

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
JULY 12, 2017**

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

A regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of the Village of Lake Bluff was called to order on July 12, 2017 and 7:00 p.m. in the Village Hall Board Room.

The following members were present:

Present: Paul Bergmann
Mary Francoeur (arrived at 7:08 p.m.)
Robert Hunter
Janie Jerch
Randolph Liebelt (departed at 8:35 p.m.)
Janet Nelson, Chair

Absent: Cheri Richardson

Also Present: Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator (AVA)

2. Consideration of the Minutes from the June 14, 2017 HPC Meeting

Member Bergmann moved to approve the June 14, 2017 HPC minutes as amended. Member Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

3. Non-Agenda Items and Visitors

Chair Nelson stated the Chairperson and Members of the HPC allocate fifteen (15) minutes at this time for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the HPC on any matter within its area of responsibility that is not listed on the agenda.

There were no requests to address the HPC.

4. Continued Discussion Regarding Historic Preservation Regulations and Historic Districts

Chair Nelson said the Village Board asked the HPC to make suggestions by September 2017, on how to make the Historic Preservation Ordinance more popular and understood by the Village. She then led a discussion regarding the HPC slate of recommendations and historic preservation regulations.

Chair Nelson said when distinguished home awards are done their well-received but the HPC designations do not seem to have that sort of following. A discussion regarding publicity or yard signage followed.

In response to a comment from Member Bergmann, Mr. Cole said that historical surveys of the Village exist in an Access database and are not publically published because of its size and most people do not have the program. He advised that more user friendly options that are being considered.

Chair Nelson said it is important to have a recent photograph in the database and asked if the HPC should use the existing survey database or start over. A discussion regarding the database/survey process ensued.

Mr. Cole said the biggest consideration for this item in particular will be budgetary and will require consideration by the Village Board because it may not be possible to get good estimates for this before it is time for the HPC to submit its recommendation.

Chair Nelson said there are some historic structures that are part of Lake Bluff's history that should be recorded such as the electric switching station located on Green Bay Road and the Mariani building that use to be Natural Marble Sawmill.

Chair Nelson asked what other terminology could be used to signify that a home is landmarked.

Member Jerch asked if a certified landmark home owner could apply for property tax benefits and if it would be a State or National designation. Mr. Cole said the property tax credit is created by State Statute, which states only a certified landmark is eligible for that State tax credit. The Village do not have any certified landmarks but there are properties here that are receiving/benefiting from the State tax credit. The State have certified these properties therefore, we do not know what their interpretation is. This could be clarified in the draft ordinance depending on where you want the incentives to be incorporated.

Member Bergmann said the National Historic Register is a federally designed program and purely honorable in its designations. The federal designation is a rigorous process but there are no attaching limitations. The application process is managed by the State; although this is a federal designation it is administered by the State. Should the State accept an application the property is then recommended to the National Historic Registry Office.

Chair Nelson said the HPC need more information regarding the Nationally Registered properties in Lake Bluff and the properties that receive the property tax credit. A discussion followed.

In response to a comment from Chair Nelson, Mr. Cole said the State has already certified the existing ordinance. When a landmark is considered for designation it goes through all the HPC's consideration in terms of determining if it is historic. When it comes to the certification, it is up to the owner, there is no review by the HPC. In terms of certification there is no application it is basically the owner signing a contract. The contract is basically a covenant to subject the structure to the strictest review that can be imposed in the ordinance. To significantly change the home, the owner would have to come to the HPC to seek a certificate of appropriateness, stating the proposed changes are in line with the Department of Interior standards for preserving the home. Should it get denied the owner must prove that it would be an economic hardship to preserve the home. A discussion followed.

Chair Nelson asked what conditions a property owners can take with a landmarked home. Mr. Cole said it is not considered a violation to a landmarked home to change the doorknob or paint the home. The ordinance requires a building permit for interior/exterior work and if Staff believe it will materially affect the home it must come to the HPC for consideration. Mr. Cole reviewed the landmark delay process and certified landmark (certificate of appropriateness or hardship) noting one of these are required to obtain a permit. A discussion regarding landmark terminology followed.

Member Francoeur said that a different phrase than “landmarking” may more accurately convey that it is not burdensome.

Member Bergmann said the National Historic Registry does not use the word “landmark;” it “registers” home. Chair Nelson asked if we can say this is a Lake Bluff Historic Registered Home. A discussion regarding the process followed.

Member Jerch said if we want more landmarked homes we should have the home recognized first then extend the landmark process. She is not sure of the landmark and certified landmark are two separate processes. Mr. Cole commented on the current process and noted the HPC can change the process to include an honorary and legal step.

Chair Nelson described “heritage lots” noting it remains a buildable lot after a home is demolished. A discussion followed.

Member Bergmann said part of the charm of the house on small lots is the organic growth that the houses have gone through over time. Should you think about taking all this down and putting up a brand new house you will homogenize Lake Bluff in the same fashion as with the larger lots, less charm, fun and funkiness that you like about Lake Bluff.

In response to a comment from Chair Nelson, Mr. Cole said the HPC could provide relief from the bulk restrictions, shorten the setbacks, increase the floor area ratio in the context of being designated a “historic lot”, as the restriction are made for larger lots, to preserve the buildability of the lot. A discussion followed.

Member Bergmann commented on the ½ vacant lots in his neighborhood and noted if there are now designated historic lots suddenly they become a buildable lot. The assumption has been this is a house on a lot with a non-buildable ½ lot. When talking about historic lots if you have some that have been vacant over an extended period of time, you put a burden on the rest of the neighborhood, you being building into a neighborhood in place where people were not expecting to have structures.

Chair Nelson said the idea of this was if you demolish a house the lot can be rebuild, but if you are talking about there is no existing structure, that needs to be discussed.

In response to a question from Member Francoeur, Mr. Cole said the HPC was directed to study and present ways to strengthen the Historic Preservation Ordinance. President O’Hara asked that input from the HPC be presented to the Board no later than six month from March 13, 2017.

Chair Nelson commented on previous discussion regarding maintenance of identified structures. She said if there was a maintenance grant set aside, from increased demolition fees, it could possibly decrease the number of demolitions. A discussion regarding building fees followed.

Chair Nelson said her concern is that we look at ways to enhance the idea of preservation rather than to put in penalties for not preserving. Basically at this time our ordinance is more penalizing and is taking away some of the homeowners rights. She would like to see happen is to make the ordinance more welcoming. She is in favor of increasing the demolition fee because the additional money can be put toward a grant to maintain some of the older homes. A discussion regarding incentives followed.

Chair Nelson said next month the HPC needs to finalize the recommended list for submission to the Village Board.

Following its discussion it was the consensus of the HPC to recommend the following:

- Renewed consideration of the 2007 Historic District proposal;
- Encourage homeowners to research the older homes and update pamphlet information for distribution;
- Simplify the landmark designation application process; and
- Explore the adoption of heritage lots.

Following its discussion it was the consensus of the HPC to further review the following:

- Upgrade the Lake Bluff survey for historically significant properties, list the existing structures that have or have not been designated landmark status then publicize the list;
- The Lake County Recorder of Deeds land record search process;
- State/National certified landmark process; and
- Possibility of establishing a maintenance grant;

5. Chairperson's Report

Chair Nelson had no report.

6. Staff Report

AVA Cole reported the next regular meeting is scheduled for August 9th.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to consider and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Glen Cole
Assistant to the Village Administrator