

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – September 28, 2009

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, September 28, 2009, at 5:30 p.m. at the Community Art Center, Carnegie Building, Mayor Pro tem Downs presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Johnson, Negard, Downs, Meuers, Waldhausen, Hellquist Absent: Lehmann

Staff Present: City Manager John Chattin, Community Development Director, Rita Albrecht, Deputy City Clerk Michelle Miller

Others Present: Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Members: Paul Richards, Chair, Cindy Serratore, Louis Marchand, Dorothy Baxter, Michael Meuers, Rachelle Houle and Alan Brew. Lori Forshee-Donnay, Bemidji Community Arts Council (BCAC) Executive Director and Lorie Yourd, BCAC Board Chair.

Mayor Pro tem Downs stated that the purpose of the work session was to hear a presentation by the Heritage Preservation Commission.

Carnegie Library

HPC Chair Richards began by stating the two issues they will be discussing, which will be the long-term use of the Carnegie Library, and the establishment of a Bemidji Historic Register, in accordance with the Heritage Preservation Commission Ordinance.

Cindy Serratore, HPC Member, reviewed "The Bemidji Carnegie Library Reuse Study". The purpose of the study was to look at the uses of the library, the park and the waterfront. The library has been seen as a gathering spot for the community within the Library Park and the waterfront. After review of the reuse study, the HPC recommended that the City explore Scenario 3B, which includes expanding, upgrading (including making it more accessible) and keeping it in its current location. Serratore indicated that partnerships will have to be formed regarding funding options; however, the HPC would need the City's support in order to pursue any funding sources.

Council discussed the following:

- The Event Center is a priority; there are no funds to renovate the Carnegie Library
- Park funds should not be used to upgrade the building
- If restored, can this building be used for the next 20-30 years
- Funding options can be increased by seeking Certified Local Government (CLG) status
- Transfer property to a non-profit (i.e. BCAC)

Lori Forshee-Donnay, Executive Director of the BCAC, identified the problems associated with the building, which include, but are not limited to:

- Access issues
- Bathroom/amenities
- No access behind building
- Transients occupy the stairwell behind the building
- Snow removal in the front of the building
- Snow plows going by the building have broken windows
- Heating/cooling system issues; insulation
- Water damage

Serratore indicated that an occupied building makes it easier for preservation. Richards stated that the HPC discourages selling the building to a private entity due to non-public use of the building. The HPC could look at funding sources and, with CLG status, more funding opportunities are available.

Alan Brew, HPC Member, stated that since the Carnegie Library is already on the National Historic Register, and since it sits on a state highway, wouldn't the deterioration to the front of the building be the state's responsibility. Chattin stated that the City Engineer had investigated that question at one time with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and they indicated that they did not have any responsibility for the deterioration to the front of the

building. Richards stated that the State Historic Preservation Office could help support the HPC with a request to MnDOT if the City supports that approach.

Meuers stated that with CLG status the HPC would have more funding sources available for preservation.

Johnson stated that the Carnegie building is a park amenity and that “park” dollars should be used to help renovate. The state should also have some responsibility regarding the damage caused by snowplowing.

Serratore noted that in the survey submitted by the community, people wanted to see a stronger relationship between the park and the Carnegie Library.

Hellquist stated that CLG status could put too many restrictions and standards on historic homes, possibly making remodeling unaffordable. He further commented that the homeowner could lose their say on what happens to their property.

Waldhausen stated that the City needs to move forward with the process of preserving the Carnegie building, stating that once the building is gone, it is gone.

Motion by Waldhausen, seconded by Meuers, for the HPC to begin the process to seek CLG status. Motion failed with the following vote: Ayes: Waldhausen, Johnson, Meuers. Nays: Negard, Downs, Hellquist.

Bemidji Historic Register

Richards stated that under the current ordinance, the HPC shall inventory and prepare a list of properties worthy of historic preservation (Bemidji Historic Register). The HPC presented to the Council five properties (owned by the City) that they thought should be on the Bemidji Historic Register. Once those properties were on the list then they would seek approval from the County to have the Courthouse put on the register. At that point the HPC could approach BSU and private homeowners for approval of other properties they believe are worthy of historic preservation. Richards stated that perhaps a “history walk” could be developed with the properties listed on the register. Richards also stated that there would be no financial obligations to the City for properties to be put on the Bemidji Historic Register. The process of putting properties on the register involves a close relationship with the owner and that it does not represent a taking of the property; however, that it serves a public “good”.

Motion by Waldhausen, seconded by Meuers, to add the Carnegie Library to the Bemidji Historic Register and direct the HPC to investigate funding sources, with the City’s support, in preserving the Carnegie Library, including conversations with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Downs, Negard, Johnson, Waldhausen, Meuers. Nays: Hellquist.

Downs requested a special meeting to discuss personnel issues and sought two other councilors to join him in this request. Negard and Meuers joined him in his request. A special meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 1 at 5:30 at City Hall.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Negard, seconded by Meuers, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
Deputy City Clerk