

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
6:30 PM TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET

Approved October 19, 2023

Members Present: IN PERSON: Laz Scangas (Chair); Richard Stahl (Vice Chair); Joe Luneau ZOOM: Lisamarie Charlesworth; Lisa Evans

Members Absent: KarenMarie Peltier; Barbara Weinstein

City Staff present: IN PERSON: Katie Haseltine (Minute-Taker); Chip Sawyer (Director of Planning and Development)

Members of the public present: IN PERSON: Louise Hayes

1. Begin Recording and Open Meeting, called to order at 6:05 PM

- a) Introduction of attendees
- b) Public Comment on issues not on agenda – None.
- c) Discuss additions or deletions to agenda – L. Scangas would like to add Grant Application.

2. Discuss French Canadian Heritage District project.

- a) L. Scangas asks everyone to quickly share their findings from the streets they surveyed.
 - i. L. Evans and J. Luneau were teamed up. L. Evans did the bulk of Cedar Street. L. Evans found that the majority of structures had few changes, noting that siding was the most common update. Structurally speaking, L. Evans observed very little change. J. Luneau also observed that vinyl siding was the most common change as well as open porches that are now enclosed.
 - ii. L. Charlesworth and K. Peltier were teamed up. L. Charlesworth did part of LaSalle Street, a tiny bit of Oak Street, and most of Maple Street. L. Charlesworth found it difficult to identify structures by address number, many homes didn't have a clear number present to see. The main observation was that structures were definitely more run down than they were described in the report from the 1980s. L. Charlesworth shared that other changes were to the siding, doors were different, and that at least 3 structures were now no longer there.
 - iii. C. Sawyer and others on City Staff did Edward Street, Lower Welden, and

Pine Street. C. Sawyer noted that they didn't think to look at siding. However, observed that there were a couple cases where the structure was entirely replaced, open porches now enclosed, new porches, and things that are missing.

- iv. L. Scangas and R. Stahl were teamed up and did Lake Street, part of Russel Street, part of South Elm Street, and Hunt Street. They found similar comments as others already stated (siding and porch updates). L. Scangas reports that they found Lake Street took a lot of big hits, noting lots of houses and commercial buildings are now gone. East and West of Beverage Mart, many buildings have been torn down and are now vacant spaces or new buildings have been built in place of them.
- b) C. Sawyer needs all notes and surveys back to compile all the information together.
- c) L. Scangas quickly discusses the Grant Application.
 - i. The deadline for going after money is December 11th.
 - ii. L. Scangas states that they will need to start working on an application.
 - iii. Looking to focus on presenting the project as a historic and cultural district.
 - iv. There is a need to schedule an additional meeting between now and the groups next meeting on December 5th to allow more time for preparing the application. October 17th and October 10th are presented as potential dates. The committee consensus lands on October 10th as the best date for the additional meeting.
- d) L. Scangas shares that L. Hayes is here from the Historical Society to discuss the map and her knowledge of the culture and residences in the area that is being proposed for the grant application, which is being referred to as the French Canadian Heritage District.
 - i. L. Hayes discusses the map, stating it reflects the layout and names of those who lived there in 1936. Many residences were French names. Hayes discusses the map and how its purpose was to identify how many residences were French names. They found that many residences were French names and those that weren't, were likely still French, but L. Hayes spoke about how names deliberately altered spelling in response to World War II as well as in response to the tradition of speaking and efforts to make pronunciation easier.
 - ii. Overall, the observation is that the district was overall very French and what played a large role in that was Holy Angels Church. In 1899, when they opened the Convent School, the students had half a day of French and half a day of English classes. Parents would decide which classes their children would take in French and which classes they would take in

- English.
- iii. C. Sawyer believes this application will likely need to be site specific district and the way to do it will be with the knowledge of the schools to reference.
 - iv. L. Scangas asks about how long the school was open. L. Hayes didn't know off the top of her head but can get that information.
 - v. L. Hayes states the Convent School was in the building that is now senior housing. The nuns lived in a separate house. A commercial school opened and held grades 9-10.
 - vi. R. Stahl asked about students transferring to BFA upon completion in the catholic schools. L. Hayes believes many of them just went to work, rather than continuing education.
 - vii. L. Hayes mentions that the public school didn't have the latest equipment that the catholic school did. C. Sawyer asks why the school was so flushed with cash. L. Hayes shares that families paid tuition to the catholic schools above and beyond the public-school tax they paid, and J. Luneau reflects that staff in the catholic school weren't paid, which is likely a large contributing factor to their financial ability to have the latest equipment.
 - viii. L. Hayes remembers some students bringing in potatoes, squash, and other harvests to school and wonders if that was in lieu of tuition, a very likely possibility.
 - ix. When the convent was sold for senior housing, the nuns moved into the building that is now Almond Blossom Schoolhouse.
- e) L. Scangas thanks L. Hayes for the detailed information she brought to this discussion and asks if there are any follow up questions or comments.
- i. J. Luneau wonders about some of the name changes that were definitely more deliberate. L. Hayes reflects that many had a feeling of wanting to present as more American during the war so they were more accepted by the community.
 - ii. J. Luneau also reflects that there was a general hesitation for St. Mary's graduates to matriculate to Holy Angels. L. Hayes states that stemmed from a longstanding conflict between the Irish and the French. L. Hayes shares a story of someone in her family that was marrying a non-French person and the conflict that brought to the family. L. Scangas recalls a student who passed away at Holy Angels and the service was to be held there, but students at St. Mary's could not attend because of that conflict. R. Stahl recalls someone standing up and asking if Holy Angels was going to allow St. Mary's parishoners to attend mass when St. Mary's closed down last year. J. Luneau and others reflect that many did not transfer to Holy Angels, but have rather decided to attend mass in outlying towns like

Fairfield and Georgia.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a) **J. Luneau motions to approve the minutes of June 27, 2023, as presented. R. Stahl seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.**

4. Other Business.

a) Grant Application

- i. L. Hayes wonders if it should be names “Franco-American”, but C. Sawyer thinks we should stick with “French Canadian Heritage District”. L. Charlesworth reflects that heritage really speaks to what they are trying to do with the district.
- ii. C. Sawyer states we will need to seek a consultant to present the information to and determine a solid plan for moving forward. L. Scangas would like L. Hayes to continue being involved, to share her historical knowledge with the consultant.
- iii. L. Hayes reflects that many of the families that were residing in this district came from the railroad. Many farming families lived on their farms but were members of the Holy Angels Parish.
- iv. L. Scangas curious if L. Hayes has a guess at when the district was at its peak since the grant application is interested in a “period of significance”. L. Hayes is estimating between the 30s-50s. J. Luneau suggests using the dates from when Holy Angels opened to when the school closed and using that as the period of significance.
- v. J. Luneau reflects that the aggregate ability for the community to begin construction on the church confirms that the community was already pretty well established and would be a good reasoning for using the earlier date as the period of significance.
- vi. C. Sawyer not sure what the match will be with this grant application but anticipates that the group will be relying on in-kind donated time for this. L. Scangas to check with Lisa on what an estimated cost could be for this. C. Sawyer shares that the grant application should be released on October 9th, in time for the additional meeting scheduled in October.

5. Review next meeting date/time.

- a) October 10th, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

6. Adjourn.

- a) **Meeting adjourns at 6:55 pm.**