

SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING
November 20, 2024
4:00 p.m.

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon 97058
Via Zoom / Livestream via City Website

PRESIDING: Robert McNary, Chair

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Bev Eagy, Forust Ercole, Eric Gleason, Karl Vercouteren

OTHERS ABSENT: City Councilor Scott Randall, Museum Commission Representative Julie Reynolds

STAFF PRESENT: Director Joshua Chandler, Senior Planner Sandy Freund, Secretary Paula Webb

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair McNary at 4:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Eagy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Eagy and seconded by Gleason to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried 5/0; Eagy, Ercole, Gleason, McNary and Vercouteren voting in favor, none opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Vercouteren noted J. Scott Stephenson was included in “Commissioners Present” instead of Commissioner Vercouteren. Mr. Stephenson was not in attendance.

It was moved by Vercouteren and seconded by Gleason to approve the minutes of August 28, 2024 as corrected. The motion carried 5/0; Eagy, Ercole, Gleason, McNary and Vercouteren voting in favor, none opposed.

MINUTES

Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting

November 20, 2024

Page 2 of 4

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Eagy nominated Robert McNary for Chair. Commissioner Vercouteren seconded the nomination. Vercouteren then moved for a unanimous vote. The motion carried 5/0; Eagy, Ercole, Gleason, McNary and Vercouteren voting in favor, none opposed.

Chair McNary nominated Forust Ercole for Vice Chair. Commissioner Eagy seconded the nomination. Commissioner Vercouteren then moved for a unanimous vote. The motion carried 5/0; Eagy, Ercole, Gleason, McNary and Vercouteren voting in favor, none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

2025 GOAL SETTING

Director Chandler introduced the City's new Senior Planner, Sandy Freund. Senior Planner Freund will oversee the Historic Landmarks program.

Senior Planner Freund presented the staff report. She recommended the Board consider a restructuring exercise to prioritize and achieve goals effectively in the coming years. Staff suggested defining goal terms more clearly: short-term goals as one to two years, medium-term goals as three to five years, and continuous goals greater than five years.

The Commission reviewed and updated their 2025 goals, focusing on updating historic inventories, encouraging new nominations to local and national registries, and maintaining Certified Local Government status. Specific goals include providing historic restoration workshops, creating concept designs for historic building plaques, and supporting the preservation of the Waldron Drug/Gitchell building.

The Commission also discussed the potential for adding new goals related to the historical significance of buildings along the railroad and the importance of informing real estate buyers about historic property requirements.

Additional topics included the addition of a short-term goal to research the Rock House and the development of a GIS map to include historic property designations. The GIS map, expected by spring, will provide property information, including historic designations.

Concerns were raised about the First Street project's impact on historic properties. The meeting also touched on the importance of preserving historic resources and the potential for new residential grants.

Staff will return at the January meeting with the 2025 Goals for approval (Attachment 1).

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Vercouteren noted the Original Courthouse Board would meet tomorrow to discuss potential programs for the February Regional History Forum. He invited anyone with ideas to share them with him or Commissioner Gleason.

MINUTES

Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting

November 20, 2024

Page 3 of 4

Commissioner Gleason raised two concerns. First, regarding the Fort Dalles Museum application, he noted the city's new application process is intended to assist staff in writing reports and guiding applicants to provide sufficient information. However, the current combined application for remodels, new construction, and landmark status has caused confusion. He suggested splitting the application into separate forms, particularly separating landmark designation requests, to simplify the process.

Second, he expressed concerns about the First Street project. While acknowledging the need for improvements due to the deterioration of paving and sidewalks observed over the past 40 years, he emphasized the importance of protecting historic properties, particularly the stone retaining walls around the Chinatown site. He argued for prioritizing the preservation of these walls, as replacing them with gabion walls would not be ideal aesthetically, historically, or potentially cost-wise. Minimizing land disturbance and avoiding impacts on historic resources would likely save money in the long term by reducing the risk of unforeseen expenses associated with archeological sites.

Commissioner Vercouteren inquired about the Walking Tour, specifically the Otocast app and its functionality. He questioned the app's longevity, noting he had encountered information suggesting it requires periodic renewal and payment to maintain its connection.

Director Chandler explained that the Otocast app operates under an annual license or agreement. While it was included in last year's budget, he needs to verify its status for the upcoming year. He noted that user engagement has been relatively low, which raises concerns about the value of ongoing payments for the service.

Chandler added that continued payment ensures access to updates, including software improvements. If the subscription lapses, the program would likely remain functional but without updates, effectively leaving users with an outdated version. He offered to investigate further if there is interest in maintaining the service.

STAFF COMMENTS

Director Chandler mentioned that the Fort Dalles Museum/Anderson Homestead is considering replacement of the vehicle storage building. Chandler noted the goal is to bring this matter before the Board at the January meeting.

Chair McNary asked if any topics at the Urban Renewal Agency meeting would be important to the Historic Landmarks Commission.

Director Chandler emphasized that increasing the maximum indebtedness for urban renewal would provide more funding for the Urban Renewal Incentive Program. This program currently offers three grant types:

- **Facade Improvement Grant:** Provides up to \$50,000 as a 50/50 match for property owners undertaking projects such as facade improvements to historic buildings downtown. For example, a \$100,000 project would receive \$50,000 in funding.

MINUTES

Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting

November 20, 2024

Page 4 of 4

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- **Residential Dwelling Grant:** Offers \$10,000 per residential unit added to the urban renewal district, such as converting vacant upper-floor spaces in downtown buildings into residential units. This funding can help cover system development charges.
 - **Mixed-Use Grant:** Allocates up to \$150,000 for projects classified as mixed-use, combining residential and commercial components.

If the substantial amendment is approved, additional funds would be allocated to this program, and staff are exploring potential modifications. Proposed changes include increasing grant amounts and introducing a new residential grant to support upgrades to residential properties within the urban renewal district, which includes downtown and areas extending west and south of Webber Street.

Chandler also mentioned the Tony's Building site redevelopment, which is currently under review by a selection advisory committee. Once a proposal is chosen, the project will require Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) review to ensure alignment with preservation goals.

These initiatives align with broader goals of historic preservation and revitalization in The Dalles.

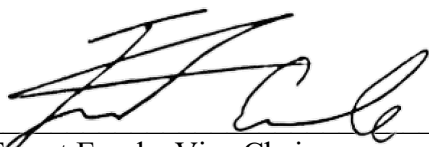
ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.


Meeting conducted in a room in compliance with ADA standards.

Submitted by/
Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department

SIGNED:


Forust Ercole, Vice Chair

ATTEST:


Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department