

BISMARCK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

August 20, 2025

The Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission met on Wednesday, August 20, 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.

Commissioners present were Greg Zenker, Matthew Hull, Amy Sakariassen, Scooter Pursley and Vice Chair Beth Nodland.

Commissioner John Swanson and Chair Damita Engel were absent.

Staff members present were Annie Hojian – Office Assistant and Lauren Oster – Planner, Joshua Jyring – Assistant City Attorney.

Guest presentation, Emily Sakariassen, South Fork Historical Research.

MEETING INFORMATION

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made or submitted for the current agenda or prior June 18, 2025 agenda. Vice Chair Nodland closed the public comment period.

MINUTES

Vice Chair Nodland called for consideration of the minutes of the June 18, 2025 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Zenker to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2025 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, with corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sakariassen and with Commissioners Hull, Pursley, Sakariassen, Zenker and Vice Chair Nodland voting in favor of the motion, the motion was approved.

2023 HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND GRANT UPDATE

Ms. Oster provided an update regarding production and installation of banners for the Highland Acres Historic District and Cathedral Area Historic District banners. Banners are currently in production, and installation will occur within the next month. A notice was published through City of Bismarck social media platforms regarding phase I installation of banners in the Highland Acres Historic District. The HPC determined by consensus that a second notification regarding installation of additional banners be provided to the public via City of Bismarck social media platforms.

The brochures for the Highland Acres Historic District walking tour have been produced and copies are now available from Community Development. Ms. Oster asked how the HPC would like these

brochures distributed to the community. With the two previous walking tour maps, Downtown and Cathedral, commissioners informally placed them in areas they felt the community would be able to easily access them. Commissioner Pursley informed the HPC that the North Dakota Department of Tourism has a brochure distribution program that entities may consider as an avenue of distribution and he will reach out to them. Commissioners discussed methods of distribution and determined the following entities/methods would be explored by members of the HPC: North Dakota Tourism, Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center, The Bismarck Veteran's Memorial Public Library, hotels, emphasizing downtown area hotels, North Dakota Heritage Center, the Lewis and Clark Riverboat, Bismarck State College, the North Dakota Capitol Building, The Former Governor's Mansion, Camp Hancock, Highland Acres Elementary School (via Bismarck Public Schools Administration), the Bismarck Event Center, and the League of Cities for conference marketing and packets. Although the community concert series organized for the Highland Acres residential community has concluded, it is possible organizers of these events may be interested and available to help distribute brochures to interested parties. Brochures are intended for local residents, and those visiting our community. Commissioner Sakariassen stated the "little free libraries" located around communities are a good place to locate brochures.

2024 HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND GRANT UPDATE

South Fork Historical Research has completed and submitted the North Dakota Cultural Resource Surveys site-forms for the first twenty properties within the South Capital Survey project area. These site forms have been provided to the HPC for content and quality control prior to today's meeting due to the amount of information needed to be reviewed. Upon receiving comments and/or corrections from the HPC, the site forms will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review. To maintain the previously agreed-upon timeline, staff will need any comments from the HPC by 5:00 p.m. August 21, 2025. The initial site forms were more thoroughly researched than what is typical of a Class II Reconnaissance Survey, however, to keep within the agreed upon scope of the project, the remaining properties the HPC will review site forms for will only be evaluated as reconnaissance level efforts afford. Emily Sakariassen of South Fork Historical Research has provided a draft example of what a typical site form for reconnaissance surveys will look like and copies are available to HPC members. The reconnaissance level surveys will establish basic characteristics and trends within the survey area and the information gathered will only be sufficient to recommend eligibility in reference to a potential district. Staff recommends the HPC review and provide feedback on the submitted site forms to the consultant.

