



Landmarks Commission

Cravath Lakefront room 2nd floor 312 West
Whitewater Str, Whitewater, WI, 53190 *In Person
and Virtual

Wednesday, March 05, 2025 - 7:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Board Member Gloria Buley
Board Member Neil Hicks
Board Member Pat Blackmer
Board Member Kelsey Herold

ABSENT

Council Representative Orin Smith
Board Member Penelope Alwin

STAFF

Taylor Zeinert, Economic Development Director (EDD)

GUEST

Jordan Reilly

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A committee member can choose to remove an item from the agenda or rearrange its order; however, introducing new items to the agenda is not allowed. Any proposed changes require a motion, a second, and approval from the Committee to be implemented. The agenda shall be approved at each meeting even if no changes are being made at that meeting.

Motion made by Board Member Buley, Seconded by Board Member Reilly.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

CONSENT AGENDA

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

1. Approve Minutes of December 4, 2025

Motion made by Board Member Reilly, Seconded by Board Member Blackmer.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

2. Approval of January 14, 2025 Visioning Session Minutes.

Motion made by Board Member Hicks, Seconded by Board Member Buley.
Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

3. Approval of February 5, 2025 Minutes.

Minutes tabled until corrections can be made.

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

STAFF REPORT

4. Staff Report regarding Main Street Historic District Banners. **(ED Zeinert)**

The group had asked that EDD Zeinert investigate the Main Street Historic District Banners. The Streets Department was able to locate most of them.

Blackmer had some concerns that some of them were missing.

EDD Zeinert stated that Streets has assured her that all the banners they have, have been put up.

5. Staff Report regarding the Birge Fountain Account: Whitewater Community Foundation. **(ED Zeinert)**

EDD Zeinert stated that she was able to contact Jay at the Whitewater Community Foundation to see how much we have in the Birge Fountain Account. You will see on page 26 that we have about \$3,200 dollars. I will note, that from a Staff level that the cost to repair the fountain is exponentially more than what we have in our account.

Blackmer stated that she also received an email regarding the Birge Fountain Account. I understand that Ben Adamitus the former chair and Kori Oberle the former vice chair are still listed on the account. They would be the ones to authorize expenditures from that account. The individual handling the account for us indicated that should be changed. And then Blackmer and Buley would be the signatories.

EDD Zeinert stated that she has made that clerical change.

6. Staff update for exterior renovations of the Delta Zeta House. **(ED Zeinert)**

EDD Zeinert stated that Geri Katz had contacted the office and I had reached out them. Delta Zeta is looking at making exterior changes, specifically to make sure that the front and rear entrances are ADA compliant. At this time, they are looking for bids

however, are struggling with finding someone who can accommodate the historic needs of this building. Based on Gloria's experience with Hamilton House and Pat's experience on the Landmarks Commission, I had reached out to them to see if they had any good options or suggestions. I do think that this group should investigate at some point, putting together a suggested list of contractors, so that in the future when home owners come to us we have an approved list to show them. If it weren't for the personal experiences here, I would have no idea where to start.

Blackmer asked if Gerri was satisfied.

EDD Zeinert stated that she has not heard back.

7. Staff update regarding status of Landmarks Brochures. **(ED Zeinert)**

EDD Zeinert stated that at the February meeting the group had discussed updating the Landmarks Brochures to make sure that it was both in English and Spanish. Staff had reached out to the tourism board about updating costs. Since reaching out to that staff person, that staff has left the tourism council. I was able to talk to Lisa Dawsey Smith who is the head of Downtown Whitewater, which oversees the tourism council. Lisa Dawsey Smith shared with me that there are over 500 brochures of the current Landmarks brochure that had never been distributed. I bring this up because I am looking for guidance on whether you just want us to use the remaining 500 brochures we currently have? Do you want us to print new ones?

Blackmer stated that she has possession of the 500 brochures. Lisa Dawsey Smith gave them to her when they were relocating from downtown to the White Memorial Building. They found them packed away someplace in a box hidden away. We were not aware that they still existed. I am distributing the 500 brochures, as needed, to different areas of the city. I was invited to a meeting on March 12 by Lisa regarding funding of the brochures. I would suggest we approach them now for funding at a future date.

EDD Zeinert wanted to clarify the "they" was the local tourism council.

