

MADISON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting – September 8, 2020

Meeting conducted remotely through Zoom, with assistance from Michael Pellessier, Communications & Technology Coordinator for the Borough of Madison.

Attending: Madison Historic Preservation (“HPC”) Chair Janet Foster; Executive Chairs Mary Ellen Lenahan and Dr. Jill Rhodes; Members David Luber, Max Hart, John Solu and Carmine Toto (connected by audio); Recording Secretary Laurie Hagerich; Council Liaison Carmela Vitale and HPC Attorney Jonathan Testa. Absent: Members, John Forte (excused) and Chris Kellogg (excused). Several members of the public, including Sandy Kolakowski, for Save Madison Theater, were present.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Foster at 7:30 pm and Ms. Lenahan announced the meeting was called in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. A verbal roll call was taken by Ms. Hagerich.

The minutes of the August 11, 2020, Public Meeting were considered and on motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the minutes were accepted as written.

Sign & Façade Update:

Ms. Lenahan reported there were no new Sign and Façade Applications.

Old Business:

Preservation Celebration Update:

Ms. Lenahan reported the Preservation Awards will be made at a Council Meeting on September 30. Mr. Luber has submitted an article to *The Madison Eagle* and it appeared in the on-line version last weekend. It will also appear in the print version, as well as other on-line news media.

Report of Subcommittee for Ordinance revision:

Dr. Rhodes reported the final draft of the new historic preservation ordinance has been shared with the Borough Administrator Ray Codey and he has distributed it to the Zoning and Planning Boards, as well as Susan Blickstein, the Borough’s planner. Feedback was received and this will be sent to Jason Hyndman so that he can consult with the Zoning and Planning Board attorneys to resolve any issues. The Mayor and Borough Council have also seen the attorney’s comments, and the comments will be sent to all HPC members.

Presentation of revised Preservation Documentation of Lyons Theater building by Saxum Development Historic Preservation Consultant:

Saxum Attorney Peter Wolfson was present, along with historic preservation expert Barton Ross, and Saxum representative Brandon Alviano to present revised Preservation Documentation for the Lyons Theater. Dr. Rhodes excused herself because she was not part of the voting process on the July 2019 Resolution.

Ms. Foster explained that revised documents were received on September 2, consisting of the following 6 documents: A poster and interpretive text to be installed on the new building explaining the historic theater; History Report; Property Survey; Specifications for the demolition of the historic theater; measured drawings including floor plans,

elevations, and sections; and photographs made to HABS standards, all of which are filed in the drop box cited on the September Agenda and available for public review. An additional document, an elevation drawing of the proposed replacement building was sent to the HPC on September 8. This shows the proposed location on the new building of the re-used Lyons Madison Theater 1925 stone plaque. The drawing also illustrated a proposal for placement of a facsimile of the original ticket booth on the exterior, and the placement of the interpretive materials requested by the HPC in the July 2019 Resolution.

The meeting was turned over to Mr. Wolfson and Mr. Ross. Mr. Wolfson expressed hope that the revised documents would satisfy conditions 5, 6, and 8 of the July 2019 Resolution on Demolition. He stated the developer is prepared to save any historically significant artifacts found during the demolition and turn them over to HPC or Madison Historical Society, and a number of bricks which are thought to be of unusual design, would also be saved and turned over. The Borough has indicated the historic elements, including the chandeliers, can be stored in a safe indoor location on Borough property. Mr. Ross then explained what steps had been taken in revising the documents to comply with HPC recommendations, including updating maps, making another visit to the site to note historic features, taking a photo of the diamond-pattern facade brick, adding a section drawing to the measured drawings of the building, creating a narrative history and adding sources and updating the time lines.

