

MINUTES

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING

February 25, 2026

4:00 p.m.

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

PRESIDING: Forust Ercole, Chair

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Forust Ercole, Tom Giamei, Eric Gleason, Victor Johnson,
Bob McNary

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Tom Giamei

Note: Commissioner Giamei was connected to the meeting remotely but did not confirm attendance or participate in the meeting and was therefore recorded as absent.

OTHERS PRESENT: Museum Commission Representative Julie Reynolds
(arrived at 4:18 p.m.), City Councilor Scott Randall

STAFF PRESENT: Community Development Director Joshua Chandler, City
Attorney Johnathan Kara, Administrative Assistant Crystal Sayre

CALL TO ORDER

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Ercole led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Commissioner Gleason and seconded by Vice Chair McNary to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried 4/0; Ercole, Gleason, Johnson, McNary, voting in favor, none opposed, Giamei absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner reviewed the minutes from the January 28, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Gleason noted a minor correction under Commissioner Comments, requesting that the last name of Karl Vercoutern be added where only his first name was referenced.

It was moved by Vice Chair McNary and seconded by Commissioner Gleason to approve The minutes of January 28, 2026 as amended. The motion carried 4/0; Ercole, Gleason, Johnson, McNary, voting in favor, none opposed, Giamei, absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chuck Gomez, 221 E 2nd Street: Chuck Gomez, owner of the Granada Theater, provided an update regarding the recently installed digital marquee at the historic theater located at 221 Second Street. Mr. Gomez thanked the City and Historic Landmarks Commission for allowing the installation while preserving the historic character of the building. He noted that although there had initially been community concern about introducing a digital sign to a historic property, research showed that the theater's marquee had been modified several times throughout its nearly century-long history. Mr. Gomez reported that the digital marquee has been well received by the community, with many compliments regarding its appearance and compatibility with the historic architecture. He explained that the marquee has also become a useful tool for promoting nonprofit and community events, including helping increase attendance for a recent Columbia Gorge Discovery Center event. Mr. Gomez stated that the theater continues to make the marquee available to community groups and expressed appreciation for the Commission's support of both preservation and thoughtful modernization. Chair Ercole thanked Mr. Gomez for the update. No additional public comments were offered.

PUBLIC HEARING

HLC Application 224-25, 412 Washington Street, Scott Austin

Request: Approval for the demolition of a non-contributing accessory building along the alleyway and to the rear of the primary building on the subject site, an historic structure formerly known as Webber's Cleaners, located along Washington Street.

Chair Ercole read the rules of a public hearing. He then asked if any Commissioner had ex-parte contact, conflict of interest or bias which would prevent an impartial decision.

No ex-parte contacts, conflicts of interest, or bias were declared by Commission members. No Challenges to the qualifications of the Commission were made.

Chair Ercole opened the public hearing at 4:08 p.m.

Community Development Director Joshua Chandler presented the Staff Report. Director Chandler explained that the application concerns the property at 412 Washington Street, the former Webber's Cleaners building located within the Central Business Commercial (CBC) Zone and CBC-1 Historic District Overlay.

The application requests approval to demolish Building B, a rear accessory structure located along the alley behind the primary historic building (Building A).

Director Chandler provided background on the site's historic status. The front building, Webber's Cleaners, is recognized as the historically significant portion of the property. The National Register nomination originally classified the property as historic but non-contributing in 1993, with a subsequent update in 1997 identifying it as a secondary structure. The Oregon State Inventory lists the property as an eligible contributing resource.

MINUTES

Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting

February 25, 2026

Page 3 of 12

Director Chandler explained that Building B—the rear structure—is not identified as historically significant in the nomination documents and is described only briefly in the historic record. The building is utilitarian in design, constructed of concrete masonry block, and architecturally distinct from the primary historic building.

Director Chandler noted that the Historic Landmarks Commission previously reviewed the property in 2020 when partial demolition and repairs were considered.

He presented photographs (Attachment 1) showing significant structural deterioration, including:

- foundation failure causing the building to sink,
- major cracking and separation of structural elements,
- roof failure resulting in water intrusion,
- visible structural gaps between building sections.

Director Chandler reported that the applicant consulted Terra Firma Foundation Systems, which determined that the building's foundation is failing. Repair estimates ranged between \$250,000 and \$300,000, with costs likely to increase if repairs were delayed.

Director Chandler explained that the applicant considers these costs economically unreasonable, particularly given that repairs would only stabilize the structure before further improvements could begin.

The proposal would remove the rear structure while retaining the historic Washington Street façade and primary building. The demolition would create additional rear parking and improve the usability and marketability of the property.

Director Chandler noted that demolition notices were issued twice in the local newspaper as required by code and that no public comments were received.

He concluded that the Commission must evaluate the application under demolition criteria, including the condition of the structure, economic feasibility of repair, and impacts to the historic resource.

Commissioner Gleason asked whether the rear structure or breezeway was part of the original construction. Director Chandler explained that available records provide very limited information about Building B, and historical documentation includes only minimal references.

