

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
VILLAGE HALL - COMMITTEE ROOM
801 BURLINGTON AVENUE

NOVEMBER 20, 2014, 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Pro tem Casey called the November 20, 2014 meeting of the Architectural Design Review Board to order at 7:23 p.m. and asked for a roll call:

PRESENT: Mr. Casey, Ms. Englander, Mr. Larson, Mr. Riemer

ABSENT: Chairman Mattheis, Mrs. Acks, Mr. Davenport

STAFF: Village Planners Chrise and Ainsworth

VISITORS: Mr. Scott Lazar, 808 Maple Avenue, Downers Grove

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR - None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 28, 2014 meeting were approved on motion by Ms. Englander, seconded by Mr. Larson. Motion carried by voice vote of 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. ADRB Roles and Responsibilities.

Village Planner, Ms. Kelley Chrise explained the purpose of holding the ADRB meetings to the board members, recalling that part of a prior dialog was for the board to create a work plan to guide the board's activities. Ms. Chrise reviewed the board's role, noting it was to administer the historic preservation ordinance and to perform additional duties, as cited in Chapter 2 of the Village's municipal code.

B. Existing Regulations Overview

Reviewing a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Chrise discussed the primary regulation under the purview of the board was that of the historic preservation ordinance, specifically Chapter 12, which is a tool to allow residents to designate their properties and to preserve historical or architecturally significant sites, etc. She explained the difference between a landmark versus a historic district and the processes/criteria that had to be followed. Examples were cited. General questions followed on whether there was a time limit on how long a property could be landmarked, the inability to maintain a landmarked structure, and grant funding opportunities to maintain such properties. A review of the criteria for landmark designation and historic district designation followed. Questions followed as to whom determined a historic district's boundaries. Different

Certificates of Appropriateness were then explained as well as an explanation of the appeal process.

C. Work Plan Discussion

i. Comprehensive Plan – The purpose and vision of the village’s Comprehensive Plan was explained by Ms. Chrisse who pointed out that the plan identifies the physical and economic characteristics of the village projected for the next 15 to 20 years. The most recent plan was adopted in 2011. Further components of the plan were explained, i.e., housing styles, diversity in housing, and commercial development that the plan encourages.

ii. Historic Preservation Plan – Ms. Chrisse provided details of this plan and map on the overhead, identifying the two properties designated as landmarks in the village and the properties that were identified as being potential future designations. “Honorary” historic districts as identified by the Downers Grove Historical Society were also pointed out. Goals of the Historic Preservation Plan were explained in more detail. Ms. Chrisse added that this was where opportunities existed to coordinate preservation efforts and activities with other entities, such as the Downers Grove Historical Society and the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance, if the board was interested.

iii. Architectural and Historical Survey – Per Ms. Chrisse, this survey was completed last year and it provides a more detailed history of the village with the documentation of over 800 properties. The survey identified predominant architectural styles within the village. The village’s four survey areas were referenced on the overhead, along with potential individual and district designations noted within each area. Recommendations within the survey were also mentioned, such as combining this survey with the survey under the historic preservation plan, creating a historic district, educating the public about landmark designation, and facilitating the nomination process.

iv. Design Guidelines – Ms. Chrisse explained that the design guidelines were not a stand-alone document at this time; they were adopted in conjunction with the village’s facade improvement program that was adopted in 2009, and which program had not been funded recently. However, the design guidelines were used in other projects to maintain consistency and compatibility with the village’s “fabric” which Ms. Chrisse explained could be an opportunity for this board to consider whether the downtown guidelines needed to be extended throughout the entire downtown. The guidelines focused on a building’s massing, scale, and what was appropriate/inappropriate for the area, and encouraging higher-quality materials to be used, etc.

v. Brainstorming – Ms. Chrisse asked members to share their thoughts on what preservation should be within the village and whether it was being captured or whether it needed to be improved in certain areas. Asked if village administration had a general direction of what they wanted from the ADRB, Ms. Chrisse stated that as a CLG, the Village should work to increase the number of designated properties but the board would need to determine the activities and other initiatives that would support the achievement of existing preservation goals and recommendations. She explained the advantages a homeowner could take by obtaining funding through the state and federal governments if the owner wanted to improve his/her building’s facade.

