

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday November 5th, 2024, 6:00 pm

Providence City Office Building, 164 North Gateway Dr., Providence Ut

Call to Order: George Wootton.

Chair Roll Call of Commission Members: Brendan Lee, Ken Thigpen, George Wootton, Suzane Baker, Karen Brooks, Wes Theurer.

Staff in Attendance: Community Development Director Skarlet Bankhead and City Recorder Ty Cameron.

Comments from the public: Any member of the public who has a comment pertaining to the mission of the Historical Preservation Commission will have 3 minutes to make their comment.

- No comments were made by the public.

➤ **Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes:** Approval of the minutes for July 2nd, 2025. [\(MINUTES\)](#)

- George Wootton called for the approval of the minutes of July 2nd, 2025.
- No corrections were made or suggested.

Motion to approve the minutes of July 2nd, 2025 – Suzane Baker. 2nd- Brendan Lee.

Vote:

Yea- Brendan Lee, Ken Thigpen, George Wootton, Suzane Baker, Karen Brooks, Wes Theurer.

Nay-

Abstained-

Absent-

Motion passes, minutes approved.

➤ **Item No. 2 Clarification of the wording in the Commission's Responsibilities and Duties.**

- George Wootton opened the discussion by explaining his recent conversation with the city manager about understanding the commission's roles and responsibilities as outlined in the city code. He emphasized the distinction between "shall" (meaning must) and "may" (meaning optional) in their bylaws.
- The commission reviewed their mandated responsibilities, which include conducting surveys of historic, architectural, and archaeological resources; acting in an advisory role to local government; working towards citizen education; supporting enforcement of state and local historic preservation laws; and reviewing applications for alterations or new construction involving historic sites.
- Ken Thigpen raised a question about how the commission could be made aware of threatened historic properties, particularly those facing potential demolition. Skarlet responded that they should start by checking the National Historic Register to identify which homes are currently listed, noting that Providence has two or three properties on the register. She explained that being on the historic register doesn't provide protection from demolition but rather enables opportunities like tax credits for restoration.
- Wes Theurer brought up the definition of archaeological resources, questioning whether trees planted by previous generations would qualify. After some discussion and looking up the definition, which refers to "the study of past human life and cultures through the analysis of

physical remains by tools, pottery, and monuments," there was debate about whether items like apple trees and iris plants might qualify as material remains of past human activity.

- The commission discussed their limited authority, with George noting that during the recent tree issue in town, it was made clear they had no authority to influence decisions about trees. However, Karen Brooks pointed out that while they couldn't enforce anything, they still had the right to voice their opinion as a commission on matters of historic significance.
- Regarding the requirement to review applications for alterations to historic sites, Skarlet clarified that the commission would need to decide where to focus their efforts, suggesting they might not want to review every single building application but should look at properties on historic registers.
- The discussion turned to how the commission could fulfill their educational responsibilities. Previous attempts to work with schools had been unsuccessful, as the schools weren't interested in having the commission speak to students. Current educational efforts include having a booth at the city celebration and conducting bus tours during recent years.
- George expressed particular interest in the one "may" responsibility - preserving personal and community stories and traditions. He suggested this should perhaps be elevated to a "shall" responsibility, though he acknowledged this was his personal interest and questioned whether it reflected community desires.
- Skarlet explained that the city code they were reviewing was binding law, while bylaws were separate documents that governed how the commission operated. Any changes to the city code would require working with city staff and ultimately getting approval from the city council.
- The commission discussed the possibility of expanding their role to include more focus on oral histories and community stories. Skarlet explained the difference between a Historic Preservation Commission (focused on physical structures and properties) and a Historical Society (focused on people, culture, and traditions inside those structures). She offered to research what would be involved if the commission wanted to pursue historical society activities.
- Suzane Baker pointed out that many of their responsibilities ("shalls") naturally happen together and that working on the "may" item of collecting stories could support their educational mandate. The discussion concluded with an understanding that the commission needed to better balance their focus between the mandatory physical preservation work and the optional but valuable work of preserving community stories.

➤ **Item No. 3 Clarification of the terms of service for the Chair and Vice Chair.**

- George Wootton explained that according to current city code, the chair serves for one year, after which the vice chair automatically becomes chair and a new vice chair is elected. He noted that this system could be problematic given they only meet four times per year, making it difficult to accomplish anything with such rapid leadership changes.
- Several commission members expressed concern about the frequent turnover, with Karen Brooks noting that meeting only quarterly would mean spending most meetings just refreshing their memories on previous discussions. The group discussed the need to meet more frequently, especially during this reorganization period.
- Skarlet clarified that the term structure was part of city code, not just bylaws, so changing it would require a code amendment through the city council. She explained that if the commission felt they needed to meet more than the quarterly schedule set by the city council, the chair and vice chair should meet with the mayor and city manager to discuss their needs.

- The commission learned that while they are only required to meet twice per year by code, the city council had scheduled them for quarterly meetings. However, during periods of active work, previous commissions had met monthly. George proposed that for the next few months (December, January, February), they meet monthly to gain momentum, then reevaluate their meeting frequency.

