

**Minutes**  
**HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD**  
City Commission Room, City Hall  
1101 Poyntz Avenue  
Monday, November 16, 2020  
4:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Kevin West, Chair; Eileen Meyer, Vice-chair; Tom Hanson, Tanner James, and Bethany Pingel.

**Members Absent:** Jana Fallin and Ann Kosch.

**Staff Present:** Ben Chmiel, Planner and John Adam, Senior Planner.

**Public Present:** Ben Burton, Applicant; Sharlin Sargent, Rex Fowels, Nick Grandy, Jay Banks, Abram Mertz, Colene Lind, Public.

**1. MEETING OPENING**

The call to order was postponed as the Board received a number of written public comments related to the agenda items just prior to 4:00 p.m. and wanted to read through them all. West called the meeting to order at 4:20 p.m. Staff performed roll call and confirmed a quorum. There were no comments from the public unrelated to items on the agenda.

Meyer moved to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2020 meeting. Hanson seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

**2. MAJOR REVIEW: 120 N. 4th St (Community House) Amendment**

Meyer moved to remove the Community House Review from the table. Hanson seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Chmiel presented a report on the submitted application. He briefly described the history of the building and its physical changes over time. He reminded the Board how the property was sold by the City to a private developer and how the process has unfolded over the last couple of years. He noted that the Board approved of a previous rehabilitation project, much larger in scope back in March, and emphasized that the current proposal was an amendment to a portion of that proposal, which was a substantial enough change that it had to be reviewed again by the HRB.

Chmiel briefly described the previous proposal for the subject area, which included a large, open space with a restroom on the main floor where the gym used to be. He then showed how the amendment to the proposal included a 1,500 square foot apartment largely on the east half of the space, which would be an enclosed structure, one story high, with restrooms relocated within it.

Chmiel noted that in December of 2018, the State Preservation Office conducted a preliminary assessment of the space. They were reacting to a potential proposal to subdivide the gym into apartments with two alternative arrangements. Chmiel pointed out that the State seemed comfortable with a subdivision, given an arrangement that gave the space a more open feel.

Chmiel then examined the Secretary of the Interior Standards, emphasizing the relevancy of Standards 1, 2, and 9 in the context of the proposal, noting some concerns. Chmiel said all things considered, staff was recommending approval of the project as proposed.

West invited the applicant to speak. Burton noted a letter he sent to the Board emphasizing the steps made in the amendment, including working with SHPO, the National Parks Service, and his own historic consultant. He noted it was a tax credit project contingent on meeting the Secretary of the Interior Standards. He said that SHPO informed him the space would be able to be subdivided by up to half of the space and he felt that the volume of the space could still be sensed. He said that under private ownership he was trying to find a viable use that maintained the building's historic integrity and maintaining it on the historic register.

West commented that the open space being maintained was what tipped the original project into favor with the Board, and subdivision of the open space was never framed as a possibility. He asked if subdivision was the plan from the beginning. Burton said he had brought up the possibility of subdividing the space up to half in the past, to both the HRB and the City Commission. He said it was something that was documented as a possibility from the beginning as they were trying to find a viable use for the space and given the current economic conditions, this was the best way to move forward.

Meyer asked how the leftover open space would be used. Burton said the ideal renter for the space would be an open coffee shop or some other food/beverage service with finite hours as not to disturb the residents elsewhere in the space. Meyer asked if anyone would be able to go into the space during the evening. Burton said it would still be a private business, the space of which would be inaccessible after business hours.

West asked why the apartment was called the "owner's suite" on the plan set. Burton said that was an error and that it would just be another rentable apartment in the building. Pingle said she had studied the building in the past, noting its significance. She said that just because they were told the gym could be subdivided up to half, doesn't mean it would be best, adding how small the remaining portion of the gym would be. She asked the applicant if he had explored any other options for the use of the gym space as more of a community space. Burton explained that the building is now a privately owned building and keeping it as community space is not necessarily financially feasible. Burton clarified that the building was privately financed, though \$500,000 was given by the City as part of the RFP through the economic development fund, which he said would be paid back through taxes. Pingle thought that a larger space for events like weddings would be more financially successful given the location. Burton said he consulted a wedding event business in considering the use, but said there were logistical, storage, and capacity issues that would come with the building, inhibiting its success as a wedding venue. West argued that those were known issues when proposal came up and the sale was going through. He said he found it odd that the request for the use came up now instead of earlier.

