



The Macalester-Groveland Community Council fosters citizen participation in government and community decisions that make our neighborhood a great place to live, work, learn, and play.

Minutes - October 2020 HLU Meeting

Housing and Land Use Committee (“HLU”) Macalester-Groveland Community Council (“MGCC”)

Date: Wednesday, October 28 at 6:30pm
Location: Held remotely via Zoom
Chair: Mike Moore
Secretary: Elizabeth Wefel
Staff: Alexa Golemo

Attendees:

Staff:
Alexa Golemo

Committee Members:

Art Punyko, Grid 4
Brian Wagner, At-Large Business
Kathy McGuire, At-Large Residential
Cathy Plessner, At-Large Business
Colin Fesser, At-Large Residential
Colin Voerding, At-Large Business
Drew Nelson, Grid 5
Dave Pasiuk, At-Large Residential
Elizabeth Wefel, HLU
Gene Johnson, Grid 5, Secretary
Jack Fei, HLU
Kate Baxter-Kauf, At-Large Residential
Kensy Lipstreuer, At-Large Renter
Marc Manderscheid, Grid 1
Meg Arnosti, HLU
Mike Sonn, HLU
Nathan Zacharius, Grid 5
Saura Jost, Grid 2
Tim Schmidt, At-Large Education
Tom Dietsche, Grid 1, Treasurer
Wendy Merrill, HLU

Julie Kaupa, HLU

Invited Guest(s):

Guests: Antonio Gambino, Tono Pizzeria & Cheesesteaks
St. Thomas representatives: Amy Gage, Mark Vangsgard, Amy McDonough
Deanna Sepanen, High Winds/Macalester

AGENDA

6:30pm I. Introductions

The committee members introduced themselves and their roles with MGCC.

The chair spoke to the goals, process, and responsibilities of the HLU committee. The chair and staff member explained the Zoom procedures for speaking and voting. All online voting will be done by typing “aye”, “nay” or “abstain” in the Zoom chat window.

Persons attending by voice only over a phone will need to cast their vote verbally.

6:38 pm III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Motion by Jack Fei to approve the August 2020 minutes.

Second by Dave Pasiuk.

Motion to amend minutes to change Masquerade to Masqueray proposed by Marc Manderscheid.

The minutes were approved 16-0-3

6:40 II. Addition/Deletion of agenda items

Alexa reports request to record and post meeting to MGCC Website.

Cathy Plessner asked to be added to the agenda for 6 minutes. Colin Fesser made motion and Cathy Maguire seconded. Motion passes 20 - 0.

6:43 pm IV. Request for a waiver of the 45-day waiting period for wine and malt on-sale license application,

Tono Pizzeria & Cheesesteaks (1580 St. Clair Ave.)
Antonio Gambino, Tono Pizzeria & Cheesesteaks

Alexa explains request and points out that conditions can still be imposed. Antonio describes his family business that relies on family recipes and has been a hit in the suburbs.

Jack Fei asks if approved will it go forward with full service in November?

Yes, but limited capacity due to COVID.

Art Punyko pointed out that we have generally approved requests like this in the past.

Wendy Merrell asks why need short term frame?

Response is that it takes time at city hall.

Brian Wagner made motion to approve. Jack Fei seconded.

Move approval of the waiver of the 45-day period for Tono Pizzeria & Cheesesteaks at 1580 St Clair Ave for an on-sale wine and malt liquor license. 18-2-1

6: 50 V. University of St. Thomas Application for Demolition Permit for Loras Hall, Presentation

Mark Vangsgard, Vice President for Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer

Mark provides overview of project including what is next for their push to demolish Loras Hall, including steps that must be taken and the steps they are taking to ensure that they are building an inclusive space. It needs \$10 million worth of repair. It was built as a residence hall but converted to office space. It can only be used for that purpose. It is a very inefficient location for campus. School can not buy new land within mile of campus. Every inch of land must be put to its highest and best use. There would be risk in moving it. The building can only be used for offices, not for education. There are a lot of student dollars that would go into this project. With high student debt and high cost of schooling, we want to be good stewards of tuition dollars. We spend a lot of money on heating and utilities. Money would be better spent on tuition.

Loras Hall is not architecturally significant. It has a famous name attached to it. We want to determine ways to save some of the history in a way that helps people understand the relationship between Archbishop Ireland and Cass Gilbert

Elizabeth Wefel asked about the impact to UST's carbon footprint. Mark explained it would likely lower the carbon footprint.

Art Punyko asked if this would help increase diversity in STEM programs. Mark explains that he believes it will. They hear that students do not choose St. Thomas because it is not welcoming. A building is not everything, but it can make a difference. It will help increase STEM programming and students.

Julie Kaupa asked if there are other buildings that match its architectural style. Mark stated there were originally 6 buildings like this. 3 have been taken down.

Wendy Merrel asked what happens if they do not get the permit. Mark responds that we have looked at another of different options. We may mothball and use for storage. We may attempt to integrate into the new steam building. That is very inefficient.

If you do not remove Loras, you would still build steam building? Mark responded that we would discuss with the board. Institutionally we need more science and engineering capacity.

