



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

January 8, 2025

4:00 PM

Minutes

Members Present: Rick Pukenas, Josh Cline McGee, Alexis Gore Graves, Tal West, Bonnie Bray, Joanne Wesson

Staff Present: Penny Tysinger, Historic Preservation Planner
Maureen Meehan, Planning Services Director
Tori Deviney, Deputy City Clerk

A. Chair Pukenas called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

B. The invocation was given by Ms. Graves

C. Chair Pukenas led the Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Bray and Mr. West were brought into the meeting as members.

D. Approval of Agenda

The motion was made by Mr. McGee and seconded by Ms. Wesson. ***Unanimous vote, Motion carried.***

E. Approval of Minutes

1. Minutes of the December 4, 2024 Meeting

A motion was made by Ms. Bray to approve, seconded by Mr. West. ***Unanimous vote, Motion carried.***

F. Public Comment

None

G. New Business

None

H. Old Business

1. Final Draft - Design Standards

Ms. Tysinger began the meeting by discussing the current status of the draft document of the Design Standards, explaining that it was still a work in progress. She noted that while the document was mostly complete, the consultant was in the process of making final revisions. She pointed out that there were many red revisions, particularly in the later sections, and emphasized that the members should focus on these changes as they reviewed the document. She mentioned that the consultant would be working on refining the introduction, historical write-up and appendix sections in the coming month. Additionally, the consultant would be preparing the local designation report to present at the next meeting.

Ms. Tysinger acknowledged that there were still some typos, strikeouts, and formatting issues in the document. She encouraged the members to review it with fresh eyes, noting that it had been some time since they had last seen it. She asked that any comments be submitted before the next meeting so that more formal steps could be taken. She emphasized that waiting until the meeting to provide feedback would cause delays in the process.

A tentative timeline for the project was then shared. Ms. Tysinger hoped that the map, standards, and designation report could be approved in the February meeting. Once these steps were completed, the state would have the month of March to review the standards and report. In April, the planning board would likely begin reviewing the overlay zoning process, and the aldermen were expected to take up the matter in May or June. If everything proceeded according to plan, the adoption of the project could happen by July 2025.

The discussion shifted to new state legislation that could complicate the process. The law now required that 100% of property owners agree to down zoning before it could be carried out. Ms. Tysinger explained that this could potentially affect the creation of the historic district, as it would require every property owner to agree to the additional regulations. She acknowledged that this new law introduced challenges but assured the group that the Commission had decided to continue moving forward with the local designation despite these concerns.

The members expressed frustration about the possibility of one person opposing the project and halting the progress. However, Ms. Tysinger reassured the group that they did not expect the situation to unfold in that way. She shared that there had been rumors that the legislature might remove this provision but noted that it had not been removed during the final adoption. There were additional updates about the ongoing legislative session, with Ms. Meehan confirming that it was set to reconvene the following week.

The conversation turned to the potential delays and challenges of the process. Mr. West reflected on a previous conversation from the prior year when the group had hoped to have the project completed by spring. Ms. Bray asked what would happen if the project were approved by the planning board and the aldermen but could not be adopted due to the new law. Ms. Meehan confirmed that in that case, the project would simply sit on a shelf, waiting until it could be used. This provided some reassurance to the group, who were hopeful that the project could proceed without further setbacks.

Ms. Tysinger then explained that the planning board's role would be limited to reviewing the rezoning process and adding the overlay district to the map. The planning board would not be involved in reviewing the standards, and the aldermen would only be able to take action once all the other steps were completed. She stressed the importance of public education in the coming months, particularly in ensuring that the public understood the work that had been done and how the document had evolved over time.

Ms. Wesson expressed optimism, saying that it was a relief to finally see the project in print. She pointed out that the public would have an opportunity to understand the history of the city through the images and information included in the report. Ms. Tysinger agreed, praising the group's hard work and commitment. She noted that the standards had already undergone a cursory review by the state, and with the adjustments made based on their feedback, the state's review would likely proceed smoothly and fast. The designation report, however, had not been seen by anyone yet, and Ms.

Meehan clarified that the state had 30 days to review it once it was submitted.

Ms. Tysinger expressed confidence that the project was nearing completion. She thanked the members for their support and emphasized that, with their input, the project was close to being finalized and ready for approval.

Ms. Graves inquired if the down-zoning would occur after the state returned it, to which Ms. Tysinger clarified that once the state returns the documents, it would be time for the planning board to proceed with the overlay. Mr. West expressed concerns shared by other Commission members about the slow pace of the process, noting that they feared a repeat of the 1980s situation where progress stalled, and the project remained unfinished. Ms. Tysinger was asked if the project had progressed far enough back then, but members indicated it likely had not. Mr. Pukanus pointed out that the current plan seemed more concrete compared to the earlier conceptual phase, and expressed hope that the progress would continue.

Ms. Meehan, reflecting on the timeline, acknowledged the frustration but also emphasized the significant progress made by the Commission, noting that many boards could take several years to accomplish what this one had done in less time. She commended the team's hard work, stating it was a great accomplishment. Ms. Bray also praised the city's decision to allocate resources to this effort, appreciating the contributions of previous team members like Deputy City Clerk Tanya Shannon and Development Services Director Travis Henley.

2. Updates

Ms. Tysinger then provided an update on issues affecting the historic district, including the Board of Aldermen's efforts to address right-of-way obstructions and bring compliance to public spaces. Ms. Meehan then spoke more in-depth about it, mentioning that there would be grace periods for non-compliant properties, and the city had issued public information on this. The ordinance would allow certain vegetative encroachments to remain, like plants in the right of way, though some hard structures like fences and trellises would need to be removed. Specific conditions for parking pads were also outlined, noting that they could not be reserved for private use.

Ms. Graves asked about the fairness of reserving one parking space in front of her house, particularly when others across the street had ample space. Ms. Meehan explained that while parking pads could be installed, they could not be reserved for individual use since the right-of-way is public. Ms. Graves expressed her frustration, sharing how the paving of Howe Street had impacted the available parking in front of her home. Ms. Meehan acknowledged the concern but reiterated the city's stance on public use of parking spaces.

Ms. Tysinger recognized the challenges of addressing parking and right-of-way issues in downtown areas, where smaller lot sizes and the growing presence of cars in older neighborhoods make finding solutions more complicated.

Chair Pukanus then asked if any public that was present wished to speak, to which Mr. Bandera in the audience mentioned the potential impact of the 382 bill and commented on the challenges of maintaining parking in light of changes to the right-of-way. Ms. Meehan clarified that parking requirements were not mandatory for certain lots, particularly smaller,

non-conforming ones, but on-site parking could be accommodated if possible.

I. Other Business

J. Announcements

Chair Pukanus then announced the next meeting for February 5, 2025.

K. Adjourn

After no further discussion, Ms. Bray made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Graves. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***

Adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

X 

Charles Drew
Chair

X 

Tori Deviney
Deputy City Clerk