

Historic Preservation Commission

Regular Meeting

January 8th, 2026, 4:30pm

City of Mankato

Present: Tim Pulis, Mike Lagerquist, Justin Vossen, John Zehnder, Jeff Kagermeier

Staff: Brittany Mitchell, Mark Konz, Travis Johnson

Guest: None

Call to Order

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

Land Acknowledgement

Mr. Zehnder read the land acknowledgement statement.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Lagerquist moved to approve the agenda; Mr. Pulis seconded with all in favor.

Approval of Minutes

December 18th, 2025, Minutes:

Mr. Kagermeier moved to approve the December minutes; Mr. Vossen seconded with all in favor.

Old Business

December 2025 Old Business

Project Updates

Today's Action Items

1. Ms. Mitchell reviewed updates on projects occurring in the City of Mankato

Upcoming Action Items

1. HPC members can request updates on these or any projects moving forward.

Kern Bridge

Ms. Mitchell indicated that Kern Bridge is underway.

Mr. Zehnder noted that, following the previous meeting and the desire to install a historical interpretive sign for the Kern Bridge, he researched potential coverage under legacy funding. He explained that eligibility requires the site to be a regional park or trail and confirmed that this trail is considered a regional trail. He also noted that the minimum grant amount is \$25,000. While interpretive signs could be included in the grants, examples he found typically involved multiple pieces of park infrastructure, with signs being just one component.

Mr. Konz added that the City of Mankato has applied for interpretive signs in the past, but the application was considered too small. He noted that one of the elements reviewers like to see included is a trail counter and indicated that incorporating a trail counter into an application for an interpretive sign could improve the likelihood of acceptance. He also added that legacy funds are currently being used for a portion of the bridge project. The city applied through the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission and was awarded \$1.2 million; therefore, they may prefer to complete the bridge before returning to install an interpretive sign.

Mr. Vossen asked whether a trail counter is like a traffic counter and how it functions.

Mr. Konz indicated that it is in fact like a traffic counter and typically captures motion to record the number of people using the trail.

Ms. Mitchell added that there is potential to use the 2026 CLG grant to obtain a historical marker for Kern Bridge, which is planned to be discussed later in the meeting, noting that the preliminary deadline is tomorrow.

Hotel Mankato

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the City of Mankato would be receiving new plans soon. No further updates were available at this time.

Post Office

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

Ardent Mills

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

Good Counsel

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

Walgreens

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

New Business

CLG Grant 2026

Today's Action Items

1. HPC members were asked to identify projects they would like the CLG grant to support in 2026, as well as in 2027 and beyond.

Upcoming Action Items

1. Mr. Kagermeier will prepare and submit the pre-application for the 2026 CLG Grant, due January 9.
2. Mr. Lagerquist will inquire with the owners of Good Counsel to determine if they would be open to historical designation.
3. Mr. Konz will place an item on the City Council agenda for January 26th noting HPC's intent to submit a CLG grant application for the Kern Bridge.

Minutes:

Ms. Mitchell indicated that last year they went through the CLG grant process for the Lincoln Community School. She added that all necessary signed forms for the historical marker have been received and that she hopes to place the order within the next week. She also noted that she would like to have an open discussion about other potential projects or properties that the HPC may be interested in pursuing for future markers.

Mr. Kagermeier asked whether the deadline was the following day (January 9) at the time the post office closes.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the application was completed online and that the City of Mankato has the login information to access it directly through the SHPO website. She added that she could print a copy of the application to review its complexity and send it to Mr. Kagermeier to work on.

Mr. Kagermeier indicated that he would be happy to assist with the application.

Mr. Konz added that this is a pre-application, and even if it cannot be completed in its entirety by the deadline, the submitted portion can still be reviewed and feedback provided. He added that submission is not mandatory.

Mr. Pulis stated that Hubbard Mill had been discussed in the past, but due to ownership issues, it was considered more of a dead end.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the Mankato Union Depot had been mentioned in the past and suggested it might be possible to approach the ownership group to see if they would be interested in pursuing a marker. She noted that the building recently underwent an interior remodel with additional landscaping and that the owners have a designated area where they hope to place a historical marker.

Mr. Pulis asked whether the sign would be a larger interpretive sign or a smaller plaque.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there would be an opportunity to explore which options would work best. She added that the Lincoln School marker would be a large interpretive sign featuring a narrative written by Ms. Potter.

Mr. Konz recommended that in instances where a story needs to be told, an interpretive marker can be more effective than a simple designation marker.

Mr. Vossen questioned whether both the Kern Bridge and the Depot would both be interpretive markers.

Mr. Konz confirmed that this was correct, noting that both are on the National Register but not the local registry. He added that, in relation to the Depot, they have inquired about local designation in the past but never pursued it.

Mr. Kagermeier added that the bike trail runs along the river and eventually connects to Sibley Park and the Kern Bridge. He suggested adding some type of signage along the trail.

