

I. CALL TO ORDER –

A regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission on Monday, June 27, 2022, commencing at 6:30 p.m. was called to order by Chair Kotelnicki. A quorum was established.

A. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner (Chair)	Darlene Kotelnicki	Present
Commissioner	Sid Willson	Present
Commissioner	Rick Beecroft	Present
Commissioner (Plan. Comm. Rep)	Mike Flaata	Absent
Commissioner	Kevin Hovey	Present
Commissioner	Dave Welker	Present
Commissioner	Holly Flemming	Absent
Ex-officio	Bill Hicks	Absent

II. MINUTES TO APPROVE – May 23, 2022 **MOTION: To approve as submitted (Rick/Sid/Passed unanimously by a voice vote).**

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

226 Sibley Avenue North

- A. Open public hearing at 6:31 p.m.
- B. Declaration of Conflict of Interest: None Ex-parte: None
- C. Review of Proper Notification - Per City
- D. Introduction of Completed Application by Commission: Darlene reviewed the COA. Rick pointed out page 2 should be numbered 5 to 8 and Darlene corrected this on the copy going back to the city.
- E. Presentation by Designee: No one present
- F. Comments from Other Interested Parties: None
- G. Closure of Public Hearing at 6:29 p.m. with option to recall applicant.
- H. **MOTION:** Due process was followed (Mike/Kevin/Passed unanimously by a voice vote).
- I. Checklist: Completed 7 Yes 0 No 3 NA A discussion followed about what type of windows and what facade were being put in. The commissioners decided that facades facing alleys were to be considered public facades since the public walks through the alleys. Significant concerns about the stairway replacement, how the stairway will be attached, is it covered, and what material.
- J. Findings of Fact: completed and submitted to the city with the checklist.
- K. **MOTION:** To approve as amended with item #2 approval for glass replacement only and item #4 not approved (Rick/Dave/Passed unanimously by a voice vote). The property owner should submit more information about both.

Sidewalk in front of 227 Sibley Avenue North

- A. Open public hearing at 6:56 p.m.
- B. Declaration of Conflict of Interest: Darlene and Kevin declared a conflict of interest and did not participate in the discussion or vote. Ex-parte: None
- C. Review of Proper Notification - Per City
- D. Introduction of Completed Application by Commission: Reviewed
- E. Presentation by Applicant: Betty Allen spoke on behalf of the Litchfield Downtown Council. They received an anonymous donation for a second clock. This clock was selected for the 2020 highway project. A diagram is enclosed. Betty stated they requested the city take over the clock after installation.
- F. Comments from Other Interested Parties: None
- G. Closure of Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m. with option to recall applicant. Rick asked if the applicant was really the city. Betty responded she had talked to Dave and it was submitted this way.
- H. **MOTION:** Due process was followed (Rick/Mike/Passed unanimously with Darlene and Kevin not voting).
- I. Checklist: Completed 5 Yes 0 No 5 NA
- J. Findings of Fact: completed and submitted to the city with the checklist.
- K. **MOTION:** To approve as submitted (Rick/Sid/Passed unanimously by a voice vote with Darlene and Kevin not voting).

229 Sibley Avenue North

- A. Open public hearing at 7:09 p.m.
- B. Declaration of Conflict of Interest: None Ex-parte: None
- C. Review of Proper Notification - Per City
- D. Introduction of Completed Application by Commission: Darlene reviewed the COA and photo.
- E. Presentation by the property owner or designee: Not present
- F. Comments from Other Interested Parties: None
- G. Closure of Public Hearing at 7:37 p.m. with option to recall applicant.
- H. **MOTION:** Due process was followed (Rick/Mike/Passed unanimously by a voice vote).
- I. Checklist: Completed 8 Yes 0 No 2 NA
- J. Findings of Fact: completed and submitted to the city with the checklist.
- K. **MOTION:** To approve as submitted with window frame change (Rick/Kevin/Passed unanimously by a voice vote).

IV. OLD BUSINESS - FAQ Grant The information from Dan Hoisington was reviewed with several minor corrections. This will be sent to Dan and after the corrections are made it is considered approved and can go on the city's website. See attached list.

