

Historic Preservation Commission

Regular Meeting

December 18th, 2025 4:30pm

City of Mankato

Present: Jessica Potter, Tim Pulis, Mike Lagerquist, Justin Vossen, John Zehnder

Staff: Brittany Mitchell, Courtney Kramlinger, Travis Johnson

Guest: Steve MacGregor

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 pm.

Approval of Agenda

Justin Vossen moved to approve the agenda; Mike Lagerquist seconded with all in favor.

Approval of Minutes

November 13th, 2025 Minutes:

Mike Lagerquist moved to approve the November minutes; Tim Pulis seconded with all in favor.

Old Business

Project Updates

Today's Action Items

1. Ms. Mitchell provided the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) members with updates on ongoing projects throughout the City of Mankato.

Upcoming Action Items

1. HPC members may request ongoing updates on these projects or any other projects of interest.

1416 N Riverfront Dr.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that progress continues and there are no new updates at this time.

Kern Bridge

Ms. Mitchell indicated that this project has broken ground and underway.

Mr. Pulis questioned if any local tribes had been consulted in relation to this project.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that, to her knowledge, there has been communication with the tribes. She added that an excessive amount of dirt beyond what was originally anticipated based on past river levels has been encountered, but she is not aware of any updates regarding those discussions.

Mr. Pulis indicated that there was at one time a lower road that ran closer to the river in addition to the existing road. He noted that he had recently observed a small section of wall where this road once existed and asked if anything related to this road has been uncovered so far.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she was unaware of any findings but would consult with city staff to find out.

Hotel Mankato

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the project is in a value engineering phase and the construction is planned to start in the spring.

Mr. Pulis questioned whether the apartment building adjacent to the proposed hotel would become more visible because of the recent work done on its windows.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there will be a three-foot access space between the buildings. She noted that the original hotel had a very small gap, but the new proposal will include a three-foot walkway.

Post Office

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there is no update at this time. She noted that some preliminary submittals were made in the summer, but no further progress has occurred since then.

Ardent Mills

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there are no updates at this time.

Good council

Ms. Mitchell indicated that they are still working with potential developers on concept plans. Based on what has been seen so far, the original structures are planned to remain, and no buildings are proposed for removal.

Walgreens

Mr. Lagerquist questioned whether there were any updates to the now vacant Walgreens building.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there is interest in the building and expressed her assumption that a proposal may come forward in 2026.

New Business

Remodel at 731 S. Front St.

Today's Action Items

1. Courtney Kramlinger was present at the meeting along with Steve MacGregor. Both attended to review the proposed scope of work at 731 S. Front Street and to answer any questions from Commission members.

Upcoming Action Items

1. None

Ms. Kramlinger indicated that this project proposes using EDA levy funds; therefore, the HPC must review it and provide comments. Steve MacGregor was present at the meeting to discuss the scope of work and answer any questions the commission members may have.

Mr. MacGregor reviewed the proposed plans for the project, which include adding an awning above the existing windows and replacing the existing wood surfaces with stucco. He noted that while the large glass windows on the building are in good condition, water leakage has been an issue; as a result, some of the framing will need to be replaced.

He also explained that the building has exposed steel columns, and the plan is to build them out, apply stucco, and add a metal cap on top. Any remaining wood elements will be wrapped in metal. Lastly, he mentioned that the front door would be replaced with a storefront-style door.

Ms. Kramlinger inquired whether the baseboard required repair due to rot.

Mr. MacGregor confirmed this, noting that the owner has installed treated lumber to prevent moisture. The plan is to remove the treated lumber, repair the rotted wood beneath, install a new wood sill wrapped in bronze-colored metal, and replace all window trims.

Ms. Mitchell inquired about the area behind the proposed awning.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that the existing wood would be retained and repainted. He noted, however, that there is leakage behind that section of the building, which will need to be addressed.

Mr. Lagerquist inquired whether any work was planned for the building's brick.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that no work is planned for the brick and that the existing brick will remain. He added that there is a concrete slab below the windows. Due to the presence of steel columns, he explained that using stucco is a more cost-effective and less complex option than attempting to install brick below the windows to match the other side of the building.

Ms. Potter noted that the building was constructed in 1912, is not locally designated, is not listed on the National Register, and is not located within a historic district. She asked the HPC members to provide additional comments on the proposed changes.