Blackmer feels that at this point in time we need to dispense of the 500 brochures we currently have. However, at a future point in time, perhaps later in the year, they provide funding for the new brochures.

EDD Zeinert asked if Blackmer was asking for EDD Zeinert's opinion. She stated that she doesn't think it hurts to ask.

Buley stated some of her guests would complain the brochures were too old. Here they are going to see the Territorial Oak and it is no longer there.

Blackmer stated that there are only three significant structures that are not in the landmarks brochure. She would not remove the Territorial Oak. It was the site that was the important thing, even though the tree is no longer there.

EDD Zeinert stated that it sounds like we are continuing with the March 12th board meeting, to request funding for new brochures.

Motion to seek funding at the March 12th Downtown Whitewater Meeting for new brochures.

Motion made by Board Member Buley, Seconded by Board Member Blackmer.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

8. Staff Report on the Community Committee regarding Starin Park Water Tower. **(ED Zeinert)**

Blackmer stated that all members were in attendance at the meeting. We are going to move forward developing a plan at this point in time. Our hope, is to present the plan and ask for allocated funding.

Hicks feels that details will always help. If you come back with a very detailed report stating this is options A, B and C and we prefer A. We estimate it is going to cost x amount of dollars. And we want to go with this because. It will help push it along. I do like the idea that if you want to get more detailed information coming to common council and asking that we need to get more details before we can provide a legitimate plan. And it's going to cost us \$5,000 or \$10,000 for this engineering report. The money is going to always be the issue.

CONSIDERATIONS / DISCUSSIONS / REPORTS

9. Discussion and possible approval of a plan of action related to the broken Ceramic House Plaques and forms.

Blackmer stated that many years ago the City of Whitewater decided they would hire an art student at the University of Whitewater and she would design plaques. These plaques would represent the architecture style of the different local landmark residences in the City of Whitewater. What happened is it did not materialize. The City of Whitewater spent \$1,600, and the artist did not complete the project. We retrieved all the work that the artist had done and we had them stored at my residence and then they finally moved to the White Memorial Building in the basement. I was reticent at that time to throw them away, because the City of Whitewater had paid for it. Many of them are broken.

EDD Zeinert stated that she would defer to the Landmarks Commission. There really is no use for them and the majority are broken. It may make sense to throw them away.

K. Reilly asked were these supposed to go on the front of the houses.

Blackmer stated that was one of the issues, of course. Adhering this to a local landmark property, particular one that could of been on the National Registry. Just the fact that it is a local landmark, you can't change the exterior. And the size of these plaques is quite large. When the initial plaques were given to the properties, that were not located on Main Street they were very small about the size of a business card. The properties that are located in the Historic district all have stones with brass plaques in front of the house.

Buley asked when this was started.

EDD Zeinert stated that if you turn to my memo on page 31, I have attached the minutes from 2014, 2015 and 2016. These were the only items I could find in record of the plaques. They have been sitting in the basement of the White Building. The city has

cleaned, renovated and rented that space. I think they are beautiful, but many of them are broken. I think the Smith-Allen House is the only one that has truly kept together. Acknowledging that this impacts Landmarks we wanted to bring it to this body. If it were up to staff we would just throw it away.

Blackmer stated that she would take the Smith-Allen House plaque and eventually donate it to the Whitewater Historical Society.

EDD Zeinert stated that this is up to this body to decided.

Blackmer pointed out that a lot of these are actual molds.

Buley asked how many actual plaques do we have?

Hicks asked since we have the molds and you can make them. Would this be something appropriate to donate the molds to the Makers Space. Let them make this a project of these.

Blackmer stated that the artist is still in the area.

EDD Zeinert stated that she could ask Diane, however the last time Landmarks asked them if they wanted something, they stated thanks but no thanks and it was a bookshelf.

Blackmer stated that she doesn't think the Library is an appropriate space and the Historical Society has limited space.

Blackmer asked Hicks if it would be appropriate given these are City property to ask the people in these houses, if they wanted them instead of just throwing them away.

Hicks stated that it may be City property but it has been 10 years and likely written off. So it would be appropriate.

Blackmer stated that if something is intact, why don't we donate it to the owners of that house.

EDD Zeinert asked what if the owner doesn't want it?

Blackmer stated than give the option to the the Historical Society. If they don't want it, than throw them away.

