



Landmarks Commission

Whitewater Municipal Building Council Chambers,
312 West Whitewater St., Whitewater, WI 53190
*In Person and Virtual

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 - 6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Council Representative Orin Smith
Board Member Gloria Buley
Board Member Pat Blackmer

ABSENT

Board Member Penelope Alwin

STAFF

Taylor Zeinert, Economic Development Director (EDD)

CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the Consent Agenda will be approved together unless any committee member requests that an item be removed for individual consideration.

Unable to vote on the minutes due to no quorum. Item tabled until next meeting.

1. Minutes from December 5, 2024 meeting.

Unable to vote on the minutes due to no quorum. Tabled until next meeting.

HEARING OF CITIZEN COMMENTS

No formal Committee action will be taken during this meeting although issues raised may become a part of a future agenda. Participants are allotted a three minute speaking period. Specific items listed on the agenda may not be discussed at this time; however, citizens are invited to speak to those specific issues at the time the Committee discusses that particular item.

To make a comment during this period, or during any agenda item: On a computer or handheld device, locate the controls on your computer to raise your hand. You may need to move your mouse to see these controls. On a traditional telephone, dial *6 to unmute your phone and dial *9 to raise your hand.

None

VISIONING SESSION

2. Discussion regarding 2025 priorities for the Commission based on the list of future agenda items.
 - A. Discussion regarding Commission turnover
 - B. Discussion regarding renovations regarding Delta Zeta House
 - C. Discussion regarding possible new landmarks to be designated
 - D. Discussion regarding updating and reprinting the Landmarks Brochure.
 - E. Review Architectural and Historical Survey of Whitewater written by Carol Cartwright
 - F. Review and Discussion regarding Birge Fountain condition and needs.
 - G. Obtain a Report form Whitewater Community Foundation regarding donations received for Birge Fountain.
 - H. Discussion regarding having a community meeting with Jason Tish regarding the importance of historic preservation in community.
 - I. Discussion regarding educating relators, building inspectors, community service officers and the police department regarding local landmarks
 - J. Discussion regarding planning for America 250 in our municipality
 - K. Discussion regarding sending letters to local Landmark owners to maintain their properties and join the commission.
 - L. Discussion regarding recruiting more members to the commission and publicize the work the commission is doing
 - M. Develop a relationship with University and discussion regarding the two historic structures on their property.

Blackmer explained that the purpose for the meeting is to come up with the priorities for what Landmarks wants to do in 2025.

WATER TOWER

Blackmer stated that one of the big thing that needs to be addressed is the Water Tower, simply because the Commission needs to have a report back to the Common Council by May. We have engaged with the community, and there are members of the community who are willing to serve on the Starin Park Water Tower Community Committee. We would have to add a notification that there could be a possibility of a quorum of the Landmarks Commission at this meeting.

Members of the committee that have offered to serve on the Water Tower Committee are:

Gloria Buley
Dave Salsa who is the owner of the Quiet Hut
Bob Harrell who owns Dale's Bootery.
Jim Bilgen or Jane Bilgen
Lynne Binne
Kelsey Herald
Jordan Reilly

Blackmer stated that Smith, EDD Zeinert and herself would serve on the committee. She feels that Alwin, would also like to serve. We need to determine when do we want to meet. We don't want to conflict with other commissions and committees in the City.

EDD Zeinert stated that this committee can meet at the Municipal building as long as there is no other committee meeting. EDD Zeinert wanted to know if the frequency of the meeting would be once a month or twice a month.

Blackmer feels that the frequency, initially should be once a month. Than discuss as a group and select dates as appropriate and that everyone can make.

Buley asked about the May deadline.

Blackmer stated that John's letter stated May. However, unsure if that was the first meeting in May or the second meeting in May.

Smith stated that they would recommend the second meeting in May. Which is May 20th.

Blackmer asked how many meetings would that given the committee prior to the May 20th meeting.

Smith stated that it would be 4 meetings.

Blackmer asked if that would be enough meetings. She suggested probably 5 since the committee should meet in May prior to the meeting on the 20th.

