

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Caucus Room of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, February 13, 2019**

The Chairman, Matt Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M.

Roll Call

Members: Present –Vice Chairman Ralph White; Clint Gault; Chairman Matt Smith
Absent - Lois Shinko

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, December 12, 2018, and the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, January 9, 2019

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gault to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, December 12, 2018, and the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, January 9, 2019, and approve said minutes as published and the vote was all ayes. The Chairman declared the motion passed.

Landmarks Letter of Recognition – Ralph White

Mr. White stated that he would have nothing until spring.

Landmark Nominations – Lois Shinko

Since Ms. Shinko was absent, there was no discussion for this item.

Comments

Mr. Smith said that he spoke with Rose Seighman, the Mayor’s Administrative Assistant, yesterday and she said that the Norton Townshend plaque will be delivered no later than February 22nd from the Sewah Studios in Marietta, Ohio. On their website Sewah stated that they have this new powdered, coated paint method. Mr. White stated that hopefully, it holds up on the plaque better than what they were using. He said that he feels for Sewah because they were forced to use a different type of paint because of EPA regulations. All the chemicals that produced longevity are now prohibited so Sewah had to use a different type of paint that is EPA friendly and it did not hold up. Mr. Smith stated that he will be glad to see the Norton Townshend display back up where it should be.

Mr. Smith stated that he asked Ms. Seighman about the Cahoon House and was informed that the City is in the process of buying it. An environmental assessment of the property had to be done and that has been completed with no complications. Mr. Smith said that he also saw Mayor Jensen briefly and the Mayor said things are moving forward on the Cahoon House; he would like to see it made into possibly a museum/tourist center.

Mr. White stated that his term on the Landmarks Preservation Commission ended the end of December and he had chosen not to sign on for another term. Ms. Seighman called him and said that Mayor Jensen asked him to reconsider, under the condition that maybe we would make some changes. So we are supposed to have a meeting regarding that. He said that the reason he did not really want to have

another term was because basically, the LPC has no teeth; we are just going through motions. He said that there are things that he has wanted to do through the years such as increasing the fines and changing the moratorium. Then we had that meeting with the Law Director a couple years ago and were told we cannot do anything. The Mayor agreed that was true and said we will try to get together to see what we can do to change that. So Mr. White said he was hoping that that happens. He said that he did not want property owners of landmarks to feel that they are held to a standard like the Certified Local Government would have done. That was sort of the answer to the problem back then, but if you are not going to be a Certified Local Government, then you are going to have no teeth. We chose not to do it and so here we are. He does not know what is going to happen. He suggested that the other members of the LPC find out when their terms end and start thinking about what they want to do. He hoped that we can have a meeting with the Law Director and the Mayor and iron out a few things for the future. Also, he would like to bring up the pay for the LPC. Originally we were volunteers and then the City decided to pay us and we have not had any increases in seven or eight years.

Mr. White said that another thing that he touched base with is the way that the LPC is put together. We cannot do anything about that right now because it is set in the Charter and cannot be changed until the next Charter Review. But that is going to have to change because nobody in the Historical Society or the Garden Club is willing to become members of the LPC. He asked Mr. Gault if somebody from the French Creek Foundation would be willing to step up in Mr. Gault's place on the LPC if Mr. Gault did not want another term. So the LPC has to be some sort of an appointed position or voted position in the future and that is why he said to think about when their terms expire, and what they are going to do so that we can kind of plan. And we need to talk about that with the City.

Mr. Smith asked if the Mayor would be doing the appointing and Mr. White said either that or voted positions if somebody wants to run. He said he does not know, but we are not going to get the people from community organizations. That was the way it was set up for the volunteers in the beginning but it is not going to work in the future. Mr. Smith noted that it seems like the pool of people willing to do these type of things has just dried up. Mr. White said we just need to plant that seed of thought for discussion down the road.

Mr. Gault said that he looks at this as volunteer work and it would be the same for him whether he was paid or not, but perhaps part of the solution could be if there was something more meritable there for people to want to do it. For people who have brilliant minds, like Mr. White and Mr. Smith, who know so much about the history of Avon and are so involved and detailed and organized with pictures and information, it makes sense for people of their wisdom to not just be on the LPC to help out but to have some sort of benefit to them as well.

Mr. Gault asked Mr. White what he would like to see happen in regard to the LPC meetings. He noted that there are never any guests and he did not feel that having night meetings encourages people to come. Mr. White said that in his opinion, they are not here for a civic event; they are here for demolition permits and landmark status. So if somebody wants a demolition permit or a landmark plaque, they have to come when we are here, and other than that, you are not going to get visitors.

