

Minutes of Meeting
Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission
May 18, 2016

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

Members Absent: Jeanette Goza

Staff Present: Steve Keenan

Call to Order: A quorum being present, Chairman Pell called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Chairman Pell entertained a motion to allow Commissioner Mike Brooks to attend the Historic Preservation Commission [HPC] meeting via speakerphone due to employment purposes. Vice Chairman Sherman made a motion to allow Commissioner Mike Brooks to attend the meeting via speakerphone due to employment purposes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schackmann and the voice vote to approve was unanimous.

Chairman Pell said the purpose of the special meeting was to consider the initial report for the Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church.

Approval of Minutes: Chairman Pell said the Commission would postpone approving the May minutes until the regular June meeting.

Committee Reports: Commissioner Jacobson discussed a summary of the farmhouse entries. He said there were multiple entries from Cartwright (4) and Gardner (3) Townships; other townships had one entry each, i.e. Cotton Hill, Rochester, Loami, and Lanesville. Commissioner Jacobson said seven entries had insufficient documentation for pre-1860 construction dates. He said four houses had evidence to indicate construction prior to 1860. Commissioner Jacobson said the youngest documented house in Cartwright Township has a diary stating the owner bought lumber presumably for the house in 1857. He said the next oldest house was an 1847 addition to a Greek Revival house in Gardner Township documented by family history. Commissioner Jacobson said the original house was built in 1833; however, only the addition remains. He said the second oldest house was an entry in Cotton Hill Township, built around 1835. Commissioner Jacobson said a family history indicates when the family bought the house in 1854 the owner at the time indicated the house was constructed in 1835. Commissioner Jacobson said the oldest documented house for which the Committee has evidence is located in Cartwright Township. He said it was constructed in 1832 according to court testimony. Commissioner Jacobson said the style of the house is not incompatible with an early date. He said this house appears to be the oldest house for which the Committee has evidence at this point. Commissioner Jacobson said the Committee might contact a tree ring expert to help confirm some dates. He said some of the entries that do not have great documentation might have hewn

logs that could be dated. Commissioner Jacobson said he would try to contact Professor Glen Freimuth at the Illinois State Museum. He said after discussing the entries with the expert, the Committee would distribute a press release summarizing the information presented at the meeting. Commissioner Jacobson said the Committee discussed its presentation at the Sangamon County Fair. He said there would be a display near the Farm Bureau area. Commissioner Jacobson said there would be contact with the owners to perhaps be present at the display at the County Fair, or to mention their names in association with the houses. Chairman Pell asked if there was anything Commissioner Brooks cared to add, to which Commissioner Brooks said no. Chairman Pell said the Committee did great work and noted the next month will be very exciting.

Initial Recommendation for New Landmark Application: Chairman Pell said the reason for the meeting was to consider an initial application for a new landmark for the Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church. He said the Commission's purpose is to approve the initial report and to show the landmark meets the criteria specified in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Chairman Pell said he typically prepares the initial reports as the Chair [of the HPC]. He said Commissioner Williams worked with the pastor of the church and the leader of its governing board to agree to landmark the property. Chairman Pell said this landmark would be the first that represents a religious order. He said Sangamon County landmarks represent the width and breadth of the people who have lived here. Chairman Pell said the next meeting would be the public hearing. Staff said the public hearing would be scheduled for June 1, 2016 at 4:00 PM. Chairman Pell said if anyone has comments or wants to make an objection to the landmark, they could appear at the public hearing. He said the public hearings are usually pretty slim meetings. Chairman Pell said the church meets the criteria within the ordinance. He asked Commissioner Williams if he wants to add anything.

Commissioner Williams said Buffalo Hart was founded in 1824. He summarized some developments in the township in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Commissioner Williams said the church, constructed in 1900, was a social gathering place to bring residents together to discuss news and information. He said he feels the church has significance as a rural gathering place that is representative of the history of central Illinois. Commissioner Williams said the church maintains much of its original parts intact. He mentioned a tornado blew out a wall and some stained glass windows in 1927. Commissioner Williams said much of the church chapel interior remains the same as it did in 1900 including but not limited to: wainscoting, pulpit, and the overhead doors. He said the church was constructed because the chapel, constructed in 1832, was the size of a garage and the group needed a larger space.

