

Landmark Commission Meeting
Mantua Village Hall
September 26, 2015

Call to order

Chair Nick Ehlert called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Roll Call

Commissioners: Erick Hummel, Hal Stamm, Carole Pollard, Helen Hazlett, Renee Henry and Nick Ehlert were present.

Aaron Snopek was absent.

Mayor Linda Clark was present.

Members of the public who were present: Broc and Edie Benner, Terry Vechery, Kim Sumwalt, Jodie Fiala, Greg Balbierz, and Jim Oster.

Welcome to guests

Nick welcomed the guests who were in attendance. They were business owners who are interested in listing their properties with the Landmark Commission.

He reviewed the advantages to listing their properties with the Mantua Village Landmark Commission.

- On commercial modifications
 - State of Ohio gives a 25% of the expenses tax credit
 - Federal tax 20% of the expenses tax credit
- Others will be encouraged to list their properties, both commercial and residential
- People beautify their properties and make them more attractive to visitors and patrons.
- Research indicates that housing premiums may increase 18% if property is in or near a historic district

Disadvantages:

- Once a property is listed, then if the owner wants to make modifications to the front exterior, they must submit the proposed modifications for review. Once this has been approved, the modifications can be made.

Examples from Nearby Communities

Aurora's Landmark Commission meets monthly and Ron Lowe has been very helpful. He had been invited to attend today's meeting; however, he was not able to due to his wife's illness. Carole, Hal and Nick had attended a meeting in Aurora and witnessed how they advised a homeowner who had submitted a modification request.

Nick and Carole cited examples from Hudson and Aurora to illustrate the types of recommendations that are given to property owners by the Commissions of those cities. For example, one home owner in Hudson was required to replace a front door which did not match the architectural style of the building. They were both impressed by the encouragement of the Aurora Commission to a home owner to increase the height of a proposed roof-raising to higher than the owner had originally requested. In both examples, the Commissions are interested in the front exterior of the house. Apparently vinyl siding, trim and windows are allowed if the style chosen fits the architectural style of the property.

Carole has volunteered to leave her copy, which she purchased, of How to Complete the Ohio Historic Inventory with

Jenny August. Interested people can consult it. It gives many examples of architectural styles with photos and descriptions and dates from 1979. A copy of this book can also be found in the reference section of the Ravenna Reed Memorial Library.

She explained there are three levels of designations a property owner can apply for:

- Local designation of historic significance
- Ohio Historic Inventory
- National Registry of Historic Places

Each one is independent and separate from the other. If the owner wants the property to be listed on one, two or all three, he must make separate applications. Being on one list does not put the property on any other list. However, only the local designation protects the property from being modified in a way that would be architecturally inaccurate.

Draft Forms

The Landmark documents that had been obtained by Carole from Aurora and redrafted by Renee Henry were reviewed. The original documents from Aurora were copies and not editable. She recreated them to reference Mantua Village instead of the City of Aurora. They need to be reviewed, proof read and approved. There are four documents: Mantua Village Landmark Inventory, Request for Landmark Listing, Certificate of Appropriateness, and Landmark Commission Review.

Renee pointed out that the documents reference homes and not businesses. Carole thought the Aurora Landmark Commission has had more interest from home owners than from businesses. She was given an inventory form for a tavern as a business example.

Mayor Clark replied to Carole and Nick's question on whether copies could be given to the guests to look at by stating yes, they could if first "draft" be written on them. She suggested making sure the documents reference the exterior of the structure and are applicable for both residence and commercial and that it meet the requirements of the legislation.

Since Carole had given the forms in one package to her, Renee asked for clarification on the four documents and what they are for and who is responsible for completing them.

Terry Vechery, a guest, explained the "Mantua Village Landmark Inventory" forms are to be used by the Landmark Commission when it researches and inventories local properties. These can be kept for reference in a binder at the Village Hall.

The property owner desiring to apply for listing fills out the "Request for Landmark Listing."

"Certification of Appropriateness" and "Landmark Commission Review" would only be needed when a listed property owner requests modifications.

It was decided to modify Mantua's documents so that either commercial or residential applicants can use them and to refer to the exterior instead of the interior of the structure.

Eric asked about page 4 of the Request for Landmark Listing / Modifications.

Discussion on the text resulted in the following change to the text on page 4 of the Request for Landmark Listing / Modifications: "Describe below any later exterior structural changes made to the structure in your opinion and the approximate dates they were made. (Example: porches or stoops added or removed, chimneys, roofs, and any addition of complete rooms, ancillary buildings or changes to the property.)"

For information purposes you may describe interior changes that may have been made. (Example: interior walls moved, doorways or hallways closed or opened, bathrooms added, room usage changed i.e. kitchen moved to another location than the original, stairways moved or replaced.)"

