



MINUTES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE

January 22, 2009

7:04 a.m.

Mayor's Conference Room

- Members Present:** Paul Adlaf, Judy Barclay, Anita Bloom (via speaker-phone), Carrie Davis, Randy Derifield, Steve Huening, Kirke Machon, Juliana Maller, Milton Nelson, Herb Zuegel
- Members Absent:** Ald. Jim Allegretti, Buzz Hill, Brian Kidd, Alfredo Marr
- Staff Present:** Aggie Stempniak, Jon Branham, Barb Cannon
- Others Present:** Jean Follett, Nan Parson

I. ROLL CALL

II. APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 3, 2008

Moved by Judy Barclay and seconded by Herb Zuegel, the members approved the minutes of December 3, 2008.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Presentation by Jean Follett on the Village of Hinsdale's Historic Preservation Experience and Ordinance Creation

Jean Follett is a Hinsdale Village Board Member who was on Hinsdale's Historic Preservation Task Force about 12 years ago and was a Chairperson on the Historic Preservation Commission that was formed in 1998.

Hinsdale was the "Teardown Capital of America", which triggered a lot of things, including tweaks in the Zoning Code. The teardowns started about 15 years ago. About one-third of the original housing stock has been replaced. Hinsdale is like Park Ridge in that the people live there for generations. There is a lot of turnover but there are also a lot of people who are second and third generation. There's a real commitment to Hinsdale as a place to grow up and stay. There was a lot of consternation over teardowns. In about 1988, conversation began about having a preservation ordinance. The Village Board President appointed a 10-person task force, which included real estate people and the former chair of the planning commission. It was split down the middle in terms of thinking a preservation ordinance was a good or bad idea. It was a good mix. The task force was given one year to decide whether to have an ordinance. They had IHPA and a lot of other outside people in to talk about what they were doing in their communities. They looked at model ordinances and weighed all of the pros and cons and, at the end, by the end of the year, the entire group voted unanimously to pass onto the Village Board

the recommendation that Hinsdale adopt a preservation ordinance, which they did in pretty short order. It was adopted in early 2000.

Hinsdale's ordinance is basically the State's ordinance with a few changes. It includes owner consent. They felt that was very important and there was no way to get an ordinance passed without that. They looked at various model ordinances, with Evanston being the primary one. Evanston had owner consent to start with as well. Once people realized preservation was an option and it was not as onerous as they imagined it might be, after 12 years, they were able to get rid of owner consent. Hinsdale had to start someplace and knew they would never get anywhere if they put some draconian ordinance in place to begin with. There was a lot of back and forth about that issue and also the issue of how many people it would take to initiate a historic preservation district and how many people it would take to actually pass that district through the initial application process. That percentage changed over time. It had been at 51% but is now at 75% of property owners to approve a district. There is no local district, and that has been a deliberate strategy.

Hinsdale has two huge National Register districts. One of the big areas in Hinsdale that people care most about is downtown. It is complex. The building owners are not the storeowners and so there are many layers of participation in the downtown community. They decided to do a national register district so that people who own an older building have the option of doing some rehab and getting tax credits for it. Just this last year, Hinsdale did a 450-house residential National Register district. People have the option of using the tax freeze without necessarily being individual landmarks.

Hinsdale has 26 local landmarks at this point. Some are public buildings. Probably 10 have had their taxes frozen. That's out of a housing stock of about 6,000. It's really a small number. The various taxing bodies have never opted out. They will never get to even 10% of the Village being landmarked. The places where people have opted out, like Highwood, are places where you have a very high percentage of your highest taxed properties that have the option of taking the tax freeze. In most communities, it will never be a significant percentage of the tax base.

After the Commission was formed, it was decided that the Village owned three of the most historic buildings in town. By landmarking these historic buildings, it showed residents not to be afraid because the Village had to go through the same review that everybody else does – replace a door, fix the gutters, etc. Village Hall and two Park buildings from the 1920's were landmarked in that first year. People have been very happy about that. They are now in the process of actually applying for a grant to do some rehab work on one that would not have been eligible if it were not landmarked.

