

Township of Woolwich Heritage Committee Minutes

February 12, 2024
4:59 p.m. – 6:01 p.m.
Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Meeting Chair: *Councillor Bonnie Bryant, Chair*

Attended: *Colleen Willard-Holt, Co-Chair*
Katy Boose
Dianna Weltz
Jacob Drung
Ellen Siebel-Achenbach
Marg Drexler
Kim Hodgson

Staff Present: *Stacey Bruce, Committee Support Specialist*
Sherwin Meloney, Planner

Special Guest: *Emily Schuurmans, Realtor*
Brodie Barth, Realtor

Regrets: *Natalia Smiarowski, Acting Co-Chair*

Italics indicates a virtual participant.

Call to Order at 4:59 P.M.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.

Land Acknowledgement

Chair Councillor Bonnie Bryant read a land acknowledgment.

Adoption of Minutes

Moved by Dianna Weltz
Seconded by Marg Drexler

That the minutes of January 15, 2025, be adopted as presented.

...Carried.

Special Guests: Emily Schuurmans and Brodie Barth, Realtors

Realtors Emily Schuurmans and Brodie Barth owners of a designated heritage home shared their experiences and challenges related to owning, maintaining and renovating heritage properties, highlighting;

- Their review of buying, selling, and maintaining heritage properties.
- The perception of a decreased buyer pool due to heritage designation stigma.
- Common heritage property neglect, prohibitive renovation costs, and financial burdens.
- The impact of heritage designation on home value, insurance, and lending.
- Renovation challenges around required extensive approvals, leading to time-consuming delays.
- Restrictions on window replacements, roofing materials, and use of modern materials despite local precedents.
- Difficulties meeting restoration standards due to material shortages.
- The long lifespan of traditional wooden windows with proper treatment but limited availability of replica options.
- Climate-related impacts on historical materials.
- Regulatory and administrative barriers experienced when engaging with local heritage committees and Council for support.
- The interpretation of heritage conservation standards varies across committees.
- Struggles with "demolition by neglect" and unauthorized renovations.
- Balancing heritage preservation with financial feasibility for owners.
- The need for clear guidelines and more efficient approvals.

At this point in the meeting, committee member Kim Hodgson entered virtually.

- The financial and resource considerations of designated heritage properties
- Insurance difficulties requiring outreach to 30+ companies with high premiums.
- Post-COVID-19 market hesitancy further exacerbating lending and cost barriers around designated heritage properties.
- The required niche renovation material and workforce challenges, particularly in securing skilled tradespersons like masons, and stucco for repairs.
- The limited grant funding for large-scale restoration projects.
- Local Heritage committee and policy considerations
- Challenges in balancing strict restoration mandates with affordability.
- The need for more efficient approval processes, and suggestion to reduce major renovation approval timelines from 6-8 months to 1-3 months.
- Support for a clear, predictable framework for heritage processes to encourage heritage designation while ensuring affordability.
- The potential for more staff-level heritage related decisions to streamline approvals.

The committee thanked E. Schuurmans and B. Barth for their insights and emphasized the importance of collaboration between property owners, heritage committees, and municipalities to develop practical, owner-friendly heritage policies.

January 15, 2025, Action Items Review

The committee reviewed and updated action items from the January 15, 2025, meeting.

Work Plan

This item was discussed alongside the January 15, 2025, Action Items Review.

St. Boniface Cemetery, Church & Manse Heritage Designation Update

The committee reviewed draft documentation for the heritage designation of St. Boniface Cemetery, Church and Manse, noting:

- A draft Statement of Significance has been prepared, acknowledging the background research contributions from committee members.
- The inclusion of design, physical, and contextual value descriptions.
- The addition of two windows and the Blessed Virgin Mary statue.
- Cultural heritage attributes
- Exclusion of interior fixtures and fittings to simplify the designation process and avoid renovation restrictions.
- Omission of individual iron cross attributes due to available and established community-led restoration efforts.
- Inclusion of the history and transportation of altars and statue attributes.
- Next steps
- Township staff review and property owner consent considerations.
- Considering the Diocesan stance on heritage designation and potential resistance.

ACTION: Stacey Bruce to research past heritage designation processes and letter of intent examples.

The committee further discussed challenges and implications of designating interior vs. exterior heritage features for these properties, noting:

- General considerations around the protection of interior heritage features vs. typical exterior-focused designations
- General property ownership challenges and heritage restrictions on renovations.
- Past interior modifications, including pulpit dismantling, roof lowering, and possible ceiling painting deterioration.
- The unaltered main and side altars remain key heritage features.
- Preservation and designation decisions with clarification that alterations to heritage-listed elements may be permitted if reversible.
- Concerns about the impact of renovation materials on heritage attributes.
- Selection of specific interior elements for designation, including stained glass windows, altars, life-size statues, and rear statue.
- Updating the Cultural Heritage Attributes description to specify the discussed interior elements that should not be altered.
- Emphasizing the importance of preserving the church's original blueprints.

ACTION: M. Drexler to obtain a copy of the original St. Boniface Church blueprints from the President of the Maryhill Historical Society.

New Business

An update was provided about the Waterloo Region High-Performance Development Standards Community Session scheduled for Thursday February 13, from 5:30-7:00 pm at the township's Council Chambers.

The committee's agenda item call process was reviewed.

The committee considered their Elmira Carnegie Library Designation and discussed its heritage designation process. A proposal was shared to create short videos highlighting the library's architectural and community impact in collaboration with a Niagara based partner.

The committee acknowledge its member's efforts and contributions.

The committee reviewed approval procedures and discussion from earlier in the meeting about heritage designation renovation processes, including:

- Costs, owner considerations, and the role of the committee in reviewing requests with sensitivity.
- Engaging with property owners to understanding local frameworks and guidelines.
- The acknowledgement of staff capacity challenges in processing heritage designation requests.
- Concerns about owner reluctance, objections, and the financial implications of heritage designations.
- Ways to identify barriers and streamline approvals.
- Developing clear guidelines for potential heritage designees, including renovation cost estimates and restoration commitments.
- Compiling reference materials on heritage designation frameworks and guidelines.

The committee scheduled a subgroup meeting for March 26th at 5:00 pm via Zoom to define frameworks, process guidelines and timelines for heritage designation requests.

ACTION: Jacob Drung to share Toronto heritage designation framework resources with the committee.

Items for the Next Agenda – March 12, 2025

The committee planned to review the Draft Township of Woolwich Mixed Use Urban Design Guidelines at the next meeting, pending its availability by the end of February.

Adjournment (6:01 P.M.)

Moved by Katy Boose
Seconded by J. Drung

That the meeting be adjourned to meet again on March 12, 2025.

...Carried.

Recorder: Stacey Bruce, Committee Support Specialist