

## Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission

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### Minutes

July 15, 2015

6:30 p.m.

City Hall

Room A101

Commissioners Present: Marsha Gunderson, Chair, Chuck Flemmer, Gordon Iseminger, Melinda Leach, Dale Sickels, Sandy Slater, Judy Swisher

Commissioners Absent: Sharon Bures, Cory Lien, Doug Munski, Gerad Paul

Others Present: Steve Martens; JoAnna Martens; Dave Kuharenko, GF Engineering; Rich Romness, GF Engineering; Lisa Steckler, Certified Local Government Coordinator, State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND); Amy Munson, Grants and Contracts Officer, SHSND; Peg O'Leary

#### Wells Denbrook Historic Context Presentation – Steve Martens

Martens thanked the commission for the opportunity to research and document the history of Theodore Wells, Myron Denbrook, and the Wells Denbrook firm in North Dakota. He also thanked the staff at UND Special Collections for their knowledge and assistance, noting that their Wells Denbrook collection of drawings numbers more than 900 pieces. The purpose of a context is to define thematic similarities and place them in a framework of the times.

*Sickels arrived at this time.*

Martens said it was a challenge to identify important Wells Denbrook work that has not already been placed on the National Register.

*Swisher arrived at this time.*

Martens gave brief biographical descriptions of each man and described three eras in the evolution of the architectural firm: Wells only, Wells and Denbrook, and Denbrook only. He went on to discuss the major styles in which the architects worked and the growth and productivity of the firm over six decades, from 1923 to 1978. Early work focused on traditional styles such as Beaux Arts, Collegiate Gothic, and Tudor Revival, moving into Art Deco, Streamline Moderne and Civilian Conservation Corps Rustic. Later work was largely in Modernism; they designed their own office in the Desert Modernism style in 1954.

Commissioners requested changes to some aspects of the document. It was felt that the tone of the report is rather personal and that comments reflecting that tone should be reworked in favor of a more scholarly tone. Slater noted that she was tugged in different directions as to whether the author liked Denbrook and/or his work. She also noted that the collection of Wells Denbrook material was donated to the library largely because Gordon Iseminger let her know that EAPC need the space that the collection occupied in their offices and she pursued the donation. The donation did not come with any support money and she commended Wilbur Stolt, then director of the library, for funding the \$8,500 necessary to properly house the collection, and Frank Slater for cataloging the collection. She said the context was a tremendous document for future

scholars and represented a lot of work by the author. Martens commented that it makes sense to want writing that will stand the test of time. Iseminger questioned whether recommendations could be made regarding buildings which could be nominated to the NRHP, whether individually or in multiple resource nominations. He also asked that some of the uncertainty in the writing, (e.g. arguably, probably, maybe), be replaced with certainty whenever appropriate. Flemmer pointed out that doing a context is new to the commission so they are trying to think down the road. Sickels said Denbrook had hired him for EAPC; Sickels said Denbrook's approach was a very engineer type of approach to design – repeated details, dogmatic posture, stringent. Iseminger requested that Martens provide the basis for his conclusions more often. Martens suggested that the broader world events be brought in. It was noted that the commission did not question Martens' expertise and had, in fact, chosen him to write the context for that very reason. End users of the material would not have the advantage of knowing him and the material would have to stand on its own.

Slater asked what the procedure is for going forward; O'Leary said the context is on the State Review Board agenda for August 28. Review copies must be available to the SRB one month ahead of the meeting. Martens confirmed that he would be able to address the revisions within two weeks. Commissioners thanked Martens for his work and they look forward to the final product.

#### Minutes

**Motion:** to approve the minutes of June 9, 2015, as presented. (Swisher, Sickels)

**Motion carries.**

#### Granitoid Preservation Project – David Kuharenko

Kuharenko reported that the preservation project, on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues South and on Cottonwood between those streets, had been completed in mid-June. Due to budget constraints, patching had been completed but crack work and sealing was not part of the project. There are no plans to do the sealing in the future. They used stamped concrete to patch heavily cracked areas and hot-pour sealant to fill in around the patches. Gunderson said she was not happy with the final result; she said the patches were much larger than she was led to expect and the dark sealant emphasizes them. Sickels asked whether aggregate or plain cement was used; it was plain cement. The project cost was \$104,000 in TAP funds and \$30,000 in Grand Forks funds; no assessments. Gunderson said these blocks were chosen for preservation because they were the best remaining Granitoid blocks and now they look like a patchwork quilt. Romness said that what is left will retain its integrity much better than it would have without the patching; the work has stopped the growth of the random cracking. Flemmer said the commission perhaps should have looked into what the patches would look like more. Slater questioned the remaining cracks; Romness said the remaining cracks are typical of Granitoid and are not growing. They are not offset like the patched areas. These cracks probably date to shortly after the Granitoid was installed. Romness noted that the patches, per NRHP regulations, are not supposed to match so closely that they cannot be distinguished from real Granitoid. Gunderson asked why the work was done a month early; was it done well? Kuharenko said the work met all state and federal DOT specs. Leach asked if the contractor was fully aware of the historic aspect of the project; Kuharenko said they were properly notified and supervised. He noted that the sandstone curbing was successfully protected. Leach stated that the eye is drawn to the patch and the sealant is obtrusive; this is counter to the intention in preserving the street. Romness said the black outline will gray-out in time and the patches should darken with age. Kuharenko noted that they specified a clear curing compound instead of the usual white.

