

BISMARCK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

April 16, 2025

The Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission met on Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 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.

It should be noted that the Zoom meeting link provided by Dakota Media Access was not functioning properly.

Commissioners present were Matthew Hull, John Swanson, Greg Zenker, Beth Nodland, Scooter Pursley and Chair Damita Engel.

Absent was Commissioner Amy Sakariassen.

Staff members present were Annie Hojian – Office Assistant, Daniel Nairn – Planning Manager, Lauren Oster – Planner, Joshua Jyring – Assistant City Attorney, Linda Oster – Assistant City Engineer, and Aaron Schmidt – Senior Project Engineer.

Prior to the start of the meeting and roll call, Chair Engel called for a moment of silence to honor Walt Bailey, who passed away April 11, 2025. Mr. Bailey was a Historian for the State of North Dakota for 37 years, co-founded the Bismarck Historical Society, and was a co-founding member of the Historic Preservation Commission. Any memories of Mr. Bailey that anyone would like to share were encouraged and will be put in the minutes for next month's meeting.

MEETING INFORMATION

Historic Preservation Reports

MINUTES

Chair Engel called for consideration of the minutes of the March 19, 2025 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Hull to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2025 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zenker and with Commissioners Nodland, Pursley, Swanson, Hull, Zenker, and Chair Engel voting in favor of the motion, the motion was approved.

DOWNTOWN STREETLIGHTS

Linda Oster, Assistant City Engineer – City of Bismarck Engineering Department, addressed the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Aaron Schmidt – Senior Project Engineer, City of Bismarck Engineering Department was also in attendance for this portion of the meeting. Engineering is currently working with the City of Bismarck Public Works Department to upgrade all street lighting to LED lighting in the City of Bismarck. After 2025, only the downtown lighting remains to be upgraded to LED. This provides a better quality of light and reduces power

consumption. It is estimated that the City of Bismarck will be down 60% of power consumption costs due to the change in technology. The lighting currently downtown are metal halide fixtures that have been retrofitted to LED when the lamps burn out. The metal halide bulbs are difficult to find and when they are found, are very expensive. It is an old technology that is systematically being phased out by the industry. Eventually, an upgrade to something other than a metal halide will be needed. High pressure sodium is another technology that is also being phased out. LED is the technology that the City of Bismarck is converting to.

Upgrading the existing pedestrian fixtures has presented some challenges. Different fixtures, brackets and manufacturers have been used throughout the years. The existing fixture is the Plaza Fixture by ELA, and is still an option; however, it is a custom option and the high cost reflects this.

It is estimated at least 230 pedestrian fixtures in the downtown area will need to be replaced or upgraded, including fixtures and brackets for anything installed prior to 2024. A project is currently in the works along Front Street between 3rd Street and 7th Street and 30+ new fixtures and poles plan to be added in 2026. Ms. Linda Oster presented some available potential choices that would clean up the poles, providing an opportunity to use the banner arm and place an additional banner on the bottom as time goes on. While cost is not the only reason to consider other options, it is a large one. The lights installed in 2024 were \$4900 each. If everything downtown is replaced, the cost is well over one million dollars. This is being brought to the downtown community now as it may be time to revisit downtown design criteria and update the fixture to something that is unique to Bismarck, but is not unique to the industry. Ms. Linda Oster is not a historian and values the HPC's knowledge and input regarding the historical significance and aesthetic of the area in selecting new fixtures and poles for lighting.

Although several examples were shown to the HPC, Ms. Linda Oster recommends the Utility Lantern Series by Holophane. It is very similar to what is used in the residential areas. It is available in bronze and the existing concrete poles would be re-used. The bracket arm would be flat out and any standard banner could be used on it. Banner arms could be tacked on below. Ms. Linda Oster did point out that the 30-foot poles would remain the same and have only the head changed out at the same time. The lighting choices to be made concern only the 13- foot pedestrian poles.

Commissioner Hull asked if the old banners would work on the new styles proposed. Ms. Linda Oster affirmed that they should still work with the current banners. He also questioned if the styles provided would allow for banners to survive North Dakota winds. It appears the current style has a support bar on the top and bottom for the banner, while the proposed style has only the support bar on the top, allowing the banner to fly freely in the wind. Ms. Linda Oster stated the concern for this would not be part of their submittal as an evaluation by a structural engineer would be required; certain requirements are called out for wind gusts, standard loading and wind loading and Engineering would be concerned with that while moving through approval.