The Village set the pace in terms of landmarking, and then the Commission began a lot of public education. The first thing the Commission did was to create an Architectural Guide Map, which shows historic houses all over the Village. Not all of the houses on there are still standing. It is based on the demonstration survey, which was done all over town by Vicky Granacki. At the time, it cost about \$10,000. Ms. Granacki, who has

surveyed for a long time in the Chicago area, commented that Hinsdale has an unusually high percentage of significant historic houses.

Hinsdale became a CLG a couple of years after they approved the ordinance and every year, until the funds dried up at the State level, they applied for a CLG grant and did a survey. During the one year of the task force, the Village gave them a little bit of money to do a windshield survey of the entire town to assess their historic resources. Afterwards, consultants took one square block they thought was representative and did a sample-intensive survey, where they looked at every single house and its history and judged whether it was a significant house or not. Then they built on the survey. They used that windshield survey, which said they had a high percentage of historic resources. It said 10 or 12% of their houses were important, historic houses, which is unusual. They built on that. Every year they took about a 250-house chunk of town, starting with the oldest platted part of town, and surveyed. Now they are probably 80% surveyed.

Hinsdale's total Preservation Commission budget typically is in the \$18-20,000 a year range. One of its Village Planners is half-time. He's the liaison for the Commission. In addition, the CLG grant was generally around \$9,000, which was then matched.

There is still CLG money available, but the survey money has gone away because IHPA does not have the staff to do the review.

Walking through Hinsdale's process: The task force went through an educational process. It met twice a month. They had people from other communities in to speak on topics they wanted to hear about – their ordinance, their award program. It was through that process that people became persuaded that it wasn't as difficult to do as they thought to begin with and, once in place, it wasn't a huge burden on village government. Hinsdale has 125 employees for a Village of 18,000 people, the same population as Winnetka, which has 50 more employees. Hinsdale didn't even have a Planner on staff when this process started. Due to Preservation, they got a Planner, a huge step forward, and that person also became the Preservation staff person.

During the task force year, they held open meetings. All of the education happened afterward. At that time, there was a huge teardown problem. There was a lot of talk in the press about teardowns and the work the task force was doing. That was the education. Hinsdale has never had a press that was anti-preservation. The local paper supports the Preservation Awards Program. That's been incredibly helpful.

They came to two conclusions during the process: (1) the preservation ordinance is essentially an extension of the zoning code. If you already have overlay districts or any kind of special design review areas, this is the same thing. It's just another way to do zoning. It is not a whole other layer of government; it's just an add-on to your zoning code to some extent. (2) People need to feel good about where they live. It's a fundamental thing. A lot of what Park Ridge's Preservation Commission is going to do is foster that spirit of community feeling because a lot of what is being done is protecting

community character. That's really what preservation boils down to. You're protecting community character.

Mr. Nelson asked how the Roscoe Harold Zook house in Hinsdale was saved. Zook has roots here in Park Ridge. He designed the Pickwick.

The Zook house was moved. The Historical Society in Hinsdale, who had always run the Awards Program for years and had been preservation-minded, had initiated the landmarking of a historic church, which was done through a separate ordinance that landmarked that church individually before there was a preservation ordinance. When the Zook house was about to be demolished, they rallied around and raised the money to move it and convinced the Park & Recreation Commission that it should be moved to a park. They are raising all of the money to restore it. They're this tiny, little Historical Society, as all locals are, and they own three historic buildings. They're running a little house museum. They have Emmanuel Hall, which is the church that got landmarked. They're running it as a rental facility, which they fully renovated and brought up to ADA. Now they're halfway through restoring the Zook House. That's not government money. The Village facilitated it because it's on Village land and they cleared some right of ways to make the move happen. So they did put some money in to do the utility work.

The Zook House will probably be used by the Art Center across from the park. The goal is to use it for studio space. There will be a Zook museum upstairs because there have been a fair number of Zook demolitions so there's a trove at this point of Zook artifacts.

Harold Zook was a good architect and was the head of Hinsdale's Plan Commission in the 1920's. He decided that all of the Village's public buildings would be Colonial Revival. He's a local hero. He wasn't the world's most fantastic architect, but he was very unique. During the Depression, he worked out of his house and put a lot of time into the Village. It was their good fortune he was in town and very active for 20 years. He's been a great sense of pride for people.

