

MINUTES

CITY OF MINERAL POINT HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING Thursday, December 4, 2025 – 6:30 PM Library Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:30 PM.

Matthew Payne (2025-28), Chair	Present	Alex Ramshur (Council Rep)	Present
Erik Flesch (2023-26)	Not Present (Excused)	Gary Cisler (2024-27)	Present
John Spady (2024-27)	Present	Tim Freeman (2025-28)	Present
Mark Hogan (2025-28)	Present		
Others Present: Matt Honer, City Administrator			

The City Administrator confirmed compliance with Open Meetings Law.

CONSIDERATION OF OCTOBER 23, 2025 MINUTES

Noted that PDF format presented visual accessibility challenges because of differing page sizes. The Chair and City Administrator will attempt to address this in future documents.

Motion (Freeman/Cisler) to approve minutes of October 23, 2025, 2025. Motion carried (6-0).

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Minutes Procedure: Chair Payne outlined a new process for preparing minutes. He will draft using meeting recordings which will be deleted after approval. Members agreed with this approach.

Comments from the Chair: As a new Chair, Payne to the privilege to make introductory comments. Noted his first year in Mineral Point was coming to understand the community. Joined HPC in April 2025. After discussion and review of past HPC materials, identified need for clearer, consistent information to support decision-making and assist applicants. Acknowledged public perception that HPC may feel like a barrier. Expressed intent to improve transparency and public education.

Payne outlined priorities to strengthen HPC's work: improving public education, increasing consistency in applying criteria, and enhancing ongoing education for commissioners. The goal is preservation of Mineral Point's historic character.

Certificate of Appropriateness Application Process: Payne provided overview of revised workflow for COA applications. Updated process reflects his personal time capacity and approach rather than being a requirement of the position. Each step includes Cc'ing the Chair and City Administrator.

- COA applications continue to be submitted to City Administrator who will forward to the Chair with preliminary comments and recommend if item better suited for 2-person committee review or full HPC consideration.
- Chair reviews materials relevant to property (previous COAs, Wisconsin Historical Society inventory, library archives, Field Guide) and will include for member review, reducing need for each member to perform research independently.
- When appropriate for 2-person committee, Chair routes accordingly. 2-person committee may act on assigned applications but may also refer to the full HPC for consideration.
- Applications for full HPC review proceed as usual. Noted that HPC decisions may be appealed.
- Chair notifies applicants when materials are received and communicates decisions.

The process' emphasis is on consistency, transparency, public perception, and the quasi-judicial nature of Commission decisions. One notable procedural shift: the City Administrator plays a less directive role. Keeping the administrator informed is essential because there may be additional factors that may influence decisions. The public often sees the City Administrator as an "equalizer," and citizens sometimes bring concerns directly to staff when dissatisfied.

Public perception of the COA process was discussed. Very few applications are fully denied, though applicants sometimes may leave feeling frustrated or unclear about a rationale behind a decision. It was emphasized to recognize an applicants' rights as a property owner, ensuring they feel respected and informed throughout the process. In a "small town" like Mineral Point, residents closely observe how decisions are made and may view some as receiving preferential treatment.

While acknowledging individual perceptions cannot be controlled, the Chair emphasized the Commission can strengthen its processes and communication to help build trust and improve understanding. The Chair referenced ideas gathered from a conference and suggested the Commission may pursue greater community visibility, potentially including a public forum to explain how the COA process works. It was noted no property owner in the historic district wants to feel excluded or labeled as more or less "key" than others.

If the Commission chooses a community education program, the Chair will appoint a committee to outline an approach for the HPC to review, ensuring any outreach is aligned with HPC goals.

Commissioner's Exchange: Payne explained as a new chair and relatively new member, he wanted to know better the backgrounds and strengths of each commissioner. To help build that understanding, he circulated some questions and invited members to share interests, experience, skills, and perspectives related to serving on the Commission. Each person was appointed for particular reasons, and discussion will help better appreciate each one's contributions.

Commissioner Flesch shared a written response. Works as public policy administrator with Wisconsin DNR. Professional background in geology, architectural design, historic preservation, nonprofit leadership, and communications. Recognized as a historian under U.S. Secretary of the Interior's qualification standards. Gained additional preservation experience through coursework, museum leadership, and work with architectural firms.

Commissioner Hogan moved from Chicago where he operated an architectural practice for 28 years specializing in exterior renovation and restoration of multi-story buildings. It included masonry, roofing, and structural repairs. Long-standing interest in history and architecture. Led Mineral Point Historical Society's project to install bronze plaques—managing the design, purchase, and installation—with more than 135 plaques being placed.

Commissioner Spady serves as "invested citizen," owning two downtown buildings. Serves on the Tourism Commission. Originally from New York. Worked for 18 years as film and television location scout and manager developing strong skills in balancing stakeholder interests and knowledge of architectural periods. Recognized for expertise with historical settings, often sought for period-specific productions. Joined HPC believing he could help bridge preservation goals with the economic and tourism needs and bring a practical, balanced perspective.

Commissioner Cisler discovered Mineral Point in the 1970s. Learned hands-on building skills—stone masonry, carpentry, and restoration—restoring several historic homes. Values maintaining historic character but supports flexibility, when original materials are unaffordable, to avoid "preservation by neglect." Aims to protect past work while encouraging practical balance supporting long-term vitality. Understand HPC intent is not to discourage people or make it impossible to do something, but to work with them.

