

LANDMARK COMMISSION MINUTES

April 25, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michele Derr
John Dickinson
Christy Graham
Joel Hartmangruber
Andy Lee
Noros Martin
Marcela Medellin
Janel Ponder Smith

■ Chairwoman
■ Member
■ Member
■ Member
■ Member
■ P&Z Liaison
■ Member
■ Member

Monica Aguon, Assistant City Attorney
Terry Floyd, Development Services Director
Chris Horgen, Public Information Officer
Karen Montgomery-Gagné, Principal Planner/HPO
Christal Cates, Senior Administrative Assistant

■ City Staff
■ City Staff
■ City Staff
■ City Staff
■ City Staff

ABSENT:

Nadine McKown
Tim Brewer

■ Vice- Chairwoman
■ Council Liaison

GUESTS:

None

I. Call to Order, Introductions and Welcome

Chairwoman Michele Derr called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Ms. Derr had Commission members, staff and guests, introduce themselves.

II. Review & Approval of Minutes from: March 28th, 2023

Chairwoman Derr called for review and approval of the March 28th, 2023 Landmark Commission meeting minutes. Mr. Noros Martin made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Janel Ponder-Smith seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved 8-0.

Regular Agenda

III. Action Item: Review & Approve – 719 Scott Avenue: Nomination: First Wichita National Bank – National Register of Historic Places (Downtown Wichita Falls)

Ms. Karen Montgomery-Gagné presented the case and stated staff was notified March 10, 2023, by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) of a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the First Wichita National Bank, located at 719 Scott Avenue in downtown Wichita Falls. Ms. Gagné gave a brief overview of nomination eligibility and criteria stating, there are four main criteria that apply beyond meeting the basic minimums (being at least 50-years old; having historic character, etc). Additionally, a property must

also have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association for listing consideration.

The main criteria include:

- A. Being associated with important events that have contributed significantly to the broad pattern of our history.
- B. Being associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Ms. Gagné explained the original structure, known as the Clint Wood Building, was designed by architect E. Stanley Field and associate J.F. Lauck and constructed in 1919 as a seven-story high-rise commercial building in a L-shape with reinforced concrete and clad in brick and cast stone. The structure originally cost \$750,000 and housed tenants such as Prairie Oil and Gas Company and the Gulf Company. In the 1920's the building was sold to Bob Waggoner, an area oilman and was referred to as the Waggoner Building.

Wichita National Bank purchased the building in 1946 and subsequent renovations occurred in 1948 followed by a 1952 (architect Jesse G. Dixon) one-story motor bank addition and in 1955 a second remodel modernized the ground floor exterior with new windows, entrances, signage and installation of square red granite paneling while expanding the interior banking space.

In 1960, the bank merged with First National Bank, becoming the largest bank in Wichita Falls. It was at this time that a well-known Texas architect, George Dahl, was hired to completely remodel the exterior and interior of the building. Ms. Gagné stated that it was during this era when the building exterior was clad in the iconic shades of blue porcelain enamel steel panels and five floors were added to the original building. The one-story addition from 1952 was modified to accommodate the double height lobby. The air conditioning venting was placed between the original masonry exterior and steel panels. The red square granite was replaced with cream-colored granite at the first floor along the southwest and southeast elevations. Large recessed storefront windows were also added. By 1966, architects Wood & Sibeck, designed an expansion for the parking garage and motor bank.

The building was again renovated in 1980 and the storefronts replaced. It's believed the flat roof, metal-clad canopies with recessed lighting were likely added over the main entrances during the 1980s remodel. During this same time, a non-historic three-story addition constructed at 712 8th Street became part of the building complex. By 1993, the non-historic lettered signage for American National Bank was installed but later removed in 2018.

Ms. Gagné advised the Commission, Post Oak Preservation Solutions, indicated the First Wichita National Bank (FWNB) building qualified for nomination under the following criteria:

Criteria A – Area of Commerce – role in supporting industrial, agricultural and commercial development post-war era. Ms. Gagné noted the building had an important role in expansion of commerce with the First Wichita National Bank's extensive renovation and being considered the largest bank in the community offering loans to businesses, rural communities and individuals throughout Wichita Falls and northwest Texas area.

