Department budget for historic preservation. The major intent of the funds is to provide money for commissioner training. Annual training of at least one commissioner is required to maintain eligibility for Certified Local Government status. Other uses for these funds include preservation award plaques, tours and brochures, guest speakers, and educational activities to generate attention toward historic preservation in the community.

Mr. Anderson explained that none of the \$2,000 allocated by the City Council for the 2015-16 fiscal year has been spent. Staff would encourage the Commission to participate in training and to generate ideas for bringing in speakers to do workshops and seminars about some aspect of historic preservation or design guidelines, for example. Mr. Anderson said the plaque program is certainly having a huge impact downtown and has staff's support. However, staff would prefer to

see a special allocation for plaques from the City Council, as opposed to using Commission education funds for plaque grants—i.e., separate funding for both plaques and education. Mr. Anderson suggested there may be ways to do that besides the Commission setting aside money, e.g., Ames Historical Society or Main Street Cultural District could request a special allocation for funding for plaques. Staff encouraged using funds for training and educational opportunities for the commissioners. Spending part of the funds meant for education is perhaps not the best way to approach funding for plaques, he said.

Jason Dietzenbach asked for a review of available funds. The original allocation, according to Mr. Anderson, was \$3,000, and was requested by Sharon Wirth during her time serving as the Commission Chairperson. Ms. Wirth explained that the Commission asked the City Council for a special allocation for funds for additional educational activities. Mr. Anderson explained that when the plaque program came along, and \$2,800 of the \$3,000 special allocation remained, there was a request to the City Council to carryover those funds into the next fiscal year and to designate those funds for use toward plaque reimbursements at \$200 per plaque. So far, \$800 has been reimbursed, and pending requests for reimbursement will use all of those funds.

Mr. Anderson clarified that a special allocation for the upcoming budget year for the plaque program has not been proposed. Mr. Dietzenbach inquired about the timeframe for making such a request. Mr. Anderson replied that it would be late in the budget process to make a request for a special allocation, and would be up to the City Council whether to consider it. If the Commission wants to spend part of its \$2,000 allocation on the plaque program, staff recommends direct discussion with the City Council about its intentions to use funds for plaques. Mr. Anderson stated this would ensure the Commission's actions are aligned with the City Council's ideas of how those funds, or a portion of those funds, are to be used.

Lisa Hovis suggested that the Commission research alternate uses of the education funds, e.g., speakers or conferences, to aid in making decisions about how to allocate education funds if those funds are not used for plaque grants. Matt Donovan agreed that would be a good approach and necessary to understand available opportunities. Background research would help the Commission have informed discussion about budget decisions, he said.

Peter Hallock asked the Commission to move a request for a special allocation from the 2016-17 budget to fund both the trailhead plaques, as described earlier by Ms. Wirth, and continued funding of the historic building plaques. Mr. Anderson indicated that a good way to make such a request would be for the Commission Chairperson to write a letter to the City Council. Mr. Hallock stated that it is better to plan ahead for those allocations rather than simply spend money available to the Commission now – not that he would oppose spending money now.

MOTION: (Hallock/Donovan) that the Historic Preservation Commission Chairperson submit a request to the City Council for a special allocation of \$3,500 from the 2016-17 budget to fund both trailhead plaques and continued historic building plaque grants.

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

Mr. Dietzenbach noted several upcoming opportunities for Commission education and training (e.g., Preservation Iowa Summit, National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Iowa Downtown Summit) and expressed an interest in being proactive about sharing information about these and other opportunities with the Commission. Ms. Hovis cited the Main Street Now Conference as a worthwhile opportunity with many program options.