EDD Zeinert asked what do we do with the molds?

K. Reilly stated she likes the idea about donating the ones to the home owners. The plaques, you cant adhere them to the outside of the house.

Hicks stated trash the molds.

K. Reilly agreed with trash the molds.

Hicks stated we will be doing this again in 10 years when someone finds them in the basement of City Hall.

EDD Zeinert stated she will work with the facilities crew to get rid of the molds and work with Pat to get the phone numbers of the owners for the unbroken plaques. And the broken ones we can throw away.

Motion to throw away the molds and the broken plaques and donate the intact plaques to the home owners.

Motion made by Board Member Reilly, Seconded by Board Member Hicks.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

10. Discussion of possible plans for Landmarks Commission and America 250 in Whitewater.

EDD Zeinert stated that she has spoken with Orin and he would prefer to start in April and that he planned to hit the ground running.

11. 11. Discussion and possible action on new landmarks to be designated.

Blackmer stated at this point and time, I don't believe that any designation of local landmark has occurred. And if you have read anything in Carol Cartwright's survey she did in 2008, you will know there are many residences in the City that would be appropriate to designate as local landmarks. There are some private structures in the City that would also qualify. Her suggestion is to look at things like, Premier Bank because of it's unusual architecture and see if they would be interesting in landmarking. It has always been my philosophy that we ask permission of the homeowner even though we have the right to go landmark a structure without asking the permission of the homeowner. If we wish to landmark a City owned property, they we need to ask permission of the Common Council.

EDD Zeinert asked from a staff perspective is there criteria on what is a landmark and what isn't? Is there a rubric?

Blackmer stated that it is all in the ordinance. Generally, what we do is look at things that have architectural significance. The other structure in the City is the Masonic Lodge, because of it's history and the length of time it has been there. They were asked several years ago and they said no.

EDD Zeinert asked do we know if the ownership has changed since they were asked the last time?

Blakmer stated that the ownership had not changed. They had only talked to one individual last time and it didn't go any further.

Buley stated that she feels that it is totally unfair, just to take someone's property and list it as a historical landmark. I also, feel that when you sell a piece of property, there is a little block that states is this a historical property. If you are going to ask someone to do that, they deserve the same respect as you would selling something as to what it means to be a historical piece of property. I think that it should be spelled out about what that means moving forward so that when someone wants to fix things.

Blackmer stated that it is in the city ordinance.

Buley stated that when you go ask someone, they are not going to go out and read the city ordinance. if you want them to be a landmark, tell them what they are up against.

K Reilly asked about if there was a landmark fee.

Buley stated she has never paid a fee.

EDD Zeinert stated that one concern that she heard was that this board meets once a month and if something drastic happened and approval was needed from the board you would have to wait.

Blackmer stated that we have the right to have emergency meetings.

Matter was tabled to allow group to think about landmarks.

12. Discussion and possible action regarding the status of the Territorial Oak.

Blackmer stated she attended the Urban Forestry Meeting on February 24, 2025. They had a discussion regarding the Territorial Oak. What is remaining of the Territorial Oak is located at the Department of Public Works garage. A slab would be given to the Whitewater Historical Society, a slab would be given to the Walworth County Historical Society and the branches would be cut into what they called coins. To be given out as tokens and gifts and a significant part of the tree itself would be located at the Starin Park Arboretum as a playground for children. That leaves us with the stump that is located at the corner of Franklin and Main. At this point in time, it was their suggestion to leave the stump, and reposition the signage.

Buely stated that as long as it is not a liability to the city as an unsafe stump, it would be cool to leave it there.

Blackmer stated it will continue to deteriorate and maybe at that point it will become more of a safety issue.

K. Reilly asked if the plaques were still there.

Blackmer stated they are not, but would need to be replaced. It was the tree yes, but the significance is the actual site. It was the first survey point for the City of Whitewater. Even though the tree is gone, which is a shame, it is the site that is the valuable aspect of it.

Motion on keeping the stump.

Motion made by Board Member Buley, Seconded by Board Member Reilly.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

-America 250

-Designated Landmarks

-Territorial Oak

-Plaques

NEXT MEETING DATE APRIL 3, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Motion made by Board Member Hicks, Seconded by Board Member Blackmer.

Voting Yea: Board Member Buley, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Blackmer, Board Member Reilly