

BISMARCK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2024

The Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission met on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building, 221 North 5th Street. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom. Dakota Media Access was present to record the meeting and archive on freetv.org for public viewing. Chair Sakariassen presided.

Commissioners present were Damita Engel, Tory Jackson, Beth Nodland, Amy Sakariassen, John Swanson and Greg Zenker.

Commissioner Scooter Pursley was not present.

Staff members present were Annie Hojian – Office Assistant, Sandra Bogaczyk – Office Assistant, Lauren Oster – Planner and Stephanie Pretzer – Assistant City Attorney.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Sakariassen asked if there were any public comments.

There being no public comments, Chair Sakariassen resumed the meeting.

MINUTES

Chair Sakariassen called for consideration of the minutes of the September 18, 2024, meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Zenker to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2024, meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jackson and with Commissioners Engel, Jackson, Nodland, Swanson, Zenker and Chair Sakariassen voting in favor of the motion, the motion was approved.

INTRODUCTION TO FORESTRY DIVISION

Doug Wiles, former City Forester, presented information to the Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding duties and responsibilities of the City of Bismarck's Forestry Division. Mr. Wiles explained the City is responsible for tree planting and maintenance of approximately 25,000 trees on all boulevards and in parks. They also provide 24/7 storm response. Pruning is done in fall/winter months or early spring however, Forestry will respond to areas of concern. The Partners in Planting program, covers cost and labor for street trees is shared between the City and homeowners. With this program, approximately 1000 trees can be planted per year rather than the 300 Forestry can handle on their own. Homeowners can request a site inspection to determine the best tree for the area and also, upon final inspection, receive a rebate. Bismarck Parks and Recreation provides 20% of the operating budget for the year to Forestry. As such, they work well together in maintaining the beauty of Bismarck.

Mr. Wiles discussed historical plantings regarding trees and areas of town. When determining plantings, it is taken into consideration what is native to the area, how best to match the existing

vegetation, and mitigate the destruction of new and existing trees. The history of the area is also considered and if an original tree is not available, a very close replacement is chosen. For example, the American Elm tree is prevalent in the Cathedral District, however, due to Dutch Elm Disease, many trees have died off. The Hackberry tree is very similar to the American Elm. In 2024, 137 American Elm trees had to be removed due to disease. Inoculation has proven to be 50% effective. Due to this, there is only one company that provides services as they cannot guarantee the work and some homeowners do not feel the cost is worth the risk. The Forestry Department also provides firewood surveys, to identify where Elm wood is in the city and where firewood is inspected to mitigate the spread of disease by beetles that have made it home over the winter.

As more inventory is performed by HPC, there will be more opportunities for Forestry and HPC to work together to preserve plantings that have historical significance. Discussion occurred regarding historical plantings around Bismarck.

Centennial Forest is maintained by the Forestry department. It was planted in 1972. There was also a centennial planting that was done at New Generations Park.

The Arboretum's focus are native plantings and is located near Tom O'Leary Golf Course. There are a few plantings there that are rare.

It is recognized by HPC that street trees, especially in the Cathedral District, are well planned out plantings with forward thinking towards the future, that also recognizes the history of the area.

There are state champion trees in town. One example is a Green Ash Tree, that is located on the 1900 block of LaForest Ave. Emerald Ash Bore has been discovered in ND and Forestry is looking at precautions to take and mitigation efforts to protect existing trees.

The historical significance of Hillside Park was discussed. This park came out of the New Deal package where states received monies for civic improvement projects. Monies were used to purchase trees, build structures, and plan the park. Any cobble structures around town are likely from this era in Bismarck's history. It was a planned park and city auditors at the time chose to make it a "destination". It also serves as an access point to reach the oldest cemetery in Bismarck. It is unknown at this time if the trees were planted at that time or the route to the cemetery was a planned part of the park.

2024 HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND GRANT UPDATE

Ms. Oster summarized the recent Certified Limited Government (CLG) conference held on October 7th, 2024. Due to the conference being held over a shorter duration this year, approximately \$2,500 that was budgeted for the conference was not used. Staff recommends review from HPC on where to appropriate these funds.