James asked if there were any plans for echo mitigation in the main space. Burton said the ceiling tile was sound-rated to keep down noise and that it would be kept.

Meyer pointed out that the apartment only had three windows in the apartment and that she did not foresee it being very rentable. Burton indicated that it met the code and safety requirements with two in the bedroom and one in the living space. He said it was not abnormal to other units marketed in the building.

West called for public comments. Sharlin Sargent of 1800 Westbank Way thought if the space was required to make the project feasible, it should have been determined before the proposal was made, noting it seemed like a last-minute change. She also felt the design was awkward, noting that its historic use would be compromised. Sargent also thought that the stage area should have been preserved and felt that the applicant was changing the agreement originally made, noting that the proposal would interfere with its historic value. She also explained that event space could be feasible, pointing to the Union Pacific Depot as an example and felt like a private use was not appropriate. She lamented that the

building had to deteriorate before being sold. Sargent asked if the apartment was connected or separate from the stage. Chmiel confirmed that it was separate. She strongly encouraged the Board to not approve of the proposal.

West closed the public comment. Meyer speculated that there was plenty of room for tables and chairs to serve as an event venue, which would keep it as more of a community space. Hanson thought the commercial use of the space would no longer a community space or a gathering space as it would be off-limits to the public.

West said he disagreed with the staff recommendation, citing the Secretary of the Interior's Standards #1, #2, and #9. In regard to Standard #1, West pointed out how the space being "allowed" to be subdivided up to half seemed arbitrary. He noted the change in spatial relationships, as the gym space would be repurposed from a large community gathering space use to a "cube" of an apartment "plopped" in the middle of the space. He further explained that temporary/demising walls are usually acceptable when subdividing a space, but that model didn't work with an apartment. He also speculated that removing the apartment would not be easy. In regard to Standard #2, West pointed out that there were not necessarily any remaining distinctive materials or character-defining features on the interior, other than the open space of the gym. In regard to Standard #9, West explained that the new construction destroyed the spatial relationship characterizing the property, again noting an apartment plopped in the space. Pingel wished the stage could be restored, again emphasizing the feasibility of an event venue with all the facilities available, saying there may be more opportunities for other uses.

West called for a motion. Meyer moved The Board finds that the proposal does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as reviewed in accordance with K.S.A. 75-2724 citing Standards 1, 2, 4, and 5. Hanson seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

### **3. WORK SESSION: Local Register & Lee Elementary Neighborhood Local District**

Chmiel explained that he had been working with residents of the Lee Elementary area neighborhood, which was exploring the possibility of creating a local historic district, including 11 properties on Hunting Avenue just a couple blocks west of the core KSU campus. He presented the preliminary research and documentation conducted by the residents, explaining that the area held architectural and developmental significance as a mid-century modern suburban neighborhood, with distinct characteristics. He noted that the neighborhood would have been one of the first suburbs of the city. Chmiel said the neighborhood was seeking local listing for sake of timeliness, but said the neighborhood is interested in eventually pursuing a State and National nomination. He also pointed out that the neighborhood was in an area included in the HRB's strategic survey plan and was encouraged that the residents were taking the first step.

West recalled the Board's desire to see improvements made to the local register, but confirmed they had not been enacted yet. Chmiel said adopting a new nomination form was a significant part of those improvements, which would be acted on later in the agenda and that the form would ideally be available for the nomination should it move forward.

