



City of
WHITEWATER

Whitewater Landmarks Commission

MINUTES

Thursday, February 3, 2022 – 6:00 PM
Municipal Building, Cravath Lakefront Room
312 W Whitewater St, Whitewater, WI 53190

Call to Order and Roll Call

- Chairperson Blackmer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Present: Patricia Blackmer, Ben Adamitus, Karen Coburn, Ken Kienbaum, Dan Richardson, Lukas Schreiber

Absent: None

Staff present: Olivia Pratt

Others: Richard Helmick, Kori Oberle

Approval of Agenda

- Schreiber made a motion to approve the Agenda for this meeting, seconded by Adamitus.

Ayes: Blackmer, Adamitus, Coburn, Kienbaum, Richardson, Schreiber

Noes: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Schreiber made a motion to approve the minutes from January 6, 2022 with a second by Adamitus.

Ayes: Blackmer, Adamitus, Coburn, Kienbaum, Richardson, Schreiber

Noes: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Hear Citizen Comments: No formal Landmarks Commission Action will be taken during this meeting although issues raised may become a part of a future agenda. Participants are allotted a three-minute speaking period. Specific items listed on the agenda may not be discussed at this time; however, citizens are invited to speak to those specific issues at the time the Commission discusses that particular item.

Set date of next meeting – March 3, 2022 at 6pm

Reports

- Update on Birge Fountain Committee Ordinance Repeal, Landmarks Commission Oversight

Chairperson Blackmer states that at this point in time, the ordinance repeal has not been posted in the Whitewater Register. Therefore, the ordinance has not been officially repealed although it was repealed at the Common Council meeting without a second reading. Schreiber says that although it still needs to be posted, he believes that the repeal is in effect 24 hours after voting takes place.

- Update on City Manager's Plan for the Effigy Mounds Preserve

Chairperson Blackmer spoke with Eric Boettcher regarding Effigy Mounds and Walton Oaks Park. Midwest Prairie was hired to clear brush at both sites, but has not yet made any attempt to be there as the weather has not been cooperative and they have had other projects to finish up. Boettcher will be in contact to figure out their start date. Effigy Mounds will be done first, then they will move onto Walton Oaks.

Commission member Coburn brings up money that she heard about at the Urban Forestry Committee meeting that has been given towards the restoration of Effigy Mounds and Walton Oaks. She asks if any of that money will go towards the brush cleanup. Blackmer responds that she knows nothing of that money and as far as she knows, the funding for the brush cleanup was part of Boettcher's leftover budget.

Unfinished Business

- Student application for Landmarks Commission

Emma, the new president of the archaeology department at UW Whitewater, has expressed interested in joining the Landmarks Commission, but has not yet applied. She has been given information on where to find the materials required to apply.

- Library display case ideas for May

It was decided that the original idea of showing the full process of becoming a landmark may be too convoluted for the small space available in the library. Another possible avenue to pursue is city owned historical property such as the bell at the fire station. Walton Oaks and Effigy Mounds would be nice to show, but it is unknown if substantial progress would be completed by May. Commission member Adamitus wonders if there would be any specific landmark that would be beneficial to spotlight for the years forward, such as the Birge Fountain.

- Continued postings on TheClio – White Memorial Library.

Blackmer has submitted the White Memorial Library to be added to TheClio postings of historical landmarks. This adds to the educational component of the Landmarks Commission.

New Business

- Heritage Day Tour (planning for 2023 Birge Fountain 120th Anniversary)
Citizen Oberle proposes using the 2019 Heritage Day model for the 2023 Heritage Day event. The focus being Birge Fountain and the main objective being to raise funds to restore the fountain – not maintain it. Following that model, there would be a number of community groups and organizations helping throughout the event. Oberle asked the Landmarks Commission to be a primary partner with the event (document attached.) The proposal is still a draft and open for any changes. Oberle suggests the Landmarks Commission, Historical Society, and Downtown Whitewater get together in the next few months for a broad discussion to figure out tour elements.
- Survey Completed for Certified Local Government Status
An annual survey must be completed to keep status as a CLG. Blackmer completed the survey and had it sent to Jason Tish, the Certified Local Government Coordinator for the Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions Conference
The conference will be held April 29-30, 2022 in person and virtually. Blackmer sent the Commission members information by email. In the past, the Commission was able to offset some of the costs for individuals to attend, which will be looked into again this year. Though the City is a member of the association, there is still a fee for individual attendance.

