



**Great Falls-Cascade County
Historic Preservation Advisory**

Commission

March 10, 2021

12:00 p.m. Planning

& Community

Development

Conference Room

**Note: Meeting will
be conducted in
Virtual format**

Agenda

Public comment always welcome!

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2020
 - Action Item with Public Comment
2. Planning Staff activity report to the HPAC
3. Upcoming opening of Historic 10th Street Bridge – Proposed Resolution from HPAC to allow historic bridge to be fully used
 - Action Item with Public Comment
4. Update on Historic Preservation Officer search
5. HPAC discussion of top priorities for 2021
6. Big Sky National Heritage Area Update
7. Reports from Commissioners
8. Public Comment
9. Adjourn Meeting

Great Falls/Cascade County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Minutes from the February 10, 2021 meeting held in the Planning & Community Development Conference Room via Zoom

Members Present: Ellen Sievert, Carol Bronson, Ken Sievert, Ken Robison, Steve Taylor, Peter Jennings, Rich Ecke

Members Absent: Chris Christiaens, Suzanne Waring

Staff Present: Tom Micuda

Ex-Officio Members Present: Joan Redeen

Visitors: Jane Weber

The meeting was called to order by Rich Ecke at 12:01 pm.

1. **Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 13, 2021** – Ken Robison made a motion to approve the minutes. Carol Bronson seconded. The January 13 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.
2. **Planning staff activity report to the Commission** – Tom reported that both of the second interview candidates for the vacant HPO position turned the City down. One withdrew her interest due to a promotion opportunity with her current job for Arkansas State Parks. The other turned down an offer of employment because of a competing job offer. Since we had a lot of applications for the position, we are going back to those and already have interviews scheduled for February 17 and 22.

Additionally, the City Commission approved our annual Certified Local Government grant. It will be sent to the SHPO tomorrow.

Rich asked if there were any qualified HPO candidates from Great Falls who applied. Tom noted that one individual from Great Falls was a possible candidate for an interview. Jane told all HPAC members not to be discouraged. Having candidates turn down a job offer for other opportunities happens in many other places, including the County. Ellen did note that Great Falls doesn't have a great reputation, and the Heritage Area initiative is part of the effort to better promote Great Falls and Cascade County.

3. **Update of Civic Center Façade Project** - Tom indicated that since HPAC last discussed this, the City Commission approved use of Downtown Tax Increment bond funds to finance this project. Cushing and Terrell developed all the bid documents for the façade and roof renovation work. The Pre-Bid meeting was recently held and well attended. Tony Houtz ran the meeting. There will be a bid opening on February 17. Depending on bids, there could be an award for the project at the March 2 City Commission meeting. It will be a two-year construction project.

Ken Sievert and Ellen both asked about whether the project received review from the SHPO. Tom indicated that he did not know, but would contact Tony Houtz to find out. Rich expressed his happiness that the project is finally moving forward.

4. **Proposal to use Downtown Tax Increment Finance Funds to support building façade projects and building safety improvements** – Tom noted that several HPAC members asked for this item to be placed on the agenda after it was recently discussed at a City Commission work session. The proposal is a joint effort between the Downtown Development Partnership (DDP) and the City. Joan briefed the Commissioners noting that three programs are being considered that would involve grant requests for Downtown TIF funds. The first is called CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design). This would involve the installation of cameras and lighting. The second involves the installation of building improvements to address issues such as handicap access and fire prevention. The third program would be to improve facades. It would address building elements such as windows and building material replacement, not simple re-painting. The programs would require a 50% private funding match. No property would be eligible for more than \$80,000. The current proposed limits are \$50,000 for an individual façade project, \$25,000 for interior building improvements, and \$5,000 for CPTED. The goal is

to have the programs approved by July 1. The total amount of funding proposed for all three programs would be \$500,000.

Joan noted that the City Commission was very supportive of the programs proposed, but had concerns about whether the programs should be overseen by the City or DDP.

Ellen stated that it is very important for historic preservation review to occur with these projects. Rich agreed with Ellen that this review is important because the downtown is a National Register District. Peter asked if there is any language in the proposal that addresses historic review.

Joan responded by saying that she would take her cue from the City on historic review being part of the process. Tom indicated that he would continue to be involved in the discussions, but would recommend that the projects be reviewed by HPAC.

5. **Update on Historic Preservation Awards Activity** – Rich updated the Commission. He recently took all three plaque awards to the winners. A news release was also issued containing a link to the video produced to publicize the award winners. The *Electric* put together an article about the awards. Joan noted that the video had 221 views on YouTube.
6. **Big Sky National Heritage Area Update** – Jane provided HPAC with an update. She reviewed the concerns that had been alleged by those opposed to the initiative. In her view, the City's actions to assist the NHA were very appropriate. This consisted of holding a small amount of money for the NHA before it achieved non-profit status, keeping archived meeting minutes (before NHA status), and scheduling City meeting rooms. The NHA group has done good work so far: helping the First People's Buffalo Jump, promoting events in Cascade honoring Charlie Russell, helping out the Monarch Depot get some additional land. If the NHA is officially created, small grants to promote tourism, economic development, and preservation would be possible. Because of the amount of opposition, more letters of support are needed from individuals and groups to promote the NHA. The NHA group is making contacts to get these letters, and Jane urged HPAC members to send letters as individuals. The Feasibility Study is almost ready to be submitted, but only about 50 support letters are included so far.
7. **Reports from Commissioners** – Ken Robison noted that the JC Adams Stone Barn has a website: jcadamsstonebarnco.org. This is a great time to support efforts surrounding the Barn.
8. **Public Comment** – None
9. **Adjourn Meeting** – Meeting adjourned at 12:58pm

March 10, 2021

Resolution by the Great Falls Cascade County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Whereas, the city of Great Falls is the legal owner of the historic 10th Street Bridge over the Missouri River.

Whereas, the 10th Street Bridge is the only remaining example of an open-spandrel concrete-arch bridge in the region.

Whereas, the 10th Street Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's honor roll for historic structures.

Whereas, the group Preservation Cascade has succeeded in saving and renovating the 100-year-old structure.

Whereas, the River's Edge Trail group has expressed interest in fully incorporating the renovated bridge into its more than 50-mile-long recreational trail system.

Whereas, the 10th Street Bridge is well suited to accommodating pedestrian and bicycle traffic once access to the south end of the bridge is accomplished, and after one additional section of protective railing near the south end of the bridge is installed.

Whereas, the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission strongly supports efforts to preserve and enhance our community's historic buildings and structures.

Whereas, the 10th Street Bridge, when open on both the north and south ends, will make a worthy addition to the popular River's Edge Trail system.

Be it resolved that the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission strongly urges the City of Great Falls Planning Board and the Great Falls City Commission to take all necessary steps to clear the way for opening the south end of the bridge to public use, including but not limited to approving subdivision requests for property near the bridge, and approving a land swap that would allow public use of the bridge on its south end and enable the installation of an asphalt or concrete pathway from the existing section of River's Edge Trail alongside River Drive North to the south end of the 10th Street Bridge.

The Historic Preservation Advisory Commission believes these actions will enhance community life in and around Great Falls, assist and enhance historic preservation in the city and county, and aid economic development in the community.

Signed,