At the request of Mr. Dietzenbach, staff addressed how requests for education opportunities are handled. Mr. Anderson acknowledged that the \$2,000 limit likely restricts opportunities to in-state, and that the City could not pay for the entire Commission to attend a conference, once all expenses are considered. Therefore, the Commission must be thoughtful about choices and what can be done for reimbursement. Ms. Wirth noted Mr. Dietzenbach's attendance at the 2015 Iowa Downtown Summit and asked if it qualified for reimbursement. Mr. Anderson replied that it would be up to the Commission to decide. Mr. Dietzenbach explained that former commissioner Maria Miller had received tickets for the summit in a drawing. With her departure from the Commission, Mr. Dietzenbach was able to use the tickets. He stated he had not processed a reimbursement request and would be reluctant to do so if funds are unavailable, or if it would detract from funding building plaques.

Staff clarified funds currently available to the Commission in response to inquiries from Mr. Dietzenbach and Mr. Hallock. Presently, \$2,000 is designated for historic preservation in the 2015-16 Planning & Housing budget *and* \$2,000 left from the special allocation rollover, i.e., \$800 of the \$2,800 special allocation for plaques has been reimbursed.

Mr. Hallock proposed that \$1,000 go toward funding plaque grants, leaving \$1,000 available for other activities. Mr. Anderson said a request to City Council would be needed in order to spend education funds for plaques. Mr. Hallock said his request made earlier in the meeting is for the 2016-17 fiscal year, and that he heard from Ms. Wirth's update that there are potentially five more plaques that could be accomplished with funds from the current fiscal year. Ms. Wirth indicated that four or those five requests are without a promise of grant funding. Interested parties have been put on a list. The plaque committee has been upfront with interested people that no grant funds are available currently, she said.

Mr. Anderson said he would anticipate questions from the City Council about spending the \$2,000 allocated for historic preservation—i.e., how decisions are made to allocate a portion of the funds for plaque reimbursements, and what educational activities would be planned and funded by the remaining money in the Commission budget. Mr. Donovan commented that those questions from the City Council underscore the need for research and informed decisions. Mr. Donovan supported allocating a portion of the budget to additional plaques, but also saw a need to have something else to present to the City Council showing how money was allocated. In Mr. Dietzenbach's view, the more critical action item is requesting a special allocation for plaque money for the 2016-17 fiscal year. He said the Commission still has time to determine how to use its remaining funds for 2015-16 fiscal year.

Mr. Dietzenbach requested reimbursement for expenses related to his attendance of the 2015 Iowa Downtown Summit.

MOTION: (Hallock/Donovan) to reimburse Jason Dietzenbach for expenses totaling \$107.21 related to his attendance at the 2015 Iowa Downtown Summit on August 27-28, 2015 in West Des Moines Valley Junction.

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

Mr. Hallock requested including a discussion item on the next Commission meeting agenda on how the Commission plans to use the remaining 2015-16 fiscal year funds (other than what will be reimbursed to Mr. Dietzenbach).

## **2015 CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT ANNUAL REPORT DISCUSSION**

Ray Anderson, Planner, explained that the City of Ames has been designated as a Certified Local Government since the 1990s. Every year staff submit a report to the State Historical Society of Iowa that includes information about Commission preservation activities, including historic preservation planning, technical assistance on historic preservation issues or projects, and sponsored public educational programming in historic preservation; commissioner training or educational opportunities, contact information, and biographical sketches of new members; and descriptions of Commission issues, challenges, and successes from the preceding and upcoming calendar years. Staff requested input from the Commission as well as its feedback to a draft of answers to questions for the commissioners to consider. The 2015 Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report is to be submitted to the State in February 2016.

Sharon Wirth shared her view that the Commission should take more credit for its role in the plaque program and encouraged emphasizing those activities in the CLG report. She noted the positive effect of the plaque grants as well as Roberta Vann's many volunteer hours working on historic building plaques. Mr. Hallock suggested noting both the dollar amount of plaque grant reimbursements and the total number of plaque commitments in the CLG report. Ms. Wirth suggested including descriptions of Commission collaborations with others and contributions from other community members in connection with the plaque program. Mr. Dietzenbach noted collaboration between the Commission and the Main Street Cultural District and with the Ames Historical Society. Ms. Wirth cited the sesquicentennial banners hanging in the downtown area as another notable project that originated with the Commission and included volunteer contributions from Roberta Vann.