Emily Sakariassen explained that the work done on the reconnaissance survey sample of 20 properties was completed closer to an intensive level effort. Ms. Sakariassen chose to complete the sample properties in this way as an approach to orientating herself to the history of the neighborhood and specifically chose the 20 oldest properties based on the construction dates provided by City of Bismarck records. This allowed her to determine what primary and secondary resources are available, develop historical context and chronology, and gain knowledge about the neighborhood to better assess the remaining properties. As the information was found, including different people associated with each property, it was determined inclusion of this information would be beneficial. This is not standard for a reconnaissance survey of a potential historic district. Ms. Sakariassen is hopeful other methods to identify important people in the neighborhood will become available as work continues and site forms for the remaining 180 properties will be lighter in content. Ms. Sakariassen provided an example to the HPC of what future site forms will look like and contain so that HPC members are aware of the difference in work completed versus future work and why the difference in the

level of information exists. The main difference will be a shorter summary description. Visits to the Registrar of Deeds office will not be made, but she does have other resources available to do some historical research in a very efficient manner. It will be sufficient to make the required recommendation for whether or not these properties have integrity and would convey their historic character, and if they would be a "contributing" or "non-contributing" property to a potential district. Appreciation was expressed by the HPC for the additional research and efforts by Ms. Sakariassen and they are pleased with the results.

Commissioner Hull asked, regarding page two of the site form regarding "future recommendations checklist", why some of the site forms have certain categories for individual nominations, specific to a site, and others have "will not contribute to district potential" rather than both categories addressed for each site. Ms. Sakariassen explained "future recommendations" is a selected list, as individually eligible properties would require a more intensive research level. As Ms. Sakariassen had conducted more in-depth research for this sample of 20 properties, she felt there was enough information to say this property, specifically the Dr. Porter house at 824 North 4th Street, should be noticed by SHPO as a potentially individually eligible property beyond just the parameters of this project. In regard to other properties marked as "Reconnaissance Survey" or "Intensive Survey", SHPO was contacted for clarification to ensure consistency in the project. This classification is used to indicate to the SHPO if the research has been exhausted. If a property is not checked as "individually eligible", it indicates there is not enough information available to make a determination, and more research is necessary.

Ms. Sakariassen requested it be noted that the work provided to date is a preliminary evaluation; boundaries are arbitrary and management recommendations for a potential district may change as more information is found during the rest of the survey. Some properties already presented to the HPC for their review may be re-evaluated and another determination may be recommended. Vice Chair Nodland asked if Ms. Sakariassen was limiting herself to only one time period. Ms. Sakariassen explained she is not, and she did not have enough information at this time to provide a confident evaluation as to whether a property would be contributing or non-contributing until the whole potential for a district is understood. Next steps are to continue with the remaining 180 sites; all field work has been conducted, with the exception of two properties as Ms. Sakariassen is attempting to find a more opportune time to photograph the properties, assemble the forms, begin research and writing of each property to reconnaissance level. The 20 submitted to the HPC for their review have not been submitted to the SHPO. Upon HPC review and comments, and return to South Forks Historical Research, a submittal to the SHPO will be made within two weeks. Comments will be received from the SHPO and Ms. Sakariassen will address them as required. This will occur simultaneously with new reviews and submissions, and while there may be more to review at the end of the project, it will allow the opportunity to learn as the project progresses, define and re-define the areas and periods of significance, and make final recommendations at one time rather than go back and re-do any work.

Commissioner Sakariassen asked how receptive property owners have been and how interactions have progressed. Ms. Sakariassen stated that residents are receptive, and interactions have been positive. She has heard many stories and has received offers for historical photographs from current and previous residents of the neighborhood. Ms. Oster has shared survey results with Ms. Sakariassen, and she will be attaching them to the site forms to be submitted to SHPO and any relevant information will also be included in her narrative.

Commissioner Pursley asked what would cause a property in the area to be non-contributing and how does receiving that label effect the area; does it have any impact on whether an area is determined to be a historical district. Ms. Sakariassen referred to National Historic Register Bulletin 46, which gives additional guidance for evaluating properties that are historic residential suburbs, as well as some additional guidance for assessing integrity in terms of a multiple properties and sites contributing to a whole, such as a district, as well as assessing the integrity of a property. There are seven aspects of integrity that the National Park Service, through the National Register Program, looks for to be retained by the property, for it to be eligible. These include materials and if original materials still exist, if it conveys its original design, and if the setting is the same; each individual property is reviewed for its retention of those qualities. Things like major additions that are visible from the public right-of-way, replacement of historic siding with something that's not sympathetic, replacement of windows or enlargement of windows, are looked at cumulatively and do have an effect on the property being non-contributing to the district. In addition, if data supports a specific time frame thematically for the properties located within an area, and the property falls outside of that period of significance, it could make the property non-contributing. A non-contributing status means a property is still within a historic district, but does not have the benefits for potential grants regarding restoration. Properties that are now contributing can lose that status and become non-contributing if it is re-surveyed in the future. Determinations are made based on the present point in time. For the sake of the project, if it is found a qualifying number of properties does not exist, the argument for a district would not be available. A majority of the properties must exist in a district for it to be listed in the National Register. Vice Chair Nodland expressed that although a property may have been deemed non-contributing previously, it may be through research, a case can be made that a property is indeed contributing. Ms. Sakariassen informed the commission that she has found there are some property owners who have either recently completed, or are doing restoration work, and are actively trying to restore something to its original character or save some of the historic materials. She provided the Dr. Porter house as an example.