Chairman Pell said what the HPC is here to do today is to entertain a motion on the initial report recommendation for the church to become a County landmark. He said this would activate the public hearing where the HPC will vote on a landmark recommendation to the County Board. Chairman Pell said the vote today is not to send the recommendation on the landmark to the County Board, to which staff said correct. Commissioner Sims said the effect of the vote is whether to have a public hearing on the landmark. Chairman Pell said the HPC is saying the church is worthy to be a County landmark and at the public hearing, the HPC will then present its recommendation as to whether the County Board should make the church a landmark. Commissioner Sims said the landmark would then proceed to [the Public Health, Solid Waste, and Zoning] Committee and be placed on the regular County Board schedule. Chairman Pell said he thought it might be at the County Board's July meeting at the earliest. Commissioner Sims suggested the HPC have a representative to go to Committee and/or to Caucus. [Commissioner Brooks had lost the call. He reconnected at this point.] Chairman Pell suggested contact with the

County Board representative for the area. He said the County Board member may make the motion to approve the landmark.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to accept the initial report for the Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church that the nominated landmark does meet the criteria, i.e. letters A, B, and H checked on the application, for designation. Commissioner Schackmann seconded the motion. Chairman Pell recognized Commissioner Jacobson for discussion.

Commissioner Jacobson said the brief description of significance in the landmark application could have used some of the language from the initial report. He said there is nothing in the application description about the church's architecture. Commissioner Jacobson said this should be incorporated in the statement of significance. Chairman Pell said the body of information [application and report] is all one item. He said the HPC could return the application for lack of information but there is not much point. Commissioner Sims said the application conveys the sense of the landmark. He reminded the Commission that the application needs only meet one of the criteria to be worthy for landmarking. Chairman Pell asked Commissioner Jacobson if he wants more information for posterity. He noted the application and the report combined have a description of the Commission's wants. Commissioner Williams said the application contains over thirty pages of the Church's historical significance. Commissioner Jacobson said the most important part of an application is the description of significance. He said it seems that the statement of significance should indicate the structure has certain architectural elements to preserve. Chairman Pell said the Commissioners received two different documents: an application and an initial report. He said the application under item four does not say see additional information attached. Commissioner Jacobson said the architecture has some significance since it was mentioned in the initial report. He said within the statement of significance that architecture should be included. Commissioner Sims said what is significant here is not the application, but what goes to County Board. He suggested if there is additional information that should proceed to the County Board to put that in writing. Commissioner Sims said that could be amended at the next meeting as part of the hearing. Commissioner Jacobson asked if Commissioner Williams accepted Chairman Pell's architecture statement, to which Commissioner Williams said yes. He said it should be included and forwarded. Chairman Pell suggested adding "see additional materials that were attached to the application including their history and including the initial report." Commissioner Jacobson said the file for the landmark would only include a report. Commissioner Sims said the file can include anything the HPC wants to include in it. Staff said there is a smaller application in the Commissioners' hands for the meeting. Commissioner Jacobson said the statement of significance is the first thing an historic preservationist examines. He suggested language to the effect that "the building has architectural significance, see [the attached]." Chairman Pell said the application is meant for the layperson, rather than an architect or an architectural historian. He mentioned people often use consultants due to the complexity during the National Register application process. Chairman Pell said the landmark application captures the spirit of what is important for a site historically. Commissioner Sims said this is the prima facia evidence that the HPC has a reason to take the landmark to a hearing. He said at the hearing there might be more reasons presented why the building is significant as a landmark. Commissioner Sims said someone might come to the hearing and say that none of the information in the application and the initial report is true and that is why the landmark goes to hearing. He said the information is not like a final document for the National Register. Commissioner Jacobson said he wanted to make a statement and to have it included in the statement of significance. Vice Chairman Sherman said the church has a vernacular architecture with elements of Palladian [window], Roman [arch], and other

architecture. He said it is not one style of architecture. Vice Chairman Sherman said it is vernacular because it was built by a builder rather than designed by a particular architect.

Chairman Pell said there is a motion on the table to move this to a public hearing. He said the HPC is all in agreement on this point. Chairman Pell said the Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church, built in 1900, is worthy of a County landmark. He said the next step is to take it to a public hearing. Chairman Pell said he would be more than happy, without Dean's objection [Commissioner Williams indicated his assent], to have that wording added that talks about architecture within the brief statement of significance. Chairman Pell said this motion was on the table by Commissioner Williams, to which staff added there was a second by Commissioner Schackmann. Commissioner Jacobson asked for clarification. Chairman Pell said to add to the written verbiage about its architectural significance as in the report or as will be determined at the public hearing.

The voice vote to approve was unanimous.

Vice Chairman Sherman said the significance of the church is community. Chairman Pell said the church is a gathering place and that it is significant to the people of Buffalo Hart Township.

Adjourn: Chairman Pell entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jacobson made a motion to adjourn the May 18, 2016 meeting with Commissioner Lathan seconding the motion. The voice vote to approve was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Steve Keenan

*Attendance by speakerphone