Members commented that this was an opportunity for the ADRB to raise awareness of

historic preservation and preserving the character of the village, educating the public on available funding opportunities, and also forming a plan to educate the residents on what properties are eligible and communicating the same.

Resident Mr. Scott Lazara, 808 Maple Avenue, Downers Grove, generally spoke about the recent push for a historic district and the goal to partner with local community organizations. However, he cautioned the board to educate the public but to not lose control of the message. He also shared the challenges of creating a historic district but going about it one property at a time versus creating an entire district immediately.

In response, Ms. Chrisse stated that the board should determine what type of partnership and with what entities the Village should partner with to support the village's preservation goals. A partnership with one or more organizations may help to educate the public about preservation and encourage the nomination of properties.

Mr. Lazara shared that he opposed the recent promotion for a historic district but inquired as to how changes to Chapter 12 in the municipal code are made, wherein Ms. Chrisse encouraged the board members to review the chapter because modifications could be proposed. Any changes propose would require a public hearing before the board to offer an opportunity for public comment.

Chairman Pro tem Casey suggested that for the next meeting it would be beneficial to focus on the educational process, to understand the programs that are available, and to create an accessible way to link the residents to that information should they be interested in designating a home or district but also educating them as to the economic challenges of same. Some members raised the point that this board was not to arbitrarily determine a district, but was here to provide information to assist a group, individual or neighborhood if it decided to designate something. Ms. Chrisse stated that the board's role may want to be a village-wide focus on the preservation efforts that the board wants to put in place, as tools, to the residents or, hold a workshop on restoration efforts, such as window glazing or even maintenance on older historic homes. Or, as an initial step, to target those structures identified in the four surveys and to send the owner a copy of the survey with an informational sheet accompanying it and explaining what the survey means. She explained how the village could assist a person or group with designation process. She also recommended that the members review the village's zoning ordinance to see what modifications, if any, may be desirable, as it related to preservation opportunities.

For the next meeting Ms. Chrisse stated she would identify the goals within the various plans and create a matrix that the board could use to evaluate its goals, and then make any adjustments from the compiled list. Unfortunately, she explained, the ADRB did not have a budget for 2015. However, when the board establishes a work plan, it could identify future budget items and plan for them in the next budget.

It was further pointed out that there was no financial incentive for an owner to designate other than pride in ownership and the board had to find a way to recognize that owner. Mentioned was the fact that some communities have an annual award for the best rehab project, which was a low-cost recognition, along with news article write-ups, plaques, etc. Mentioned, also, was the fact that a Centennial Homes program was available through the village's historical society. Another suggestion included having a house walk of designated homes.

At this point, Ms. Chrissy asked each board member to choose a community and to research its preservation ordinance to see how it was organized. At the next meeting the board could assemble that information and use it as a list to help update the village's ordinance. Also, Ms. Chrissy suggested she could post any revisions to the ordinance on the village's web site in order to receive feedback from the residents prior to any public hearing process. Dialog then followed regarding the 51% approval needed for landmark designation and how that process could be revised in the ordinance, noting various examples existed.

In closing, Ms. Chrissy asked members to feel free to add any additional or unique information about their community when they researched them and she would email everyone tonight's PowerPoint along with the spreadsheet/matrix. A short dialog followed regarding the need for the village to have updated gateway signage to promote the historic nature of the village. Ms. Chrissy would follow up on that signage issue.

Ms. Chrissy announced the next ADRB meeting would be held January 22, 2015.

PUBLIC COMMENT – See above discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

MR. RIEMER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. MS. ENGLANDER SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 9:18 P.M.