Vice Chair Nodland asked commissioners if discussion and comment held today would serve as the HPC's comment on this project. Commissioners present were in agreement. Ms. Oster stated no formal motion is needed.

250th ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF THE U.S.

Ms. Oster informed the HPC the U.S. will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of it's founding in 2026 and several groups around the community are already beginning to plan for this event. Although efforts and celebrations may not be specific to Bismarck history, there is still an opportunity to engage with members of the community and implement some of HPC's goals, specifically fostering civic pride in accomplishments of the past. Staff has reached out to City of Bismarck Administration and the Bismarck Historical Society to inquire on potential partnerships or to support current efforts. Other opportunities may include working with the Downtowners, Dakota West Arts Council, or Northern Plains Heritage Foundation as an example. Potential grant opportunities were presented in the agenda packet to the HPC, and Ms. Oster presented a brief overview to the commission.

The America 250 Tour is anticipated to be in Bismarck Wednesday, September 9, 2026, through Sunday, September 13, 2026. They have a goal to feature special events like a traveling exhibit, presentations, patriotic festivals or events and are looking for collaboration with local groups or organizations in curating local history exhibits, promoting events and partnering on local field trips with local school districts.

There are two grant opportunities available. The first is the North Dakota 250 Community Initiatives Grant. This is state funded and provides up to \$10,000. This requires a 20% match that can be cash or in-kind. Applications are currently open, but will not be reviewed until October 1, and will be reviewed quarterly after until funds are expended. The second is Celebrate America! Grant. This provides federal funds through the National Endowment for Humanities up to \$25,000 per application. This is a 1:1 cash match only. Applications are currently open and reviewed on a rolling basis.

Similar activities exist that would be eligible for both grants: speakers, screenings and discussion series, community events and family programs, exhibits (permanent or temporary) including interpretation, digital projects resulting in virtual exhibitions, web content, or virtual tours, educational materials and curriculum development for K-12 and higher education purposes, and research leading to documentary films, exhibits, books, or other products that reach the general public. Additional separate eligible activities specific to each grant are public art (related to exhibits/interpretation) and a trip to the North Dakota State Heritage Center and State Museum to view ND250 exhibit or a trip to a local organization to view ND250 exhibit or program (\$1,000 max) [ND 250 Community Initiatives] and meetings, conferences and symposia, and professional development and training [Celebrate America!]. Tory Jackson, Bismarck Historical Society, is eager to partner with the HPC.

Staff recommends the HPC determine the desired level of involvement they would like to have for these efforts, including activities or ways to engage community members in the celebration are identified, and determine what grant(s) should be applied for to support the celebratory activities.

Vice Chair Nodland asked for clarification of grant criteria, specifically for exhibits and speakers, and if these activities pertain to the US's 250th anniversary or Bismarck's local history. Ms. Oster explained for the National Endowment for the Humanities, as it is a federal grant, the criteria is very broad and the HPC would be able to articulate how the funds would be utilized very easily. The state grant may have additional information available, but the notice of funding does not include a lot of information other than what is a potential activity. Most activities are related to celebrating the past 250 years, but it could relate to North Dakota, through different places, innovations, or achievements that have contributed to the nation's overall history.

Discussion ensued and commissioners determined they would like to be involved, but are unsure as to what level, activities, partnerships, or funds would be associated at this time. Commissioner Sakariassen feels this is an opportunity for the HPC to develop a framework that could be utilized for future events and involvement also. Commissioner Zenker feels the HPC could support this endeavor, but the City of Bismarck Administration should lead any efforts. Ms. Oster has reached out to Jason Tomanek, City Administrator, and based on his response it would go a long way if the HPC was actively supporting this effort through discussions, brainstorming ideas or helping with grant funds. Ms. Oster agrees that the City of Bismarck Administration would take the lead in the efforts, with active support from the HPC.

