

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes
March 6, 2008

The Miles City Preservation Commission held their regular monthly meeting at the Preservation Office at 907 B Main Street on Thursday, March 6. The meeting was called to order by Kathy Doeden at 5:15 p.m. In attendance were board members Melissa Hartman, Susan Devlin, Denise Hartse and Doug Melton. Guests at the meeting were John Marks, city-county planner; Dr. Robin Hogan; Steve Craddock, new city grant writer; Joe Whalen, Mayor and Robin Gerber, former MCPC member and local historian and teacher. Amorette Allison, historic preservation officer, acted as recording secretary.

The first item on the agenda concerned rumors about the 1923 Northern Pacific depot. The building has been abandoned for approximately 20 years and is deteriorating. There was some concern that demolition of the building was imminent.

The whole story appears to be that someone on the Miles City Economic Development Council called the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to complain about the condition of the building. The BNSF response to such complaints is usually demolition. Word got around that a contractor had been hired to demolish the local depot as well as other depots in Montana but this was not correct.

Dr. Robin Hogan--a local dentist interested in historic preservation--and her husband have paid the back taxes on the depot and have a lien against it. Further contact with Jill Willbanks at Staubach Property Management confirmed the building is not in danger of immediate demolition and Staubach wants to cooperate in selling the property and/or leasing it to the Hogans or other interested local parties.

As it has been for the past several years, ownership of the actual structure is in doubt because the person holding the lease is in violation of that lease and in arrears on taxes and cannot be contacted but the BNSF has not acted to regain ownership of the property. The BNSF currently has a moratorium on land sales but are willing to enter into a long term lease. Hogans have hired an experienced local attorney to continue investigation into the matter.

The MCPC expressed its support of Hogans' efforts. John Marks explained options for grants and usage of the property that have been discussed by the MCPC in the past. Other grants were proposed and it was agreed the MCPC would assist in any way possible to obtain such grants or provide any other help possible. Board member Deborah Wohlgenant, who was not in attendance because she was out of state, is also interested in restoration and it was suggested that Drs. Hogan contact her or a meeting be arranged by the MCPC.

The issue will no doubt be revisited.

Doug Melton reported on his attendance at the recent CLG meeting in Helena and brought back considerable information. The State Historical Society annual meeting in October will be held in Glasgow and it is hoped a contingent can attend from Miles City.

Doug reiterated the desire of the State Historic Preservation Office for all CLG's to apply for Preserve America status. Amorette Allison explained the problems in a Miles City application and it will be discussed by the MCPC in future.

Members of the committee who created the nomination for the 2008 HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation for the CornerStone Project presented folders with the nomination. Copies will be kept by the Cornerstone administrator, the Miles City Preservation Office and the Miles City Public Library. (A letter was received regarding the nomination on March 18 indicating the nomination was complete. Winners will be notified in early June.)

The meeting was adjourned at at 6:35 p.m