Commissioner Johnson asked whether the breezeway enclosed any interior space. Director Chandler clarified that the breezeway is largely open and connects the two structures but does not create significant enclosed square footage.

Commissioner McNary asked whether the entrance from the breezeway into Building A would remain after demolition. Director Chandler explained that the entrance would remain and any minor repairs would likely be involved after removal of the breezeway.

Scott Austin, property owner and applicant, testified in support of the demolition request. Mr. Austin explained that significant investment had already been made restoring the historic front portion of the property along Washington Street. He stated that the restoration was intended to preserve the historic character of the building and improve the property overall.

However, Mr. Austin reported that the rear building has severe structural issues. He explained that the foundation failure and structural damage make rehabilitation impractical. Mr. Austin

stated that removing the building would enhance the historic property by improving access and providing parking behind the structure. He also indicated that future improvements could include ornamental fencing or landscaping to improve the appearance of the rear lot.

Mr. Austin clarified that the breezeway structure is self-supporting and not structurally connected to the two buildings except through flashing designed to prevent water intrusion.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Mr. Austin discussed the foundation evaluation conducted by Terra Firma and confirmed that the sinking structure is likely caused by the building's weight on unstable ground.

He also shared historical information indicating that a small house once existed between the two buildings and that dry-cleaning operations were historically routed between the structures through that intermediate building.

With no further deliberation, this portion of the public hearing was closed at 4:35 p.m.

It was moved by Vice Chair McNary and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve application HLC 224-25 as presented. The motion carried 4/0; Ercole, Gleason, Johnson, McNary, voting in favor, none opposed, Giamei absent.

RESOLUTION

HLC Resolution 208-26, HLC 224-25, Scott Austin

During discussion, Commissioner McNary asked whether the motion should specifically reference the conditions of approval. Commissioner Gleason noted that the conditions contained in the staff report had not been modified. Chair Ercole clarified that the motion to approve the application included the conditions as written in the staff report and that an additional vote was not necessary.

It was moved by Commissioner Gleason and seconded by Vice Chair McNary to approve Resolution 208-26 as presented. The motion carried 4/0; Ercole, Gleason, Johnson, McNary, voting in favor, none opposed, Giamei absent.

Following the vote, Director Chandler noted that the City administers a Brownfield Program that may aid with environmental review and redevelopment activities. Director Chandler encouraged the applicant to connect with Economic Development Officer Jake Anderson to explore potential eligibility for Brownfield funding.

ACTION ITEM

2026 Goal Setting (continued from work session of January 28, 2026) – Final Review

Director Chandler led a discussion regarding the Commission's 2026 goals, building upon draft materials prepared by Senior Planner Freund.

The Commission reviewed the proposed Mission Statement, goals, and associated action items.

Commissioners discussed whether both a vision statement and mission statement were necessary. Several Commissioners indicated that a single mission statement might be sufficient if it clearly described the Commission's purpose.

Commissioners also recommended revising language to refer to historic properties rather than historic housing to ensure the statement applies broadly to all historic resources.

Commissioner Johnson suggested replacing the term “promoting” with “facilitating” to better reflect the Commission’s role in enabling preservation efforts.

The Commission also discussed removing language referencing stabilization of property values, noting that this outcome may not be directly attributable to the Commission’s actions.

Director Chandler incorporated suggested edits during the discussion and presented revised wording reflecting Commission input.

Review of Goals and Action Items

The Commission reviewed each proposed goal and action item:

- **Historic Resources and Documentation**
Commissioners supported continued efforts to update The Dalles Municipal Code Chapter 11.12 and develop a comprehensive preservation plan for the City.
- **Historic Inventory and Register Nominations**
The Commission discussed updating historic inventories, digitizing records, and identifying additional properties eligible for nomination to historic registers. Commissioners supported exploring a “test case” nomination involving a City-owned property.
- **Public Engagement and Interpretation**
Commissioners discussed expanding educational resources, including historic building plaques and historic walking tours. Commissioners also expressed interest in involving local students through programs such as the ASPIRE program.
- **Education and Preservation Resources**
Commissioners discussed potential workshops, training opportunities, and financial barriers associated with historic preservation work. Staff indicated that grant funding may help offset some preservation costs.
- **Recognition of Historic Restoration Projects**
Commissioners discussed creating a recognition program for completed historic restoration projects.
Ideas included:
 - certificates signed by City leadership,
 - on-site recognition or signage,
 - press or community acknowledgment of completed work.
 - Commissioners expressed interest in recognizing property owners who successfully complete preservation work in accordance with Commission approvals.
- **Collaboration with Community Partners**

The Commission supported continued collaboration with organizations such as Main Street, the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, Columbia Gorge Community College, and Urban Renewal partners.

Commissioners noted that local fabrication programs at the community college could potentially assist with historic plaque production.

- **Historic Interpretation and Oral History**

Commissioners discussed maintaining historic interpretation resources such as the walking tour and oral histories.

Museum Representative Reynolds raised questions about where oral histories should be archived and preserved long-term. Commissioners discussed potential partnerships with the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and the Original Wasco County Courthouse, which already maintain historical archives.

Staff also noted limitations with the current walking tour software system and the need to ensure that the City retains copies of audio recordings and interpretive content.

STAFF COMMENTS

No additional staff comments were provided.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Gleason commented that he appreciates the continued efforts in the community to preserve historic buildings and resources. He noted that historic preservation often requires balancing the desire to maintain historic structures with the practical realities of maintenance and rehabilitation costs. Commissioner Gleason stated that he values the role of the Commission in helping guide preservation efforts and supporting property owners who invest in maintaining the historic character of The Dalles.

Commissioner Johnson expressed appreciation for the collaboration between property owners, staff, and the Commission in advancing preservation efforts. He commented that thoughtful rehabilitation and restoration projects contribute to maintaining the unique character of the community and help ensure that historic resources remain active parts of the City rather than becoming neglected or underutilized.

Commissioner McNary remarked that historic preservation requires ongoing attention and stewardship and that the Commission plays an important role in encouraging property owners to maintain and improve historic buildings. He noted that it is encouraging to see projects completed in a way that respects the community's architectural heritage while also keeping buildings functional and viable for modern use.

Chair Ercole thanked Commissioners and staff for their continued work supporting historic preservation in The Dalles and noted that the Commission's efforts help maintain the community's historic identity while encouraging appropriate reinvestment in historic properties.

Museum Representative Reynolds commented on the importance of documenting and preserving oral histories and historic records within the community. She asked where collected

oral histories would ultimately be archived and preserved and noted the importance of ensuring that recorded historical materials have a long-term repository. Reynolds referenced past efforts to record local oral histories and emphasized the value of coordinating with organizations such as the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and other institutions that maintain historical archives.

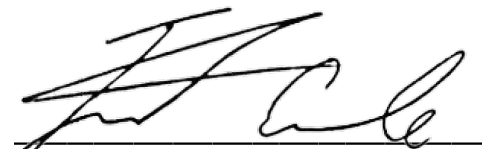
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

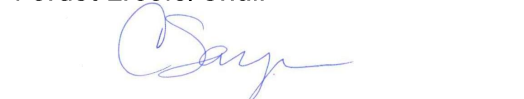
Meeting conducted in a room in compliance with ADA standards.

Submitted by/
Crystal Sayre, Administrative Assistant
Community Development Department

SIGNED:


Forrest Ercole, Chair

ATTEST:


Crystal Sayre, Administrative Assistant
Community Development Department



City of The Dalles Historic Landmarks Commission

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026 | 4:00 PM

HLC 224-25, 412 WASHINGTON ST

HLC No. 224-25

Applicant: Scott Austin

Address: 412 Washington Street

Assessor's Map and Tax Lot: 1N 13E 3CB taxlot 800

Zoning District: "CBC" Central Business Commercial

Overlay: CBC-1

Historic District: Downtown Commercial

Proposal: Applicant is requesting approval for the demolition of a non-contributing, accessory building along the alleyway and to the rear of the primary building on the subject site, an historic structure formerly known as Webber's Cleaners located along Washington Street.

HLC No. 224-25



Vicinity Map



Historic Status

Building A – Webbers Cleaners

- **1993 National Register Nomination:** Historic / Non-Contributing
- **1997 National Register Update:** Secondary
- **Oregon State Inventory:** Eligible / Contributing
- *Not part of this application*

Building B – Rear Accessory Structure

- Connected to Building A by a wood-framed, flat-roofed breezeway
- **1993 National Register Nomination:** No listed classification
- **1997 National Register Update:** No listed classification
- **Oregon State Inventory:** No listed classification
- *Minimal historic documentation; referenced only as an accessory structure with no identified architectural significance*

Building B

- Rear, utilitarian structure; no architectural similarity to Building A
- Connected to Building A by wood-framed breezeway
- 2020 repairs and partial demolition approved by HLC but never completed
- Foundation failure and major structural cracking
- Separation occurring between building sections



Building B



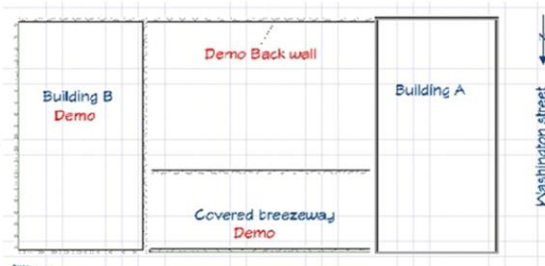
Repair vs. Demolition

- Estimated repair cost: \$250,000 – \$300,000
- Cost excludes interior improvements
- Construction costs continue to rise (~\$6 - \$10k since 2020 estimate)
- Applicant states repair is economically unreasonable



Proposed Outcome

- Demolish Building B and covered breezeway
- Retain historic Building A
- Create approximately 6–7 parking spaces
- Improve usability and marketability



City of The Dalles Historic Landmarks Commission

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HLC 224-25, 412 WASHINGTON ST