

MINUTES OF THE ALBERT LEA HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

April 15, 2025

5:30 pm – City Center

Call to order at 5:30pm by Tom Staker.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Levisen, Stephanie Kibler, Brad Kirchner, Tom Staker, Tarrah Hall-Sather, Nic Lang, and Larry Baker.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Linda Bryan.

STAFF PRESENT: Megan Boeck, City Planner.

INTERESTED PARTIES: Rachel Christensen, City Councilor and owner of 232 Washington Ave S.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Levisen and second by Kibler to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Hall-Sather and second by Kirchner to approve the March 11, 2025 meeting minutes as written. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1) Certificate of Appropriateness – 232 Washington Ave S

Staker opened the public hearing at 5:37pm.

Lang abstained from the public hearing at 5:37pm.

Boeck stated that the property owners have applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness for four different exterior repairs and modifications:

- 1) Window awning/overhang – east storefront (Washington Ave)

- 2) Window restoration and foundation repairs – south elevation (Main Street)
- 3) Landscaping – south elevation (Main Street)
- 4) Window and garage door restoration – west elevation (Alley)

Details on the repairs and modifications can be found in the prepared staff report on file.

Lang explained that he is not trying to chase trends but to bring back life to the building. He said the windows on the south side were reduced in the 1970's and the fabric awning was replaced with metal to avoid damage. He noted that metal is practical and low maintenance.

Lang provided an additional picture of the south side windows and explained that it is easier to repair a 3x5 ft. versus 8x10 ft. window pane. Lang also stated that he prefers to square up the windows with veneers and caulking versus trim and that the reductions are justifiable.

Kirchner stated that the previous months request was to shrink the window opening and that he appreciates the solution offered which is to keep the opening but provide less glass.

Kibler questioned staff if the windows as proposed is considered historic and reasonable.

Boeck stated yes.

Kibler questioned staff if the awning as proposed is historic.

Boeck stated that per page 10 of the historic guidelines, materials that were installed after 1953 are not considered historic.

Lang stated that he is pro save the building not save this or that historical element.

Levisen stated that a no to the awning is not a no to the building.

Christensen thanked the commission for their knowledge base and stated that she would never want the commission to make a decision other than what they think is right. Christensen wants the commission to know she doesn't expect preferential treatment and that her only goal was to prevent blight and tax forfeiture of a downtown building but if this doesn't work she will work to find another solution.

Staker closed the public hearing at 6:26pm.

Motion by Hall-Sather and second by Staker to approve the placement of the awning. Motion failed on a 0-5 voice vote with Lang abstaining. Motion is denied. Boeck informed the applicant of his right to appeal to the City Council within 15 working days as per city ordinance.

Motion by Kirchner and second by Hall-Sather to approve the window restoration and foundation repairs on the south elevation. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote with Lang abstaining.

Motion by Kibler and second by Levisen to approve landscaping on the south elevation. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote with Lang abstaining.

Motion by Kirchner and second by Kibler to approve the garage door restoration. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote with Lang abstaining.

NEW BUSINESS

1) Certificates of Appropriateness – Staff Approvals

Boeck provided the commission a list of staff approvals that have been granted for COA's to date.

The board thanked Boeck for an update and looks forward to continuing with staff approvals for projects that meet guidelines.

COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATION

None.

STAFF COMMUNICATION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Kirchner and second by Hall-Sather to adjourn the meeting at 6:53pm. Motion carried.

Megan Boeck, City Planner

Tom Staker, Chair