

Historic Preservation Commission

Regular Meeting

June 11th, 2026, 4:30pm

City of Mankato

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

Staff: Brittany Mitchell, Travis Johnson, Chris Talamantez

Guest: Tony Filipovitch

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

No minutes were taken during previous meeting

Old Business

No old business

New Business

MAPO Summer Conference

Today's Action Items

1. Mr. Talamantez was present at the meeting to request that members of the HPC prepare a presentation for the 2026 MAPO Summer Conference regarding the Kern Bridge.

Upcoming Action Items

1. Mr. Lagerquist, Mr. Pulis, and possibly Mr. Kagermeier will work together to create a presentation for the conference focused on the Kern Bridge.

Minutes:

Mr. Talamantez stated that the City of Mankato will host the 2026 MAPO Summer Conference. He noted that the conference will be held over two days this year and, due to the ongoing Kern Bridge construction project, requested a presentation for attendees focused on the history of the Kern Bridge. He added that, if construction progress allows, he hopes attendees will also participate in a site visit to view the project. The presentation and potential site visit would likely take place after lunch on July 30.

Ms. Potter asked how long the presentation could be.

Mr. Talamantez responded that he expected the presentation to last approximately 30 minutes, plus time for questions. He added that the presentation may be combined with a presentation from the City Engineering Department, which could extend the overall duration.

Ms. Mitchell asked whether the City Engineering Department would be participating in the presentation.

Mr. Talamantez responded that they could coordinate with the Engineering Department; however, it would likely consist of two separate presentations. He added that he envisioned the Engineering Department primarily providing context about the bridge during the site visit.

Ms. Potter stated that there is a significant amount of information available at the Blue Earth County Historical Society. She noted that Mr. Talamantez had previously reached out to the Historical Society to determine whether they could assist with the presentation. While the Historical Society is unable to help present the information, it does have a substantial collection of materials available, including files, photographs, and potentially a staff member who could assist with research or provide additional information if needed.

Mr. Lagerquist indicated that he has a friend who grew up near the bridge and has stories about crossing it during family activities. He added that he would be willing to incorporate those stories and assist with the presentation. Mr. Pulis also indicated that he could help with the presentation.

Ms. Potter added that she could connect Mr. Kagermeier with Mr. Lagerquist and Mr. Pulis to assist with the presentation, noting that Mr. Kagermeier has already completed a significant amount of research on the Kern Bridge that could be beneficial to their efforts.

2026 City of Mankato Project Updates

Today's Action Items

1. Ms. Mitchell provided project updates to the Historic Preservation Commission members.

Upcoming Action Items

1. Historic Preservation Commission members are encouraged to ask questions regarding any projects taking place within the City of Mankato.

Minutes:

Menari Body Works: 121 E. Cherry Street.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the parapet is being increased in size to improve the appearance of what was previously a mansard roof. She added that, while the property is a contributing structure, it does not hold significant historical importance to the area.

Barkhadle Grocery store: 725 S. front St.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that a permit application was submitted for a storefront upgrade at 725 S. Front Street by Goodrich Construction. Because the property is located within the Downtown Gateway District, a Certificate of Design Compliance is required and is subject to an internal design review.

Mr. Pulis indicated that he had recently visited the grocery store and noted that, approximately 50 years ago, it was the Rendezvous Café and later became the Mankato Food Co-op. He added that, according to the owner, the adjacent building at 727 S. Front Street may be converted into a restaurant.

Ms. Mitchell clarified that the current proposal is only for 725 S. Front Street and does not include 727 S. Front Street. She explained that the applicant is proposing to clean up the stucco by patching and repairing it. The applicant was also asked to provide a material board demonstrating the proposed materials and colors. It is her understanding that the awning will be replaced, both storefronts will be renovated, and the railings will be repainted. She added that staff have had conversations with the owners regarding a potential deli/restaurant use in the future, but that proposal is not included in the permit application currently under review.

Ms. Potter indicated that, based on the scope of work, there was no substantial or drastic work proposed that would require Historic Preservation Commission review. She thanked staff for providing the project details and noted that the HPC would not need to conduct a formal review.

709 S 2nd Street.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the property is currently under review for a remodel permit. She added that City staff have been very transparent with the owners that the historically relevant features of the property are not to be altered. After speaking with Michael Koop, she noted that the historically significant elements are primarily located on the front portion of the home, and that this information has been communicated to the new owners.

Ms. Potter questioned whether the upper roofline was also included.

Ms. Mitchell stated that, after speaking with Mr. Koop, the primary historically significant feature of the property is the front porch and that the roofline is not considered historically significant. She added that a small addition was constructed after the home was originally built and is also not considered historical.

She further explained that the owners are permitted to replace the windows and siding but are not allowed to alter the front of the property. Ms. Mitchell added that the City of Mankato is pleased that new ownership has stepped in and is working to restore the home, noting that it has not been occupied since 2013.

Mr. Filipovitch questioned whether Mr. Koop had stated that the mansard roof is not a contributing historical feature of the property.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the mansard roof was not identified as a historically significant feature of the property and that the front porch was identified as the primary historically relevant element. She added that this information has consistently been communicated to the new ownership group and that any proposed work must maintain the property's historical significance, which would require an internal review done by Ms. Mitchell.

Mr. Filipovitch questioned who the contractor was for the project.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that the ownership group is not local and created an LLC specifically for this property. She added that, during the initial meeting, the contractor stated that they are a historic restoration contractor that has operated out of the Twin Cities for approximately 30 years.

Mr. Pulis questioned whether there would be financial implications if the owners did not follow the direction provided by the City of Mankato.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she would need to confirm that information with Mr. Koop but explained that, if the front porch were removed from the home, the property would likely lose its registry status and, in turn, the associated tax benefit. She added that the property is nationally designated but is not locally designated.