Colene Lind of 2048 Hunting Avenue said there was still more research to do, but it was a fun project. She believed that there was architectural and design history that should be preserved, noting that mid-century was in vogue. She thought the designation would help citizens see the value in the style and history. Lind also spoke to the social history, noting the post-war development style evocative of the mid-century. She also explained that many were built and designed by people with K-State ties. She said all the neighbors loved their homes and would like to see them preserved. Meyer asked if Lind had neighborhood consensus on the nomination. She said no one had said "no" but suggested the majority

of owners were on board. Abram Mertz of 2020 Hunting Avenue said his upbringing gave him an appreciation for historic homes and he quickly fell in love with his home. He noted how cohesive the neighborhood's style was, adding that we need to start thinking about the next generation of preservation in mid-century.

Jay Banks of 2008 Hunting Avenue gave his support for the nomination. He explained the uniqueness of the electrical work in his house and other small features evocative of the time period his house was built in and that he would like to see maintained. He also thought it was time to start preserving mid-century.

Nick Grandy of 2000 Hunting Avenue explained how he came to buy his house and the beauty and uniqueness of the neighborhood as well as the individual houses. He thought it had something that set it apart from the rest of the community.

Rex Fowels of 2038 Hunting Avenue said he moved in in 2014. He said his house was largely in its original state. He asked the Board if the nomination was worth pursuing. Hanson said he supported the idea, stating his excitement for others wanting to preserve mid-century architecture. Meyer was reminded of a SHPO training that emphasized the need to start preserving mid-century modern and was glad to see proactiveness of the neighborhood. James said he was excited about the nominations, noting the approachability of the style today. He said the style had been ignored in the past, despite the cultural and technological feats associated with it. Fowels thought that older Victorian homes probably should have been preserved earlier than they were and there was an opportunity here. Pingel thought that 100 years from now people might be thanking the neighborhood for taking a stand. West concurred with the comments of the Board. He said the houses were really neat and worth preserving. He encouraged pursuing the local registration and potentially expanding the district with a State or National nomination. West explained how improvements to the local district would be beneficial to this and future nominations. Fowels thought it would be beneficial to at some point hash out how restrictive a nomination would be. West spoke to how the register needed to be more flexible and user friendly to encourage nomination. Fowels brought up how design guidelines might be made. Chmiel explained that design guidelines could be proposed for the neighborhood and would be a product of agreement between the Board and the neighborhood. He suggested the neighborhood first make a proposal as to how they would be written.

Lind noted how the new application makes design guidelines optional. Chmiel said they were, but they could also be imposed by the Board. He said it would be best to include them even if they were nominal as to satisfy the language in the ordinance establishing the register. He said they were helpful in knowing what the Board could enforce when a project was proposed.

#### **4. MANHATTAN REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION FORM**

Chmiel presented an updated draft of the Manhattan Register of Historic Places nomination form. He explained that based on previous discussions with the Board, several major changes were made, including separating the individual site form from the district nomination forms. Other revisions included a much shorter length, more condensed but expandable sections, removing arduous documentation details, and allowing existing State and National Nomination forms to supplement the local form, or be used in lieu of it. He said it largely mimicked the profile of State/National district documentation for individual properties. He emphasized that the document presented would be translated to an online fillable form, where it would be easier for people to upload documents and photos.

West asked about accepting existing State/National nomination forms. Chmiel said it would be an option to submit as part of the application. West praised the new form emphasizing its simplicity. West asked what the Board would need to put the form in place. Chmiel said the Board would just need to vote to approve of the form, pointing out that Lee Elementary would be eager to use it instead of the old one.

Pingel asked on the design guidelines if requests for minor changes could be made easier to apply for, similar to the Minor Review process. Chmiel explained that a Certificate of Appropriateness process would determine what was required as far as documentation, but that the Board should revisit that at some point in the future as well. West brought up the issue with penalties associated with the local register as well, noting the Board's desire to potentially soften that language as well as other incentives.

Meyer moved to adopt the revised Manhattan Register of Historic Places Historic District Nomination form as presented. Hanson seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

## **5. MINOR REVIEW APPLICATIONS**

Chmiel presented a building permit for a small interior storage room at 205 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The Board had no comment.

## **6. UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were none.

## **7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

December: Manhattan Register Of Historic Places Nomination Form, Site/Structure.

January: Manhattan Historic Preservation 2020 Annual Report.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

West adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm. The next meeting would be held December 14, 2020 in City Hall.