

**MINUTES  
CITY OF AMES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Date: February 8, 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 Conference Room 135	Peter Hallock	2018
	Lisa Hovis	2018
Adjournment: 8:12 PM	Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock	2016
	[*Absent]	

CALL TO ORDER: Kim Hanna, Chairperson, called the February 8, 2016 Historic Preservation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Dietzenbach/Hallock) to approve the February 8, 2016 meeting agenda

*MOTION PASSED: (6-0)*

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 11, 2016 MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: (Hallock/Vann) to approve the January 11, 2016 meeting minutes

*MOTION PASSED: (6-0)*

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PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

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**DISCUSSION OF ANNUAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION BUDGET**

Ray Anderson, Planner, explained that this item appeared on the agenda to allow for discussion of how the Commission may opt to spend funds designated for educational activities for the current and next fiscal years. These funds total \$2,000 per year. No money has been spent yet.

Kim Hanna asked if the funds must be spent by June 2016—Mr. Anderson said yes—and if using the funds on something other than educational activities could result in a loss of future funding. Mr. Anderson said that would be a possibility. Peter Hallock stated that some of the funds were committed to reimbursing Jason Dietzenbach for travel expenses and to funding several historic preservation award plaques. Mr. Anderson agreed and clarified that no funds have been paid from the current fiscal year budget of \$2,000.

Ms. Hanna suggested bringing in a speaker to discuss the history of Greek housing in university towns. Roberta Vann thought the subject of Greek housing may have appeal to a broader and more varied audience, including students. Jason Dietzenbach suggested contacting the Ames Historical Society for presenter suggestions.

Ms. Hanna cited examples of past speaker topics, including windows and adaptive reuse. Mr. Hallock recalled that several earlier presentations focused on topics related to updating Chapter 31 of the *Municipal Code*. Mr. Dietzenbach asked Mr. Hallock if particular topics would have more value to Old Town Historic District residents. Mr. Hallock said he would like to see public outreach to the neighborhood and property owners about code revisions, new procedures, and what can be approved by staff. He said there have been significant changes, and residents may not be aware of the changes, or even the previous procedures, for that matter. Ms. Vann asked what issues might be most sensitive. Mr. Hallock replied that garages would be a valuable topic because garage demolition used to be permitted without consulting the City. Ms. Vann and Mr. Hallock expressed interest in trying to generate greater public involvement in whatever activities or presentations the Commission chose to pursue.

Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock asked what information about historic preservation is available on the City website. Mr. Anderson indicated that Chapter 31 of the *Municipal Code* appears on the website, along with an application and supporting information. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock and Mr. Hallock spoke about the absence of online examples/FAQs focused on how to apply rules and regulations. Ms. Hanna agreed that an enhanced website would be very useful. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock suggested that investing in a visual, user-friendly website might yield a better cost-benefit ratio than bringing in speakers on specialized topics. Mr. Dietzenbach cited the City of Dubuque website as a model the City of Ames could follow. Staff and commissioners discussed the City website, procedures for content updates, website administration and hosting, and available staff resources. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock stated it would be beneficial to develop a 'site within a site' dedicated to historic preservation. Mr. Hallock thought it would be overly ambitious to attempt to develop and fund an enhanced website by the end of the current fiscal year. Ms. Hanna stated that website improvements could be a goal for the following fiscal year.

Mr. Dietzenbach asked if commissioner training opportunities were available before the end of the current fiscal year. Mr. Anderson replied that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) sends periodic emails about seminars and training opportunities. Ms. Vann recalled attending a seminar in Des Moines several years ago that she regarded as interesting and useful. Mr. Anderson and Ms. Hanna offered to distribute information from SHPO about training opportunities to the commissioners.

The need to identify, select, and schedule speakers was discussed. Ms. Hanna suggested May or June as a possible goal. Ms. Vann thought a speaker would need to be scheduled for April if the target audience were to include students. Ms. Hanna asked for a defined topic to enable more specific discussion of timing and costs. Mr. Dietzenbach suggested Sharon Wirth and Gloria Betcher as resources for generating ideas for speakers. Mr. Hallock cited the Ames Historical Society as another potential resource for ideas, especially regarding Greek housing. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if the goal would be to raise awareness of the Greek houses and the value of the properties. Ms. Vann thought the aim would be broader—i.e., recognizing the value and historical contribution of Greek houses to Ames, and for students to feel pride in this unique part of the community. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock suggested bringing in a developer or someone from the State to discuss the historic rehabilitation tax credit. Ms. Hanna mentioned Jami Larson and Ron Hallenbeck as potential speakers. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock added that Steve King, Deputy SHPO officer, does a good presentation.

