

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes

City of Geneva

109 James Street - City Council Chambers

March 14, 2023

Call to Order

Chairman Paul Zellmer called to order the March 14, 2023, meeting of the Geneva Historic Preservation Commission at 7:02 pm.

1. Roll Call

Present: Chairman Zellmer and Commissioners Hartman, Jensen, McManus, and Salomon

Absent: Commissioners Stazin and Zinke

Quorum present.

Staff Present:

Michael A. Lambert - Preservation Planner

Others Present:

Ron Sandack – City Attorney

Theresa Vorkapic – Court reporter, Planet Depos

2. Continuation of Public Hearing (from January 18, 2023)

A. 4 East State Street CASE 2022-079 & 2022-080

Applicant: David A. Patzelt, Authorized Representative

Shodeen Family Foundation

Application for: Demolition of a Historic Landmark and

De-designation of the Property

Chairman Zellmer reviewed the continuation of the Public Hearing and identified that the commission is reconvening the Public Hearing to hear additional public testimony both for and against the request of the demolition and de-designation of the 4 East State Street Property. Commissioner Zellmer noted that the

anticipated consultants' review of the Applicant's pro forma statement has not been completed but will be forthcoming at a future date.

Chairman Zellmer asked Preservation Planner to identify and enter into the official record any letters received in regard to the pending case. Mr. Lambert identified two letters—both from the Applicant—addressed to Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley and Landmarks Illinois.

Chairman Zellmer opened the floor to those wishing to provide testimony, beginning with those who had signed in to speak on January 18, 2023 but were not heard due to time constraints.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Colin Campbell, who shared a brief presentation on the overhead screens. In support of preserving the historic Alexander Brothers Blacksmith Shop, Mr. Campbell presentation identified other buildings preserved by the Shodeen Group as well as a rendering of a potential redevelopment of the Historic Landmark at 4 East State Street.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Tim Vetang, who spoke against the demolition of the Historic Landmark at 4 East State Street and in favor of preserving the structure. Mr. Vetang noted other buildings in Kane County that were in similar or worse condition that had been preserved by owners who appreciated the structures' historical significance. Mr. Vetang noted that efforts to preserve the structure in recent years by the owner have been minimal, resulting in the opinion of the owner that the building, now, is beyond repair.

Chairman Zellmer recognized David Shepard, who spoke against the demolition of the Historic Landmark at 4 East State Street and in favor of re-purposing the structure.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Sharon Jones, who spoke in support of the Fox River and quality of life along the river and the proposed Fabulous Fox! Water Trail. Mrs. Jones passed out information about the trail to the Commissioners. Mrs. Jones thinks the Fabulous Fox! Water Trail group should be brought into discussions about the site. She noted her past service on the Commission many years ago; she does not believe that the building "could be preserved very well" unless it could showcase the history of blacksmithing and the two Alexander brothers. She questions the value of restoring the structure and the expense for the Shodeen company due to flooding and building condition except to explain the history of blacksmithing. She shared information about the Mill Flower sculpture as an example of some sort of memorial. Mrs. Jones advocated for the Fabulous Fox! Water Trail and distributed information about the trail project as well as an early history describing the Fox River in early days and information supporting the most minimal development of the site.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Bill Cook, who spoke in favor of preserving the blacksmith shop for its history that it represents as we come up on the 200th anniversary of the City of Geneva. If we don't "do it right" we will be showing future residents a parking lot and advocated for leaving the structure much as it is without being converted to some new use, referencing Rome's Coliseum, suggesting the Historic Landmark structure be cleaned up and stabilized. Asked