Colin Fesser asked about potentially incorporating materials from old building would go into new one versus going into a landfill.

That would be part of the design process. A lot of what we could use is red brick.

VI. History & Preservation of Loras Hall, Presentation Marc Manderscheid, Community Member

Marc is in favor of a new STEAM building. He wants to preserve Loras Hall. Marc then explains the history.

Cass Gilbert designed the seminary campus. The buildings were built in 1892-time frame. Some of these buildings have been demolished. St. Thomas may demolish other buildings in the future. Marc is concerned that it will be the only building that will survive. Marc provides further history on buildings and mentions Macalester's Wallace Hall.

This dormitory was a revival of an older style. It is the oldest non-residential structure in that portion of St. Paul.

Marc explains that state law regarding historical preservation applies regardless of who owns it. He further explains the next steps in the process.

Marc emphasizes that it is important to preserve the building to provide context to the environment.

Loras Hall is important because of the people it associated with, for the architectural style of the building and its contribution to the historic district, and for the context of the neighborhood.

VII. Cathy Plessner, At-Large Representative

Cathy is the most proximate neighbor in the district. She lives closest to the building of anyone on the committee.

She describes concerns that historic designation can perpetuate racism. Historic districts are often used to shut down change and preserve whiteness.

Our decisions send a message about our values. Cathy Plessner approached Craig Stone about what demolition could look like. Loras Hall is not architecturally significant. It is a disaster from an environmental and sustainability standpoint. Cass Gilbert went onto much better buildings.

Loras Hall does not meet core values in sustainability and resiliency in St. Paul 2040 plan.

Building was also named for a slave owner.

This district is the whitest people in the city. We should face our history. Demolition would signal a more equitable future for the district.

Motion by Cathy Plessner that the HLU Committee of MGCC supports UST plan to remove LORAS hall so that new STEAM building can be built on this site. Jack Fei Seconded.

Mike asks to table the motion.

Brian Wagner asks if students have taken a position on this. Mark states that students are supportive but may reflect self-interest. He is not aware of a formal vote.

Brian Wagner asks if student government will be involved in decision?
Mark states this could be an agenda item at monthly meeting with student government.

Meg Arnosti states she has a separate motion.

Dave Pasiuk points out that state just spent hundreds of millions remodeling Cass Gilbert's best-known building. This building is not intrinsically valuable and serves no purpose especially in a time of climate change.

Art Punyko appreciates discussion tonight. He would like to see specific goals around diversity and recruiting.

Meg Arnosti has seen as a landscape architect older building incorporated into a new structure. Does UST have a vision for incorporating the building into a new building?

Mark states they have looked at how to incorporate in a meaningful way, but the floor heights do not match floor heights for newer building. We have run into obstacles.

Elizabeth Wefel states that she supports because of concerns about climate change and sustainability.

Jack Fei points out that he appreciates how Cathy pointed out how white privilege is racist. He also points out that Cass Gilbert may not have liked the building that much and that he did not like working with James J. Hill.

Saura Jost states that as a structural engineer she has seen how it can be difficult to repurpose buildings. She believes the best option is to demolish and build new for the future and needs of community.

Colin Fesser is a trained archeologist and believes this is a complicated topic. He has a strong desire to protect historic structure, but you cannot protect every structure which creates a tight rope. We need to be protecting the stellar artifacts and exemplars. We are making this decision at a time of crisis of climate change and juncture regarding historic preservation. On balance this does not make sense.

Kate Baxter-Kauf does not have much to add but wants to add that we need to pay attention how historic preservation has elevated certain voices at expense of others.

Meg Arnosti asked about the difference in cost of making LEED certified vs building a new STEAM building.

Mark pointed out that \$380 per square foot would not make it LEED certified.

Greg Fenton architect points out that \$380 is to renovate to an office building. It would not be LEED certified.

Discussion ensues about what it would cost to upgrade.

Kathy McGuire believes that we need to be careful about statements that we make. Some say it is ugly and some say beautiful. It is art. We need to preserve our past so that we know where we are going.

I did not know about Loras Hall's name sake. Does that mean we tear down the building? Where does it end? We already lost a church. The building is not exclusive.

Motion by Cathy Plessner that the HLU Committee of MGCC supports UST plan to remove LORAS hall so that new STEAM building can be built on this site. Jack Fei seconded.

Mike calls for a vote.
14 ayes, 5 nays, 3 abstain

Cathy Plessner makes a motion that West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) members should have to vote as the District Council votes.

Dave Pasiuk points out that he understands the logic but believes this should be a motion for board.

Representatives at WSNAC represent MacGroveland Council.

Alexandra states that this is a motion that would come from the board.

Mike Sonn recommends that this probably should be discussed by the board.

Tim Schmidt pointed out that the board typically affirms committee.

Marc Manderscheid points out that the motion is designed to point out that committee can tell Marc how to vote. He believes this is apples and oranges and this would take the role of the board away from the board.

Jack Fei recommends that the motion be changed to a recommendation.

Cathy Plessner withdraws her motion.

8:30 pm Updates/Announcements

Staff provided the following updates and announcements:

Next meeting is scheduled for November 11.

8:32 pm Adjourn

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Wefel on October 28, 2020.