### Traffic Light at 4<sup>th</sup> and Belmont – Rich Romness

Romness reported that one of the lights is broken and that “historic” style is no longer available. If the lights are replaced, they will be a different style. For now, it’s a four-way stop.

### Red River Valley Community Action

- 2310 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, built 1954 – Federal weatherization funding will be used for interior only work on this house. The house has never been surveyed and is not in a potential historic district.

**Motion:** to concur with a determination of no historic properties affected by the proposed work at 2310 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. (Slater, Flemmer)

**Motion carries.**

### State Historic Preservation Office Update – Lisa Steckler, Amy Munson

- Steckler said she enjoyed sitting in on a meeting and staff are hoping to visit each CLG for at least one meeting a year.
- Grants – Munson said the federal preservation funding had remained at the 2014 level and, as a result, the State Historical Society was not offering Preservation Fund grants this year. They hope to resume those grants in 2016. The Cultural Heritage Grant, which is funded with state monies, was reappropriated by the legislature and funding will be available this year.
- Preservation Poster – Staff members have constructed an oversize poster that explains the goals and procedures of the Preservation Division. Babcock Hall is featured on it. Leach requested a copy of it to put in the display case in Babcock. Munson wants to finish editing it and will send it out.
- Postcards – Lorna Meidinger has been taking photos at each of the NDUS campuses and staff members have made postcards featuring one building from each campus.
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (revised 1999) – The fiftieth anniversary of the Historic Preservation Act is next year. Various programs are being planned. Information is available at <http://preservation50.org/>
- Fiscal Year – Munson reminded the CLG that the fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

### Chair Report – Marsha Gunderson

- Downtown Design and Review Board – The board met to approve new signage for Alerus Financial.
- RH Standard is moving into an historic building at 6 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- Vintage Mille Photography is moving into the Jacks building next to Lyon’s Garage on N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- St. John’s Block – Flemmer asked about plans for rehab; Gunderson said the state has forwarded the plans to the National Park Service. The NPS has 45 days to review. The owners are applying for historic tax credits.

### Coordinator Report – Peg O’Leary

- St. Michael’s School Complex Nomination – One proposal met the requirements of the RFP. It was submitted by Michelle Dennis. The proposal was approved by the state, with expressed concern for meeting deadlines. Commissioners agreed that deadline issues have been largely out of Dennis’ control and commended the quality of previous work.

**Motion:** to authorize a contract with M.L. Dennis Consulting for the St. Michael’s School Complex nomination. (Slater, Flemmer)

**Motion carries.**

- Fire Hall Theatre – Fire Hall management requests a support letter for their grant requesting continuing funding for the on-going tuck-pointing project on the building.  
**Motion:** to authorize a letter to the State Historical Society in support of on-going work on the Fire Hall Theatre building at 412 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. (Swisher, Flemmer)  
**Motion carries.**
- Commission Terms – Swisher, Munski, Lien, and Sickels are requesting reappointment for two-year terms. Gunderson said she has decided to retire from the Commission. She said 33 years with 32 as chairperson are enough; she would like to see some new young people become involved. Iseminger expressed dismay at losing her leadership and institutional memory and encouraged her to reconsider.
- NAPC Membership Renewal – Annual membership fee is \$150, which is specified in our CLG budget.  
**Motion:** to renew the HPC annual membership in NAPC at the \$150 rate. (Leach, Swisher)  
**Motion carries.**
- Wells Denbrook Context Payment – Pulled
- Society of Architectural Historians – The SHSND has remitted the final payment (\$3,750) on the Buildings of North Dakota Archipedia grant. This amount must be paid out to the Society of Architectural Historians. They will then send us \$250 payment for administering the grant.  
**Motion:** to authorize payment of \$3,750 to the Society of Architectural Historians for the public portion of the Archipedia. (Sickels, Slater)  
**Motion carries.**
- Sorlie Bridge Update – O’Leary visited with Mike Yavarow, GF Engineering, who is monitoring the rehab work on the Sorlie. He says the work is going very well; the on-site supervisor is very pleased with the quality of the work.
- Kennedy Bridge Update – O’Leary has received notice of the formal concurrence between NDSHPO and MnDOT of the NRHP eligibility of the bridge. MnDOT has also assured HPC that it will be included in all future consultations regarding the bridge.
- St. Michael’s Hospital and Nurses’ Residence – The work has begun on the tuck-pointing project.
- Buildings of North Dakota – The presentation and book signing will be held at the Masonic Center, Tuesday, July 28 at 7:00 p.m.

Other Business

- Flemmer noted that the house at 125 Belmont Road is being torn down.

**Motion:** to adjourn. (Sickels, Iseminger)

**Motion carries.** Meeting adjourned. 9:15 p.m.

*The next regular meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2015, in A101, City Hall.*

Respectfully submitted,

Peg O’Leary  
Coordinator