

**MINUTES OF
HISTORICAL LANDMARKS COMMISSION**

October 14, 1992
Wasco County Public Library
722 Court
The Dalles, Oregon

ROLL CALL - The following Commissioners were present: Dave Kammerman, Colleen Schafroth, Eric Gleason, Elroy King, Pat May and Gladys Seufert.

The following staff was present: Scott Keillor, Collese Dahlberg and Dan Durow.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

September 23, 1992 - It was moved by May and seconded by Gleason to approved the minutes as distributed. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PUBLIC HEARING

Request #9-92 of City of The Dalles Convention and Visitor's Bureau to place a 10'X 66' mural within the Commercial Historic District was before the Commission. The proposed mural would occupy the east face of the Davies Drug building, at the corner of East 2nd and Federal Streets. The mural would depict pioneer life along the Oregon Trail from 1843 through the 1850's.

King asked if any commissioner wished to declare a conflict. After seeing there were no conflicts or challenges, King asked Keillor to review the staff report and findings.

[Durow arrived 4:10 p.m.]

Proponents

Ben Hart, Director of the City of The Dalles Convention and Visitor's Bureau addressed the Commission. Hart said that the mural program will revitalize the economic standing and bring visitors and conventions into town. He said that the first step is to develop roots for the 1993 Oregon Trail Celebration. He believed that the murals at Toppenish, Washington have added incentive to visitors for that community.

The mural, painted by Don Crook, is being created in three panels. The first panel depicts the arrival to The Dalles. The second shows the staging area, where they waited to board the rafts, and the third panel is of the departure. The mural is being paid for with a combination of \$5000 of CVB funds a \$5000 and grant from the

State. The contract with the artist calls for a limited number of prints from the mural.

When asked what the future plans for murals would be, Hart said that he would like to see 20 to 30 murals in town over the next five years. He would also like to see a mural society created. However, he did not want to see it associated with the CVB or the City. He hopes to help establish the society and then to see it thrive as a separate entity. He did mention that he hopes local talent will be used.

Opponents

Paula Kutner, Ft. Dalles Museum, 313 E 13th, The Dalles, Oregon

Kutner said that she was not against murals, but in favor of historic accuracy. Oxen were the common means of pulling wagons. Therefore, the mural depicting horses pulling the wagons is inaccurate. She had spoken with Jim Weeks, a local historian, and his research revealed one horse used to every nine or ten oxen. She was sorry to find horses so prominent in the mural.

During the Oregon Trail Celebration, the community will see 1000's of visitors. Many of these will have come from Independence and will have visited several museums, learning a lot of history along the way. These visitors will not expect to find beautiful, healthy, horses on a mural depicting an historic event. She asked if the community is not concerned about local history, how will we teach visitors. She said that by the time the visitors reach The Dalles, many will know a lot of history, maybe more than some of the artists.

She concluded by saying that if murals are to be a party to our history, then they should be done with historic accuracy. We don't want to be the laughing stock of the Oregon Trail.

Proponents - Rebuttal

Ben Hart, Director of the City of The Dalles Convention and Visitor's Bureau Hart said that he understood the purpose of the hearing to be a determination of compliance or lack of compliance with the criteria.

Hart said that the artist had agreed to replace horses with oxen in the second panel. He also said that the fact that horses were used makes the mural historically accurate.

Gleason asked if there will be more notice the future before murals go up. Hart said that this was a quick process and when he was aware that a hearing would be required, he complied. Gleason said that he prefers to see the Commissions viewed as an advisory body, not a rubber stamping entity. Seufert said that she would like to see an historian on the mural society.

Neutral

Jill Muller, Wasco County Historical Society, 2121 Wright, The Dalles Muller said that oxen were the primary source of travel. Baker City has some beautiful examples. She said that numerous historians and excerpts from diaries will support her claim. If at all possible she believes the horses in the first panel should be changed to oxen, or at the least, mules.

Chair King said that the public testimony was closed after the proponent rebuttal and there should be no further public testimony.

Deliberation

Seufert said that she objected strenuously. The clean, pretty woman in the first panel is a misrepresentation. Some of these people walked. The horses were not at all authentic. The indians stole the horses, so if people did bring them, the horses usually didn't get this far. She said that the first panel of the mural is all wrong for our history. If you are going to do this, do it right, or not at all.

