

City of Colville

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

July 17, 2015

10:00 a.m. – City Hall

MINUTES

The Colville Historic Preservation Commission met for a regular meeting on Friday, July 17, 2015, in the Council Room at City Hall. Chairman Russ Larsen called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m. with a quorum present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Russ Larsen, Bruce Dietz, Avrum Baum, and Muriel Meyer. Tony Harmon arrived late. MEMBERS ABSENT: Christopher (CJ) Wolfe. One vacancy exists. STAFF PRESENT: City Planner RJ Keetch. RECORDING SECRETARY: Susan Davis.

INTRODUCTIONS: The new members to the HPC were welcomed. Introductions of Commissioners and staff followed.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of March 21, 2014 had been distributed to each member prior to the meeting. Bruce Dietz moved and Muriel Meyer seconded the motion to approve the minutes of March 21, 2014 as written. Voice vote showed all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Distribution of membership packets.

City Planner RJ Keetch distributed membership packets to all of the members present. He overviewed the information, which included: a current membership list; Colville Municipal Code, Chapter 15.20 establishing the HPC; Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 7 – Historic Preservation Element; minutes from previous 2014 meetings; Building Inventory of the downtown core area; brochures and booklets relative to HPC programs; and application forms for historic plaques and art recognition.

B. Possible downtown agenda.

RJ Keetch explained part of the purpose of the commission is to promote and assist with rehabilitating and preserving historic properties through the use of special tax valuation. Applications for special tax valuation are reviewed and approved by the HPC. It was RJ's understanding that the only downtown business that has taken advantage of the special tax valuation program is Barman's. Basically, the assessment on an eligible historic property may be reduced by the amount spent on improvements, which then reduces the amount of property tax the owner pays every year for a 10 year period. Discussion ensued regarding ways to encourage and promote the use of tax incentives. It was suggested that educational materials outlining the benefits of being on the historic register and identifying the qualifications for eligibility could be very informative for property owners.

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It was recognized by all of the members that the repair/maintenance of downtown historic buildings is very important to the preservation of these buildings and helps promote economic vitality. A question was asked regarding the HPC's degree of authority/enforcement. It was noted that the local historic program is an incentive based approach and is not intended to be regulatory. Russ Larsen confirmed that the HPC identified a historic district as being the C-2 (Central Business) District; however it has not been adopted by the City Council. Local plaque recipients are given honorary recognition and no new regulations have been imposed.

RJ Keetch distributed some handouts and noted that the Colville Planning Commission is going to be involved in strategic planning and visioning as part of a grant to create a Strategic Plan for the City (copies on file). The planning process should help the City and community define a vision for its future. He felt this all ties into discussion about the downtown historic area and identifying what we want to achieve.

Muriel Meyer asked if thought had been given in the past to having murals painted on downtown buildings. Tony Harmon indicated that the subject had been discussed but no action was taken. He confirmed that there are two wall murals on the Old King Cole building at 1st & Main Streets.

Avrum Baum suggested that it might be helpful to have artistic renderings showing buildings "before" improvements and "after" improvements to encourage property owners to make needed repairs. He volunteered to contact Todd Strobel at the high school to see if some art students might be able to take something like this on as a class project.

RJ advised that for a few years in the 1990's the City participated in "The Main Street Program" which is a preservation-based economic development tool that enables communities to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts by leveraging local assets. As a result of that program, the City got a facade improvement grant. There were several downtown businesses who took advantage of the program at that time. RJ distributed the following materials for more information: "The Main Street Four-Point Program" from the National Main Street Center and "Facade Improvement Program" (copies on file). Muriel Meyer confirmed that the Colville Chamber of Commerce has legal status through its 501-C3 to participate in The Main Street Program. She suggested that the first step would be to approach the Chamber Board about pursuing the program again and get input.

In conclusion, it was a consensus of the HPC to attempt to pursue participation in The Main Street Program. It was decided that RJ and Muriel will go to a Chamber Board meeting to discuss the subject. RJ asked the HPC members to think of other aspects/ideas to help define the Commission's priority and submit them to him by July 31st for continued discussion at the next regular meeting on August 21st.

REPORTS

It was noted that there is still a vacancy on the HPC. Muriel suggested that someone from the Chamber with a strong interest in historic preservation might be a good candidate to fill the position. Attempts will be made to encourage potential candidates to apply for vacant positions.

Bruce Dietz submitted his resignation from the HPC for health reasons. He thanked the members and staff for allowing him the opportunity to participate.

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Russ Larsen asked if anyone had been able to attend the last meeting of The Heritage Network (THN). He reported the Fort Colville/Walla Walla Military Trail project has been completed. The current project is restoration of the Indian Agency Cabin in Chewelah which was acquired by the Stevens County Historical Society. THN meets on the third Monday of the month at different locations around the county. Russ stated that the City pays membership dues to THN on behalf of the HPC. He indicated that he tries to attend the meetings when they are held in Colville.

ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business, Muriel Meyer moved and Bruce Dietz seconded the motion to adjourn. There were no objections and the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:20 a.m.