Mr. Wolfson then spoke of the revised design for the new building, with three floors instead of four, reduced height and massing, and other modifications sensitive to HPC recommendations. A rendering of two elevations of the new design for the building was shown, as well as an artistic rendering of the ticket booth replica and its proposed location in an entrance area next to the Post Office. If there is interest in displaying the chandelier, Saxum would cooperate. The complete set of plans for the revised design will be available for review by HPC after submission of the plans to the Zoning Board.

Comments from members of the Commission included: Ms. Lenahan recommended several edits be added to the History Report that was prepared by Barton Ross for Saxon Development, and she will send the suggested language. In response to a question, Mr. Wolfson indicated the permanent interpretive material will be contained within two 2'x 3' plaques, not one, as shown in the drawings of September 8. It was noted the Borough is willing to store the historic elements in an indoor space. Ms. Foster thanked Mr. Ross and Saxum for making revisions to the documentation requested by HPC, such as adding the cross-section drawing, including narrative descriptions for the photographs and clarifying the specifications for the demolition. She commented that she hoped the material used for the Lyons Theater stone plaque can be determined after its removal, since this is important information. Also, an appropriate placement of the plaque will help to avoid confusion between the historic material and the new building elements.

The location for the ticket booth replica was discussed and whether it is adequately visible to the public in the location proposed. Members of the HPC felt that a facsimile ticket booth in a rear exterior location was not doing anything to preserve the ticket booth as a recognizable symbol of the old theater, nor did the facsimile seem to make any sense on the new building. Mr. Wolfson's response was that he felt that since the original ticket booth is not salvageable, the facsimile proposed satisfies the intent of the condition. Mr. Wolfson proposed that the facsimile ticket booth be deleted from the new building. Further discussion led to the offer of the original ticket booth to the HPC or the Madison

Historical Society and placing a photograph of the original ticket booth in the permanent interpretive materials. The HPC agreed.

Mr. Wolfson asked the Commission to consider that honoring the Theater legacy through the historic interpretive plaques is sufficient and that the requirement for preservation of the actual ticket booth be waived. He again asked that approval for the demolition be given, especially in view of the revised design for the new building with reduced height and massing. The HPC was not considering or commenting upon the other changes to the new building, and may do so when it is presented to the Zoning Board.

Public Comment:

Sandy Kolakowski, for the Save Madison Theater group, commented that she appreciated the efforts made in the revisions to the historic documentation but disagreed with the statement that reduced theater attendance was caused by digital streaming. In her view, the demolition of the theater is the reason there will no longer be opportunities to attend movies in Madison.

No other members of the public wished to speak and Public Comment was closed.

Ms. Foster polled the HPC members as to whether they are satisfied that Saxum has met the conditions of documenting the theater history, preserving the plaque and developing interpretive materials to be displayed in a prominent place and would support approval of the demolition.

Mr. Solu stated he felt the historic elements would be safe-guarded with storage by the Borough and he would support approval of the demolition. Ms. Foster, Mr. Hart, Ms. Lenahan and Mr. Luber were also were in favor of approval.

Accordingly, the Commission unanimously agreed that Saxum Development has met the conditions of the Resolution and a confirmation letter will be sent. The location of the stone plaque will be refined as the designs for the new building are finalized. Mr. Ross will work with Ms. Lenahan on adjustments to the timeline and historic report. The Commission is in agreement that the conditions are complied with pursuant to the conversations at this meeting, with the exception of location of the stone plaque, to be determined at a later date.

Mr. Testa will prepare a letter to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board confirming the decisions made, with the reservation for location of the stone plaque, which will be determined after submission of the plans for the new building, subject to review at a public meeting.

It was agreed there was no need for an Executive Session.

Other Business, Future Meetings, Adjournment:

Master Plan Update:

Mr. Luber reported public comment on the Master Plan revision is closed and there is a meeting with the planners on September 23. There will be a public session to discuss the comments and an opportunity for the Committee to share comments with HPC and with the public.

The next meeting of the Commission will be on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, via Zoom.

There being no further business, on motion made, seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Laurie Hagerich, Recording Secretary