

**CITY OF ABILENE
HERITAGE COMMISSION
AGENDA**

March 18, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
Abilene Public Library
209 NW 4th St.
Abilene, KS 67410

Agenda Item
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call: ___ Duane Schrag, Chair ___ Brenda Finn-Bowers, Vice Chair ___ Mary Burtzloff ___ Joanne Hamilton ___ Phil Hamilton ___ Andrew Pankratz ___ Nanc Scholl
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of the Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2021
Business 5. Downtown storefront windows 6. Administrative Review: • Fence permit issued: 405 NE 8th St.
7. Comments
8. Adjournment

**CITY OF ABILENE
HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

**January 21, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
Abilene Public Library
209 NW 4th St. Abilene, KS 67410**

Members Present: Phil Hamilton, Joanne Hamilton, Nanc Scholl, Duane Schrag (Chair), Brenda Finn-Bowers, Andrew Pankratz

Members Absent: Mary Burtzloff

Staff Present: City Manager Jane Foltz, Planning & Zoning Administrator Kari Zook

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Schrag.

Approval of Agenda

Finn-Bowers motioned to add the annual election of the Chair and Vice Chair officers to the Business section, seconded by J. Hamilton. Motion carried unanimously 6-0. Finn-Bowers moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by P. Hamilton. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes – November 19, 2020

P. Hamilton moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Scholl. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Business

Election of Officers

J. Hamilton moved to appoint Schrag as the Chair, seconded by P. Hamilton. Voting was then ceased by Scholl, seconded by Finn-Bowers. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

P. Hamilton moved to appoint Finn-Bowers as the Vice-Chair, seconded by Schrag. Voting was then ceased by Schrag, seconded by P. Hamilton. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Additional Historic District Downtown street sign blades along NW 3rd St. at Spruce, Broadway, and Cedar St. intersections were installed by the Public Works Department and paid for by Heritage Homes Association.

Updated Heritage Commission Guide

Discussion was held regarding the updates submitted by Katrina Ringler, Preservation Office Supervisor with the Kansas Historical Society, and the guide was edited to include all changes.

Scholl moved to approve the updated Heritage Commission Guide as printed, seconded by Finn-Bowers. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Reappointments were confirmed by the City Commission on January 11, 2021. Scholl and Burtzloff were reappointed to three-year terms (2021-2024).

Administrative Reviews Issued:

Roof & Right-of-Way Permits:

- 109 NW 3rd St. – Hallmark/C'est Le Vie
- 104 NW 3rd St. – American Family Insurance

Comments

- Discussion was held about the storefront windows on Buckeye still being boarded up from the hailstorm in May 2020. Since these are privately owned businesses, they cannot be forced by the City to replace them. P. Hamilton presented the idea of obtaining money or grants to help businesses with projects such as this. He will work on the language for a request to be submitted to the City Commission asking for annual line-item funding to help downtown businesses.
- There is movement in Abilene regarding new businesses and retail space remodeling. The processes have been delayed with the current Covid-19 pandemic.
- Discussion was held regarding the education and lack of information being given to homeowners purchasing properties in the historic districts and properties listed on the National Register. There are many resources for realtors to assist and raise awareness and promote historic preservation. In the recent past, the Heritage Commission sent letters to homeowners with reference materials on incentives available if you own a historic property. It was mentioned having a workshop or visiting realtors in the future to educate the importance of historical properties in Abilene.

Adjournment

Finn-Bowers made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Scholl. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Minutes Approved,

Attest:

Duane Schrag, Chair

Kari Zook, Planning & Zoning Administrator

DIRECT SOLUTIONS TO THE DECAY OF DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS, ABILENE KS.

HERITAGE COMMISSION TOPIC

2/17/21

OVERVIEW Abilene's HISTORIC DOWNTOWN (CBD-- Central Business District) is the core of a national historical place to be preserved by city leadership. The care and vision falls to successive generations, each one blessed or cursed by shifting cultural trends and vagaries in economic conditions. The physical issues of aging, weathering structures are predictable—who deals with it and in what way, is not. One can argue that the main threat to CBD heritage structures grasping at immediate bottom line solutions at the expense of historical legacy, not the weather or the economy. This is an introductory proposal intended to provoke thoughtful action and create some simple, direct means to remedy and enhance the CBD in the face of pressures that drive development toward I-70.

EXAMPLES OF PROBLEMS What kinds of situations around town make city leaders wince? Is it the awkward quick-fix on the Brown Mansion porte cochere facing Buckeye? Does the semi-permanent raw plywood on storefronts seem good enough? What about the beautiful but vacant corner display windows at third and Cedar? How about the poorly sealed, single pane glazing and rotting sills that cause shop owners to shell out thousands per month in utility bills during extreme cold and heat? Do archaic utilities incentivize anything but moving toward exit 275? Are there solutions to any of this on the horizon? No, the hand wringing eventually gets replaced by resignation and apathy, the mood of letting nature take its entropic course. How many immediate problems could be fixed, if each one received \$5,000.00 or less? Could there be a reallocation of cash so that these problems get tourniquet stop-gap measures with the hope of full treatment rather than idly watch the historical legacy bleed to death? The tenant usually does not have the money, the owner often has no incentive, and the city has no direct responsibility—so what to do?