Commissioner Nodland informed Ms. Linda Oster that Bismarck has a long history of downtown streetlights that were very decorative. She has sent information on a series of them over the last 150 years and how they have progressed to Ms. Lauren Oster. In reference to the HPC, and regarding promoting tourism, economic development, and for creating a sense of place in the downtown area, Commissioner Nodland asked about the possibility of choosing a pedestrian light more in keeping with a style Bismarck has had in the past. If a historically accurate and aesthetically pleasing option is not available, Commissioner Nodland would like to find a modern version that closely mirrors a past version. She stated that the lights Bismarck has had in the past are not similar to the examples presented today. She asked if the goal was to create a historic feel

and look for the downtown area using a combination of the lights selected, putting up historic district banners, and revisiting the downtown historic district and using the downtown as a core tourism destination. Commissioner Nodland asked if select streets could be done using a different lighting choice than other streets to help differentiate the downtown area and create this feeling and look. Ms. Linda Oster does understand the importance of aesthetics and historical significance, however, her main objective pertains to the lighting quality and finding a fixture that can do what is necessary from a lighting perspective, also taking into account energy usage and cost. It is Ms. Linda Oster's understanding, affirmed by Daniel Nairn, that any lights chosen in the downtown area would be subject to approval from the Downtown Design Review. Due to this, the lights would be approved in a "none or all" decision, rather than allowing some areas of the downtown to have different lighting than other areas.

Commissioner Pursley asked if there is a minimum lumen requirement at a particular angle that Engineering is required to account for which may limit some available options. Ms. Linda Oster affirmed they have an option to meet the current lumen output or exceed it. If available options, while aesthetically pleasing or closer in style to historical lighting, do not have enough of a lumen output, it is not an option Engineering will consider. The lights are not just for pedestrian use and do provide some lighting to the street itself. Due to this, the lumen output is very important.

SECTION 106 – 221 NORTH 5TH STREET

Ms. Oster informed the HPC that the City of Bismarck Public Works Department is applying for the North Dakota Department of Commerce Energy Conservation Grant for lighting upgrades to the City/County Building located at 221 North 5th Street. Upgrades will consist of changing the existing interior only compact fluorescent lighting to LED lighting. The original portion of the building was built in 1926, and therefore triggers the needed Section 106 review due to the building being more than 50 years old. Staff from the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND) were consulted and it was advised staff should obtain the HPC's determination and include that with the other grant materials submitted with the grant application. Staff was unable to find any recorded cultural survey for this particular building however through various research materials, staff found that several renovations, additions and upgrades have been completed in/on the building over the years. Draft cultural review for supporting and draft declaration are attached for the HPC's review and the draft declaration would be updated per the HPC's determination and comments. Staff recommends the HPC review the documentation attached for the Section 106 review and provide a determination regarding the lighting upgrades.

HPC asked if the style of the lights would change or just the interior bulbs. It is staff's belief only the interior bulbs would be changed based upon Public Works' statement that only the interior of the fixtures would be updated, from fluorescent to LED, however, staff can confirm with Public Works. Commissioner Zenker would believe some additional fixture changeout/upgrade would be necessary, and Chair Engel reiterated that upon looking at available photographs from the original building, the lights that are currently installed are not original to the building design and the interior has been changed multiple times already. Commissioner Nodland noted on the description and history of the building created by staff, it states the original Quain and Ramstad clinic was in Mr. Eppinger's building on Main Street. The building on 4th Street that staff describes in the archival report was actually Mrs. Eppinger's building. The report should state it is the Eppinger Block, which is different.

Chair Engel believes that the requested lighting upgrades would not change what is left of the historic character of the building. The declaration that staff will draft needs to read that the HPC

recommends a determination of no adverse effects for this property and reflect the correction regarding the location and history of the original Quain and Ramstad Clinic brought to the HPC's attention by Commissioner Nodland.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Zenker to approve the request of the lighting changeout/upgrade with corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hull and with Commissioners Nodland, Pursley, Swanson, Hull, Zenker, and Chair Engel voting in favor of the motion, the motion was approved.

