

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission**  
**May 4, 2016**

**Members Present:** Chuck Pell, Chairman  
Robert Sherman, Vice Chairman  
Jerry Jacobson  
Tina Lathan  
Aakash Raut  
James Schackmann  
Norm Sims  
Dean Williams

**Members Absent:** Mike Brooks, Jeanette Goza

**Staff Present:** Steve Keenan

**Call to Order:** A quorum being present, Chairman Pell called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

**Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Pell entertained a motion to approve the April minutes. Staff read some amendments from Commissioner Jacobson. A motion to approve the April minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Sherman and was seconded by Commissioner Jacobson. The voice vote to approve was unanimous.

Chairman Pell asked for a motion to allow Commissioner Brooks to attend the meeting electronically due to employment purposes. A motion to allow Commissioner Brooks to attend the meeting due to employment purposes was made by Commissioner Jacobson and was seconded by Commissioner Schackmann. The voice vote to approve was unanimous.

**Chairman's Report/Comments:** Chairman Pell mentioned there were 11 entries in the Oldest Farmhouse search and that it was good to get the Commission's name in the public's mind. Chairman Pell asked everyone to get out and survey historical sites. He also mentioned there might be training opportunities through organizations like the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency or Landmarks Illinois.

**Committee Reports:** Commissioner Jacobson reported that the Farmhouse Committee took no action today as there was no meeting due to lack of a quorum.

Commissioner Jacobson said he wanted to summarize some developments in the Farmhouse Search. He summarized two recent submissions through Commissioner Sherman, one of which is a classic Greek Revival house. He said it is located in Gardner Township on a highway. Commissioner Jacobson said it was likely built prior to 1860. Commissioner Jacobson said this entry is a good residential example – it has two chimneys and columns emblematic of the Greek Revival style. Chairman Pell wondered if there is a tie-in to area settlement patterns since so many of the entries were from a particular township. Vice Chairman Sherman thought the entries could be indicative of where settlement took place. Chairman Pell asked what the group's consensus is concerning the oldest farmhouse. Commissioner Jacobson said one of the houses is definitely pre-1860 because of its architecture. He thought of the one of the better-documented houses had a diary entry indicating when the owner bought wood to construct the house. Commissioner Jacobson said it was the best documented entry other than the Greek Revival as to

being prior to 1860. Commissioner Sims said the operation here is to deal with the houses submitted and the best evidence available. Chairman Pell asked if the Committee would recommend giving certificates to all the entries. He mentioned the letter sent to most of the entries indicated verification of application information. Commissioner Jacobson said he made contact with all the entries except the two Vice Chairman Sherman submitted. Chairman Pell suggested an expert such as Anthony Rubano or Mike Jackson help verify the age of entries. Commissioner Sims reminded the Commissioners there is approximately one month until an announcement. Chairman Pell asked by what process the Committee determined the authenticity of the entries. Commissioner Jacobson said he had done that in conjunction with the property owners. He said other than one or two entries the property owners have done their utmost to document the early construction of their houses. Chairman Pell asked if Commissioner Jacobson feels comfortable with the assessments whether the houses are pre-1860 or not, to which Commissioner Jacobson said no. Commissioner Jacobson said he believes the only two with solid evidence are the entry with the diary and the Greek Revival house. Chairman Pell said the group would ultimately have to meet again, perhaps before the June meeting.

Chairman Pell suggested discussing does the Committee only want to present something to two of eleven entries; or, should there be an alternative method chosen to determine the dates of the entries. Commissioner Jacobson said everything that can be done has been done for all but about two or three of the entries. He said there have been pictures sent of the beams and foundations of many of the houses. Commissioner Jacobson said he suggested certificates for all participants. Vice Chairman Sherman said that is a good idea. Commissioner Jacobson suggested a special citation or other means for recognizing those who could be confirmed as pre-1860 entries. Vice Chairman Sherman suggested language on the certificates saying one of the oldest, as opposed to the oldest, farmhouses in Sangamon County. Commissioner Sims asked if there were any entries that have not submitted any evidence to meet the 1860 criteria. He suggested everyone else should receive a participation certificate. Commissioner Sims said it does not make sense to tell a property owner they are wrong about the age of a house. He said this is a good news item. Commissioner Sims said make a determination based upon the best available evidence as to what you think the oldest one is and present the owner with a plaque. He said the Committee discussed having Brandt and/or the Farm Bureau contribute to the cost of a plaque. Commissioner Sims suggested having an expert (similar to Rubano) look at the top one or two entries. He said then you can say this expert looked at the houses and helped to determine the oldest house based on the submitted evidence. Commissioner Jacobson said he was negative about the plaque because there are only two so far that are verified pre-1860. Commissioner Sims said the nature of the search is the oldest one submitted. He said a good question to ask for some of the older entries would be is it likely a house was built in the year submitted on the application. Commissioner Sims said some entries have a span of time and there is no evidence as to exact date of construction. He said it is okay to give something to everyone who submitted an entry, but what was billed was a plaque would be given to the oldest farmhouse submitted which has the best evidence.