Commissioner Ramshur emphasized historic preservation importance: once lost, cannot be replaced. Living in Mineral Point strengthens appreciation for preservation. Respects HPC's commitment to protecting community heritage. Experience from lifelong interest in history, hands-on work maintaining an older property, and research into historic properties considered for purchase. Strengths are design review and research. Growing skills in advocacy and public education. Value conflict resolution and aim to help applicants achieve goals in a historically appropriate way. Desire balanced, case-by-case approach—respect historical integrity while considering property owners' needs, costs, and practical realities—essential to successfully sustain properties.

Commissioner Freeman moved here in 1988. Became deeply involved in maintaining and adapting an older home, addressing roofing and plumbing. Participated in construction and restoration projects, including outbuildings and a second story to make residence more functional year-round. Helped purchase and restore railroad depot. Involved in preservation of stone Thomas Barn near Highway 151. Challenges in historic preservation include difficulty and cost of obtaining appropriate materials, which sometimes requires compromises.

City Administrator Honer holds a graduate degree in history with thesis on urban renewal and certificate in public history focused on historic preservation. Initially considered as a career but pursued related work. Throughout career, performed historic preservation–related work in various roles, including neighborhood planning and community organizing. Previously served as chair of Dodgeville HPC and noted parallels to current leadership transitions. Current role limits capacity to provide staffing support to HPC due to existing responsibilities.

Commissioner Payne noted history and historic preservation as long-time avocations, pursued through coursework at UW–Madison and Marquette beyond formal studies in communications. As an administrator for a Wisconsin regional Episcopal Church office, oversaw multiple property dispositions involving both church buildings and associated historic properties, gaining practical preservation experience through hands-on responsibility rather than formal training. Skills are in research and preparation, including extensive reading and review of all available HPC minutes. Notes importance of complete information before making decisions. Volunteers to help organize city property records to improve accessibility and efficiency.

Payne noted how historic preservation work is shared across Wisconsin through many certified local governments and relies largely on community volunteers. Emphasized HPC can learn from existing ordinances and processes elsewhere and is not working in isolation. Stressed the importance of remembering human relationships, suggesting that understanding one another improves how the commission conducts its work.

CONSIDERATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION (2025-COA35)
REQUESTED BY CITY OF MINERAL POINT RELATED TO CORNISH HERITAGE PARK (100 BLOCK HIGH ST).

Payne noted application could have been routed to the 2-person committee, but on routed to agenda because alteration to exterior of structures [151.03(C)(2)] are adjoining Cornish Heritage Park site. There was a question if the application was within the HPC purview. Noted that role is limited to reviewing exterior modifications to historic structures—not park design, lighting levels, or plant selection. Honer confirmed site did not require review as an open, public space decided by the City Council and affirmed by city attorney during the High Street project in 2022. Noted property tax mill rate is unaffected as project funded through private funds.

Discussion focused on installation of string lights and trellises attached to 145 High (old Fire Station) and 139 High (Opera House). Proposal involves anchoring bolts into mortar (not brick) and using hinged trellises into the ground to allow for maintenance and reversibility. Easements from adjacent property owners are required. Members noted string lights and trellises are common in community and consistent with traditional historic park designs. The work followed best practices by minimizing impact and allowing for removal. Concerns raised about potential damage from vegetation growth against masonry and public interaction with trellises. City would address issues if they arose. [151.04(C)(1)j and 151.04(C)(2)e]

Motion (Spady/Freedom) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for 2025-COA35 Cornish Heritage Park for lights and trellis as presented. Motion carried (6-0).

2-PERSON COMMITTEE ACTIONS

Payne noted the COA applications are included in packet for archival purposes, not action. Ramshur and Cisler reported on actions since the October meeting and accepted questions.

2025-COA32 (105 Jail Alley) by Mark Runge. Install metal railing on front steps of three rectangular panels on each side. Applicant designed railings based on knowledge of federal style buildings and it matches railings on the back patio which was approved in 2013. [151.04(C)(1)j and 151.04(C)(2)e]. **Approved.**

2025-COA33 (43 High Street – Royal Apartments) by Limestone, LLC. Replacement of 17 windows. Many already replaced/fitted with storm windows. Remaining original windows in very poor condition, significant wood rot, making repair impractical. Tri-State Windows completed with a mid-level product, custom-made to fit existing openings (not “standard” sizes) and appearance consistent with original windows. One Commissioner emphasized this project may set a precedent for allowing replacement windows by this contractor without requiring top-of-the-line products when compatible in appearance and fit. [151.04(C)(1)f and 151.04(C)(2)b&h]. **Approved.**

2025-COA34 (421 Fountain Street) by Anna & Jacob Colden. Replace basement door and window (visible from street). Existing door not original, nor a copy. Side window original. All other windows had been replaced with newer windows. The window in question was in bad shape with moisture issues. [151.04(C)(1)f & 151.04(C)(2)b] **Approved.**

Because of time constraints, agenda items 5., 6., 7., 8. and 9. were deferred to the January 2026 meeting without objection.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES: Payne noted continuing education opportunities listed on agenda. Each Commissioner is encouraged to complete the free, self-paced online training by the Wisconsin Historical Society as recommended by the State Historic Preservation Office, to promote consistency and shared understanding among commissions. Training is text-based, divided into manageable sections, and may be completed at your own pace.

Additional professional development opportunities include fee-based conferences and an intensive three-day Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP) sponsored by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Commissioners invited to express interest so potential funding options may be explored.

RESOURCE SHARING: Payne described efforts to create shared, read-only resource drive for commissioners on a shared drive. Materials would include comprehensive address lists identifying properties in the historic district and spreadsheets tracking past Certificates of Appropriateness. Allows commissioners to research whether an address had prior approvals. The goal is to improve access to information and provide better tools to support informed decision-making. Look for updates on this via e-mail notice.

NEXT MEETING: January 22, 2026, Community Room of City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objection and having reached the agenda item, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.