for the consideration of Eminent Domain for City acquisition of the historic site. Mr. Cook believes that preserving historic sites is an obligation of the City's citizens.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Steven Jones, current Aurora and longtime Fox Valley resident who spoke in favor of preserving the 180 year old history represented by the blacksmith shop and Mill Race Inn. Mr. Jones believes that the building should remain "in some capacity" for the future.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Erica Eysturlid, who spoke on behalf of her husband and herself. They are 22 year residents of Geneva and has a "birds eye view" of the site as residents of Oak Street. She noted that a demolished historic building cannot be replaced, but the building is an "eyesore" at this point, particularly because of the water that is allowed to stand along the building. The idea of apartments filling the site is "shortsighted" along the historic waterway (Fox River) and building on the site is questionable due to flooding. The historic building "has stood for 180 years and could continue to stand if cared for" and could be a "significant draw for" Island Park and the natural beauty for which Geneva is known.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Charles Bauman, who spoke in favor of preservation of the blacksmith shop. "Petitioner has a history of destroying historic buildings" including limestone buildings on State Street west of the Fox River that are covered by new 3 story buildings (Geneva on the Dam). Concerned if demolition is denied by the Commission, the Applicant will allow the building to further deteriorate until it cannot be salvaged.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Jeanne McGowan, who voiced her "support for preserving the historic Mill Race building," agreeing "with most of the testimony provided this evening." The building is highly significant to Geneva and the entire Fox River Valley. Believes the building can be preserved and identified Gov. Pritzker's authorization of funds that could be used for the blacksmith shop. Ms. McGowan reference the Pure Oil building history, noting that the developer said the historic gas station could not be preserved, but it has been.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Al Watts, Community Engagement Director for the Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, who posed a question: is there an exact picture of what is to be demolished and what is not proposed to be demolished?" Preservation Planner Lambert shared that the Applicant's request was for only the remnant stone structure and proceeded to share (on the overhead screens) an aerial view of the property to identify the extent of the proposed demolition. Mr. Watts sought clarification of the areas of the designated site to be demolished, specifically how much of the structure to the west of the stone building. Mr. Lambert clarified that the Applicant has indicated that the mid-1960s concrete foundations are not proposed to be demolished under this proposal, only the limestone structure. Mr. Watts clarified that the area that holds standing water would remain under the request.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Dave Patzelt, Applicant and representative for the Shodeen Family Foundation. Mr. Patzelt confirmed that Mr. Lambert's assessment of the demolition request was correct: the stone structure would be demolished

and “the white, octagonal foundation (to the west of the stone structure) would remain.”

Chairman Zellmer recognized a virtual attendee, Lisa Wolancevich of the Kendall County Historical Society and the Yorkville Preservation Society, who referenced a derelict 1897 jailhouse and sheriff’s house that was preserved...it can be done. After 10 years, the building is fully restored and would be happy to share the steps that they took to preserve the building. Restoration of the building led to other work in their downtown.

Chairman Zellmer recognized Attorney Kate McCracken, representing the Shodeen Family Foundation, who clarified that any response this evening did not preclude a closing statement before the public hearing is concluded, whenever that might be. Attorney McCracken relinquished the floor to Mr. Patzelt. Mr. Patzelt responded to a statement by Mr. Colin Campbell, referencing the re-purposing of the stone structure as part of the charrette. Mr. Patzelt clarified that at the end of the charrette process, the final solution included the removal of the stone structure, noting that the stone would be re-purposed in decorative structures “because the findings of the team that were on the charrette could not come to grips with the cost and the structural issues that are associated with the stone remnant structure.” Mr. Patzelt clarified that, during the 216 demolition, the Shodeen Group agreed to “peel back the onion” to discover what the core of the building was but “did not make any commitment to preserve the stone structure.” Mr. Patzelt addressed the suggestion of Mr. David Shepard to donate the structure, referencing that during the charrette process neither the Geneva Park District of the City of Geneva was interested in accepting the historic structure. Mr. Patzelt clarified the record he was not aware of any litigation by the City existed (in regard to the filling of the hole resulting from the demolition of the former hospital) during the development of Dodson Place on Third Street. Mr. Patzelt then shared a presentation on the overhead screens. Mr. Patzelt referenced communications between Commissioners and City staff in regard to the proposed demolition and reviewed work undertaken by the Shodeen Group to stabilize the historic structure in 2016. Mr. Patzelt reviewed the recent offering of the historic stone structure for sale, which resulted in 1 contact with an interest in undertaking the demolition of the building and “no other interest in acquiring the building for \$1.” Mr. Patzelt concluded by referencing awards received by the Shodeen Group for their preservation work.

Chairman Zellmer sought a motion to continue the public hearing to April 18, 2023 in order to receive the consultants’ review of the Applicant’s pro forma statement. Motion made by Commissioner Salomon; seconded by Commissioner Jensen. Attorney McCracken interjected that she would request that the Commission consider an alternate meeting date due to schedule conflicts with several of the Applicant’s representatives. Preservation Planner Lambert noted that he had been unable to confirm a quorum for any other dates in April but could offer alternate meeting dates in May. Attorney McCracken questioned whether the results of the consultants’ review would be received by April 18, 2023 to which Mr. Lambert replied that is the intent of the consultants. Attorney Sandack identified that consultants give ranges for completion of projects; every reasonable effort will be made to obtain the report before April 18, 2023, but the report “will be here when it is here.” It is anticipated that the consultant will be making a presentation on April

18, 2023. Attorney McCracken stated that they “will make all reasonable efforts to modify any impediments” and be present on April 18, 2023. Attorney reiterated that she and her clients would like a copy of the report by April 15 or some date prior if possible.” Mr. Lambert called the roll to consider the motion, which passed unanimously (5-0)

3. Adjournment

At 8:31 pm., Commissioner Salomon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Jensen. Motion passed by a unanimous voice vote: 5-0.