V. NEW BUSINESS – Bolton & Menk report. At a previous meeting one of the commissioners asked a question about this report. A copy is provided for all commissioners. **MOTION:** To approve with corrections as noted (Rick/Sid/Passed unanimously by a voice vote.)

VI. REPORTS - Meeker County Historical Society: Sid reported they have asked the city for three building maintenance projects. The first is the fire door between the original building and 1960 addition. The second is painting the east facade exterior. The final is the repair of two storm windows on the south and one on the north. Darlene also reported she has asked for updated fire suppression and building security.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS -

A. The next meeting will be Monday, July 25, 2022 at 6:30 pm in City Hall.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – 8:10 p.m.

DARLENE KOTELNICKI
CHAIRPERSON

PRESERVATION: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission?

The Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is a city commission. The seven HPC members are city residents who are appointed by the City Council. One member must be a designated representative of the Meeker County Historical Society.

In 2008 the Litchfield City Council adopted Ordinance No. 153, declaring that the preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, places, buildings, structures, and other objects having a special historical, community or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity safety and welfare of the community. The ordinance created the Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC).

Litchfield became a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 2009. A Minnesota Statue (471.193) authorizes local government to create and manage a comprehensive program of historic preservation. A city's governing body may establish a heritage preservation commission to preserve and promote its historic resources including, but not limited to, the survey and designation of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are of historical, architectural, archaeological engineering, or cultural significance.

2. What are the HPC's goals?

The HPC's primary goals are:

- (1) Maintain the historic integrity of the City of Litchfield, including, but not limited to structures, landscapes, and parks. Identify properties for possible nomination and recognition.
- (2) Promote the wise use of Litchfield's heritage resources through planning and education.
- (3) Identify properties for possible nomination and recognition.

3. Why give historic designations and establish a local Commission?

One of Litchfield's greatest assets are its historic buildings and parks. They give us a sense of place and reflect the history that we share as a community. Once they are lost, they cannot be recovered. Historic designation is the community's way of identifying and recognizing individual structures and areas that are significant for their styles, designs, features, and materials or their association with historical events or individuals.

4. How do you decide what places and buildings are worthy of designation?

Just being old is not enough. To receive designation, a property is evaluated for its integrity — whether it remains substantially intact — and for its significance — whether it is important

to Litchfield's story. To better understand what is significant, the HPC completed a historic context report in 2009, identifying the major themes of local history.

These are the specific criteria:

- a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City of Litchfield, State of Minnesota, or the United States.
- b) Its location as a site of a significant historic event.
- c) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Litchfield.
- d) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, form or treatment.
- e) Its identification as work of an architectural or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of Litchfield.
- f) Its embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, material, or craftsmanship that represents a significant architectural innovation.
- g) Its unique location, scale, or other physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, a district, the community, or the City of Litchfield.

5. What has Litchfield designated at this point?^[L]_[SEP]

The Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) can designate individual properties or historic districts. Three individual properties are locally designated: the Litchfield Opera House, the Grand Army of the Republic Hall, and Trinity Episcopal Church. All three are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as well. The downtown is designated as a local historic district.

6. What is a historic district?

A historic district is a concentration of historic buildings, structures, sites, spaces, and objects that have been deemed historically or architecturally significant. The designation is intended to preserve the character of the area as a whole – not just the buildings, but the streetscape and parks as well. Within a district, there are often buildings that are not significant – either too new or substantially altered from their historic use. These are considered as noncontributing properties.

7. What are the overall benefits of these designations to the community as a whole?^[L]_[SEP]

With designation, the Heritage Preservation Commission helps our citizens to recognize and preserve the history around us. This shared history – what makes Litchfield special – gives us a sense of community. For example, Litchfield was home to a major nineteenth-century brickyard, run by Henry Ames, and its bricks give the downtown its distinctive look.

It is also good business. Rehabilitating old buildings to their original appearance not only adds character to the area, but can also help attract investment, marketing opportunities, and enhanced tourism. The HPC can provide expertise to property owners regarding appropriate character/style of improvements and assurance that similar design standards will be used when approving alterations on other properties within the historic district.