Buley stated that she will not be back until the 28th of January

Smith suggested we could double up in another month, if needed.

EDD Zeinert asked if it would be ok for her to look at the calendar. And see what works. And send them to this body, by survey to see what works for everyone and than we can send out a finalized list.

Blackmer felt that worked. She is confident that the committee can sell the council on the fact that the restorations does not need to take place immediately. I think if we can can piecemeal it out with the suggestions we need to raise funding. The city is willing to commit the \$250,000 whether we tear it down or we apply it to restoration. I think we need to look at private sources of funding. We are looking at significant funding. But again the things that McEnroe has suggested doesn't have to be done right away. It can be done in phases. It can go out as much 10 to 15 years.

Buley asked about how much it was going to cost to tear it down. She thought it was something like \$800,000.

Smith stated that it was 1.6 million to save it and 600,000 to tear the Tower down.

Buley asked why it was only 250,000.

EDD Zeinert that it was \$650,000. The city had gotten a grant to go toward either tearing it down or restoring it. But she will need to talk to Brad to see if there is a time sensitivity on the grant.

EDD Zeinert asked if it would make sense to get folk engaged to do the fundraising process for us.

Blackmer asked if there would be a cost factor to that.

EDD Zeinert stated that there would be a cost factor. However, this was mentioned to John, the City Manager and he thought it was a good idea.

Buley stated that she thought that we have to get quotes, because we would be pulling figures out of the air.

EDD Zeinert asked if this was quotes on how much to privately fundraise or quotes on how much to restore it.

Buley stated quotes for restoration and fundraising.

Blackmer stated estimates. Blackmer asked Smith if they were sure about the \$600,000.

Smith stated that yes, because it was an extra million to restore it and \$600,000 to tear it down.

Blackmer stated we need to look for state restoration experts.

Blackmer stated that the Water Tower could be added to the National Historic Registry. It is an honorary sort of thing. It allows you to get tax benefits.

EDD Zeinert asked if the Water Tower should be National Registry.

Blackmer stated yes, to consider National Registry.

Buley asked what does putting the tower on the National Registry do for us.

Blackmer stated she doesn't believe we would get substantial grants from the government because it is on the National Registry.

Blackmer stated that we need to think about what are we going to do with the Tower. Its there in a park, probably one of the highest points in the city. How can we use the structure to bring in tourism and to bring revenue to the City.

Buley thought we should have an observation tower on top. Have an elevator inside. Have all the college students in the are program do a mural so as you go up in the glass elevator which you charge for you see all the community murals and have a nice museum type area on the bottom.

Blackmer stated that we need to come up with suggestions of the use for the Water Tower.

Buley asked if anyone had talked to the Chamber.

EDD Zeinert stated that Chamber is very committed to the Water Tower and they don't want to see it taken down. The Chamber uses it for spirit tours.

Blackmer stated that first we need to purpose ways to save the Water Tower and what it could be used for.

COMMITTEE TURN OVER

Blackmer stated that she feels that this is not something that needs to be addressed in 2025 at this point. She was able to recruit two new additional members. Hopefully, filling out the application this week. They are very young in their 20's.

Smith stated that they may have someone also in that age group who would join the commission.

Buley asked if 7 was the limit.

Blackmer confirmed that 7 was the limit.

DELTA ZETA HOUSE

Blackmer explained that they are looking at replacing their handicap ramp. She wanted to remind the committee that ADA trumps the landmarks commission. She asked that this be added to the agenda in February or March.

NEW LANDMARKS

Blackmer stated that is is one of the commissions responsibilities and we have several possibilities. She asked if anyone had read Carol Cartwrights book.

Buley stated that she is almost done reading, but it is a lot of reading.

Blackmer stated that she would suggest a couple of buildings in town.

1. Masonic Lodge. It has tremendous history. The last time she consulted with an individual he said no.

EDD Zeinert asked if had a bowling alley in it.

Blackmer stated that she didn't know.

2. Located on the University Campus. When it was privately owned Blackmer approached the individuals, they thought it was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright but of course it wasn't. It was designed by, not necessarily by a protege, but an individual who was an architect that had issues with Frank Lloyd Wright. It is currently the Catholic Ministries building. It is located on Prairie Street across from Starin Park.