Mr. Dietzenbach inquired about the cost of Historic Preservation Award plaques and indicated he meant to include that in the earlier budget discussion. Mr. Anderson indicated the cost per plaque is \$50-\$100. It would be necessary to make a press release in the near future if the Commission wishes to make preservation awards this year, according to Mr. Anderson.

Ms. Wirth requested a motion to formally appoint Jason Dietzenbach as the Historic Preservation Commission representative on the plaque committee.

MOTION: (Hovis/Donovan) to designate Jason Dietzenbach as the Historic Preservation Commission representative on the historic building plaque committee.

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

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COMMISSION COMMENTS: Mr. Dietzenbach resumed discussion of the requested demolition of the Acacia fraternity house. Ms. Wirth indicated the demolition request was on the City Council agenda for January 12, 2016. She acknowledged that it was likely too late to affect that decision and so encouraged the Commission to consider the future and whether preservation of Greek houses is important. Mr. Dietzenbach suggested that weighing the issue may require project-by-project review. Ms. Wirth stated a body of research authored by William Page could aid the Commission in its decisions regarding whether to pursue this issue with the City Council. Mr. Anderson added that the ordinance currently reads that demolition is prohibited unless the applicant can provide evidence and convince the City Council that there would be an economic hardship if it were not demolished. He agreed with Ms. Wirth that the ordinance does not contain a section about historic worth or a review by the Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Anderson noted that demolition in the Old Town Historic District also requires proof of economic hardship. Ms. Hovis asked if the demolition ordinance could be discussed at an upcoming Commission meeting. Mr. Anderson indicated that it could be included in the agenda for the

Commission's February 2016 meeting. Mr. Donovan stated it would be an appropriate topic of discussion. He expressed that he sees a lot of change and modernization of Campustown occurring at the expense of the area's history. Mr. Dietzenbach asked that the William Page research Ms. Wirth referenced be made available to the Commission for review prior to its next meeting. Mr. Anderson indicated the material could be furnished to the Commission in advance.

Mr. Hallock asked staff for an update on a recent case involving a Certificate of Appropriateness for window replacement at 803 Burnett Avenue. Mr. Anderson indicated that following the November 9, 2015 Commission meeting, the homeowners considered retrofitting the subject windows but then ultimately decided to replace them with double-hung windows in order to comply with the relevant Design Guidelines and Design Criteria of the *Municipal Code*. The replacement windows could be approved and a Certificate of Appropriateness issued by staff after staff and the home owner determine the timing of installation of the double-hung windows.

Ms. Hovis asked for an update on a case at 821 Duff Avenue that came before the Commission on October 12, 2015. She stated that the property owner had not complied with the required landscaping alterations outlined by the Commission, and asked staff what would occur next. Mr. Anderson replied that he was uncertain about further Commission action. He expected staff would be involved in follow-up action with the property owner. Mr. Hallock added that a street tree was also removed and has not been replaced as promised. Mr. Anderson said he would also investigate the tree removal and replacement.

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STAFF COMMENTS: Mr. Anderson stated that if the Commission is interested in continuing the Historic Preservation Awards program, now is the time to issue a press release outlining award categories and nominations. He reviewed several award categories and explained the process for proceeding with the program. Nominees and award winners would be discussed at the March 2016 Commission meeting. The awards would then be presented at a City Council meeting in late April, Mr. Anderson explained. Mr. Hallock expressed support for continuing the program. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if volunteers would be needed to review nominations. Ms. Hovis, Mr. Dietzenbach, and Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock agreed to serve as reviewers.

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MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Donovan/Hallock) to adjourn the meeting.

*MOTION PASSED: (5-0)*

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.



Jason Dietzenbach, Vice Chairperson  
Historic Preservation Commission



Joseph C. Newman, Recording Secretary  
Department of Planning & Housing