

Legislation Text

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Receive the report regarding new business items raised at the March 28, 2024 Historic Preservation Commission meeting

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Allison Laff, AICP, Deputy Director

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

Submitted for Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) review.

BACKGROUND:

At the March 28, 2024 Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) meeting, Commissioner Deffenbaugh raised several items for consideration under new business, including additional contractor and application requirements for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) and an inventory of historic district structures. Following a brief discussion on these items, the HPC requested that staff research the possibility of:

- Requiring certain qualifications for contractors undertaking large room additions or major renovations in the historic district.
- Requiring three-dimensional model drawings for large room additions or major renovations in the historic district.
- Undertaking a survey of the historic district to proactively identify distressed, neglected or vacant properties.

The HPC also shared their interest in commissioner training, historic preservation workshops, and encouraging more discussion between the Commissioners at meetings.

This report is being provided in response to the items raised under new business on March 28, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

COA APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Staff discussed the HPC's recommended additional COA requirements (contractor qualifications and 3D drawings) with the Naperville City Attorney and offers the following in regard to larger COA projects being undertaken:

- There are no concerns if HPC asks applicants to provide information regarding the competencies and background of the contractor they have hired to undertake their project.
- The HPC can recommend that the contractor and homeowner meet with City staff (Chief

Building Official, Inspectors, Planners) prior to project kick-off to review the additional project requirements unique to the historic district.

- The HPC can request that the petitioner provide additional drawings, if needed, to understand the scope of work proposed.

Staff does not recommend that minimum contractor requirements and/or submittal of 3D drawings be *required* because:

- It will likely limit the pool of available contractors, thereby potentially increasing a homeowner's cost to undertake such work.*
- It does not appear that this is a common requirement for other local communities surveyed that also have historic districts.
- 3D drawings are expensive and may not always be necessary or appropriate to understand the scope of work.

Landmarks Illinois' website includes a **Restoration Resource Directory which provides property owners and design professionals with access to professional services, products, craftspeople and other experts related to the maintenance, restoration and rehabilitation of older structures. Staff can share this website with COA applicants; however, the list of locally available design professionals is rather limited.*

<https://www.landmarks.org/resources/illinois-restoration-resource-directory/>

SURVEY

The HPC also expressed concerns that there may be distressed and neglected properties in the historic district that the HPC or City staff are not aware of. The HPC discussed the possibility of undertaking a survey to collect data on homes in massive disrepair and those that have been vacant for an extended period of time.

If such a survey was undertaken, it would be completed by a 3rd party consultant and would likely cost between \$25,000-\$50,000. While the survey may provide useful information, it will only represent a snapshot in time and will not be updated as modifications occur within the district.

In lieu of a survey, it may be more effective for district residents and HPC members to contact the City's Code Enforcement Team if they notice properties that are in disrepair or have been vacant for an extended period of time. The Code Team will conduct a site visit and require the property owner to address any property maintenance violations visible on the exterior of the home or property. The Code Team can also issue citations if the violations are not addressed.

Unfortunately, neither a survey nor the Code Team will be able to prevent or address interior neglect which may lead to future requests for full or partial demolition.

TRAINING

Finally, the HPC shared their interest in commissioner training, historic preservation workshops, and encouraging more discussion between the Commissioners at meetings. For reference, the City will cover the registration costs for Commissioners to attend local historic preservation training. Staff does try to forward training opportunities to the HPC as they are available.

If the HPC identifies a training need specific to preservation activities in Naperville, staff can also

work to find a consultant to provide this training. If such training is desired, the HPC should identify specific topics.

Key Takeaways

- The HPC can *request* additional information necessary to review a COA, including contractor qualifications and additional drawings. However, this information should not become a requirement standard to all COA applications.
- Residents and/or HPC members should contact the City's Code Enforcement Team to report any neglected or vacant properties of concern. Code Enforcement will conduct site visits and address any exterior property maintenance violations.
- The HPC should attend available training sessions as they are available and/or interested. If there is a specific topic that requires Naperville specific training, the HPC should identify that topic so that staff can determine if a consultant can be hired to provide that training.