/s/ Celeste K. Weilandt
Celeste K. Weilandt
(As transcribed by MP-3 audio)

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JANUARY 22, 2015, 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Matthies called the January 22, 2015 meeting of the Architectural Design Review Board to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked for a roll call:

PRESENT: Chairman Matthies, Mrs. Acks, Mr. Davenport, Mr. Casey, Mr. Larson,
Mr. Riemer

ABSENT: Ms. Englander

STAFF: Village Planners Kelley Chrise and Ainsworth

VISITORS: Mr. Ken Lerner, 4933 Whiffen Place, Downers Grove; Mr. Tom Taylor 321 Gierz
Street, Downers Grove

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR - None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2014 MEETING WERE APPROVED
ON MOTION BY MR. RIEMER, SECONDED BY MR. CASEY. ROLL CALL:**

AYE: MR. RIEMER, MR. CASEY, MRS. ACKS, MR. LARSON

NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: CHAIRMAN MATTHIES, MR. DAVENPORT

MOTION CARRIED. VOTE: 4-0-2

OLD BUSINESS – None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. CLG Community Comparison

Village Planner, Ms. Kelley Chrise thanked the board members for helping to research other Certified Local Government (CLG) communities and explained that she was able to review some documents from each of these communities as well. Ms. Chrise reviewed a slide depicting the various CLG communities and discussed the similarities and differences of their preservation programs. In reviewing the “owner consent” option, Ms. Chrise pointed out there are more communities that did not require owner consent for landmarks than those that required owner consent. For those communities that did not require the owner consent, many of them had extra provisions in their ordinance where a supermajority was required to approve a landmark

designation but also had had an appeals process. Ms. Chrise explained the options that some communities used for nomination and also those options to remove a landmark designation.

All communities that were researched did require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for non-contributing structures but none required a COA for typical maintenance and repair. Some communities do provide relief from a denied COA with a Certificate of Economic Hardship. However, Downers Grove and Geneva does not have such provisions although Geneva was looking to incorporate such relief into their ordinance. Continuing, Ms. Chrise summarized that some of the communities offer education of their preservation ordinance through brochures, walking tours, etc. while a couple of communities had small budgets for such things as mailings.

Unique items found while researching the various communities' ordinances included COA requirements based on "public view," wherein a structure that can be seen from the public right-of-way would be subject to COA. Anything that is not viewable from the right-of-way, on the other hand, would not require a COA, thereby reducing oversight of improvements that are not seen by the public. A unique aspect of Elgin's ordinance allows for temporary structures on designated properties. Geneva's Historic Preservation Commission reviews subdivision, planned unit developments, rezoning and variation requests for designated properties. Because Geneva's entire downtown is in a commercial district and is within a historic district, the commission ensures that proposed development is consistent with the characteristics of the district.

The City of Aurora, as described by Village Planner, Patrick Ainsworth, can designate an Urban Conservation District, which is intended to preserve areas that do not meet the standards for a historic district. Aurora's Preservation Commission is the decision-making body for designation and COAs; however, there is the ability to appeal to the City Council. Lastly, certain communities, as Ms. Chrise explained, do allow for certain emergency repairs without a COA.

Mr. Riemer noted that Naperville's historic preservation program seeks to maintain what currently exists. Member dialog then followed on why Downers Grove was keeping its CLG status, i.e., to provide education to the community, to offer tax freeze opportunities to its residents, and to review the historic preservation ordinance holistically.

In summary, Ms. Chrise explained that on February 3, 2015, staff will be summarizing aspects of the current historic preservation ordinance in a presentation to Village Council. It is anticipated that from this preservation, Council will provide staff with direction about potential changes they are looking to make or see investigated. Per Ms. Chrise, Council's desire to review the ordinance coupled with the most recent discussions with the ADRB provides an opportunity to holistically evaluate the ordinance that was enacted in 2007. Conversation opened up about the Maple Avenue property triggering discussion about the ordinance, whereby both Planners, Chrise and Ainsworth, explained the process that would unfold before the Village Council and what Council might expect of staff. Ms. Chrise indicated that staff has not been given clear direction thus far but this process will enable some re-education about the designation process, the intent of preserving, regulations that apply to designated properties, etc. Chairman Matthies believed the comparison research done by staff was beneficial to the Village Council.