8. What is the difference between a local historic district and listing on the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. It is administered by the National Park Service through State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO). For the most part, the NRHP is honorary and does not require review of changes to a property, unless the project is funded by the state or federal government. For example, MnDOT reviewed recent work on Sibley Avenue to make sure that it did not have an adverse effect on the historic commercial district.

In 1996 the National Register listed a more than two-block stretch of Litchfield's business district, containing forty-six buildings. It was locally designated in 2008 under a city ordinance. The Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission, made up of community members and supported by advice from historians and architects, has the power to review proposed changes.

There are two benefits available only to properties on the National Register. There is a 20% federal historic preservation income tax credit, available only to properties listed in the NRHP. On the state level, there are additional preservation tax credits and, potentially, funds from the state Legacy Grant fund. Both require a property to be in the National Register.

9. What are my responsibilities as property owner of a landmark or within a historic district?

If you, as the owner, want to make any changes to the exterior of your property that would require a building permit or significantly alter the appearance, you will need to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the City and Heritage Preservation Commission prior to beginning work. The exterior work that you propose will need to comply with a set of historic rehabilitation standards aimed at preserving the heritage and character of the building.

10. What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a document issued by the Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission that approves the exterior work planned for a historical structure or site is fitting to its historic nature, character, and architecture and also fitting to its context and appearance within the historical district. The COA needs to be obtained in conjunction with a regular site alteration permit. There is no charge for the COA.

11. How do I get a COA?

The process begins with submission of an application. This is available for download at:

<https://www.ci.litchfield.mn.us/2173/Forms-Applications>

The application requires photographs of the affected area, sketches and elevations, and material design and specification. If the project includes painting, please review the Historic Color Palette, also found online, and include that information with the application. Following submission, the Heritage Preservation Commission will schedule a public hearing, which you are encouraged to attend. Remember that this does not take the place of city building permits.

12. Will I have to hire professionals to work on my historic building instead of doing the work myself?

Not necessarily. Many maintenance projects are completed by the property owners themselves. For projects where a building permit is required, you may be required to submit drawings and specifications. Of course, this is required even if the structure is not a designated landmark.

13. What changes to a building require a COA?^[1]_{SEP}

A COA is required when construction, alteration, removal, or demolition requiring a building permit is proposed to the exterior of any designated landmark or structure within a historic district, and/or when any changes affect the character of the significant features of these structures.

14. Are there any types of work that do not require HPC approval?

Yes. Generally, routine exterior repairs, such as removing small amounts of painted graffiti, do not require HPC approval. In emergency situations where immediate repair is needed to protect the safety of a building or structure and its inhabitants, the City Administrator and City Building Official may approve the repair without prior Commission action.

What are the guidelines used to determine what changes are proper to the exterior of landmarks or structures within historic districts?^[1]_{SEP}

The Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission's *Commercial Historic District Guidelines* are based on common sense and sound construction practices. They serve as a guide and resource to property owners, architects, contractors, the HPC, and the City staff during the process of reviewing exterior changes to properties. Specific or detailed information on any aspect of the standards can be provided to anyone undertaking a project upon request. The guidelines are available online at:

<https://www.ci.litchfield.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/102/Design-Guidelines>

They are not arbitrary but instead represent the best practices for historic preservation based on nearly fifty years of experience with the National Register of Historic Places. To learn more, visit this website:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>

15. Can decisions of the Commission on COAs be appealed?

Yes. If the Heritage Preservation Commission denies the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the applicant may file a written appeal to the City Council within 10 calendar days. Appeals should be directed to the Code Enforcement Officer. The City Council may overturn the Commission's order and decision by a two-thirds vote of the Council's members.

16. Couldn't the designation just be voluntary rather than mandatory?

The city would not consider a voluntary zoning ordinance or building code to be sufficient. Through careful consideration of community values, with advice from knowledgeable historians, the HPC brings a wide perspective to the question of whether a property is historically significant. Intrusive buildings, inappropriate architectural elements, and empty lots diminish a sense of place. For that reason, local historic designation offers a way for property owners to work together for the common good by following these simple design guidelines.

