Minutes
Landmarks Commission Meeting
April 8, 2024

Members Present: Luke Fessler, Gordan Kinder, Ron Larson, John Wells, Kathy Krusiec

Staff Present: Andrew Bremer, Kong Thao

1. CALL TO ORDER

   Fessler called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC APPEARANCES.

   None received virtually and in-person.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

   a. Fessler motioned to approve the minutes of the October 30, 2023, Landmarks Commission meeting. Seconded by Kinder. During discussion, Fessler commented that the result of the motion to business item 4.a, was missing and should reflect an approved motion, carrying 4-0. No additional comments from the Commission. Motion carried 5-0.

4. BUSINESS.

   a. Discussion and action to make a recommendation to the Village Board to approve a purchase order for outdoor community history signs at Arnold Larson Park.

      Fessler opened the item for discussion and provided a summary of the agenda item. Fessler referred to Thao to fill in additional details where needed. Samantha Zeilenga, from the Indigenous Solidarity Collective of McFarland (ISC), was present to provide comments on the texts of the signs. Zeilenga started by recognizing the opportunity to provide comments on the draft signs and their content. Continuing, Zeilenga commented that the word “pioneers” (second sentence of the Early European Settlers sign) should be replaced with “settlers”. Zeilenga explained that the word pioneers did not fit the context of new discovery of the period. The Commission was in general agreement with the reasoning. Zeilenga’s comments on the History of Native Americans in McFarland sign included the following:
      - Context of this sign is singularly focused and should expand to include narrative about other topics.
      - Sign is missing more information on why/how some mounds were removed and general information about removal of Native American in the area in addition to mounds.
      - Unsure of the connection to include a map of Indian Mound Conservancy, not located at the site. Possibly replacing the map or adding photos from the Land Acknowledgement ceremony.
      - Including a sentence which connects Native American story to McFarland’s early history.

- Text's reference to the Policy for Preservation and Maintenance of Native American Mounds Plan, 2023 may be outdated by the time the plan is updated. The sign could outdate itself. Remove reference to year of plan acceptance.
- Sign provides an opportunity for Native American education and awareness.

Fessler summarized Zeilenga's comments while asking for clarification on the recommendations provided. Larson concurred about the points Zeilenga made regarding the singular focus and missing narrative about removal. Larson expressed interest in drafting an updated version with the comments from Zeilenga, while also collaborating working with the ISC. Larson indicated he would also review the three other draft signs and provide staff with potential revisions. Zeilenga added that Staff should expect approval by the Ho-Chunk Nation to use their seal may take a long time and advocated for Ho-Chunk review of the final draft sign.

b. Discussion regarding a preapplication concept plan for potential improvements to 5923 Exchange Street, McFarland House Café.

Bremer provided summary on the agenda item, introducing the item as a preapplication. The property owner wanted to gather feedback on the proposed project before hiring professionals to continue with planning and design. The project would include two phases of improvements to the property. Phase 1 includes removal of the rear yard decking, conversion of the second-floor apartments and third floor Airbnb to a hotel, and adding an addition (bump out) on the north side of the building. The bump out is consistent with a previous use of the property referenced with a historical photo. Phase 2 includes construction for a new 10,000 square foot mixed use building.

Sean O'Hearn, 5205 Linden Parkway, introduced his vision for the use of the property to convert the McFarland House into a hotel. O'Hearn described the benefits Phase 1 will bring to improving the function and operation of his existing business/food service. The Commission's discussion inquired on the existing condition of the decks in the rear yard, ingress and egress points, outdoor electrical, intended use of the bump out, and windows. O'Hearn stated his intent to replicate exterior building materials to match the rest of the house and to add windows to the bump out, particularly the street facing façade but potentially elsewhere too. The Commission was generally supportive of the proposed Phase 1 improvements. The Commission did not have time to discuss potential Phase 2 improvements. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 improvements will require submittal of a Certificate of Appropriateness for future consideration by the Landmarks Commission in addition to a Site Design Review Permit from the Plan Commission. There is no set timeline for submission of these applications by O'Hearn but he indicated a desire to complete Phase 1 improvements later in the Fall of 2024.

5. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING DATE.

   a. To be determined.

6. ADJOURNMENT.

   Kinder motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Larson. Motion carried 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 5:48 PM.