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

PETTY CASH If the problem can be fixed for a little cash, give it to them. For example; many have benefitted by their auto insurance—there was a time when the company issued a check based on an agent's inspection of the damage. The owner had the incentive to get the car fixed for less money and pocket the difference. A similar system might work in Abilene. Identify persistent blighted situations that have immediate, manageable solutions, provide the cash with strict provisions and allow the recipient to creatively solve the problem without bureaucracy and hand-holding.

Assume one-time grants from \$500 to \$2,000, implemented by a third person rather than the city itself. This entity would be responsible for identifying likely candidates and suggesting the best solution. This agent should have design and construction expertise in preservation as well as motivation to provide the service "pro bono"—a design firm local or nearby that would have a stake in future projects related to preservation. [Abilene has frequently employed Olsen Associates, a nationwide firm that focuses on large-scale infrastructure, not the fine-tuned sensitivity required for most situations Abilene encounters. This approach almost resulted in bulldozing City Hall and the historic vacant gymnasium.] A strategy that gives immediate benefit for minimal effort and

expenditure can be a first step in solving simple problems, creating goodwill with stakeholders and enhancing the users' experiences.

MATCHING GRANTS In this scenario, either the city or DCEDC (Dickinson Co Econ Development) would match funds generated by the property owner. In some instances the business owner/tenant can identify qualitative improvements in their immediate circumstances but the building owner lacks motivation to fix it. Such cases can be so extensive that they are impossible to ignore. Here a program of matching grants might provide enough motivation among stakeholders to improve the property.

SCOPE OF GRANT PROVISIONS Limit the grant-mechanism to certain clearly defined areas that provide immediate solutions. For the purpose of this introductory proposal these are *site/environmental issues, façade integrity, weatherproofing, signage, and business promotion*. The issue has to be clearly defined and judged as detrimental to town identity. There would have to be a tight cap on time, cost, and quality—the three variables that determine possible subjects for the city grant—all delineated at the outset by an acceptable agent. **The purpose of the grant is to solve petty issues identified by the city and promote good will, not to augment remodeling efforts or solve problems that are the clear responsibility of the owner.**

Site/environment: icy sidewalk, gutter spillage, obnoxious odors, damaging western sun exposure or one-time maintenance issues at the sidewalk, alley, or street.

Façade integrity: inappropriate signage, unsightly/non-historic material choices, cracked glass or chipping paint.

Weatherproofing: lower utility bills-tenant stability, improve interior climate, more desirable leasing spaces.

Signage: funds to improve graphic presence on businesses remove or replace inappropriate signs

Business promotion: connectivity, flyers, posters, on-line help, endorsement

Meaningful discussion of what needs to be done and how it is executed depends heavily on a clear, usable design guideline that exists as part of a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan in turn springs out of a thoughtful vision statement that can guide the city for years to come. Decisions on how to spend money will require less discussion when there is a specific design guideline.

Every day, Abilene leadership is at a crossroads to find active measures to preserve the historical legacy of buildings and places, or to ignore the clear and immediate trend toward continuous decay—paying the responsibility forward to other players or to fate. Obviously, it is not an easy task—the scale of potential projects is so vast it staggers any effort to take control. So far, lip service to Abilene's historical place dominates practical solutions. The argument that poor cost/benefit factors discourages any direct effort is poignant given the millions in interest payments Abilene has shoveled toward Highlands, receiving absolutely nothing at all. This sets the bar for leadership's willingness to experiment with community resources. "Money spent" defines the commitment to preserving, enhancing, and promoting the historical legacy of buildings and places. Obviously, weather and wealth in the absence of planning will eventually turn the downtown into a historic ruin.

SECTION 10-6 WINDOW REGULATIONS

10-601. Window Regulations.

- a. Every window frame or other opening in the wall of a structure for a window (hereafter collectively “window frame”) that faces a city street, not including an alleyway, shall be filled with material that closes and seals the entire window frame to bar access to the structure from weather, pests, rodents, insects, birds, or other animals, and consists of (1) a rigid and transparent material, excluding plexiglas or its equivalent, (2) a decorative or tinted pane or panes of glass, or (3) the same material as contained in the original construction of the structure, or a modern, improved material that has the same appearance as that in the original construction.
- b. If otherwise in compliance with applicable City codes, in lieu of the materials mandated for window frames in subsection a above, window frames may be permanently removed so that the exterior wall does not appear to contain the window frame by closing the opening with the same material and color as the surrounding exterior of the building.

Community Development/
Inspection Department
P.O. Box 519
Abilene, KS 67410
(785) 263-2355



PERMIT NO. 2021-020

Permit Fee: \$25.00

pd 1/20/21
chk# 2408

APPLICATION FOR FENCE PERMIT

(Call 1-800-DIG-SAFE before digging!)

Project Site Address:

405 NE 8th St, Abilene

Owner of Record of Property:

John & Danielle Kelley

Phone #:

303 523 9096

Fence Contractor:

Jeremy Samsel

Please draw a map of your property showing the location of all buildings and any existing fence. Please include dimensions. Using a different colored pen or pencil, show the location of the proposed fence:

Will the fence encroach on any easement: NO

Purpose of Fence: to enclose backyard Material of Fence: cedar

Height of Fence: 6' Distance From Property Line: from side of home to existing fence on the line?

Signature Danielle Kelley Date: 1/19/2021

(For Office Use Only)

Special Conditions _____

Approved _____ Disapproved Reason: _____

City Inspector _____ Date: _____



Existing wood
fence, w/

proposed
new fence
w/ walk-thru
gate

limestone (matches the
home structure)
wall