17. Will I have to restore or repair my building if it is historically designated?

Absolutely not. You may maintain the current look of your building. The designation of a landmark or a historic district does not mean that you have to restore your building. It means that if and when you need or decide to make changes, they need to be consistent with the overall historical and architectural character of the designated building or the district as a whole. Of course, like all buildings, you must comply with local and state housing and building codes.

18. Can I add on to an existing historic building?

Yes, you usually can, but they require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC. The HPC prefers additions to be located away from public view to preserve the period streetscape. An addition should be compatible with the look and scale of your building. Additions also must comply with the city zoning ordinance and receive building permits. The HPC encourages people to meet with them early in the process to get feedback on the design.

19. Can new buildings be constructed in the local historic district?

Yes, but they require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC. The *Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines* has a section addressing new building construction. A new building should be compatible with the existing district, reflecting the scale, composition, color, and materials of the surrounding properties. New buildings do not have to be imitations of historic ones. The general principle to follow is that new buildings should look new.

20. Can I alter the office space, subdivide rooms, and remodel the interior without HPC review and a Certificate of Approval?

The HPC does not review changes to the interior of historic properties, just the exterior.

21. If a property is listed, does that change provisions in building codes?

Local historic designation does not override the standards established in the city's zoning ordinance or building codes. The building inspector may allow some variance for significant historic building features that do not meet modern building codes provided the features do not pose a health or safety hazard. Interpretation is at the discretion of the local building official.

22. Can I install a ramp to make my property accessible?^[SEP]

We encourage accessibility and ramps can be constructed without affecting the character of the structure. However, they require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC.

23. Won't historic designation just cause unnecessary hardship to property owners?

The act of designation should not cause economic hardship. The ordinance does not restrict the owner's use of the property. The guidelines are completely passive—no owner is required to make changes to his or her property, simply to follow standards if/when a change is proposed. In fact, the owner can draw on the experience and advice of the HPC to make changes that will enhance the value of their property. Often, small adjustments are all that are necessary to conform to the design guidelines. Finally, as a last resort, owners who feel they have been unfairly penalized may appeal to the city council.

24. Will my changes or repairs cost more if my property is in the historic district than if it wasn't?^[SEP]

Not necessarily. Historic preservation guidelines allow for a wide range of rehabilitation options – from complete restoration to basic maintenance. In many cases, repairing existing features may be less expensive than replacing them with new features. This also preserves the historic materials of the property.

25. What about demolition of historic structures?

A COA is required to demolish a structure or to move a structure within the district.

26. What resources, including financial, may be available for individual property owners?

The federal government does not have a grant program for historic preservation, but instead offers a significant incentive. If it is an income-producing property – as are almost all the buildings in the historic district -- property owners may be eligible to make use of the Federal Preservation Tax Credit program of up to 20%. The IRS may offer a 10% rehabilitation tax credit for buildings built prior to 1936 (regardless of historic designation). The current status of these programs should be verified through the IRS web site at www.irs.gov.

The state backs up the federal tax credit with an additional tax credit. The Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit offers a 20% state tax credit for qualified historic rehabilitations, paralleling the federal tax credit.

Minnesota Legacy Grants are another source of funds for historic preservation, available to nonprofit organizations and local governments if the property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Litchfield offers an incentive with its Historic Downtown Exterior Improvement program, offering up to a \$8,000 matching grant.

27. Why should I support local designation?

Designation has many benefits.

- It helps maintain property values by monitoring changes to surrounding buildings.
- It brings recognition to the special qualities of your building.
- It provides a marketing and promotion tool to attract local shoppers and tourists.

28. One of the purposes of the HPC is “education about our historic resources.” What has the commission done?

The Heritage Preservation Commission believes that Litchfield is “a community that comes together to protect, provide for, and enrich itself.” It is committed to saving and sharing our city’s rich history. One of its first steps was to research and write a Historic Context Report, a more than 200-page book that identified themes from our past. It stands as the best modern history of Litchfield. In recent years, the HPC has developed walking tours, produced a video tour of the historic downtown, and created a website with property histories, tours, and educational games. Recently benches, complete with stories from our past, have been placed around town. This is a special community of which we can all be proud.