People are very upset right now because another huge Zook house is about to come down. It's a residential structure that will be replaced with another. The Village has no ability to save it; they are not home rule. The house definitely qualifies as a historic building but, because of owner consent in the ordinance, they are not allowed to step in.

The implication of not being home rule is that Hinsdale has no ability to put fees and taxes in place. They must justify any fees charged as covering the cost as a Village. So, there cannot be a \$10,000 demolition permit because it doesn't cost \$10,000 to administer it. On the teardown side, a lot could be tremendously helpful in leveling the playing field a little bit more in favor of the existing house.

Hinsdale's most recent National Register District is in the absolute wealthiest part of town. Amazingly, neither of its districts has one person object during the process. A lot of that is the Commissioners doing an incredible amount of footwork ahead of time, going to business and property owners and educating them on preservation. The

Commission has a list of goals they work through each year. One year it was making personal contact with all of the real estate offices in town. They literally went around and did presentations at all of their offices about the potential to landmark and how, if they had a house they thought could be landmarked, as opposed to being sold as a teardown, you could call and talk to somebody about it.

The house that will be replacing the soon-to-be demolished Zook house is three times as big as the current one. There's a level of conspicuous consumption that wants new. As for every house in the Village, the land is worth more than the house standing on it. That's an issue everywhere. The old is probably an estate and they want to maximize value when selling. If there is a two-acre lot, it usually means the house is coming down.

The real estate downturn has affected Hinsdale two ways. Overall permits are off about 60% -- 40%. Teardowns have gone from 100 a year to 40. That's significant. The Village is also seeing a lot more additions and alterations.

There are no struggles on additions on landmarked homes. They have one house where the addition is actually bigger than the original front of the house. Even their smallest landmarked house has an addition that can be seen from the street, but it's all a question of the design review process that is in place for your Commission.

The conflict regarding new construction in Hinsdale is not really quality issue; it's a scale issue. That's their toughest battle – how to control volume. It continues to be a huge battle. They are in the middle of a zoning re-write

The Village of Hinsdale does offer benefits, but they're not huge. They offer some relief, especially on Victorians, because they have the problem with FAR, if you have a high basement or a high attic, it becomes a real problem for your FAR. They offer relief for those over 50 years who have the high basement or the tall attic so they can do additions. They also offer relief to people trying to restore a front porch, to put the front porch back that was taken off 60 years ago. Also on the issue of garages because a lot of times you have a tiny little garage that's right on the property line that was built in 1950 and, under the current code, you are not allowed to rebuild there.

Ms. Bloom asked about people who want to do an addition similar to a garage issue, but the original footprint of the house does not abide by current setbacks.

That's been an issue. They actually had one Zook house that went to the ZBA to get a variance for that exact problem. It's essentially a two bedroom house and they wanted to do an addition and they couldn't win their case on hardship. The people who owned it ended up selling.

If you've got that many new houses, has anyone calculated the real estate tax benefit to the community of the new houses?

Hinsdale's Village Manager was one of two Village Managers to admit there was no payoff. In fact, the cost of the new construction to the Village in terms of infrastructure and services was so much greater than the increase in tax revenue. Hinsdale has had a 19% population increase and that's almost entirely in school-aged children, so we have had three major school bond issues that have raised people's taxes inordinately. There are additions on all of the schools plus they have had to build three new schools in a completely developed and landlocked town. There is a huge infrastructure backlog because they have 100+-year-old sewer and water system that just cannot cope. They are exceeding their allowed water consumption under the Great Lake Michigan Compact almost every single month and, during dry times, have to reopen the wells that were closed 20 years ago in order to not get in trouble with the Great Lakes Compact over the water usage. They have had to add to the police force. They had to buy a new ladder truck. There are a lot of costs associated with it, not to mention the cost in your Building Department of reviewing so many permits a year for 7-15,000 square foot houses. The real issue for us is schools and infrastructure. You do see an increase in taxes. The average property tax bill that actually comes to the Village per household is \$750. It's tiny. People's average property tax bill is \$10-12,000, but the piece that comes to the Village is minute.

If you were to begin today, with a clean sheet of paper, what would you do differently?

It was good to have the ordinance written on the standard. It would have gone nowhere without homeowner consent.