Vice Chairman Sherman asked if there are alternate sources of information not considered. Chairman Pell said to some extent we rely on property owners, some of whom have family who have lived a particular house for generations, to determine the age of the entries. Commissioner Jacobson said abstracts generally do not indicate mortgages. He asked about the date of tax cards, to which staff replied they date generally from the 1950s on. Commissioner Jacobson noted records are different from township to township.

Chairman Pell said he is comfortable saying that the person or persons chosen with the oldest farmhouse were the oldest of the entries chosen. Commissioner Sims said if there are other old houses they should still submit because the Commission wants to know about them. Vice Chairman Sherman said the evidence needs to indicate the age of a house that is still standing today. He mentioned the diary entry and another entry with a court case. Chairman Pell asked if the house that was once a log house meets the criteria of having an active association with farming acreage. Staff mentioned no one determined what active connection to farming the Greek Revival entry has. Vice Chairman Sherman said he would check if there is an active connection to farming the acreage for his two entries. Chairman Pell suggested another meeting to hash out some of these issues during May. [Commissioner Williams entered the meeting at approximately 4:30 PM]. Commissioner Jacobson said Commissioner Brooks intended to contact the Farm Bureau. Chairman Pell advised coordinating plans for the County Fair with the Farm Bureau. Chairman Pell noted Commissioner Brooks was not in attendance. [Commissioner Brooks did not call in to participate].

Commissioner Jacobson suggested adding an additional member to the Farmhouse Committee to help with a quorum. Chairman Pell asked what would be required to have a Committee quorum, to which Commissioner Sims said a majority plus one. Chairman Pell said he would be more than happy to attend, schedule permitting. Commissioner Jacobson asked Chairman Pell if he would attend as a member of the Farmhouse Committee. Chairman Pell asked if there was a vote on formation of the Committee. Staff said selection of the Committee was an election of the Chair. Chairman Pell asked if he could place himself on the Committee. Staff said there are no rules saying yes or no. Commissioner Jacobson asked if there needed to be a vote on this action. Commissioner Sims said not if it is the will of the Chair. Vice Chairman Sherman asked if a quorum would be three. Commissioner Sims said if the Committee is five then three is a quorum. Chairman Pell asked if the Committee could communicate amongst each other to establish a date for a Committee meeting. Staff said he believes if there is a committee with five members that two can discuss, but a third constitutes a quorum that triggers an open meeting. Commissioner Sims said if a quorum is present, an open meeting is triggered. Chairman Pell asked if the five members could discuss a date for a meeting. Staff and Commissioner Sims both said a meeting notice is required 48 hours prior to any public meeting. Chairman Pell asked if all five members attend the Committee meeting, then the only business that should be discussed is for the Farmhouse Committee because five members constitutes a quorum of the Historic Preservation Commission [HPC] under the Open Meetings Act, to which Commissioner Sims said correct. Commissioner Sims advised that the Committee should only discuss items on the posted agenda. He said with a five-member committee if two people get together it means there is a meeting. There was some discussion about the meaning of the Open Meetings Act regarding the Committee's business. Chairman Pell said sometime in the not too distant future the Committee should meet and discuss how to finish the search.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** None.

**Initial Recommendation for New Landmark Applications:** Staff stated Commissioner Williams, on behalf of the Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church, submitted a new landmark application. He summarized the different ways the HPC handled the two public meetings required under the ordinance. Staff said since it appears the Farmhouse Committee has business and the HPC has business it might make sense to hold both meetings on the same day. Chairman Pell asked if there was a benefit to having another meeting. Staff said it could have the church

proceed to landmarking sooner and the ordinance specifies an initial report and a public hearing within a certain period. After some discussion, it was determined a special meeting of the HPC would be held at 4:00 PM on Wednesday May 18, 2016 in the Regional Planning Commission office, Room 212, County Building. Staff said he would send out a meeting notice. Commissioner Jacobson asked if there would be a Committee meeting before the special HPC meeting. Staff suggested a 3:15 PM Farmhouse Committee meeting on the same date. Commissioner Raut asked for a date confirmation email.

**Member Reports:** Vice Chairman Sherman said he suggested the Greek Revival house be placed on the County's register of historical surveys. Vice Chairman Sherman asked if landmarking is similar to adding a home to the National Register. Commissioner Sims said no it is easier. Vice Chairman Sherman, Chairman Pell, and Commissioner Sims discussed the certificate of appropriateness process for landmarks. Vice Chairman Sherman informed the Commissioners about some Quaker meetinghouses he saw at a recent historic preservation conference.

Commissioner Sims highlighted some staff changes to the Regional Planning Commission's office. He said to be aware there might be staffing changes in the near future.

Commissioner Schackmann said he posted a link to the agenda and minutes on the HPC Facebook page.

**Staff Reports:** None.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Additional Comments:** None.

**Adjourn:** Chairman Pell entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Schackmann made a motion to adjourn the May meeting with Commissioner Lathan seconding the motion. The voice vote to approve was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 4:54 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Steve Keenan