Future Agenda Items

- Heritage Day tour ideas
- Library display case ideas
- Update on City Manager's Plan, Birge Fountain Committee, and Walton Oaks Park

Adjournment

- Blackmer adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Olivia Pratt, Staff Representative

Whitewater Heritage Day 2023

Birge Fountain: The Heart of Whitewater

Event Design (as of January, 2022)

- Event Date: TBD (last WHD was Sunday, June 23, 2019; 10am to 4pm)
- Event Objectives:
1. Fundraising for professional restoration of fountain by 2027
 2. Raise awareness of fountain as icon of Whitewater & preservation ethic
 - a. located on site of early public school house attended by donor of fountain, Julius C. Birge, (now a City park)
 - b. given to all residents by early resident Julius C Birge, therefore everyone has the right and the responsibility to care for it,
 - c. plant seeds to grow value of cultural preservation ethic, specifically within K-12 sector of Whitewater community, (“pennies in the fountain” drive; co-creation of theme song for event, performed at fountain ceremony; study & creation of 1 & 2-dimensional art, poetry, rap, storytelling by individuals & groups; etc.)
 - d. located in heart of city, heart of Historic District, also Birge’s “symbol” for “the water that brings life and music”, meaning Whitewater Creek (powered flour mill, point around which streets laid out)
- Event Description: Imagine a mild sunny weekend day in downtown Whitewater, focused on the outdoor, antique, artistic sculpture that has served as the heart of our community since 1904: The Birge Fountain. Most of this event will occur outdoors within the Flat Iron Park where the fountain stands. Indoor components will include an exhibit of fountain and local history arts, both historic and contemporary, within the adjacent White Memorial Building sponsored by the Whitewater Arts Alliance. Day’s schedule will include fountain ceremony early p.m., featuring speakers as well as K-12 performers sharing curated poetry and music inspired by the fountain and Mr. Birge’s poetic writings about the fountain and Whitewater. A walking tour may be available, perhaps focusing on Birge family related structures and sites, such as the Stone Mill site, the Central Block at 147-151 W. Main Street, where Julius’ father, William Birge, had a dry goods and hardware store, the William Birge house located on W. Main across from the Bassett House. The tour might also feature the Main Street Historic District, in the middle of which the Birge Fountain stands. Perhaps there would be a parade from the Stone Mill site down Main Street, culminating at the fountain, immediately before the ceremony. Parade activities might include artfully removing a small quantity of water from Whitewater Creek at the banks of the Stone Mill site, and carrying it with dignity to the fountain, where it is ceremoniously poured into the large basin of the fountain, to feature Julius Birge’s “honoring the water that brings life and music” quote from his 1903 fountain dedication speech. Parade participants may include K-12 students and teachers that have created original art and music honoring our fountain. Homemade scones and iced tea might be served from the lower level of the church across the street and/or from vendors located on the Flat Iron Park. Perhaps, while waiting for the parade and subsequent ceremony to begin, a sort of Savory Sounds musical performance takes place exactly where it always does: on the steps of the White Memorial Building. Musical selections could include those created for this event by students and/or music from the 1903 period.

- Revenue Streams:
1. Sale of commemorative booklet containing fountain images, history, memories; slice of local life tidbits at time of gift, 1903, from local newspapers; Birge's dedication remarks; all local landmarks; tour map if tour component develops; etc. (costs of booklet production covered by Whitewater Community Foundation Grant and private sponsorship so all booklet sales revenue goes to fundraising project)
 2. cash donations before, during & after event, including "pennies in the fountain" drive at K-12
 3. food/drink sales day of event
 4. silent auction (curated to reflect event's objectives)
 5. if tour component develops, "ticket" cost is buying a commemorative booklet
 6. Yes, people may attend event and fountain ceremony and WAA exhibit all free, but that's okay! They will be encouraged to donate as they can and hopefully day's event will inspire all to contribute. (Must buy booklet to enter tour destinations and/or join docented-walking tour.)

Partners Confirmed: Whitewater Arts Alliance (fountain-related exhibit, restroom access);
The Book Teller (point of sale for commemorative booklet, open-mic site for performance of event-specific poetry, rap, stories, music, dance)

Partners Yet to Invite: Whitewater Landmarks Commission; Whitewater Historical Society; Downtown Whitewater Inc.; (walking tour or interior tour or combo of Historic District properties and flour mill site and Birge downtown building site, TBD)

English Lutheran Church (lower level kitchen & eating area for food sales & consumption, restroom access, parking lot access)

City of Whitewater (parking lots access, event permit, permission to close North Street between Main and Park Streets, picnic tables/tables/chairs on fountain park...)

Irvin L. Young Memorial Library (waive use fee on all historic photos & maps in collection for use in commemorative booklet, event promotion)

Whitewater Unified School District (work w/k-12 faculty in arts, social science, language arts to inspire & inform students to create original expressions related to fountain as heart of city)

Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Commission (assistance w/promotion distribution)

Community groups/clubs TBD that wish to provide food tent on fountain park...

Pandemic-Proof? Or, can any of this planning & implementing safely happen should yet another Covid-19 variant be rampaging during planning and/or at the time of this event? The majority of planning can happen virtually as needed. Active Covid disease will alter the event's final design, specifically the performance and food/drink consumption components, and any interior building tours. However, booklet sales and fundraising can continue... And, event date can be postponed...

Next Steps Invite and confirm potential partners

Determine and confirm fiscal agent (to request & receive Community Foundation Grant; to receive & hold cash donations, booklet sales, event proceeds, etc)

Convene first Planning Committee meetings with representative from each confirmed partner

Determine event date, starting & ending times, and all components of event