Talking trails were discussed. It is believed close to \$10,000 was spent including 10 sites. Due to the cost, Chair Sakariassen feels these remaining CLG conference funds can be utilized more effectively on another project.

HPC discussed possible options for funds. Commissioner Nodland suggested HPC look at the projects that are still open and where funds could be distributed amongst them. Discussion

ensued regarding a school curriculum or guide, as well as what other projects were discussed, or started, in 2023 that could benefit from those funds. The HPC also has a lot of projects that are just starting that could benefit from the \$2500. Ms. Oster advised the HPC that the Highland Acres Historic Walking/Driving Tour map is open from 2023, as well as the production and installation of approved designs of Downtown and Cathedral District banners. Open projects in 2024 include S.E.N.D. kits and the South Capitol Survey. Other projects include the Historic Preservation Plan, but this is not included in grants.

S.E.N.D. kits are still in development as several participating entities have been unavailable. Most of the budgeted funds is donated labor. Objects and worksheets would be fairly cost effective based on conversations with State Historical Society North Dakota (SHSND) and South Dakota State Historical Society (SDSHS), who run those programs. The totes have already been acquired.

Ms. Oster discussed the “history hot spots” that were shared at the Florida conference. It is a semi-permanent, 3M product and costs \$80-\$100 per spot. There is potential for re-use, but due to our climate, it may be a one-time use on the sidewalk in the spring/summer/fall months. It could be beneficial in the summer months to be interactive with the public and is a more cost-effective option than a metal plaque. Businesses that are in an area could also choose to participate and have a window cling designed, or a QR code, so that the public may gain more information as to the history of an area. It was noted that more exploration on sites is needed to determine what additional signage is needed in the future.

Commissioner Jackson suggested these funds be used to partner with Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) regarding the 1935 baseball team and Satchel Paige memorial. A statue placed outside of the ballpark and accessible to the public is a current project for the BPRD. Although funds could be requested in the 2025 grant budget, these additional funds are available now and can be appropriated to assist with the statue, rather than waiting to receive funds towards the end of 2025. Ms. Oster was contacted by a staff member from BPRD while they were obtaining information, as to our grant process, and, if help is requested, this may be where these funds would best be spent at this time. Further grant monies could fund more research and history regarding Satchel Paige. It would be a tangible, positive way for the HPC to engage with the community. Commissioner Zenker recommended getting all facts regarding the statue, placement, cost, and when it will be placed, and then determining to commit to the statue. Ms. Oster stated this information can be obtained and presented at the next HPC meeting and she would invite a representative from BPRD to come and speak on this. Ms. Oster will also confer with Amy Munson, SHSND. Being involved in a very public project, such as this, falls in line with HPC goals regarding education and partnerships with other entities in the City.

There is an existing write-up on the 1935 Satchel Paige team. Commissioner Engel stated the HPC funds could be used to donate towards the statue, but the HPC could also have some reference at the site/field to direct people to the timeline. A QR sign could be a first location for Satchel Paige. It would be beneficial in multiple ways.

MOTION: Commissioner Zenker moved to work with the BPRD and utilize the available funds on the Satchel Paige project. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Swanson and with Commissioners Engel, Jackson, Nodland, Swanson, Zenker and Chair Sakariassen in agreement, the motion was passed.

IDENTIFICATION OF 2025 HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND GRANT PROJECTS

With applications for the 2025 Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant for CLG opening in January 2025, Ms. Oster requested HPC review/provide potential projects, as well as identify and rank in importance four potential projects to include in the grant application.

Funding can be used for a wide range CLG supportive activities, including administration of HPC, national register nominations, surveys, historic education and promotion, and planning projects. Grants do require a 40% local match, however in-kind donated labor or items, as well as documented contributions, can be considered as the local match. City funds may not necessarily be needed for this and can be covered by in-kind labor.

Some topics include expansion of the downtown historic district, additional research in this area, or providing interpretive material for different parks along the Missouri River, especially because Parks and Recreation is coming up on their 100th year. Printing additional timeline booklets, as hard copies are getting low, but the goal is to have it available online. Engaging design consultant services for the historic preservation plan as the subcommittee is looking to have content written in the next 6 months and finalize everything with different graphics and layout of content. Researching the history of Police, Fire and EMS in Bismarck. Conducting a pre-disaster survey. Creating signage of historic sites, and/or creating a summer historic event series, or events, or a history trail in the park. Also, other ideas from HPC are welcome. Staff recommends reviewing the list included in the agenda, and then identifying and ranking potential ideas/projects that staff can research for this grant. The fourth option would be a backup as a research option for staff in the event one of the other three projects decided on will not come to fruition at this time.

