

Pekin Historic Preservation Commission

Minutes of the Special Meeting of 20 July 2023 at 5:34 p.m.

Pekin Public Library Community Room

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair Debbi Reed-Montgomery. Commission members Steve Harris, Vikki Barker, Vice-Chair Jared Olar, Secretary Christina Olar, and Chair Debbi Reed-Montgomery were present. Commissioner Chris Deverman was absent. Quorum of the members was present.

Secretary moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Vice-Chair. Unanimously approved.

Public comments were offered by Keith Dunkelbarger and Dustin Maquet. Dunkelbarger, who has expressed interest in serving on the Pekin Historic Preservation Commission, contacted Quinn Adamowski, regional advocacy manager of Landmarks Illinois, and invited him to visit Pekin regarding Tazewell County's plans to demolish the Schipper & Block Tobin Building and Monge Building. Dunkelbarger said Adamowski offered ideas and counsel on preserving the Arcade Building, and spoke in favor of Adamowski's idea. Maquet, owner of Maquet's Rail House in a historic downtown building, was invited by Commissioner Harris. He spoke at length on practical difficulties and challenges to efforts to save and to find a use for the Arcade Building, offering the Commission counsel derived from his own experience in preserving and maintaining his building. Maquet said he disapproved of actions that could provoke a "war" between the City Council and the county board.

New business:

- Chair reported that she had called the special meeting to discuss the visit of Adamowski, who came to Pekin on Thursday morning, 13 June 2023, to meet with the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair, along with Dunkelbarger, Tazewell County Clerk & Recorder of Deeds John Ackerman, and Jorell Glass, chief of staff for Ill. Rep. Travis Weaver. The group briefly toured the Tazewell County Courthouse and then examined the exteriors of the Schipper & Block Building (Tobin Building) and Arcade Building (Monge Building). Ackerman provided background and insight from the perspective of Tazewell County government. Adamowski wondered why the county was in a rush to demolish the buildings now, when the county had not yet determined building plans for their proposed Justice Center Annex, and opined that both buildings are in reasonably good shape for their age and both could be repaired (in the Tobin Building's case) or maintained (in the Arcade Building's case). Adamowski also said the Arcade Building probably would qualify for the National Register of Historic Buildings, but that the Tobin Building had been altered too significantly for it to qualify. He advised that the Commission should submit a preliminary application for the Arcade Building to be added to the National Register, and that the Commission ought to request the City Council to grant landmark status to the Arcade Building. The Vice-Chair therefore had prepared the materials for a preliminary application.
- Vice-Chair moved that the Commission submit the preliminary application, seconded by Commissioner Harris. Commissioners discussed at length whether to submit the application. Commissioner Barker said she thinks the Commission needs to focus on planning for a Downtown Historic District, and not put any further energy into the Arcade Building since the county had already voted to demolish it. Vice-Chair observed that the preliminary application would delay any demolition while the State of Illinois considers the application, and also noted

that even buildings on the National Register can still be demolished, but submitting the application would not commit the City of Pekin to anything. Chair stated her conviction that every alternative should be exhausted before efforts to save the Arcade Building were ended.

- Chair called for a vote. Motion passed 4-1, with Commissioner Barker opposed.

No old business.

Motion to adjourn made by Chair, approved by Commissioners via voice vote. Meeting adjourned 6:15 p.m.

Commission to reconvene in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, 10 Aug. 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at the Pekin Public Library.