Mr. Lagerquist stated that on Friday, January 6, he had a meeting with Chad Adams from the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership regarding the Good Counsel plans, noting that it is a significant hometown property.

Mr. Konz added that Good Counsel was another property where the previous owners were not interested in pursuing designation. He noted that now, under new ownership, it may be a good time to approach the owners to see if they would be interested in historical designation, even if it applies to just one building.

Ms. Mitchell asked the HPC members whether they would like to focus on the Kern Bridge for the grant application.

Mr. Vossen indicated that he felt that the Kern Bridge was the only project ready for the grant application and suggested that the others be considered as work plan items. He also asked whether Good Counsel had plans in place that would allow a historical marker application in 2027, with installation in 2028, to coincide with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Mr. Konz indicated that there is no timeline at this time but noted that even if the marker does not coincide with ribbon cutting, a tour could be organized, for example, to showcase the property.

Mr. Lagerquist indicated that he would ask Mr. Adams during their conversation whether they would be open to pursuing historical designation for the Good Counsel property.

Mr. Vossen made a motion to submit a 2026 CLG grant application for a historical marker at the Kern Bridge location. Mr. Kagermeier seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Mr. Konz added that he will place an item on the City Council agenda for January 26, noting that the HPC intends to submit a CLG grant application.

Preservation Month 2026

Today's Action Items

1. HPC members were asked to provide input on ideas for Preservation Month 2026.

Upcoming Action Items

1. Mr. Lagerquist will update HPC members about the meeting with Good Counsel owners to gauge their willingness to host an event for Preservation Month 2026.

Minutes:

Ms. Mitchell shared with HPC members what had been done in previous Preservation Months. She noted that she had researched activities from other communities to identify ways to engage a wide range of age groups and invited an open discussion with HPC members to share ideas.

Mr. Vossen added that he had seen a children's coloring book contest focused on a historical building in the community, along with a related photo contest.

Ms. Mitchell added that it might be a good idea to hold a historical trivia night focused specifically on Mankato, which could include topics such as Betsey-Tacy. She noted that she wanted to gain momentum on planning the event, with May approaching soon.

Mr. Konz asked if Mr. Lagerquist could raise the topic with Mr. Adams, Director of the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, during his meeting the following day to see if they would be interested in participating in any activities at the Good Counsel property.

Mr. Lagerquist indicated that he would bring up the topic, noting that the Historical Society had conducted informative tours in the past and that there are sisters still in the area who might be willing to participate.

Mr. Konz suggested that they could aim to complete the historical survey, designate the property historically, and hold a tour in May. He added that it would not be necessary to open the entire property, but a tour could focus on the main building or any areas the owners were comfortable with.

Ms. Mitchell added that the Living Earth Center is also located on the property and suggested that a tour of it could be incorporated as well.

Mr. Zehnder asked, based on the list of ideas, what the "Arts Through History" event at the Carnegie would entail.

Ms. Mitchell stated that, based on what another community had done, hosting a gallery of Mankato artists or art inspired by Mankato within the Carnegie space could be a good draw for the event. She noted that Carnegie's schedule is likely set for the year, so this would need to be planned well in advance, but the idea is to attract a wide range of age groups.

Mr. Zehnder stated that, regardless of the planned activities, trivia could be used to promote the event, since a local establishment would likely be willing to host a trivia night with a local theme.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the HPC should start with the Good Counsel plan to see if the owners are open to it; if not, she added that we would pivot to the list and explore other options.

Miscellaneous

Lincoln School

Today's Action Items:

1. HPC members were asked to provide input on whether they would like an event to be planned for the historical marker at Lincoln School.

Upcoming Action Items:

1. Ms. Mitchell will place the order for the historical marker with the goal of establishing a concrete timeline. All members agreed that they would like an event to be planned once the marker is installed.

Minutes:

Ms. Mitchell asked whether the HPC normally holds some type of ceremony when a historical marker is installed.

Multiple HPC members indicated that there have been different events for historical markers, including the Boy in Blue marker located in Lincoln Park, the Hubbard House, and the Moulin Rouge house, each with varying accompanying activities associated with the unveiling of the marker.

Mr. Konz added that more recent markers did not have associated events because the company producing the markers was significantly behind schedule, making it difficult to plan an event.

Ms. Mitchell asked the HPC members whether they would like to hold an event for the Lincoln School historical marker if a tentative date could be established.

Mr. Pulis stated that he thought it would be a great idea and could involve KEYC, providing additional publicity for the HPC.

Mr. Zehnder added that without an event, the sign may be installed, but people might not be aware that it is there.

Mr. Vossen stated that if the marker were completed in May, it could serve as a good fallback option for Preservation Month.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she was hoping the marker would be completed sooner, noting that the company had been quick with the design process and expressing hope that the manufacturing process would be equally efficient. She indicated that she planned to place the order the following day and would update the HPC members with the hope of being able to plan an event at a future meeting.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.