

FERGUS FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 3, 2023

The Fergus Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at 12:00 PM in the Council Chamber of City Hall. Members present were: Chair Chris Schuelke, Lois Josefson, Tom Hintgen, Brad Sunde, Ben Underwood, Jona Brown, and Nate Kunde (ex-officio). Absent was Gordon Hydukovich. Staff present Klara Beck, Mark Jorgenson, and Jill Hanson.

**Declare Quorum / Open Meeting:**

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 PM.

**Agenda Addition**

Lois Josefson requested that a discussion of design standards be added to the agenda and some possible changes to the RFP map. Chair Schuelke stated that could be part of the RFP draft discussion. The agenda was approved with the addition.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Chris Schuelke opened a discussion of the minutes from February 1, 2023. Lois Josefson mentioned some modifications to the minutes relating to the section on water damage to some of the historic downtown buildings. It was moved by Tom Hintgen and seconded by Ben Underwood to approve the minutes with the corrections discussed. Motion passed.

**Preservation Month Activities**

Chair Schuelke mentioned that May is Preservation Month. He mentioned some of the activities planned:

- Programs at the Museum – May 2023
- Tour of the State Hospital – May 19, 2023
- Downtown Tour - May 25, 2023

Chair Schuelke asked if anyone would be able to help with the two tours in May. Jona Brown and Lois Josefson volunteered to help with the tours.

**CLG Grant: Review RFP Draft**

Chair Schuelke stated that the City of Fergus Falls received the \$10,000 CLG grant to do a survey of the downtown historic properties to determine eligibility for a possible downtown historic district designation. Klara Beck explained that as part of this process the City needs to publish an RFP for consulting services to find a qualified consultant to do the study. Klara explained the draft RFP was sent out with the HPC packet, noting that the HPC should select district boundaries to include in the RFP.

Lois Josefson mentioned expanding the boundaries of the historic district that were on the current exhibits included in the draft RFP. Lois suggested using option B map and going up Union Avenue on both sides to Cavour Avenue, then go down Cavour Avenue to the Great Northern Depot and come down the railroad tracks over to Friberg Avenue and down Friberg Avenue to the river. Then come back on the river to meet the current line. Lois mentioned that this would bring in the new TIF district (old Shopko site) and it could help keep the design in line with the historic district. Lois mentioned that the district could even go to the south side of the river and pick up the Otter Tail Power generation building on Cascade then cut across that block to Washington Avenue and head west to end at the Wright Statue. Chris Schuelke confirmed the logic of incorporating the dam and generation facility considering their role in City history.

Chair Schuelke opened a discussion on the expanded area. Klara mentioned having a continuous area for the district, but if a building is already listed on the register, we would not need to have research done on it and that could help to keep the cost of the survey down. Nate Kunde mentioned the dam and hydro-electric building should not be included in a district because of federal energy regulations that they have to follow, OSHA regulations, and the relicensing of the property. Expenses and changes to their sites are regulated by the MN Public Utilities Commission. Tom Hintgen asked the outcome of renewed licensure for the Central Dam and generation building under discussion. Nate Kunde confirmed that they have been relicensed for the next 40 years. Lois mentioned this discussion about whether building owners want to be under regulatory review should be had with all the property owners prior to being included in the historic districts to make sure they want to be included in the district.

Chair Schuelke asked Klara Beck if the budget for the survey could be increased through the city to include the expanding of the district area. Klara explained that the Council approved the request for the CLG Grant with no monetary match because the match would come from labor, and that it was unlikely a match would come from elsewhere in the city budget. Klara mentioned that we have to have the survey completed by the end of September 2023.

Nate Kunde mentioned that the expanded area would add 15 to 20 more structures and would someone be willing to do this survey area for \$10,000. There was some discussion about seeing what \$10,000 would buy. We could always increase the district in the future. There was some discussion about the details that need to be included in the survey, and are we looking at a certain time period for the buildings in this survey?

Klara explained that the RFP language could state this is a starting point for a district footprint and we want to work with the consultant to get foundational information for later recommendations on proposed district boundaries. Lois mentioned she felt this footprint should bring in the new TIF district (old Shopko site) and it could help keep the design in line with the historic district.

Motion was made by Lois Josefson to submit the RFP with a modified option B map that goes north to Cavour Avenue capturing the Mortuary and the old library, follows Cavour Avenue, goes north capturing the Great Northern Railroad Depot and Casket Factory, over to Friberg Avenue, south to the river, west to Cascade Avenue, south to Washington Avenue, and west to Union Avenue. It was seconded by Jona Brown. Passed unanimously.

Klara stated that she will send out a draft RFP with a revised map for the HPC to review before it goes out to the public.

#### **ISD 544 – Elementary School Site**

Chair Schuelke stated that the school district has decided that the RTC property is no longer considered a priority location to build a new school.

#### **City of Fergus Falls Strategic Plan Presentation**

Klara Beck explained the Strategic Plan timeline to the HPC, noting the City of Fergus Falls undertook a strategic framework planning process in October 2021. The City began by identifying four areas of focus: economic development, community and social development, infrastructure, and land use. With the assistance of WSB, Inc. and Moore Engineering as consultants, the City engaged the City Council, City staff, stakeholders, and the community in discussions about priorities and strategies in each of these four areas. There were several meetings with the public to engage their input on the plan and their priorities.

The Strategic Plan was approved by the City Council and adopted in February 2023. Klara explained the funding for the Strategic Plan and how it was funded through some of the funds allocated for a comprehensive plan. Klara mentioned some of the priorities of the public were population growth, land use, and residential development. Klara explained that City staff will meet quarterly to discuss the priorities of the plan. The City Council will have annual meetings to discuss updates and review the plan. Of interest to the HPC is that a downtown historic district was noted as a strategy for downtown economic growth.

There was some discussion about the capital improvement plan and making it more open to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 PM.

Next meeting will be June 7, 2023 at noon.

  
Chair