Seufert believed that the Historical Landmarks Commission should have been the first ones consulted on this project. She said that people will notice the inaccuracy because the people who live here know about the trail. Seufert thought the Commission would be remiss in approving this application.

Kammerman asked Keillor if any criteria spoke to accuracy. Keillor read Section 10. He told the Commission that they need to address change and impact the mural may have on the historic district; i.e. will the mural adversely affect the character of the building or the district.

May said that this mural is not history, it is a travesty. Keillor added that if the content of the mural causes an adverse affect, it needs to be considered.

Gleason asked what specific modifications were to be done. Hart said that the railings on the rafts would be removed and more oxen would be placed in the background.

Kammerman asked Seufert if the horses were inconsistent, or were merely not prominent in history. Seufert said that the artist did not do his research and she recommended denial of the application.

Durow reminded the Commission that staff had polled each of them, and they had not made these points so strongly. He also said that there may be financial ramification and contract problems.

May said that Oregon City and Baker City will laugh at us.

Seufert asked why the mural was before the Commission. Keillor said that the idea of murals in The Dalles was a new one. He said

that Hart had been under the impression that he didn't need to apply to the Commission. But once he was made aware, he came to the planning office right away. Keillor said that this is not the only case, other murals are going up without permits. He is checking into this.

Hart said that he had taken the mural sketch to a City Council meeting and that was when he was made aware that he needed to apply. He added that Don Crook is a noted historian and won the Best of Show award at the Russell show.

King reopened the public testimony portion of the hearing.

Proponent

Katherine Drabeck, 301 SW Lincoln #609, Portland, Oregon 97201

Drabeck said she was honored that her building had been chosen to represent the history of the area. She is trying to acquire historical knowledge. She referred to the murals in Toppenish, where the artist was permitted artistic playfulness. An example of this playfulness is a mural with a rabbit approximately 3 feet tall which is hidden in a bush.

Drabeck believed that it would be awfully difficult to recreate an exact representation of the past. A mural of women dressed in rags and sweating may not receive the respect it is due. She said that the mural will be substantially correct as horses were used. She reminded everyone that anything made by humans will have imperfections - but it will give personality to the city. Drabeck added that the mural society should be encouraged. She offered to take the Commission to Toppenish to look at their murals.

May said that The Dalles has no connection to Toppenish. She took offense to the idea that there may be humor in the trials of those going over the Oregon Trail.

Drabeck said she had not meant it as a joke. She was trying to demonstrate artistic license.

Chairman King again closed the public testimony portion of the hearing.

Deliberation

May believed in artistic license, but not when doing commissioned work.

Kammerman said that accuracy would, in his opinion, be imperative for art purchased for the Discovery Center. He added that horses were used, murals would spruce up the community, and students would not be using the murals as a means of learning history.

Schafroth said that we were talking about only 1/3 of the whole mural. The center of the mural could actually be the focal point.

Seufert said that approval would advocate historic inaccuracy.

Schafroth asked if it would be necessary in the Commission's view to have only historic murals in the district. She had seen some very playful surreal murals in other towns.

Keillor asked the Commission if the mural would adversely affect the district.

Gleason said that an historic mural in an historic district could detract, but whether slight flaws or artistic freedom, censorship is dangerous. He added that thousands of people traveled the trail, but we have only hundreds of pieces of information on which to rely.

Schafroth added that the building in question is not a designated building, but is within the historic district.

Keillor said that the Commission needed to decide if the mural would adversely affect the district.

King agreed with Kammerman and Schafroth. Oxen were used more often, but the use of horses was historically accurate. He credited Hart and the CVB for coming to the Commission. He said that he would rather see some historic inaccuracies than see the mural program be killed.

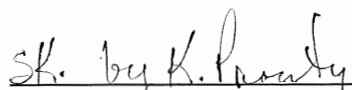
[Seufert left 5:05 p.m.]

King informed the Commission that he would entertain a motion. Kammerman moved to approve the application of the CVB, as there would be no adverse impact upon the district, and based upon findings of fact, with a recommendation to take advantage of the local historians. Schafroth seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Schafroth moved to approve Order 9-92. Kammerman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Other Business

Keillor informed the Commission that he had received a letter from the State requesting support from the Mayor for the Local Certified Government status. Keillor will approach the Mayor for this letter. The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.



submitted by Scott Keillor