Next steps were reviewed and include: Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock contacting Gloria Betcher, Ms. Hanna following up with the Ames Historical Society for Greek house information, and Mr. Dietzenbach contacting SHPO regarding potential speakers.

Lisa Hovis asked about the general range of costs for speakers. Mr. Anderson said it can vary and would be difficult to determine without making inquiries. Mr. Hallock commented that a speaker from SHPO would involve minimal, or no, cost.

Ms. Hanna said that a specific plan for upgrading the historic preservation content on the City website would enable the Commission to request carrying funds over from the current fiscal year to the next fiscal year. Mr. Anderson said there is no guarantee the City Council would carry funds over, but the chances are greater if a specific goal exists for using the funds. Mr. Dietzenbach suggested using HPC funds for a down payment to secure website services. Ms. Hanna asked if an intern would be a possibility. Mr. Anderson replied that the HPC cannot create an internship. Ms. Vann suggested hiring a consultant or a designer to develop a draft of a plan and a format for the website overhaul, as that is work that could be started within the current fiscal year. Mr. Anderson advised that the HPC would need to secure authorization from the City Council to pursue a consultant. Mr. Hallock reminded the group that the funds available without commitment likely total just over \$1,000. Mr. Dietzenbach suggested making a draft document as a starting point. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that anything that is developed should focus specifically on Ames and the questions seen in the Old Town Historic District. Mr. Hallock added that the website content needs to address the perspective of a home owner who wants to do a project on their property. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock stated that more information available to the public would reduce the number of people before the Commission saying they did not understand the code and project requirements.

Mr. Dietzenbach stated it may be worthwhile to contact the City of Dubuque to ask who worked on Dubuque's website and to use its historic preservation website design and content as a model for the City of Ames. Ms. Hanna added that the City of Dubuque website is very visual and easy to understand. Mr. Dietzenbach said the site includes information about best options for a project, what to avoid, and a guide to understand the code. Ms. Hanna noted a resemblance to how the Campustown Façade Grant guidelines were presented.

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## **DISCUSSION OF EAST UNIVERSITY IMPACTED OVERLAY DISTRICT DEMOLITION ORDINANCE CRITERIA**

Ray Anderson, Planner, reported that a demolition request for the Acacia Greek house was approved at the January 12, 2016 City Council meeting. The absence of a defined process for considering the historic value of similar properties in the area was raised at the meeting, and the City Council asked staff to examine potential revisions to the demolition criteria. Sharon Wirth spoke at the January 11, 2016 Historic Preservation Commission meeting about changing the demolition criteria and about a possible role of the HPC in the process. Mr. Anderson indicated that staff's response to the City Council will likely take time. He advised the Commission that it can continue its discussion of the demolition criteria, put the item on a future meeting agenda, or wait for further action until after staff makes its recommendation to the City Council. According to Mr. Anderson, demolition criteria in the East University Impacted Overlay District are identical to the criteria used in the Old Town Historic District, except that in the historic district the ordinance includes both an estimate of the cost of the proposed demolition *and* an estimate of any additional costs that would be incurred to comply with the recommendations of the Commission for changes necessary for the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Hanna stated that the Commission does not presently have power of review of Greek house demolition because the properties are not designated as a historic district. Mr. Anderson agreed and confirmed that the Greek houses are not considered historic landmarks and do not appear on the National Register of Historic Places. He added that there could still be a criterion added to the demolition ordinance to require Commission input to the City Council.

Mr. Dietzenbach asked if there is a way to require an investigation or evaluation of the historical relevance and value of Greek houses. Ms. Hanna thought any such effort would have to occur City-wide, not in pockets. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock agreed that any additional layer of review would ideally be at City-level, not restricted to a specific overlay district. He asked how the City would justify review restricted to only a Greek house district. Mr. Anderson acknowledged that the legal implications would likely require examination. Mr. Hallock commented that he found it interesting that there is no review of a demolition request for properties in the East University Impacted Overlay District if the property owner can prove it was never used by a Greek organization. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said the demolition ordinance is ambiguous and asked what if students lived there for one day—i.e., what constitutes Greek use for housing students?