➤ **Item No. 4 Appointment of Commission Vice Chair.**

- George Wootton opened the floor for vice chair nominations, asking first if anyone was interested in the position. When no one immediately volunteered, he asked if anyone absolutely could not serve. Karen Brooks indicated she was unable to take on the role for travel reasons, and Brendan Lee also declined.
- After some encouragement and discussion about the supportive nature of the vice chair role, Ken Thigpen hesitantly indicated he could serve. Wes Theurer nominated Ken Thigpen for vice chair, with Suzane Baker also supporting the nomination.

Motion to nominate Ken Thigpen as Vice Chair. – Wes Theurer. 2nd- Suzane Baker

Vote:

Yea- Brendan Lee, Ken Thigpen, George Wootton, Suzane Baker, Karen Brooks, Wes Theurer.

Nay-

Abstained-

Absent-

Motion passes, Ken Thigpen is the new Vice Chair.

➤ **Item No. 5 Ideas for future work by commission: Meeting schedule, Coming Years.**

- George Wootton presented several ideas for future commission work, starting with his long-term vision of establishing a museum to display Providence's history. He noted that various community members, including Brian Olson, have historical photographs and artifacts that would benefit from a dedicated display space.
- Karen Brooks suggested creating a regular column in the city newsletter featuring Providence history stories, which could serve their educational mandate. George mentioned he had already discussed this with Megan McCusition, who manages the newsletter, and she was receptive to the idea. The column could feature historical events or stories from Providence's past, helping to educate newer residents who, as Karen noted, often lack basic knowledge about Providence history.
- Brendan Lee proposed putting Providence's walking tour on Preservation Utah's new walking tour app, which would make it accessible year-round for self-guided tours while still maintaining the guided tours during Sauerkraut Days. The app supports audio content and Preservation Utah would help advertise the tours. The commission already has audio recordings for the original 13 homes on the walking tour, though not for the newer additions.
- The commission discussed conducting surveys and inventories of historic resources, including not just homes but also items like paintings, a historic cabbage slicer, and a first edition of "Providence and Her People." However, they discovered the city lacks a comprehensive inventory of its

historical items. Ty Cameron offered to help George compile what information they have, noting items are stored in various locations including a room at city hall and the library basement.

- Karen Brooks brought up her property's historical significance as the location of the old co-op scales. This led to discussion about identifying and documenting other historically significant sites throughout Providence.
- Wes Theurer raised a question about completing the World War II memorial with a final plaque honoring the individual whose likeness was used for the monument. He explained that while the plaque is already designed and ready for production at a cost of \$4,500, funding hasn't been secured. Skarlet explained that previous monuments were funded through nonprofit organizations created specifically for those projects, and similar fundraising efforts would likely be needed for this plaque.
- The commission discussed the need for training on conducting architectural and historical surveys. Skarlet offered to find resources for classes on evaluating historical significance and architectural features. Brendan mentioned his experience with historical research, while acknowledging he lacks specific architectural expertise.
- Other ideas included reaching out to residents in the historic district to gather stories about their properties and identifying historic barns and outbuildings that haven't yet been documented. The commission noted that Bear River Heritage Area had created a booklet about historic barns about six years ago, but Providence hadn't done similar work.
- The group also expressed interest in gaining access to the historic blacksmith shop on First West, though they noted it's owned by an out-of-state company, possibly from Tennessee.

➤ **Item No. 6 Tasks to complete by the next meeting date.**

- The commission assigned specific tasks to members for completion before their next meeting:
- Karen Brooks volunteered to write an article for the city newsletter asking residents to share information about historically significant properties, structures, or stories. She will contact residents to George Wootton's email with any information. Karen needs to coordinate with Megan about newsletter deadlines, which are typically one week before the month begins.
- George Wootton will work on creating an inventory of the city's historical items, with assistance from Ty Cameron who can show him storage locations in city hall and the library basement.
- Suzane Baker will research other historic commissions in the area, including Logan and Cache County, to learn about their operations and gather ideas for Providence's commission.
- Brendan Lee will continue coordinating with Preservation Utah about their walking tour app and potential training opportunities.
- Skarlet will research Providence's budget situation for the commission and find links to training resources for conducting historical and architectural surveys. She also offered to reach out to contacts about the differences between historical societies and preservation commissions if the group wants to pursue society activities.

Motion to hold another HPC meeting on December 3rd. – Ken Thigpen. 2nd- Wes Theurer.

Vote:

Yea- Brendan Lee, Ken Thigpen, George Wootton, Suzane Baker, Karen Brooks, Wes Theurer.

Nay-

Abstained-

Absent-

Motion passes, next meeting to be held December 3rd.

Motion to adjourn meeting. – Suzane Baker. 2nd- Ken Thigpen.

Vote:

Yea- Brendan Lee, Ken Thigpen, George Wootton, Suzane Baker, Karen Brooks, Wes Theurer.

Nay-

Abstained-

Absent-

Motion passes. Meeting adjourned.

I swear these minutes are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Minutes approved by vote of Commission on _____ day of _____ 2025.

Ty Cameron, City Recorder