3. Calvary Cemetery owned by St. Patrick's Church. It is possibly, one of two cemeteries in the United States located on a University campus.

EDD Zeinert asked if Griffin was the other one.

Blackmer stated no the other one is Notre Dame.

Buley asked if there was an incentive for being a landmark.

Blackmer stated that the only tax benefits are in the Historic Main Street District.

Buley stated they are very costly, as you know , you own one.

Smith asked for more explanation.

Blackmer explained that the only benefit you get being a local landmark is simply the designation that you receive, the ordinance that you need to follow, and in the past we used to give a you a small rock with a small plaque on it. If you live in the Whitewater Main Street Historic District than you can accrue tax benefits because it is on the National Registry. A landmark has to be on the National Registry to accrue tax benefits.

EDD Zeinert asked if there were consequences related to a landmark not being maintained.

Blackmer explained there was a landmarks hotel that was not being maintained. The landmarks commission stepped in and it was upgraded.

EDD Zeinert stated that some communities will highlight during landmark tours, to look out for certain buildings. Would that be something that would make someone feel important or make them upset because all these random people are looking at their home.

Smith stated that maybe, landmarks tours would be a good way to fund the the tower or fountain. Smith stated maybe have a tea party.

LANDMARKS BROCHURE

Blackmer stated that the problem is that the landmarks for sure need to be expanded to include additional landmarks.

Blackmer stated that if the Whitewater Chamber doesn't want to pay the cost of the brochure, than we go to the City or the Whitewater Foundation. The brochure is definitely priority this year.

REVIEW OF CAROL CARTWRIGHTS SURVEY

Blackmer stated that members should review the report. It is on historical law. And this would be at members convenience.

REPORT FROM WHITEWATER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION REGARDING BIRGE FOUNTAIN

EDD Zeinert stated that she attempted to call the Foundation three times to find out how much was in the account. She stated that she just ended up call Jim Caldwell directly to pull the numbers. It wasn't a lot between, \$2,000 and \$3,000.

Blackmer stated that McKay Laboratories from Ohio did the original assessment. It looks fine from the exterior but is deteriorating from the interior. The assessment was done almost 10 years ago. She thought it was 2017, it would be good for another 10 years. But 10 years is fading away. 2027 is coming up really fast. At that time they said it would have to be dismantled and taken apart and shipped off if we want to consult with them and have them do the restoration of it. The estimate at that time was \$100,000 going up to \$120,000.

Blackmer stated that not only do we need to raise money for the restoration of the Water Tower and the Birge Fountain, but we have a referendum coming up for the police/fire department and the Whitewater School District. We have the Whitewater Lakes District

not only taxing their area, but taxing the entire City of Whitewater so that residents are paying for the Lake. That's a lot of money and taxes keep going up.

Smith stated that smaller things like landmark tours are easier to buy into than a whole year-long tax rates. It is a one time thing where you can go do this fun activity and only impacts your budget for that month.

EDUCATION REGARDING LOCAL LANDMARKS

Blackmer stated that one of the functions of the Landmarks Commission by ordinance is public education. With the library closed we are in a difficult situation.

EDD Zeinert stated that we do have the Innovation center if you would like to play with that. They have multiple meeting rooms, the atrium and a kitchenette space.

JASON TISH COMMUNITY MEETING

Blackmer stated it would be nice to have Jason come down from the State Historic Preservation office, He is a State Historic Preservation Officer and tells the Whitewater community about why historic structures. Like the Whitewater Tower and the Birge Fountain, this could be our public education, not just for us but for the entire community to be invited to.

Blackmer is thinking this is something for September.

Buley asked if the Landmarks Commission had a logo.

Blackmer explained that we have always used City logo.

Buley stated that there could be a logo contest. And we chose the logo. This is what they do for Garland Fest and they have like 25 to 30 people submitted images. And its their art work on a T-shirt for a year. You could take branches from the territorial oak and make coins out of them and put the logo on it. You donate and you get a coin.