Ms. Hovis inquired if a general list exists of historically significant properties in Ames. She asked if these properties have any protection, including those outside of the Old Town Historic District and the East University Impacted Overlay District. Mr. Anderson indicated no protection exists for historic properties outside of the established districts. Historically significant properties have been identified through either the 2007 *Fourth Ward* report by historian William Page, or through a 'windshield survey' conducted in the 1990s. Presently, limited information exists on many properties, but there is not a collection of detailed information on specific properties. The next steps, he explained, would be an intensive survey of each property and putting together nominations to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The process for creating a local historic district is outlined in Chapter 31, Mr. Anderson explained, and would go through both the Historic Preservation Commission and the City Council.

Ms. Vann asked what would be needed to conduct an intensive survey of historically significant properties in the City. Mr. Anderson said it would require hiring a public historian. Ms. Vann asked if the impetus would come from the Commission or neighborhoods. Mr. Anderson replied it could come from either. Money to hire a consultant could come from the City Council deciding to draw funds from the budget, or through a grant with matching funds. Ms. Hanna asked if the William Page study was funded by the HPC, the City Council, or a collaboration. Mr. Anderson reported the funds came from the City Council.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock stated that 90 percent of the work needed for nominations was already done by William Page, and it would not require much work to complete the process. Mr. Anderson indicated the *Fourth Ward* study establishes historic context. Ms. Vann said that is the most important element, and that William Page made a strong argument that Greek houses would be eligible to be a district.

Mr. Anderson said feedback from the City Council suggests it is not entirely satisfied with the existing demolition ordinance and wants staff to examine it. Mr. Dietzenbach suggested that the Commission could respond to City Council that the next best step would be to hire a historian to finish the process, as this would provide clear direction if a property comes up for demolition, and could also serve as a reference document. Ms. Hanna said that would provide more direction to both the HPC and the City Council than what exists currently. Ms. Vann agreed and added that William Page already designates some buildings as historically important, discusses architectural features, and so forth. In her view, if anyone proposed demolishing a building listed in the Page report, the Commission and/or the City Council could already make a strong case against it because William Page's study named specific properties of particular interest.

Ms. Hovis asked if attention were given to the Greek house district identified by William Page, would the other significant areas identified in his report also receive attention. Mr. Anderson indicated that the Page study identifies eight eligible historic districts. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if the City has ever been systematically reconnaissance surveyed. Mr. Anderson replied that a survey was done in the 1990s inside the 1943 boundaries to establish the historic context of structures. This survey did not call out contributing structures but provided examples to support context. The survey did not span the entire present-day City boundaries. Mr. Hallock stated that the reason this demolition issue was raised is because there is an existing overlay requiring City Council approval—not on a historic basis but on whether the property is Greek or not. He said the East and West University overlays have different criteria. Properties outside of those areas, e.g., Ross Road, currently have no protection to even raise the issue to public attention if a demolition request were made there.

Ms. Hovis asked how a historian could be found and hired to move the initiative on to the next step. Mr. Anderson suggested drafting a proposal to the City Council including cost estimates and a request to set aside money. This would be followed by a request for proposals and selection of a consultant. Mr. Hallock encouraged looking into grant options for partial funding of studies. He said it may be easier to secure 30-50 percent of the cost from the City Council as opposed to the entire cost. Mr. Anderson pointed out that the timing to request funds is not good because the new budget will soon be approved by the City Council. It may be better, he said, to make a proposal to the City Council in fall 2016 when the next budget is being developed.

Kim Hanna encouraged the Commission to map out goals for the next couple of years. Ms. Vann thought work on the proposal to City Council could begin now, even if the Commission waited until the fall to present the proposal. Mr. Dietzenbach thought work could also begin to research grant possibilities. Mr. Hallock said it would be good to have that information ready when taking the proposal to the City Council for a funding request. Ms. Hanna asked if members of the Commission are allowed to develop grant proposals. Mr. Anderson replied that there is nothing prohibiting it, but City Council permission should be secured in advance of applying for a grant because it would commit the City to pay a portion of the fees involved in a project. Ms. Vann asked what would be entailed in creating a proposal to the City Council. Mr. Anderson explained that it would involve writing a letter to the City Council explaining the background and why the project is a priority. Mr. Anderson advised that it would be best to wait on a written proposal to the City Council until it starts its work on the next budget.