Helen motioned that the above changes be made and Carole seconded it. All approved.

Renee added "draft" to the first three pages and made additional copies for the guests interested in receiving a copy. Since page 4 is in need of major editing, it was not distributed.

Mayor Clark said the next Council meeting will be on October 20. Renee will submit a copy for their review. Once the document is finalized, it can be put on the Mantua Village Website by Michele Stuck.

Questions from the Public

Nick opened the floor to questions.

Jim Oster, a guest, asked to confirm that having one's property listed is a voluntary decision. Nick said yes, the Landmark Commission does not dictate what a property owner should do. However, once the property is listed, current and future property owners must submit any modifications that would alter the visible front exterior of the structure for review.

After discussion on which commercial properties should be inventoried by the Landmark Commission, it was decided it is best to start with the commercial properties whose owners have expressed interest and especially those who attended as guests today.

Brock Benner, a guest, asked if there is a time frame that must be followed when listing a property to restore it to the original architecture. Nick replied no. They had done a fine job with restoring the livery.

Helen Hazlett cited a residence she knows of in Newbury that had originally been a barn. The interior changes are not under the purview of the Landmark Commission.

Terry Vechery helped explain that it is not a matter of the Commission setting up when or how to make modifications. The Commission helps in researching architectural modifications and advising the property owner on what is acceptable for the style of his or her property if and when the owner wants to make modifications.

Mayor Clark added that the property owner, who has listed his property, only needs to be concerned with future modifications.

Terry Vechery added that the property owner must first have the property listed. The Commission doesn't "punish" owners, instead it will help advise the owner if and when he is interested in making exterior modifications to be sure they are historically accurate. When property owners improve their buildings, then this makes the community more attractive, such as Chagrin Falls or Hudson.

Nick reiterated it is purely voluntary to have one's property listed locally. However, it does bring benefits to the beautification of the area and make it more attractive. Once listed the owner must have any exterior modifications reviewed and accepted by the Commission before they can be done.

Eric pointed out the benefits of the tax credits that are available for business property owners only.

Carole pointed out that if nothing is done, then property owners may make modifications that are not attractive and are not historically accurate.

Helen said as a point of discussion there are things that she would like to see happen:

- 1) the Commission start the process of doing the Inventory
- 2) start with the commercial buildings in the Village
- 3) set a year as to when the buildings were built

4) contact the owners and see if they will meet with the Commission

Explain our goal to improve the downtown area

We are beginning by identifying the buildings and owners

Get consensus on what we are trying to do

The next step would be to consider residences. Would like to setup a meeting with an architectural expert to inform local home owners on their architectural style.

Terry Vechery reviewed the history of the CLG and the Landmark Commission. The next step is for the Landmark Commission to start with the commercial buildings and fill out the Inventory forms. Also, contact the Ohio Inventory of Historic Places and find out how listed commercial property owner can get tax credits. Once the process has started more owners will join in.

Brock asked if there are funds for helping home owners restore their properties. Nick replied no, that is only for commercial properties.

Carole said as an example that Aurora has worked with the Cleveland Restoration Society to get low cost loans; however, that was only for Cuyahoga County.

Greg Balbierz, a guest, noted that Willoughby was a community that had started restoration slowly and is seeing the benefits to the improvements made to their commercial buildings. He added that at Portage Community Bank, Brad Crohn, Treasurer, has initiatives for housing rehabilitation with low or no interest loans.

Nick thanked our guests and will have the "Request for Landmark Listing" form mailed to them once it is ready.

The Commission meeting began at 11:50

Reading of the Minutes

Renee read the Minutes out loud.

After the corrections were made, notably Helen Hazlett had not attended, Eric motioned the corrected Minutes be approved. Hal seconded. All approved.

Old Business

Nick asked if Carole and others would be interested in going with him to visit with business owners face to face.

Carole said that after the elections in November, she would be interested.

They discussed people who had not attended the meeting and who they could visit, for example, Mocne and Ferencz.

Terry suggested we should first get Eric Hummel's and Jodie Fiala's properties listed and find out how they can get the tax credit. Then we will have better footing to help other property owners with the process.

Forms and Grants

Renee will send the edited "Request for Landmark Listing" form by e-mail to the Commission members for proof reading. The forms will be submitted to Council before the October meeting. She will include Michele Stuck and Jenny August in the e-mails.

Renee motioned she will send the corrected form to Mantua Village Council. Eric seconded. All approved.

Terry asked if we had received from Nathan Bevil a hard copy that is used by the Ohio Historic Inventory. She said it is an official form that should be sent to us. It's a form that all historic properties are supposed to use. However, even though she's tried to get a copy, she hasn't been able to. Renee showed her the form she made based on the example from Aurora.