Hinsdale does have plaques for the houses. Hinsdale's biggest 'carrot' is its Awards Program, done during Preservation Month. Categories include Compatible Additions, Good Maintenance (maintaining an old house beautifully), and the Good Neighbor Award (for new construction that fits with the neighborhood). There are also categories for renovation and rehabilitation. There is a ceremony at Village Hall. There is a coloring contest for kids during that month. Their posters are displayed in very public places for the month, they come to the Awards Ceremony with their families, get their pictures taken, and see it in the paper. It's a Big Deal and they love it. The newspaper underwrites it. They run the ads for a month, solicit nominations for free, and they provide a little money for prizes and pay for half of the framing. People are given a photograph of their house with the award certificate. It's not an expensive program but it's a huge amount of good will. The local toy store underwrites the gift certificates the kids get as their prize. It's a community event.

The Commission has conducted various tours. One year, in conjunction with the awards ceremony, there was a self-guided walking tour of downtown, with people posted who could talk about the historic buildings in the area. A lot of different things go on during the year. At the end of any survey, there is a public meeting in the neighborhood to present its results. Everyone who attends that meeting gets a copy of the survey page citing their house and information about how to landmark. They do a follow-up with everyone cited as owning a significant house.

The one thing Ms. Follett wishes they had done was a private property tree ordinance. They are still struggling with the issue. With all of the conversation about going green, that would have been a pretty easy sell. And, by protecting trees, in some ways, it's a great way to stymie people's plans to build an oversized house.

Community surveys show the number one issue for people was tree preservation – by 20%. As a result of that, they went into a program of much more intense inoculation of elm and ash trees. They have rattled the cage of ComEd regarding its pruning practices. All utility lines are behind people's houses where there are a lot of trees.

Hinsdale selects Commissioners in two ways: self-nomination; or solicitation of people that the Board and staff know of. There is a list of qualifications in their ordinance. They like to have an architect and someone who knows something about preservation. Commissioners are appointed by the Village President. The Board then appoints them. They serve two 3-year terms, and then must step down. All of their Commissions consist of nine members. The Chair is usually selected by the sitting Commissioners. The biggest challenge for Hinsdale has been the architect because if you have someone who lives and practices in town, they don't really want to be on the Commission because then they are essentially judging – when doing Certificates of Appropriateness – the work of fellow architects and it can be awkward. It took a while to realize this, but they finally went to having only architects who practice elsewhere or commercial versus residential. Members must live in Hinsdale. There was conversation about having outside consulting members, but they have never gone that route.

No impact fees had been instituted. The Village Board actually went to the School District about 12 years ago and said, "Here's what's coming. We're seeing a huge increase in replacement housing. It's probably going to mean a big increase in school children. Maybe you should think about an impact fee." They wanted nothing to do with that, and they have paid the price. If they had imposed an impact fee at the front end, they would not have had to go to the tax increases that they've had to do.

If you don't have owner consent, and you have a survey that shows these are the structures worth saving to maintain community character, other than going out and having your Commissioners try to convince the owner that it's worthwhile, how are you getting the 26-27 local landmarks?

The tax freeze is a gigantic carrot. Most of those came for that. They knew they were going to do a major renovation and/or addition and the tax freeze is a big incentive.

The surveys really help because that gives you the ammunition. People get excited when they are cited in the survey as being a significant house. Most people know. If you live in a historic house that's special, you usually know that it is.

Do you have any of them that aren't necessarily architecturally historic but more about what happened in that structure?

There are both. Hinsdale has a huge range -- everything from tiny farmhouses to great big houses. One was architecturally okay but it was a really important house because it belonged to one of the signers of the Village Charter in 1872

Hinsdale's criteria are incredibly easy. It's not hard to become a landmark. You don't have to prove that you're exceptional. You only have to meet one criterion.

In response to how to ensure that landmarks stay without owner consent, Ms. Follett doesn't believe there are a lot of options. If you can't persuade the owner to landmark it, the key is your ordinance has to prohibit demolition too. Not every landmark ordinance prohibits demolition of landmarks. You don't have a lot of options. That's the issue in Hinsdale.

Do you see the intelligent and long-lived discourse helping the cause? Do people feel pressure now when they would not have felt pressure ten years ago because of how big a part preservation has become?

