

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Time and Date: The Historic Preservation Commission met on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers of Wausau City Hall.

Members Present: Gary Gisselman, Blake Opal-Wahoske, Kevin Crooks, Christine Martens, Brian Mason, Steve Miller, and Patrick Bacher (arrived at 6:10 pm)

Members Not Present: Linda Tryczak, and David Oberbeck

Staff Present: Brad Lenz, Samantha Kulig

Others Present: Lance Leonhard

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Chairperson Gary Gisselman called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. noting that a quorum was present.

Approve the meeting minutes for June 19, 2024, and August 8, 2024, Ad Hoc.

Motion by Steve Miller and seconded by Christine Martens to approve both the meeting minutes. Motion approved unanimously, 7-0.

Introduction to Historic Preservation Ordinance (Wausau Municipal Code 2.82)

Chairperson Gisselman read several parts of the WMC Historic Preservation Commission 2.82. Gisselman read the purpose and intent from WMC 2.82.010, and the criteria used for the designation of landmarks and historic site from WMC 2.82.050.

PUBLIC HEARING: Discussion on landmarking Marathon County Home and Hospital (1200 Lake View Drive)

Chairperson Gisselman opened the public hearing.

Lance Leonhard, representative of Marathon County who owns the Home and Hospital building, stated that chairperson Gisselman reached out to him regarding this. The request was sent to Human Resources, Finance, and Property committee for Marathon County. There were some concerns where the County would like some time to better understand the ordinance that was referenced (Wausau Municipal Code 2.82) and how it would interplay with state and federal landmark designation. Leonhard also stated that the County has also recently invested money in this building. Leonhard continues to state that the County did not express any interest in demolishing nor interest in fundamentally changing its character. County's committee is asking for more time to understand what the process is like for landmarking designation. Leonhard, on behalf of the committee, requested this commission delay consideration of the formal designation as a landmark for at least 60 days to allow the County to gather additional information and take a formal action on an upcoming meeting.

Kevin Crooks asked Leonhard what the additional 60 days would give that County committee in terms of additional information that they don't already have from reading the ordinance. Leonhard responded that the County committee met on August 7, 2024. At the time of that meeting, staff was tasked to read and understand the ordinance and provide the information for the committee. There hasn't been another follow up committee meeting since then to present what the staff has found.

Martens stated to Leonhard that Marathon County does have other landmark buildings - for instance, buildings at Marathon Park - that can provide more understanding on what Landmarking can offer. Martens also stated that she appreciates to hear that Marathon County does not want to raze the building but stated that she has concern about potential changes to the exterior. Martens asked Leonhard what kind of resources this commission can provide for helping County staff. Leonhard responded what kinds of incentives for landmarking does a local government have and what does a certificate of appropriateness entail for future renovations and changes.

Crooks responded the question regarding certificate of appropriateness stating that this commission does take in consideration the practicality of today's standards versus the characteristics of a historical landmark. From past certificate of appropriateness that were issued, Crooks cannot recall of ever requesting an owner to go back to an earlier appearance because it's not practical. Crooks continued that the interior is not regulated at all except when significant deterioration or changes of the interior that might affect the exterior - for instance plumbing problems, walls caving in, or floor collapsing – where this commission would address their concern.

Martens recommended Leonhard and his staff to reach out to the State Historical Society in additional information and resources. Crooks continued stating that State Historical Society also has a lot of knowledge about landmarking on a national level. Chairperson Gisselman stated that Zion Lutheran Church has recently acquired national status, and they can be helpful in explaining that process.

Chairperson Gisselman closed the public hearing.

Discussion and possible action on landmarking Marathon County Home and Hospital (1200 Lake View Drive)

Crooks asked Staff and Commission if the commission acted on this what would the timeframe be. Brad Lenz responded that the recommendation will be addressed in Plan Commission on September 17th, and then moved to Common Council on the first meeting of October which is tentatively scheduled on October 8th. Crooks asked if an action can be taken where we table, but not have to do a public hearing. Gisselman responded that we can table this agenda item by this commission.

Brian Mason asked Leonhard will tabling this item to this commission's next meeting date be enough time for Marathon County's committee to review and understand more about landmarking this building. Leonhard responded that he could work with the County's committee with this time frame and provide an update by this Commission's next meeting date.

Motion by Crooks and seconded by Patrick Bacher to move this to next month's meeting, September 25, 2024. Motion approved unanimously, 7-0.

PUBLIC HEARING: Discussion on landmarking the former DAUV Hall (540 S 3rd Avenue)

Chairperson Gisselman opened the public hearing.

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Discussion and possible action on landmarking the former DAUV Hall (540 S 3rd Avenue)

Chairperson Gisselman stated a letter was received today by Susan Lang, president of Emmerich & Associates, stating that they strongly oppose, because this designation will inappropriately encumber their ability to get a return on investment for the property as it is currently up for sale. Chairperson Gisselman stated that from previous designations of property, the commission tend to not get in the way of a sale.

Bacher stated that his concern of holding the action on landmarking this site is that the new prospect owners may potentially want to renovate and lose the characteristics or even worse raze the building. Chairperson Gisselman stated that there is no ordinance that would prohibit the possibility of razing it. Crooks stated that real estate can take a while to complete a sale and that there is no tell of when that will happen. Crooks continued that in the meantime, the building can be razed. Bacher also stated that in this current state, the building is not in good condition.

Bacher also stated that Emmerich & Associates didn't attend in person to discuss more on why they strongly oppose landmarking. Chairperson Gisselman responded the owner has additional opportunities during the Plan Commission meeting and during the City Council meeting since those are the next steps on landmarking this building.

Miller read the letter and stated that he agrees with Crooks on the length of real estate and with Bacher's concern on the current state of the building. However, Miller understands Susan Lang's letter and her concern as well. Miller would like to see if we can find a compromise for both the Commission and Emmerich & Associates.

Blake Opal-Wahoske stated that based on this meeting and past meetings, it seemed that most owners do not know the advantages of landmarking a historical building. Opal-Wahoske suggested that the commission should have a list of advantages and disadvantages which can make owners more acumen in landmarking their property. Crooks responded that there are some tax credits/benefits for local designation landmarking.

Martens asked if anyone else from Emmerich & Associates reached out to the Commission members with questions regarding this. Chairperson Gisselman stated he received voicemail from Susan Lang, called back, left a voicemail but have not heard back. Lenz stated he had not heard from them either. Martens also stated that she agreed with Bacher's on his concerns.

Crooks stated Wausau has a rich, German heritage, and this building is very significant to the German workers. Many buildings in Wausau show buildings with the German name instead of the English name. Crooks felt preserving that German heritage is worthwhile.

Mason appreciated the suggestion from Opal-Wahoske of having a list of advantages and disadvantages of landmarking a historical building. He also stated that in the letter "inappropriately encumber" did not specify what kind of encumbrance, which Mason believed can be dispelled by a series of questions and discussion between the owner(s) and this commission. Mason also stated that there are two additional meetings – Plan Commission and City Council - after this meeting that Emmerich & Associates can still attend.

Martens appreciated this historical building would be preserving the history of workers versus the common preservation of history of rich individuals that we see up on East hill.

Motion by Bacher and seconded by Marten to approve the landmarking on the former DAUV Hall (540 S 3rd Avenue) and to move this onto Plan Commission. Motion approved unanimously, 7-0.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date is September 25, 2024.

Adjournment

Motion by Martens and seconded by Crooks. Motion approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

The Historic Preservation Commission is next scheduled to meet at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2024.