Mr. Lagerquist added that when a previous tenant occupied the building, he frequently heard reports of ongoing water leakage issues, particularly in the basement.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that he was unsure whether the current tenant was using the basement. However, during his visit, he observed signs of water damage. He added that addressing the issues outlined in this proposal may help resolve some of the other related problems.

Mr. Pulis inquired about the intended use of the building.

Mr. MacGregor added that the building is currently used as a comic bookstore and that this use will not change.

Mr. Vossen added that this project is like previous cases reviewed by the HPC, where the building had already been altered from its original state, and that further modifications would not have an impact on its historical significance.

Ms. Potter added that, given the steel beams, she believed the building may have originally been a grocery store. She noted that the beams and the location of the door were likely part of the building's original design. She further stated that, while she personally did not favor the use of stucco, she understood the reasoning behind its application.

Mr. MacGregor noted that other options were considered besides stucco, but from a financial standpoint, stucco was the best choice for the building owner. He added that he did not inspect the basement, and that the building owner wanted to focus on the front of the building.

Ms. Mitchell questioned whether limestone could be used instead of stucco to match the other side of the building.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that using limestone would be a possibility, but given the scope of work for this project, it may make it difficult to achieve the overall project goals while keeping it financially reasonable.

Ms. Potter questioned whether the repairs would create more structural integrity for the building.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that this was correct and that it would also address some of the water issues. He added that the brick would remain the same, and an awning would be added to cover the wood that is currently present.

Mr. Lagerquist questioned the condition of the roof.

Mr. MacGregor indicated that he did not go up and look at the roof; however, the current tenant indicated that it is in good shape and that there is no leakage.

Mr. Lagerquist indicated that he believed the planned work would maintain historical integrity.

Mr. Vossen made a motion that the Historic Preservation Committee determine that the building at 731 S. Front Street is not historically significant and that the committee offer no comments on the proposed project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Zehnder and carried unanimously.

New Sign at 227 E. Main St.

Today's Action Items

1. Ms. Mitchell went over the proposed sign details for the locally designed building at 227 E. Main Street.

Upcoming Action Items

1. None

Ms. Mitchell reported that New Horizon Academy, located at 227 E. Main Street, is proposing to install a new sign. The existing sign will be removed and replaced with the new sign, which will be slightly smaller than the current one. The proposed signage meets all City of Mankato ordinances. Because the building is locally designated, the proposal is being reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Zehnder made a motion to approve the sign as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pulis and carried unanimously.

Miscellaneous

2026 Tasks

Today's Action Items

1. HPC members received updates on potential collaboration with URSI, possible revisions to the work plan, the upcoming Preservation Month, and the 2026 CLG grant application.

Upcoming Action Items

1. HPC members were asked to consider the work plan and determine what they would like to include for 2026.
2. HPC members were asked to consider potential activities for Preservation Month 2026.
3. HPC members should consider any potential projects for the 2026 CLG Grant Application.

Potential Collaboration with URSI

Ms. Mitchell indicated that URSI had recently completed a project identifying areas throughout Mankato, specifically near Franklin Rogers Park. She added that there is potential for collaboration with the URSI program to help develop work plan concepts, but she added that there would be limited graduate students available and undergraduate students may not be appropriate for this type of task. This would be something that the HPC would need to continue to evaluate for 2026.

Ms. Mitchell added that URSI had previously done a presentation on mid-century modern architecture in Mankato and asked if the HPC would like this presentation at a future meeting. She inquired about potential timing for the group to present, noting that she would check to see if the presentation could be scheduled for the February meeting.

Work Plan

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the goal is to finalize the work plan and suggested using the January meeting as a work session to complete it.

Preservation month

Ms. Mitchell touched on Preservation Month 2026, which will occur in May. She asked HPC members to consider potential activities and shared what has been done in the past. She added that she had researched ways to engage other age groups and planned to share those ideas at the January meeting.

2026 CLG Grant Application

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the 2026 CLG grant application is now available for submission. She added that HPC members should consider whether to apply and for what projects, noting that the Kern Bridge could be a potential project. The pre-application is due January 7, and the final application is due February 22.

Adjournment

Mr. Zehnder motioned to adjourn. Mr. Pulis seconded with all in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm.