



Andy Schor
Mayor

LANSING HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

July 8, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W Maple Street, Lansing, MI

MINUTES – *Approved 8/12/24*

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Skillings called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm.

- a. Roll Call:

Present: Carol Skillings, Cassandra Nelson, Sam Troutman

Absences: James Bell (excused), Jacklyn Lillis-Warwick

Staff Present: Rawley Van Fossen, Andrew Fedewa, Stephen Bezold

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Approved by unanimous consent.

3. COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS – None

5. DISCUSSION/ACTION

- a. Minutes for Approval – April 8, 2023. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dale Schrader, Seymour St., spoke on the value that restoration of historic properties has for the economy and community sense of place.

Jennifer Grau, Lathrop St., spoke on value of the Eastern High School site for the Eastside community and Lansing as a whole. Ms. Grau emphasized the value of mental health resources in conjunction with historic preservation.

Rebecca Stimson, stated she is an alum of Eastern High that she believes that the current state of the structure is being misrepresented by University of Michigan Health - Sparrow.

Mary Toshach, Preservation Lansing, recommended against applying for historic site registration without first discussing the application with the property owners.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak Ms. Skillings closed the public comments.

7. STAFF AND COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS – None

8. PRESENTATIONS – None

9. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Eastern High School

Mr. Fedewa and Mr. Van Fossen reviewed the requirements to establish a local historic district starting with a City Council-approved site study committee. A member of the public

or advocacy group can have a resolution sponsored by a city council member, city council themselves may introduce the resolution, or the Historic District Commission is permitted to do so as a body.

Ms. Nelson and Mr. Fedewa detailed the likely timeline process, from study committee formation to presenting findings to City Council. Mr. Van Fossen stated that the Mayor nominates study committee members with City Council approval.

Ms. Skillings opened the floor for the public if anyone had anything to add.

Jim Lynch, Chairman of the Eastern High School Alumni Association, asked if there was a “preservation of historical value” clause in the 2016 buy/sell agreement between the Lansing School District and then Sparrow Health System that would require future development to take historic preservation into account. Mr. Lynch stated that the community is in support of mental health resources and that he believed keeping the outer façade and auditorium would be acceptable to most people.

Cindy Martin, Eastern Alum, spoke on the strong family and community connections that many residents have to Eastern High School and the potential deconstruction, preservation, and reuse of architecturally sound and significant pieces of the building.

Ms. Toshach stated she was disappointed in UM Health – Sparrow since coming to the city and described the historic context of Eastern High School within Lansing.

Ms. Skillings asked if it was feasible to list the façade as a historically significant resource.

Ms. Nelson stated her belief that the building is not past being rehabilitated as UM – Sparrow has declared and that it just does not fit their needs. Ms. Nelson asked if staff knew the total land area owned by UM - Sparrow. Mr. Fedewa answered that the old Eastern property is at least 18 acres and that does not include adjacent property that is vacant or underutilized such as across Pennsylvania Ave., the old SEIU building, the old Goodyear building, and the 1400 block of E. Michigan Ave.

Mr. Schrader spoke on the timelines for both the local historic district establishment and UM Health – Sparrow’s redevelopment which would be long enough for all parties to be involved in decisions.

Ms. Skillings asked about the responsibilities of a potential study committee. Mr. Fedewa explained how the Historic District Commission and City Council would possibly handle permit permissions during the study committee process.

Ms. Grau stated that the public wanted a chance for meaningful community involvement, rather than preventing mental health support or preventing organizations in our community from development.

Ms. Nelson stated that she was in favor of establishing a study committee but suggested to wait for the next meeting to do more research, connect with City Council, and meet with UM Health – Sparrow.

Mr. Van Fossen asked the commissioners if they would like staff to communicate with UM Health – Sparrow on their behalf to invite them. Ms. Skillings thanked staff.

Ms. Grau spoke on the development of the contemporary Sparrow campus in the 1990s and how community engagement was handled and how once the organization improved their community outreach they received much more support for future projects.

10. PENDING ITEMS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT – 6:20 p.m.