

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Caucus Room of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, March 11, 2020**

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

Guests: Paula Pitasky, City of Avon Community Liaison Consultant

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, February 12, 2020

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, February 12, 2020, and approve said minutes as published. The vote was all ayes and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

North Ridge Scenic Byway Strategic Management Plan

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Pitasky if there was anything new to report with the North Ridge Scenic Byway Strategic Management Plan and Ms. Pitasky said no, it is still pending; hopefully next month we will have something.

Certified Local Government

Mr. Smith stated that a couple weeks ago he went to the Avon Lake Historic Preservation Commission, which is their version of our Landmarks Preservation Commission. He said he was curious to see if they had a Certified Local Government and they do. He emailed their City Ordinances on preservation, etc. to this Commission and basically it is like what we discussed before. A Certified Local Government puts layers of restrictions on people on what they can do when rehabilitating a home, a historic structure, etc., but when it gets right down to it, the owners can knock it down. In their Ordinance language, if a person gets denied a demolition permit and they bulldoze the building they are charged with a minor misdemeanor. But again, and we discussed this, it is a person's private property; they bought it and they are paying the taxes on it. Again, Avon Lake is like us; they try to persuade people with alternatives not to demolish things. Mr. White asked if they have a moratorium and Mr. Smith said, yes, but like us, you deny someone a demolition permit and in six months they can knock it down. A big difference in their Commission compared to ours is that in 2004 when our Commission was formed, we sent out the historic architect to make the list of over 200 historic homes and structures. Avon Lake formed their Commission in 2010 and they did the exact opposite. They did not make a list; people came to them and applied to be put on the list. They said, when you had a person come in to apply, it meant that they really wanted to be on the list and they wanted to take care of their homes. Mr. White noted that is who we have left on our list now in comparison to two years of people wanting to get off, so it would have been a better idea for us to do as Avon Lake did and have people come in and apply.

Mr. Gault said but it has worked out the same way for us. The people who wanted to get off the list did that and that leaves the people still on who really want to be on. Mr. White noted that we have a lot more historical houses and buildings than Avon Lake, too. Avon Lake has already lost a lot of theirs; the

few that they have are really nice and they are taken care of. Mr. Gault said at least, if someone wants to tear a structure down, they are supposed to come to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for a permit. Mr. Smith said, yes, so at least we get to speak with them and try to persuade them, so he guessed there are pros and cons to each one. He added that it was pure happenstance that he attended the meeting in Avon Lake. He was on jury duty about a month ago with one of the members of the Commission and he invited Mr. Smith to the meeting. They are a really good group of people, kindred spirits to what we are doing. They said we are welcome to come any time and Mr. White said the same.

Ms. Pitasky stated that Pam Fechter had mentioned that Law Director John Gasior was looking at different ways that the LPC can have more of a legal impact over demolitions, etc. Mr. White said that he has been asking for that for a couple years; it was supposed to be that this year there was going to be a little change so we will see what we can do. Ms. Pitasky asked about getting some samples of what Avon Lake is using and Mr. Smith said that he would email that to her. Mr. White noted that the Avon Lake curriculum for restoring was fairly strict. He would like to promote that but it is hard to ask people to spend that kind of money. Ms. Pitasky stated, and she does not know that that is the way we would want to go. Mr. White agreed that, no, it is not the way we want to go as of now. He felt that whatever someone wanted to do to save the house or building should be done, whether it was using vinyl or asphalt shingles. Mr. Smith added that the calls he has gotten over the 3-1/2 years he has been on this Commission, are directly related to that. One of the first things a person will ask is, if they are going to buy a house which is an Avon landmark, can they put vinyl siding on it because if not, they are not going to buy it or deal with it and he will tell them, yes, they can do that.

Mr. Smith said that he found it interesting in the Avon Lake Ordinances on historic preservation, that not only if you demolish a historic building without a permit and a minor misdemeanor is charged on you, you must rebuild what you knocked down. He said maybe he was not interpreting that correctly and he asked everyone to check it out

Ms. Pitasky stated that on one hand, she thinks it would be great to be able to preserve these buildings while on the other hand, she struggles as to how we can justify telling people that they cannot tear down something because it is a historical landmark when it is their property. How does Avon Lake reconcile that, saying someone cannot do that, it is a misdemeanor. Mr. Smith said that when you read their Ordinances, It is pretty complicated. The public comes to the Commission for a "Certificate of Appropriateness" and if they get that, then it goes to Planning Commission for a vote and then it goes to their City Council, so there are many layers before someone is finally approved to get whatever kind of building permits for what they are trying to do. Mr. Smith added that here, with demolition permits, we do not actually issue a permit, we just approve or disapprove and then the Building Department follows through.

Landmarks Letter of Recognition – Ralph White

Mr. White said that he did not have anything this month.

Landmark Nominations – Lois Shinko

There was no discussion on nominations as Ms. Shinko was absent.

Comments

Mr. White asked if anybody had heard from Patrick Foyte (who owns and is restoring the Stickney/Palmer house) and Mr. Smith said that he had not. Mr. White stated that Mr. Foyte has not been at the house, but Ms. Pitasky said that she has seen some activity there in the past two weeks. Mr. White said that he has been wanting to get hold of him as their guest speaker next month at the Historical Society meeting is a woman from the Lorain County Genealogical Society and she will be talking about the Stickneys in the summer or maybe May. She has some pictures of the Stickneys from the early 1800's and a lot of information about them. Mr. Smith mentioned an obituary that he saw today for one of the Peak family members, who was one of 13 children and just died at age 96. The obituary had a lot of detail and was interesting and he said they should take a look at it.

Date of Next Meeting

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission would be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, 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