Vice Chair Nodland stated that the HPC wants to be actively involved through partnerships with other organizations or agencies, in determining how best to accomplish this, and agrees to assist the administration in every possible way the HPC has available to them. This was agreed upon through consensus of HPC commissioners present. Potential grant funds, and who should apply, was discussed. Commissioner Sakariassen stated it would be beneficial if the HPC

applied for the grants. Vice Chair Nodland suggested that if there is a way to support the mission and vision of the HPC, the HPC would apply for the grant funds for their purposes, but that does not mean it would not simultaneously benefit the efforts of any entity the HPC partners with.

Commissioner Sakariassen stated the role of the HPC is to show the rest of the country how we fit into it as a whole and mentioned westward expansion. She suggested a story trail along the river, or creating a narrative, featuring westward expansion, the Lewis & Clark Expedition, and the take-over of this area, including capturing the Native Americans' perspective on life for the past 250 years. This material would still exist and could be used after this purpose for the history of Bismarck and the HPC's mission. Commissioner Hull stated opportunities exist for partnerships with Mandan, Lincoln, United Tribes Technical College, MHA Nation, and the State Historical Society. Vice Chair Nodland stated Bismarck has an important history as a steamboat landing and the development of the northern portion of the country, not only with steamboats, but with train travel and the development of a transcontinental highway system. She mentioned research as an eligible grant activity and suggested a potential project could be researching Bismarck's role in national history. The Celebrate America! grant may have the most potential for the HPC's endeavors.

The State Historical Society had a meeting recently and stated some event or activity that could be created to coordinate with the Red, White and Boom 4th of July celebration hosted by the City of Bismarck would be a great opportunity. Another idea was a symposia with local authors that could tie in with the anniversary of the Battle of Little Big Horn that will be occurring next year.

Vice Chair Nodland wanted to revisit the HPC's vision and where they are in the strategic plan. It is her position the HPC should take a lead role in representing the city's historic preservation in future endeavors instead of always partnering with someone else. She requested an update from the strategic plan committee at the next meeting.

It was determined HPC members should use the time between today's meeting and the next meeting to research the grant criteria and think of ideas to discuss at the next HPC meeting. It was suggested to find out what the Bismarck Historical Society has envisioned for grant funds, determine if the HPC can partner with them and also apply for grant funds to aid this endeavor. Ms. Oster suggested one or two commission members form a working group with City Administration or other groups to have a discussion as to how best the HPC can participate. Commissioners Hull and Pursley volunteered and will report any findings to Ms. Oster. She will then notify commissioners if any items or proposed activities require additional time to review to ensure any appropriate action(s) can be taken at the October 15, 2025, meeting. Whether a grant application would be solely submitted by the HPC, or as a partnership with another agency, it would need to be decided by the next HPC meeting in order meet deadlines regarding approval from the City Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Oster provided an update of the 2025 Historic Preservation Fund Grant. The HPC was awarded funding for two of three projects that were applied for: the Downtown Historic District survey and the Historic Preservation Plan. The subcommittee has waited to finalize activities until hearing back from the State. Once the contract is signed, work on the projects can begin.

The contract is currently undergoing the review process through various departments, and will be presented at the next City Commission meeting for their approval.

The Patrick E. Byrne house was officially accepted by the National Register of Historic Places on August 4th. Staff will work to update the National Register map available publicly online. Commissioner Hull asked if notification of this addition will be provided via social media and Ms. Oster stated she would request this through appropriate channels.

Commissioner Pursley informed Ms. Oster the Fargo-Moorhead Heritage Society has disbanded due to a lack of interest and fewer volunteers. All records they had are available through the North Dakota State University (NDSU) archives. As this is a similar organization to the HPC with a goal of providing history engagement to a community, it is relevant to bring to commissioners' attention.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Vice Chair Nodland declared the meeting of the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission adjourned at 4:18 p.m. to meet again on September 17, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REPORTS

Respectfully Submitted,


Annie Hojian
Recording Secretary


Damita Engel
Chair