Chair Sakariassen believes partnering with the BPRD would be very beneficial at this time. Summer historic events, history trails and other ideas could be lumped together and partnering with BPRD may provide more opportunities.

Commissioner Jackson would like attention directed towards the historic district. It's been talked about for a long time and is long overdue. It needs a refresh and an expansion. Discussion ensued on history trails through a park and how to accomplish this. An example was given of an interactive project, using a children's book being printed and presented throughout the park, to engage visitors to follow the story and learn about the area and history along the journey.

Commissioner Engel would like a bigger discussion with BPRD on their thoughts with helping or having signage. She also sees a need for Downtown Historic District expansion and engaging professional design services for the Historic Preservation Plan.

Commissioner Swanson would like additional signage for historic sites, with a focus on more low-tech signage available, not just a focus on digital. He feels a combination of print and digital materials would be ideal. He also reminded the Commission that awards have been discussed, but the actual award needs to be designed, developed, and paid for.

Commissioner Nodland would like to revisit the Downtown Historic District and engage professional design services. She would also like to partner with new Americans and in doing so, it would allow for research opportunities to explore the history of immigrants who are of different races/cultures, and the reasons why they came to Bismarck. She feels no other history projects referencing this have been done in 150 years.

Riverfront development along the Missouri is just beginning and the HPC feels it's presumptuous to participate, at this time. It would be more beneficial to see/know other plans for the riverfront as time goes on and develop projects/plans including the HPC from there.

Ms. Oster advised in the past 3 years, the HPC has been awarded roughly \$20,000-\$25,000 per year. It is typical to apply for 3 projects and the fourth project is administration of the HPC and is completed by staff's donated time.

Several ideas were discussed with a final consensus of:

1. Revisiting the Downtown area, to include: review and inventory of properties, update and expansion of the area, pre-disaster survey, signage needs, QR codes, plaques, etc. and possible additional talking points/tours.
2. Engaging professional design services for the Historic Preservation Plan.
3. Partnering with BPRD on the Satchel Paige project and expanding on the history and Bismarck's role with the 1935 baseball team. It is an opportunity for visible cooperation with another community group that fits in with the HPC's mission.
4. Designing and developing awards.
5. Researching the history of Emergency Services (fire, police, EMS, corrections, and dispatch) in Bismarck. It would be an opportunity to partner with the Bismarck Police and Bismarck Fire Departments.

Staff will review the requests and provide a preliminary budget for each topic. This will be presented at the next HPC meeting. Staff will have the HPC review the budgets and choose which projects to focus on. Once this is decided, a narrative will be drafted for the December HPC meeting. A brief budget analysis would be provided at the next meeting and would be used in the grant application.

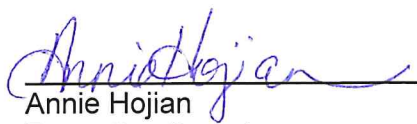
OTHER BUSINESS

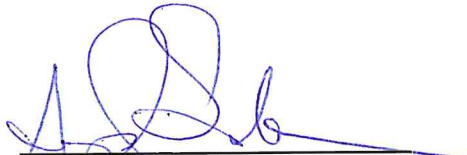
Ms. Oster updated the HPC on the HPC subcommittee's meeting last week. It was decided a meeting with individuals within the community, including contractors, downtown property owners and other property owners from various historical districts be held to share views and ideas on preservation, and difficulties with such, with a goal of having points of view from the community; not just historic preservation professionals. A goal is to organize and host this meeting before the end of the year. It is hoped this meeting will assist with creating elements in the Historic Preservation Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Sakariassen declared the meeting of the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission adjourned at 4:14 p.m. to meet again on November 20, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room.

Respectfully Submitted,


Annie Hojian
Recording Secretary



Amy Sakariassen
Chair