NRHP NOMINATION – PATRICK E. BYRN HOUSE, 120 WEST AVENUE A

The HPC has been contacted as a courtesy to review and comment on a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Patrick E. Byrn House located at 120 West Avenue A. The nominated property is currently a contributing element within the Cathedral Area historic district. Any comments made by the HPC will be presented to the nomination's author, as well as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), for the consideration of inclusion within the final nomination form. The nomination is tentatively scheduled for review before the North Dakota Historic Preservation Review Board on April 25, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.. at the Heritage Center in the event anyone from the HPC is interested to see what that process looks like. Staff does recommend the HPC review the National Register nomination, and provide any comments to be conveyed to the North Dakota SHPO and the nomination offer.

Chair Engel has reviewed the nomination and had some comments. She asked if other members had comments and believes that the HPC can compile questions for the author amongst themselves.

Commissioner Swanson felt the author did an excellent job of writing the nomination, bringing very interesting elements of the personalities who were involved, including the architects, and the author covered all criteria thoroughly. Chair Engel agreed and felt it was a very clean document as well. Commissioner Nodland asked for clarification on what a statement of support entails and if a standard one the HPC uses exists. Chair Engel stated it is unknown if the HPC has one, but she has sat on that particular board, and a letter can be drafted stating the HPC likes the nomination, it's clear, the criteria it is nominated under is agreed upon, and the HPC overall thinks it is a good idea. It is then signed by the HPC. Commissioner Hull mentioned "criterion B" for people may have been an option for the application, but he does wholeheartedly support the nomination under "criterion C." Chair Engel stated a support letter would be drafted and any comments Commissioners had would be added with a goal of completion this week as the author presents to the board on the 25th.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Nodland stating the HPC supports the nomination, a letter of support will be drafted and signed by the Chair, and will be forwarded. Commissioner Hull seconded the motion. With Commissioners Nodland, Pursley, Swanson, Hull, Zenker, and Chair Engel voting in favor of the motion, the motion was approved.

2023 HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND GRANT UPDATE

Ms. Lauren Oster stated staff and Commissioner Nodland have met to discuss designs for the Downtown Historic District Streetlight banners. It was discussed that the design for these banners should highlight potential themes, people and streetscapes identified within the

National Register nomination form for this district. Staff and Commissioner Nodland are working to set up a meeting with other members of the previous subcommittee and have already been a part of the initial discussions to further work on this project. At this time, no action by the HPC is required.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

May is Historic Preservation Month. Ms. Lauren Oster presented a draft flyer in the agenda packet to the HPC of the selected events scheduled to celebrate Historic Preservation Month for the HPC to review. These activities will be promoted in a variety of ways, including social media and on the City of Bismarck's website. Staff will also work to post history facts from the timeline of Bismarck history, or quotes from local literature, that ties into one or more of the activities on the draft flyer. This will be posted throughout the month of May as to promote Historic Preservation Month. A proclamation will be presented at the April 22, 2025 City Commission meeting for Historic Preservation Month. Staff recommends reviewing the flyer and identifying any changes that should be made before it is distributed in May.

Commissioner Nodland updated the HPC that Commissioner Sakariassen is working on the local literature exhibits. In the past, a temporary box was placed on the door of the City/County building. It held the Downtown walking maps and this flyer so people downtown had access to both. Chair Engel encouraged all HPC members to choose some, or all, of the activities to promote or participate in. It would also be an opportunity to gain feedback from the community regarding their likes, goals, and/or thoughts regarding upcoming events in future years.

Commissioner Nodland requested that the link to the Bismarck timeline website be included on the flyer. Staff explained due to the layout of the flyer, space available and information to be included, the bottom left-hand corner does have a link and a QR code. It directs you to a separate area that has far more information available regarding the timeline, other locations that may be open, i.e. The Former Governor's Mansion, Camp Hancock, or the North Dakota State Archives, and highlights other historic preservation activities and events that the community can participate in throughout the month. Additional resources are included, as well as more ways to celebrate, and the digitized Downtown walking tour and Cathedral Area walking tour maps are noted as well. Staff can work through including the QR code in the different social media posts made throughout the month. Chair Engel also suggested an email be sent to the elementary schools within Bismarck with information of upcoming activities regarding Historic Preservation Month.

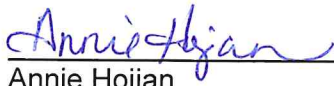
OTHER BUSINESS

None.

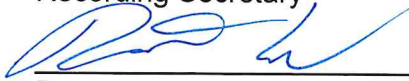
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Engel declared the meeting of the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission adjourned at 3:39 p.m. to meet again on May 21, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room.

Respectfully Submitted,



Annie Hojian
Recording Secretary



Damita Engel
Chair