Mr. Davenport voiced his support for the following topics: 1) the concept of the Urban Conservation District (neighborhood conservation district) model; 2) nominating without owner

consent or lowering the percentage for districts, 3) regulating based on what is viewable from the public right-of-way, and 4) emergency repair provisions.

B. Historic Preservation Ordinance

Ms. Chrise provided an overview of the village's historic preservation ordinance, noting its purpose and intent. She asked members whether the regulations, as written, supported the purposes and goals of the ordinance and whether the process was cumbersome or simple – noting that changes to the ordinance could be made. She explained the difference between a landmark and a historic district, the public hearing process, designation criteria requirements and the COA approval process.

Member comments followed that many citizens in the village most likely do not know this board exists, that educating the community is crucial, but they agreed that there may be ways to simplify the process. There was general consensus that more education might generate interest in preservation. Staff reminded members that this was a good time to review the ordinance to see whether it supports its intent, noting it has been more than 7 years since the ordinance was enacted but only two landmarks have been designated and no district has been nominated.

The chairman believed the issue might be more community attitude and inquired about what the residents want to accomplish. He believed that the community needs to better understand the benefits and limitations of historic designation, along with the role of this board, which may have less to do with the ordinance than with outreach. Staff concurred with the need for outreach/educational activities and wanted the commission to be aware and prepared for any ordinance modifications coming up in the future.

C. Work Plan

i. ADRB Goals Matrix – Ms. Chrise summarized the intent of the work plan is to assimilate preservation goals, purposes and intent from existing documents (ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, surveys, etc.) and determine their continued relevance. Ms. Chrise shared examples of activity recommendations that would support existing goals. Additionally, she described how some communities include the preservation of trees and inquired about the interest from this board in pursuing this type of preservation. Member comments followed that the word “Grove” was in the name of the village and that many visitors do notice the village's tree canopy. However, as one member voiced, a balance of owner property rights had to exist. Ms. Chrise gave an example of a tree preservation program in another community. Mr. Davenport supported the tree preservation topic and brought up that there could be some incentives or trade-offs with regard to this type of idea.

Ms. Chrise proceeded to discuss the Historic Preservation Plan and posed a question to the board members regarding the relevance of the plan, if an update was necessary or if other objectives were needed. Conversation followed regarding the village's historical survey and how staff was looking to make the website more user-friendly with possible CLG funding being available for that. Board members expressed an interest in using the website to generate interest in preservation and suggested websites that could be used as a template.

Regarding the goal of outreach and education, Ms. Chrise discussed that the board will

have to decide its highest priorities and long-term objectives. The board may need to partner with the Downers Grove Historical Society and the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance to achieve some of the preservation goals, rather than solely relying on staff. Conversation arose about having sponsors assist with preservation activities, Ms. Chrissy explained that it is possible to coordinate workshops that are sponsored by another group or organization.

Ms. Chrissy reminded that the members were already working on maintaining the Certified Local Government status and she was currently working on the board's annual report, of which copies would be forwarded to the members. Ms. Chrissy reported that the board had no funded grants at this time, but this board may want suggest to the Council to reinstate the program with only one or two projects funded per year.

Lastly, Ms. Chrissy reminded the board that they can add or remove goals from the matrix. Due to possible timing concerns of Council direction for the historic preservation ordinance, Ms. Chrissy suggested that the board plan on meeting next month (February 26th) with the possibility of a special meeting in March.