Mr. Gault said, but in terms of other people who might want to be involved, people who are interested in history and might want to step in, maybe daytime meetings might be more conducive to them. Also, to Mr. White's point, it might be the pay; if the pay were different maybe more people would want to be involved. What Mr. White is saying is that something has to change in order to make it a sustainable, ongoing group in the future. Mr. White said, as far as appointed people, yes. He understands that there

was nothing we can do until the next Charter Review and then we change the wording. Mr. Smith stated that the City can have a Charter Review any year they want. Typically, Avon has a Charter Review every five years but they have had them sooner than that in their history. It depends on what the City Administration wants to do.

Mr. White said, and as far as changing the time of the meetings, he does not have a big objection to it but what he does have an objection to is that there is no guaranteed place for whenever we are scheduled to have a meeting. We cannot jump around every month. Mr. Gault said that can be part of the meeting with the Mayor. We want a set time during the day that a room is available to us. Mr. White agreed that that was something we can talk about in a meeting down the road when we talk about everything else.

Mr. Gault agreed that regarding the LPC, there is a lack of interest, a lack of involvement and there is a small group of people who want to be involved in it. He said that it is still a vital group, there is still a vital cause of vital importance but if we are going to be proactive and plan for the future, we need to do something different. His suggestions would be: 1.) having daytime meetings because a lot of business people may have an interest in the City and landmarks and history, and daytime meetings would appeal to them 2.) asking about the pay for the LPC 3.) having more teeth in terms of being able to actually effectuate positive change. Mr. White stated that the teeth he was talking about is trying to prevent the demolition of certain landmarks.

Mr. Smith stated that there are several factors in the situation with the demolition permits. First of all when someone owns a piece of property, they can pretty much do what they want with it, and they should. They bought it, they are paying the property taxes and if there is something on there that they do not like and they want to knock it down that should be their right. He said that he looks at the Landmarks Preservation Commission as, before somebody knocks down a building with historical value we try to at least give them assistance and ideas on why not to do that or how to repurpose it or move it or try to get some kind of grant money; at least try to get them to think about it before they do it. He does not believe this Commission is something that is supposed to stop people and there is no teeth to this Commission anyway. For example, if a developer bought some land in Avon and there was an old historic home on it and let's say that the fine was \$10,000. to knock it down, the developer would just knock it down because that fine means nothing to him if he is building a multi-million dollar edifice. Again, he said, it circles back to his thinking that the responsibility of this Commission is to try to encourage people to preserve things through speaking with them and trying to educate them. And obviously another role of this Commission is that we recognize, through the letters that Mr. White sends out, the people who are already currently being preservationists. So we are looking at two groups of people: people who do care about preserving their homes and we recognize that and encourage it, and the other group that does not have that on their mind and maybe never even contemplated it or did not realize the historical value in a particular building that they bought and we try to educate them on that and try to sway them not to tear things down.

Mr. Gault said that maybe another way to discourage demolition would be to make it a part of the Planning Commission process. When a developer goes to Planning Commission with their project, maybe a necessary step on that process can be coming to the LPC. Mr. Smith said, and we could educate them about the particular buildings on their property. Mr. Gault said, yes, so instead of saying we can give them a fine or penalize them, they come to the LPC as part of their process and we can give them guidance on things. They may not do it eventually but at least they have to go through the process.

Mr. Smith summed up the way the process would work by saying, so a developer buys a piece of property and the Planning Commission would inform them that they have a building on that property that is on the list of designated landmarks so they tell them they are required to go the LPC to present what they are planning on doing with that building. It has nothing to do with demolition permits and fines. Mr. Gault added, and then before it is approved by the Planning Commission, the LPC has the ability to present to the Planning Commission the reasons why they should or should not approve that. Mr. Smith said, yes, vs someone walking in to our meeting, hearing what the fine will be, saying they will just pay it, and walking out.

Mr. White stated that he believes our demolition permits are good for six months. If a person does not use it, it expires. He knows of a few demolition permits that we have approved and years have gone by and the structures are still there so the permit has expired. Mr. Smith said , but they could just wake up one day and say they were going to knock it down and do it anyway and nothing is going to happen. Whereas, with Mr. Gault's idea, the Planning Commission is not going to approve it and they do have teeth. And then the person is going to have to come back through here and listen to us.

Date of Next Meeting

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission would be held on Wednesday, March 13, 2019, in the Caucus Room of Avon City Hall at 7:00 P.M.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr.White and seconded by Mr. Gault to adjourn the meeting and the vote was all ayes. The Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Transcribed by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council