
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
February 11, 2026 at 6:00 pm
CITY HALL – Foster Conference Room

CALL HPC MEETING TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Minutes of the January 14, 2026 meeting.

HPC MEMBER VOLUNTEER HOUR REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Non-Agenda Items

MEETING DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Westside Elementary Lego League Lime Kilns
2. Work Plan (final) for 2026
3. Library Display for 250th
4. NRHP Final mock-up
5. Finalize the swinging bridge BID request + purchases

CALENDAR

Next Historic Preservation Commission meeting March 11, 2026, in the City Hall Foster Conference Room.

ADJOURNMENT

***Council members may be in attendance for informational purposes only.
No official Council action will be taken.***

NOTE: Any person who has a qualifying disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act that requires the meeting or materials to be in an accessible location or format may contact City Clerk Amy White at (715)-426-3408 or in person at 222 Lewis Street for accommodations. Requests for accommodations should be made at least three (3) business days in advance of the meeting. Every effort will be made to arrange accommodations.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
January 14, 2026 at 6:00 pm
CITY HALL – Training Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Hoffman, Page, Friede, Geister, Huebel, Radford
STAFF PRESENT: Harley Mehlhorn

CALL HPC MEETING TO ORDER 6:02 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Minutes of the December 10, 2025 meeting. – Approval Friede/Radford with an amendment to strike cemetery list language in 5.c; Motion carried unanimously

HPC MEMBER VOLUNTEER HOUR REPORT

Hoffman: 3
Geister: 1
Huebel: 1

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Non-Agenda Items

1. Huebel brought up that the city was removing various Ash trees due to the trees' health, noting this is a historic event and the removal of many old trees is notable.
2. Hoffman spoke regarding a forthcoming speaking event at the Sycamore on the 27th of January at 10:30 AM.
3. Mehlhorn brought up various items:
 - a. Mehlhorn brought up a historic tax credit policy change in the interpretation of state statutes, noting that a member of the historic trust had reached out asking for interested individuals to speak regarding it to their representatives.
 - b. Mehlhorn raised to the commission the forthcoming expiration of terms of Radford and Geister and requested they email the Mayor if seeking reappointment.
 - c. Mehlhorn raised the Foster Cemetery as a forthcoming project for the City and that it will likely be a discussion item in the coming months.

MEETING DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. 2026 Work Plan Continued
 - a. The commission discussed the work plan for 2026. The list was discussed item-by-item and a rough draft of the work plan was initiated, to be finalized next meeting.
2. Quote and Design Review for NRHP Signs
 - a. Final quotes were reviewed for the NRHP signs, the commission discussed authorizing an amount of up to \$1400 dollars to be allocated to the two signs. Motion by Page, Second Friede., Motion carried unanimously.
3. May Swinging Bridge event coordination

- a. The commission discussed the timing, sequencing, and interactive elements for the Swinging Bridge Celebration. The next step is for Mehlhorn to work with Staff to initiate the photo collection drive for the forthcoming event.
4. City Hall art display plan
 - a. Mehlhorn brought to the commission that from May-November there is a gap in the City Hall art scheduling. The commission discussed various ideas of how to fill the space, from repurposing library exhibits to contacting local photographers and historians for photos and items to exhibit.

CALENDAR

Next Meeting:

1. Library Display for 250th
2. Greenwood Cemetery 250th
3. Work Plan (final) for 2026
4. NRHP Final mock-up
5. Finalize the swinging bridge BID request + purchases

Next Historic Preservation Commission meeting February 11, 2026, in the City Hall Foster Conference Room.

ADJOURNMENT

6:55 PM

Friede/Radford Motion carried unanimously.

Work Plan 2026

- Review HPC-related ordinances (what we have; what may be needed)
- Review Certificate of Appropriateness process in preparation for Swinging Bridge rehabilitation
- Swinging Bridge Celebration
- Plan new posters for kiosks (like Glover Station) ii. Plan and execute library display
- Map of existing and future signage locations
- Identify next interpretive sign
- Walking tour postcard/website
- Continue History Chats
- Final recognition of the homes on the National Register of Historic Places
- Inventory of items at the Powerplant and other city locations and create a plan for possible disposition of the items to other locations
- Library exhibit

Community Development Department

222 Lewis Street

River Falls, WI 54022

715.425.0900

www.rfcity.org



MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Hoffman and The Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Harley Mehlhorn, Senior Planner
RE: Historic Preservation Ordinance Summary
DATE: February 11, 2026

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the City's existing historic preservation ordinances and associated residential design guidelines. This summary is intended to provide clarity to the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the current regulatory framework so that any potential updates or amendments may be considered and articulated within the context of the existing ordinance provisions.

ANALYSIS

Chapter 17.76 – Historic Preservation

Chapter 17.76 establishes the City's historic preservation policy and regulatory framework. The ordinance declares historic preservation a public necessity intended to protect cultural, architectural, archaeological, and historic resources; stabilize property values; enhance community aesthetics; and support tourism and economic development.

The chapter defines key terms, including historic structures, sites, districts, improvements, and certificates of appropriateness. It creates a seven-member Historic Preservation Commission appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Common Council, with representation from professional and citizen members to the extent practicable.

Designation criteria allow historic status to be applied to structures, sites, or districts with significant historical, architectural, cultural, or archaeological value. Designations and rescissions are recommended by the Commission and approved by the Common Council. Once designated, properties are subject to the provisions of the ordinance.

The ordinance requires a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alterations, new construction, reconstruction, or demolition affecting designated properties or properties within historic districts. Ordinary maintenance and in-kind repairs that do not alter exterior appearance and do not require a building permit are exempt. Interim controls limit development activity on nominated properties during the designation process.

Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for administering and implementing the City's historic preservation ordinances. Its primary duties include reviewing nominations for historic structures,

sites, and districts; applying adopted designation criteria; and forwarding formal recommendations to the Common Council.

The Commission reviews applications for certificates of appropriateness and determines whether proposed work is consistent with the historic character of designated properties or districts, adopted guidelines, and preservation objectives. The Commission is required to act on certificate applications within forty-five (45) days and may approve, deny, or work collaboratively with applicants to achieve compliance.

The Commission conducts public hearings, provides required notices, gathers evidence, and may undertake independent investigations related to designation or rescission requests. It also prepares written reports and recommendations for Common Council action. In addition, the Commission administers and enforces the historic residential design guidelines, cooperates with property owners on recognition plaques, and participates in the appeals process as outlined in the ordinance.

Chapter 17.77 – Historic Residential Design Guidelines

Chapter 17.77 supplements the historic preservation ordinance by establishing design guidelines for historic residential districts and designated residential structures. The intent is to preserve historic residential character, promote compatibility between historic and newer development, and maintain neighborhood appearance and property values.

The chapter defines architectural terms, establishes mapped district boundaries, and assigns the Historic Preservation Commission responsibility for administering the guidelines. The design standards provide detailed direction for exterior alterations, emphasizing repair over replacement, retention of historic materials and features, compatibility of additions and new elements, and minimization of visual impacts from public streets. Where conflicts exist between design regulations, Chapter 17.77 controls for residential historic properties.

CONCLUSION

Chapters 17.76 and 17.77 collectively establish the authority, responsibilities, and procedures for historic preservation within the City. They define the role of the Historic Preservation Commission, the designation and review processes, and the design standards applicable to historic residential properties. This summary is intended to assist the Commission in evaluating the current ordinance framework and identifying areas where clarification or updates may be appropriate.