Members suggested that the board work towards establishing or reaffirming its priorities and that it meet every other month, besides what village council asks of the board. Chairman Matthies requested that at the next regular meeting, members come prepared to review the pre-existing goals and discuss the prioritization of the goals in order to put together a framework and establish a long-term plan for historic preservation in the Village. Examples followed, including improving the website to make it more user-friendly and needing clarification as to how much staff time is allocated for achieving preservation goals in the work plan. Additional comments included reviewing the current goals, identifying what the board would like accomplished and identifying the cost for such items. There was some discussion about sending the work plan to Village Council with a budget request, where ultimately the Council will make the final decision on what it wants the ADRB to accomplish through the budget allocation process.

Further dialog followed among members on how it should move through the goals list -- identify those goals that require no funding and those that do, and separate them by short-term versus long-term goals, for the next meeting. Ms. Chrissy explained how the village's website gets updated internally and the staff time involved in that process. The board reviewed Naperville's web site to get an idea of how user-friendly it was as well as the Downers Grove GIS site (parcel navigator).

ii. Brainstorming – Members raised ideas about a possible overlay ordinance and talked about having the various village committees communicating better with each other. Chairman Matthies recalled the initial discussions that this board held some years ago and was pleased to see some of those same topics returning tonight. A suggestion was made to make the historical survey a “live” document and to promote it to the residents.

Mr. Chrissy closed the discussion by asking members to send the goals to her in advance of the board's next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ken Lerner, 4933 Whiffen Place, Downers Grove, asked staff for a copy of tonight's presentation and handouts. Mr. Lerner asked for clarification regarding recommendations made

to the historic preservation ordinance prior to going to the village council, wherein Ms. Chrissy explained her understanding of the process to Mr. Lerner. Asked if staff had seen any changes or recommendations from council, Mr. Ainsworth indicated there had been nothing to date.

Mr. Lerner proceeded to comment about the attempt to create a historic district along Maple Avenue and he was very involved in that process. He offered to speak on that topic at a future meeting and proceeded to explain some of the questions his group had raised regarding the historic ordinance at that time. On behalf of the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance, Mr. Lerner offered to be a partner with the ADRB.

Mr. Casey suggested hearing from the both perspectives about the district nomination process; those in favor and those opposed to see the impact of the ordinance on both.

Mr. Tom Taylor, 321 Gierz Street, asked the board how the village “fell into the crisis mode” that it was in over saving a beautiful home. Poor zoning? Failure of council? Failure of the citizens? He believed if the Edwards house was lost, everyone would be to blame. He referred to Mr. Davenport’s earlier comment about a disconnect. Mr. Taylor stated he experienced that same reaction at last week’s council meeting when he suggested a plan to relocate the Edwards House to the corner of Main and Maple, as suggested by the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance. While he agreed that relocating the building was a great idea, he believed it was too late. Furthermore, Mr. Taylor asked what exactly was this board interested in – just historic buildings – or buildings in the future?

A member proceeded to explain how the ARDB was formed and how the ordinance was initially created to allow the general public to participate in order to preserve homes in their neighborhood. However, it was up to the community to request the designation and come to the ADRB for assistance. Unfortunately, this member mentioned that the ARDB was not given the tools to educate the public on the Edwards House and publicize it, other than through smaller avenues afforded to it.

Mr. Taylor appreciated the board taking on that charge but also pointed out how this room was filled with people last week, and now there was no one. He also noted that citizens become disengaged until something interferes with their comfort zone. Lastly, Mr. Taylor pointed out some buildings he considered at risk including the Tivoli, the Pinner Building and the post office and suggested that the public start considering them before they are gone.

Chairman Matthies stated that the inventory list in the historical survey was to identify those significant buildings worthy of being saved.

ADJOURNMENT

MR. DAVENPORT MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. MR. RIEMER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:20 P.M. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE OF 6-0.

/s/ Celeste K. Weilandt
Celeste K. Weilandt
(As transcribed by MP-3 audio)