Yes. In some north shore communities, the people who are doing teardowns will tell you, "I will not go near a significant historic house because I do not want to walk into that firestorm." But that is not the case in Hinsdale. People are not afraid of that. Ms. Follett is waiting for the day a developer buys a historic house, fixes it up, landmarks it, puts the tax freeze on it, and re-sells it. That's really what you love to see happen. It hasn't yet.

The other thing now that's a big push in Hinsdale that hopefully will gain some momentum is, and the National Trust has been a big part of it, the whole argument that it's much more green to save a house than to tear it down. One of the reasons we have so many teardowns in Illinois is it doesn't cost much to send a house to the landfill here, relative to the rest of the country. Our landfill dumping fees are about a quarter or a third of the price what people in other parts of the country pay. It's less expensive to do demolition here. But a lot of non-renewable building materials is going to the landfill, and a lot of times for no good reason. You can do additions; you can push up the roof. There are things you can do that will make that house usable for more generations.

When you started your Task Force in the 1990's, and the group hadn't reached a consensus, what were the key arguments that were made not to do preservation? Why wouldn't you do it? Then the follow-up question, how were those overcome?

The two -- obviously owner consent was a big one. But the biggest one was the whole notion of government regulation and interference with private property. There is always skepticism about what good it is going to do. Someone who is actually a preservationist by profession came to the task force and said, "I don't know why you're bothering. We've lost so much already." At that point, 10% had been lost. To date, they have lost 30% but still have a fantastic number of historic houses. So, to say *why bother if you're only going to save 10% of your historic houses* is silly. Ms. Follett believes they overcame that by helping people understand that the regulation was really going to happen as their choice. They are not going through four staff people to get to the point

where they can be landmarked. It's a really easy process. Even obtaining the Certificate of Appropriateness – people work with the Commission in advance so that when they get to the final meeting, it's pretty cut and dried.

Historic: Houses that are over 50 years old and contribute to community character

The thing to remember is you're not going to freeze your town in time. If you look at the continuum, there is constant change and constant replacement. In Hinsdale there was a tremendous number of teardowns in the 1920's. People tore down a bunch of Victorian houses to make what's there now that we all love so much. Your town doesn't stand still. It's trying to find that balance between the things that really give it character and that people really love and keeping your housing mix. But you do have to balance it because you're not going to stop the hands of time. Preservation is a part of managing growth.

You might want to talk with Doug Kaare of Oak Park. He's been there for quite a while. Hinsdale also talked with Evanston and Lake Forest.

Glenview had a group a couple of years ago that tried to throw out their preservation ordinance. They went through a real struggle. Naperville is going through that now. A member really didn't want to go to those Commission meetings and just introduced an ordinance to throw out the preservation ordinance. Glen Ellyn has a very different system. Downers Grove is in the exact same place Park Ridge is in. They're having a conversation, though at this point it's been going on for five years. Everybody gets to it in a different way.

When your Task Force comes to a consensus, that's the point at which you should have a few evening meetings. Go out in the community and have some public forums to talk about the very issues that you have struggled with and let people air it out. As you get towards the end of the process it would be well worth doing.

Invitation: The Suburban Preservation Alliance is holding its quarterly meeting this Saturday (9 a.m. – noon) in Hinsdale. It is a group of 230 people. There are usually 20-30 people at a meeting because it meets in various places around the suburbs. Various topics are discussed. The last meeting was in Wilmette. We talked about whatever the issues are in the host community. The National Trust Midwest Office manages it. [Ms. Barclay attends meetings as part of CURRB.]

B. Community Comparison (J. Branham)

Mr. Branham reviewed a comparison chart with the Task Force.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Changing future meeting times to either 7:30 a.m. or evening was mentioned. It was decided to continue this discussion to the next meeting.

Ms. Davis reviewed the Hinsdale ordinance. There are a couple of interesting things that they put in there that might be worthy of consideration. But it is generally the same as the draft ordinance Attorney Hill put together. We have a list of unofficial historic sites in Park Ridge that was compiled in 1977. We should do some type of windshield survey based on this.

Mr. Adlaf mentioned an email from a man in Georgia offering to sell 100-120 8mm color, still photos of Park Ridge's central business district he took while living here in the 1950's-1960's. He will follow-up with him.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 5, 2009, at 7:00 a.m.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 a.m.