

WHITEWATER LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING – December 7, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

The special meeting of the Landmarks Commission was called to order at 6:11 p.m. by Landmarks Chairperson Pat Blackmer. MEMBERS PRESENT: Oberle, Helmick, Blackmer, Kienbaum, Richardson. MEMBERS ABSENT: Singer, Haselow. ALSO PRESENT: Linda Long representing Whitewater Arts Alliance, City Clerk Smith.

HEARING OF REQUEST FROM CITY OF WHITEWATER, PROPERTY OWNER, AND WHITEWATER ARTS ALLIANCE AS LESSEE OF THE WHITE BUILDING AT 402 W. MAIN STREET, FOR INSTALLATION OF REPLACEMENT AWNINGS, INCLUDING ONE AWNING WITH SIGNAGE.

Linda Long, as representative of the Whitewater Arts Alliance, indicated that the Arts Alliance is interested in replacing the awnings at the White Building. The trim on the thirteen-year old awnings is very difficult to keep clean. The Arts Alliance has received a private donor financial commitment to cover a portion of the cost of the awnings. The application asks that the awning to be located above the front doorway (west side of building) contain the Whitewater Arts Alliance symbol/designation.

Landmarks member Kori Oberle presented photos of the current building and confirmed that the property was a designated local landmark. It was noted that the Landmarks Commission is charged with following the ordinance(s) as it/they relate to landmarks. Oberle indicated that the section of the code that applies relates to alterations of existing structures: “in the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.” Oberle indicated that this is the guide to be used by the Landmarks Commission while making their determination.

It was noted that the proposed replacement awnings are made from the exact same materials, but the logo and wording has been added to one awning. Long explained that the Arts Alliance believes the additional identification is necessary as there are still many people who come to the White Building thinking it is a Library (due in part to the historical “Free Library” signage on the building). Visitors have also indicated they have had difficulty locating the building, and the Arts Alliance feels that further identification of the Cultural Arts Center (“CAC”) might further identify current building use.

Long explained that the white color chosen for print was chosen based on price, and both the Whitewater Arts Alliance wording plus the logo would be white. Long noted that the CAC is attracting

people from out of the City on a regular basis, and some of those unfamiliar with the City have stated “they drove right by it.”

Landmarks Commissioner Dan Richardson questioned whether there was a hardship or some practical difficulty. He noted that the Ordinance charges the Committee to keep the building looking as it was when it was designated a landmark. He believes that the addition of the letters and symbols to the awning makes it look like a sign, and when you put a sign on a building, it changes the appearance of the building. Long indicated that if the logo were not allowed on the awnings, there would be no advantage to the Arts Alliance to replace them.

The current signage was discussed. It was agreed that the brown signage out front was a nice sign, but due to the color is difficult to see as it “blends in” to the landscaping. Oberle noted that there is also a lighted LED sign in the window of the White Building, and if signage were added to the awnings, some sign pollution is likely.

Commissioner Richard Helmick expressed his support for the Arts Alliance, which he believes offers an unbelievable community resource. Helmick indicated that he has viewed other designated Landmarks in the City, and they do not have signs on the buildings. He expressed concern that a precedent could be set if this were to be approved. He acknowledged that Bassett House had small signs, but those signs identified the name of the house itself. It was also noted that it should be a property owner responsibility to replace the awnings instead of a tenant responsibility. The possibility of enhancing the metal sign located in the yard was suggested. Several Landmarks Commissioners were willing to join forces with the Cultural Arts Center to approach the City to see whether a different sign lighting system or a different signage color scheme can be used. Oberle indicated that the advantage of working on the sign located on the lawn is that it is not part of the building, and there would be much more flexibility.

Oberle indicated that there are two requests: 1) to replace awnings which are an established feature of the exterior façade; and 2) to apply signage to the exterior façade detail. Long indicated that the focus is to increase awareness of the CAC and familiarize people with the Arts Alliance symbol.

Commission member Blackmer noted that there has been a tremendous increase in visitors to the CAC. Long attributed the increase in attendance to the long-term planning that has been done, as well as the

fact that people from other communities are attending and joining the CAC. They have experienced record attendance in 2016 – approximately 2,500 visitors.

Commission members spoke further about signage located on or near Landmarks properties. It was noted that Mercy Medical at the Starin Mansion has a large sign, but the sign is located on the property and not on the building. The color of the awnings and size of the letters, and the location of the letters on the awnings were discussed. The Landmarks Commission members expressed room for compromise on the color of the awnings, but in general, the signage / symbol on the awnings was not viewed positively.

Further discussion resulted in suggesting that Linda Long return to the private donor and the Cultural Arts Center Board, and seeing whether compromises can be made. The Commission is charged with making a decision on the matter within 30 days. It was agreed the Board would make their formal decision, and should the Arts Alliance have some compromise they would like to present, they could come before the Landmarks Commission again. It was moved by Oberle and seconded by Richardson to encourage the Whitewater Arts Alliance to consider compromises to the request for signage on the replacement awnings: 1) The replacement awnings should be green without the tan border but no letters or logo, or 2) Possibly leave awnings as are, and work with the City to see what avenues can be pursued to improve the signage on the property (not the building) to make it more visually acceptable. AYES: Blackmer, Oberle, Helmick, Richardson. NOES: Richardson, Haselow.

Commission Chairperson Blackmer requested that the record show that the Landmarks Commission officially met the 30-day requirement to make the decision on the application, and that the applicants can come back at any time, and the Landmarks Commission would be happy to consider compromises.

It was moved by Kienbaum and seconded by Richardson to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele R. Smith, City Clerk

Adjourned at 7:24 p.m.