Mr. Dietzenbach asked how timing for grants would align with budget planning. Mr. Anderson believed the timing would likely depend on the grant. He explained the typical cycle for both Certified Local Government (CLG) grants and Historic Resource Development Program (HRDP) grants and indicated the entire endeavor could become a multi-year process. Mr. Hallock stated that what can be done now is to map out a timeframe, options, and deadlines, and to develop a strategy. Mr. Dietzenbach asked about next steps. Mr. Anderson said it depends on whether the goal is national register nomination or local district nomination. With national register designation, he explained, there are no restrictions on what can be done with exterior changes, additions, and even demolitions. Mr. Hallock added that local historic designation creates protection. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said local designation is a harder sell because owners then ask how it will impact them and the benefits have to be sold in order to generate support. Mr. Dietzenbach asked if it would be most sensible to seek both national and local historic designation to get the benefits of Federal incentives and local control. Mr. Anderson reported that the typical process is national designation followed by local designation. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock agreed and added that the vast majority of local historic districts come out of national designations because the work is already done.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if the East University Impacted Overlay District came about perhaps out of concern for wholesale demolition. Mr. Anderson replied that a sub-area study identified concerns in that area of the community, including the loss of Greek houses. This concern led to the demolition criteria for Greek houses. More protection for the Greek houses would come with designation as a district establishing recognition of the properties' historic value, i.e., demolition would be prohibited unless criteria are satisfied. He added that the only request for demolition in the Old Town Historic District (in the early 1990s) was denied because the Commission did not believe the request met the criteria required for demolition approval.

Mr. Dietzenbach encouraged the Commission to respond to the City Council saying it is in the City's best interest to pursue both national and local register nominations for a Greek house district. He asked staff what information would help the City Council with its determination. Mr. Anderson stated that a proposal to the City Council could cite William Page's *Fourth Ward and Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* reports as support for designating the Greek house area as a district. Mr. Hallock advised that it may be better to frame the response as gathering and preparing information that would allow the City Council to make a decision, as opposed to pushing the City Council to act. Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock said it could be viewed as continuing something 90 percent done. Ms. Vann added it would be following the recommendation already written by William Page in his studies. Ms. Hanna asked if the response to the City Council should come from the Commission Chairperson. Mr. Anderson replied affirmatively.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock asked if staff foresaw potential political issues from even insinuating the possibility of a local landmark district, and would it be wise to start with the national register. Mr. Anderson replied that it would be good to start with the national register. Mr. Dietzenbach said that—viewing it in a positive light—the national register would allow Federal funding and would keep structures usable and not deteriorating to the point of needing demolition. Mr. Anderson said the national register recognizes historic significance as a nationally-registered district, and would be a good first step toward local designation—national designation indicates a recognition of value, and local designation would provide protection for the properties.

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COMMISSION COMMENTS: Ms. Hanna inquired about the status of the 821 Duff Avenue case regarding compliance with required grading and landscaping. Mr. Anderson indicated he will send the property owner a letter after winter when something can be done about landscaping. Mr. Anderson added that because the property is occupied, this case differs from a commercial project where a final occupancy permit could be withheld as a way to enforce full compliance with landscaping and other requirements. Ms. Hanna asked if a fine would be used to encourage compliance. Mr. Anderson indicated a fine would be possible, but would likely not be a first measure. Mr. Hallock noted that street tree removal was an issue with this case, along with the landscaping and grading.

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STAFF COMMENTS: There were no staff comments.

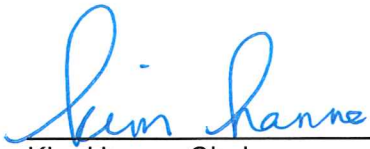
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MOTION TO ADJOURN:

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

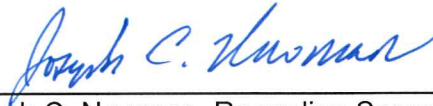
MOTION PASSED: (6-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.



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Kim Hanna, Chairperson  
Historic Preservation Commission



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

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