Renee had found the electronic form on the SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) website and had registered for it. She is waiting for e-mail confirmation.

Nick asked if any one in the Village is pursuing applying for grants now that Mantua has CLG certification. Terry said that she is on a Village grant research committee and they are working on applying for various grants.

Carole asked that it be noted that per the Minutes of the June 2015 meeting she had said she would write a letter to be first reviewed at the next meeting. It was to be addressed to residential property owners who's properties are listed in the Ohio Historic Inventory. She said she had not created this letter. Since during this meeting, it has been decided to concentrate our efforts on only the commercial property owners, this can be done at a later time when appropriate.

New Business

Rules and Enforcement

Nick cited from Chapter 159 Historic Preservation

159.02 Definitions “. . . Ordinary maintenance to correct any deterioration, decay or damage to a a structure and to restore the structure to its condition prior to such deterioration, decay or damage are excluded from the definition of 'alteration', provided such work does not involve a change in design, color, texture, material or exterior feature.”

He said that it dumbfounds him that the government book rejects the use of vinyl siding and new replacement windows. However, in Aurora's case, the Commission does allow for vinyl siding and you can make changes to the building. His question to the commissioners is what do we want? Before we get involved with businesses getting listed and asking about making improvements, do we allow new, modern windows and vinyl siding?

Helen felt it is easier for prospective property buyers if these are allowed.

As an example Eric spoke of his experience with the Coleman building in Ravenna. They replaced the upper story windows with aluminum or vinyl. However, on the street level, even though the replacement windows were initially approved, they were later disapproved. The windows that had to be installed were the more expensive snap in muntins, but the business did install them. Evidently Aurora is more flexible and in his opinion we need to be flexible as well so as not to stifle interest.

Eric would like to know who enforces the agreed upon modifications and what is acceptable. He added that he remembers Mayor Clark stating at a previous meeting that the zoning inspector will have the authority to administer the code. He is curious to know how Aurora enforces the modifications.

After some discussion, we felt that it will probably be the Mantua Zoning Inspector who will verify and enforce the modifications that the Commission agreed to. We can inquire with the Mayor or legal council what kind of enforcement the Zoning Inspector has for facades only. Nick will check with Michele Stuck on who in the Village will be responsible for enforcement.

Carole added that the text describing the modifications will have to be exact and specific in order to be enforced.

Terry said that the Commission will follow the ordinances in determining the recommended modification. If that is done thoroughly, then Council can approve it without reservation.

Officers and Terms of Service Renewal

Before the meeting in December Nick would like us to think about who the officers should be for 2016. There are 3 people who will need to renew their term of service before Mantua Village Council's December meeting.

- Nick Ehlert
- Eric Hummel

- Aaron Snopek

Nick was told by Mayor Clark an ad will be published to ask for applicants to fill Aaron's place. Helen recommended Terry consider submitting a letter of interest when the ad is published. She and Carole expressed appreciation for Terry's help in initiating interest in obtaining CLG certification for Mantua Village and her knowledge and expertise in the function and duties of the Landmark Commission.

Inventory

Discussion turned to how best to inventory residential buildings.

- As she has suggested at a prior Landmark Commission meeting Helen would like to invite a speaker to present a program on architecture to help educate property owners. Suggestions were made that perhaps the Rotary could participate in setting such a program up next year.
- Eric would like to enlist the assistance of local university students interested in either history or architecture, such as Kent State, Hiram College or Crestwood High School
- To that end Nick and Terry will contact Hiram College and Crestwood High School to see if students would be interested in helping us and get academic credit at the same time.

Regarding the inventory of commercial buildings, Eric suggested that we set a date for the spring of 2016.

Maps

As cited in the Minutes from June 2015 Eric and Hal did bring maps with them. Unfortunately, time did not permit the commissioners to look at these. However, Eric did mention that he has found it noteworthy that apparently when the train tracks were laid through Mantua in the late 1800's, the course of the Cuyahoga River was changed. It appears that where the river flows along the park, a "canal" was built to divert the water to its current course under the bridge at State Route 44.

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:30 on December 12, 2015 at the Mantua Village Hall.

Nick asked if anyone would be attending the Historic Preservation Commission sessions at the Heritage Ohio Annual Conference in Columbus on October 5 – 7 that Nathan Bevil e-mailed. Carole will be attending. Since it is taking place during the week, others cannot attend because of their work.

At 12:42 Nick asked the meeting be adjourned. Eric moved the meeting be adjourned and Renee seconded it. All approved.

Nick Ehlert, Chair Landmark Commission

Renee Henry, Secretary Landmark Commission