Ms. Potter indicated that the home was built in 1881, which is around the same period as the Hubbard House. She explained that the capitals, which are the decorative pieces at the top of the columns, may have been constructed using horsehair. She added that epoxy fill can be used to repair the material. However, she noted that the capitals are not as decorative as those on the Hubbard House and may simply be made of wood.

Ms. Mitchell reiterated that any repairs that may be proposed to any sections of the building that have been deemed historical must come directly through her.

Ms. Potter indicated that the siding appears to be vinyl and questioned whether it would need to be removed.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) had already approved the use of vinyl siding, so it is allowed to remain. She further added that Molly Westman had previously confirmed with SHPO when work was originally completed on the building, including the window replacements, and SHPO had approved those changes.

Mr. Zehnder questioned whether the treatments above the windows would remain.

Ms. Mitchell stated that she would locate the communication and share it with the group, reiterating that it was her understanding that the window replacements had been approved. She added that sections of the building had already been removed and indicated that most of the rear portion of the building was likely an addition rather than part of the original structure. She further stated that the portion that was removed had been rotting.

Kern Bridge:

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she had requested an update from the City Engineering Department regarding the Kern Bridge, including a timeline for completion. She stated that Cory Bienfang provided an update indicating that the bridge is still scheduled to be completed in the fall. He was also able to provide pictures and drone footage, which Ms. Mitchell shared with the HPC members.

Ms. Mitchell further added that preparations are underway to set the bridge and indicated that she would like to be notified when this occurs so that any interested HPC members may have the opportunity to be present and observe the process. She stated that she would share that information with the members once it becomes available.

She further added that once the bridge is back in place, she will be able to work toward having it placed back on the National Register of Historic Places. She indicated that she would work with Mr. Koop to complete and submit the necessary paperwork and begin the process.

Mr. Pulis questioned where the restoration work was occurring.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she was not certain where the restoration was taking place but stated that Mr. Bienfang had indicated the bridge was back in Mankato and that it was in the process of being reassembled. She added that the process could take approximately 6-8 weeks.

Post Office-401 S. 2nd Street

Ms. Potter asked if there were any new updates regarding the post office.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there had been no updates at this time.

Ms. Potter indicated that she had recently attended a meeting where potential developers were discussing the project. She stated that she was able to view some interior schematics and questioned some of the proposed changes. She further added that she informed the developer that there is a preservation easement on the property, and the response was that the project was currently being reviewed by SHPO.

Ms. Potter further explained that SHPO was present at the end of April and, according to their representatives, they had not had any correspondence with anyone working on the project for over a year. She stated that she felt this was a project the HPC should continue to monitor and expressed that she would like to see the property become locally designated.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she has reached out to the ownership group to discuss the process for locally designating the property but has not received a response. She added that, when a recent plat for the property was reviewed by the Planning Commission, one of the items noted in the staff report was that a preservation easement must be honored.

Ms. Potter explained that the preservation easement for the post office includes the exterior of the building, the lobby, and the federal courtroom. She noted that the easement was put in place before the post office was sold to a new owner and intended to protect those historic components, which must be preserved and respected. She further added that the preservation easement is held by Rethos, but that the Historic Preservation Commission serves as the local eyes on the property and should be aware of any work or changes that may be occurring.

Potential Project on the 600 block of South Front Street

Ms. Potter questioned whether there were any updates regarding the potential project on the 600 block of South Front Street.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that there are no updates at this time. She noted that the development group has not submitted a final plat or any building permit applications to date. The City of Mankato is currently waiting for the development group to take the next steps in the process.

Ms. Potter questioned whether, during the Planning Commission review process and redevelopment of a site such as this, the Commission considers the context of the surrounding neighborhood and whether a project could be denied based on those factors.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that Mr. Filipovitch provided a good explanation of this during a previous Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Filipovitch explained that the question is which context developers are expected to conform to, referencing the variety of buildings surrounding the property, including the Law Enforcement Center, the Profinium building, Dunkin' Donuts, and the historic buildings in the area. He questioned which context should guide redevelopment decisions. He added that the zoning ordinance does establish height limits and noted that he believed the Hilton Hotel, located downtown, had to receive an exception for the height of its building.

Ardent Mills- 200 N Riverfront Drive

Ms. Potter questioned whether there were any updates on potential projects.

Ms. Mitchell indicated that she was unaware of any projects at this time.

Free Press Building-418 S. Second Street

Mr. Zehnder questioned whether there had been any discussion regarding the redevelopment of the Free Press building, given that the printing press is being shut down.

Mr. Lagerquist indicated that the organization was well along in the process of finding a new building and assumed that the existing building would be available for redevelopment.

Mr. Filipovitch questioned whether a potential buyer would consider incorporating the Earl Johnson building and the parking garage located directly behind the Free Press building into a future development, noting the significance of the Earl Johnson building.

Ms. Mitchell stated that it was possible but indicated that it may be worthwhile for the HPC to reach out to the owners of the Earl Johnson building to determine whether they would be interested in pursuing local historic designation.

July 2026 Notice

Today's Action Items

1. HPC members should be advised that there will be no meeting in July.

Upcoming Action Items

1. HPC members should plan to attend the meeting in August.

Minutes

Ms. Mitchell informed the members of the HPC that there would be no meeting in July, as she and Mr. Filipovitch would be attending the National Heritage Council conference being held in Minneapolis. She added that she plans to hold a meeting in August to provide feedback and share the information and insights gained from the conference.

MISCELLANEOUS

HPC members should be aware that there is still an open seat on the HPC that needs to be filled. Members are encouraged to suggest potential candidates to Ms. Mitchell.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 pm.