

Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission
255 North Fourth Street
P. O. Box 5200
Grand Forks, ND 58206-5200

Minutes
November 18th, 2025

Commissioners present: Chuck Flemmer, Bill Caraher, Gordon Iseminger, Doug Munski, Judy Swisher, Nicole Derenne.

Guests: Sydney Spivey (UND Law Student)

Meeting called to order at 6:02 pm.

1. Approval of minutes from October 14th, 2025.
 - a. Moved Swisher, second Derenne. Motion carries.
2. Section 106 Reviews: No reviews this month.
3. Vote to request to move funds for Coordinator salary backstop for November, and to seek approval from SHPO.
 - a. Munski Derenne. Motion carries. Caraher abstained.
4. Chair Report: Chuck Flemmer:
 - i. Visit to Babcock Hall
 1. The chair and the coordinator visited Babcock Hall on Thursday, November 20th with Lori Oppegard and Agatha Frisby. Good refresher to go inside. The destruction so far allowed us to view more of the architecture including the fire that occurred in the early years, the unusual floor plan, the star shaped chimneys, the crenellation. UND is going to do a Level 2 HABS.
 - a. Roofline, arches from the interior, exterior walls before the additions were put on.
5. Coordinator Report: Susan Caraher
 - a. Babcock Hall
 1. The coordinator met with UND representatives Brian Larson, Les Bjore and Lori Oppegard to discuss the documentation and demolition of the building. The University is undertaking a HABS report and has contracted with

Agatha Frisby. AE2S is conducting the high resolution scans that will then be submitted to Special Collections for archiving. The building will be demolished in summer of 2026. The coordinator reiterated the desire for a lasting commemorative imprint and used Dr. Munski's idea of a pollinator garden. UND Facilities staff will need to get the sign off from leadership but we discussed ideas and shared examples of some of the creative ways to memorialize lost buildings including the outline of the foundation, a simplified floor plan and etched glass panels displaying the building's architecture placed at a vantage point on the quad. There is an offer available to any other Commission members who might wish to have a walk through and the coordinator will be happy to arrange a time for the group in the New Year. There is heat in the building but no water, and the elevator is not operational. We will check again in January as to who might like to have a visit.

2. Geography, Social Work, and other departments occupied the building in the earlier years.

ii. Preservation Plan outline

1. The coordinator shared a draft of our current project for feedback and edits. The plan is underway but this is an opportunity to shape the report. It will be due at the end of September 2026. The coordinator is working on aspects of this draft and may look to Commissioners for assistance early in 2026.
2. Flemmer also noted we should also reach out to other historians and preservationists (Leah, Peg, Marsha).
3. Survey – Poli-Sci has a survey group – Brian Urlacher, Eric Burin to ask for help with questions.

iii. BNSF Lunch Room and Express Office

1. The coordinator spoke with several BNSF staff regarding the building. It housed the Telecom team but the building was vacated about 20 years ago when the City built a new water tower that blocked the communications with the radio tower. BNSF recently cleared the area around the radio tower so it can be dismantled and sold or removed. The building is in bad shape with broken windows now boarded up, lost stone work and a deteriorating roof. It was also reported that there is mold in the building. It was placed on their demolition list which would mean about 2 years from now. Our expression of interest and plea to reconsider the fate of the building prompted an email thread with the BNSF Real Estate department and there will be further communication with them regarding what to do with it. Ideally, we would like to see the building offered to a buyer with the skills and interest to preserve the exterior and bring the building back to life.

2. Iseminger asked about the radio tower, whether we were able to get inside. The roof is an issue. Iseminger asked about the blocks.
- iv. Pi Beta Phi Sorority House
 1. The coordinator shared a recent Grand Forks Herald newspaper article regarding the North Dakota Chapter. The Grand Council will be taking a vote on whether to dissolve the local chapter due to years of declining membership and the inability to recruit and to serve members. There was no indication of the date of the vote.
 - a. Swisher noted that the Pi Phi House was the place to get a bid from when she was at CSU in 1959.
 - b. Swisher asked about other houses on campus and whether any others are having difficulties.
 - c. Munski noted the SAE house is having flooding issues and the members are living in two houses in the Boyd Addition.
 - v. Commission Member-at-Large position will be posted in January.
 - vi. University Park Neighborhood walking brochure
 1. UPN members are bringing in a copy of their brochure on Thursday to show our office. It is scheduled to go to print next week. Barbara Knipe also shared her Xcel spreadsheet with us for her survey of the neighborhood.
 - vii. Engineering Department
 1. The coordinator was informed that Cottonwood Street will undergo a repair for a water main next year. This repair will likely impact some granitoid in that area, but it is not in the “preserved” area.
- b. Other business:
 - i. Community assistance with a letter for insurance coverage
 - ii. Researching an early contractor who possibly worked in Grand Forks
 - iii. Helping to research a local residence
 - iv. Helping to research a local business
 - v. Researching brick contractors in the early years for Leah
 - c. File cleanup – the coordinator is endeavoring to free up space in the filing cabinets.
 - d. Reminder: there is no meeting scheduled for December.
 - e. Swisher asked about the boutique hotel. Flemmer noted there isn’t anything new for a while. They come to the DDRB as needed. The owners are taking their time to do it properly so it is moving slowly by design.

- f. Caraher shared his trip to Bilboa and the discussion about Cultural Heritage Management. Also heartened to learn that what we are doing here is.
 - g. Iseminger spoke about former Commission member Randy Lee.
6. Move to adjourn 6:58 pm, moved Munski, second Swisher. Motion carries.

Upcoming meetings: **Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 at 6:00pm**