EDUCATION FOR BULDING INSPECTORS, REALTORS, COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICERS

Blackmer stated that it appears that your staff is well educated. She asked about staff turnover.

EDD Zeinert explained that Greg Noll has left but we explained to the new building inspectors today about the process.

AMERICA 250 IN WHITEWATER

Blackmer explained that this is being celebrated in 2026, but a lot of communities in the State of Wisconsin are in the process of planning. You have to have a place to put it on. Kevin Hampton from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum is actually the coordinator for one of the events that the entire country is doing which is called Two Lights.

Smith stated that not to create an abundance of committees, but perhaps it would be a good idea to make a community committee for America 250 too, because I think the University would like to be a part of that. Perhaps doing a committee with different benefactors throughout the city would be a good idea to start planning now. Although, perhaps the Fourth of July group is thinking of it.

EDD Zeinert stated the Fourth of July group is not.

Blackmer nominated Smith as chairman for this committee.

Smith stated that it would be kind of cool to do a mini lecture services at the University in the University Center. There is summer Auditorium which is kind of a movie theater but we could use that as a host for like a series of informational things. And if you work with the history department, a lot of times if there's educational lectures they'll offer their students extra credit to go to those.

UNIVERSITY LANDMARKS

Blackmer asked about the Little Red School House and the Halvorson Log Cabin on the University campus. She asked what is the university doing.

Smith stated not much that they have heard of.

Blackmer stated that there seems to be some concern from the general public that those two buildings, in particular elements of the log cabin that need to be kept in observation. It's not really the responsibility of the landmarks commission but the landmarks commission can push.

Smith stated that they would be meeting with Gabby Drawley and will ask her about this.

Blackmer stated that apparently both of these venues are closed all the time. There was some discussion about the university being willing to open them particularly for field trips for younger students.

Buley asked about whether the college owned the properties. How does that work?

Blackmer stated she was not sure how that worked. It has been there since the normal school.

WRAP UP

EDD Zeinert summarized things that came up. Landmarks tours and some sort of fundraiser. I don't know if you want to explore some sort of thank you event or letter that we had talked about previously for landmark owners.

Investigate what happened to the Territorial Oak Tree.

America 250, but that sounds like Smith will be handling.

Water Tower Blackmer stated that we need to come up with a plan and how are we going to expedite that plan. What are the funding sources. It is kind of broad scope. I don't think we need a timeline at this point.

Smith stated that there are some people, who will ask for a potential timeline.

Buley asked what the timeline is for the grant.

EDD Zeinert stated the grant timeline is something we're going to investigate.

Blackmer stated to send the thank you letter out in May since it is Historical Preservation Month and is it also National Archaeological month. One of things is to ask John to give a proclamation for the Historic Preservation Month

Smith suggested for 2026 since the Roberta's Art Gallery books a year in advance. To do a display regarding surrounding landmarks. They do it for free. You apply for an art series

show. It would be there for a month and they promote it. It could be photos, it could be student painted paintings. Sculptures or those old stones and plaques that were made to be shown as visible items. This would like be Fall of 2026.

EDD Zeinert stated that I think the Arts Alliance would be a great idea too.

Blackmer sated that we have lost the library for this year and probably next year as well.

Buley suggested that maybe some of the business would loan some of their photos, like Jessica's. They have cool photos.

EDD Zeinert stated we could use the Faces of Fairhaven as a concept. They matched up University Art Students with residents at Fairhaven. We could do the same thing for local landmarks, either showcasing the exterior and interior. This would be cool.

Smith stated sometimes you can get campus departments to sponsor these gallery presentations.

Blackmer asked if there was a cost with the gallery.

Smith stated I don't know, it depends on the installation , but generally if you can get the department to sponsor it, it kind of balances out, especially if we are just putting things on easels and hanging things. The person who runs the building operations, used to do lighting for the Olympics but now works for the university. We could do a lot of really cool lighting things in that area and educational things.

Order of Importance 1. Water Tower 2. Birge Fountain 3. America 250 4. Landmarks Brochure

NEXT MEETING DATE FEBRUARY 5, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned at 7:18 p.m.