The second criteria: *Criteria C – Area of Architecture; local-level significance.* The building's period of significance is considered 1960-1973 with architectural classification being mid-century modern. Key architects included Jesse Dixon (Wichita Falls, Voelcker & Dixon) and renowned Texas architect George Dahl both designed large-scale remodels; Dahl in particular is credited with the use of blue pre-fabricated, porcelain enamel steel panels which created a sleek corporate modern appearance exemplifying the trend of modernizing early twentieth century commercial buildings to accommodate changes in business, design and technology post WWII to suit needs of tenants and customers. The use of architectural enamel tile quickly spread to Texas in the 1950s. Dahl's design introduced three-shades of blue porcelain enamel steel panels which provided depth and interest while celebrating the material's versatility and thus giving the structure the name Big Blue as it is currently known.

Ms. Gagné stated staff recommended the Commission consider endorsing the application for 719 Scott Ave. for listing on the National Register of Historic Places based on the following key elements:

1. Important role the building played in the expansion of commerce (banking) post WWII in greater Wichita Falls and the north Texas region;
2. Unique architecture with the 1960's extensive exterior remodel to a mid-century modern design; and
3. Building maintains integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship and its significant period of remodel is at least 50-years old.

Ms. Gagné advised if the Commission approved the nomination of 719 Scott Ave., staff would submit a recommendation letter on their behalf as required to the Texas Historical Commission prior to the State Board of Review deadline and noted a second letter from the Mayor would need to be sent as well as part of the City's CLG responsibilities.

Chairwoman Derr asked if there were any comments from the public, and then the Commission. Mr. Andy Lee briefly spoke on the architect, George Dahl, his projects and his professional reputation. Mr. Martin asked if approved, would the structure be removed from the tax roll, Ms. Graham advised it would not. Ms. Marcela Medellin asked if the entire structure was to be nominated. Ms. Gagné advised the addition was not recognized as it was constructed in the 1980's, however, the final determination would come from the State.

With no further comment, Mr. Martin made a motion to approve their recommendation for 719 Scott Ave to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and notice sent to the State Board of Review (THC). Mr. Lee seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 8-0.

IV. Discussion Item: National Preservation Month Activities:

- Historic Marker Refurbishment Training – April 28th, 2023, 11 a.m. (Kell House Heritage Center)
- Proclamation – City Council, May 2nd, 2023, 8:30 a.m.

- Wichita Falls Historic Resource survey – Digitization/Web Access Project

V. Other Business:

a) Monthly Reports

Depot Square:

Ms. Derr gave the following updates:

- May 4th – Art Walk
- Farmers Market – open Saturdays
- Farmers Market - 8th & Austin – Summer hours starting May, open Tues. & Thurs.

West Floral Heights:

Ms. Smith stated the West Floral Heights Historic District Volunteer Design Review Committee had been revitalized and would be holding a training Thursday, April 27th 2023.

b) Updates:

- NACP – CAMP Workshop – Ft. Worth – April 15 – Overview
- Training - West Floral Heights Volunteer Design Review Committee – April 27
- North Central Texas Regional Preservation Summit – Preservation TX: May 11 (Mineral Wells)

c) Articles/Periodicals/Trainings:

- THC – The Medallion – Winter 2023; feature issue on TX Courthouse Program

d) Design Review – Staff Authorized – Minor Alteration/Repairs:

- 1501 Grant - WFHHD – emergency gas line repair
- 1315 Grant – WFHHD – replacement composition roof
- 1300 Tilden – WFHHD – replacement tile roof (*Landmark authorized*)
- 1509 Tilden - WFHHD – replacement composition roof
- 1404 Buchanan – WFHHD – in-ground pool
- 701 Ohio – Depot Square HD – replacement TPO roof; no parapet changes

VI. Adjourn

Next regularly scheduled meeting May 23, 2023 – 12 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.



Michele Derr, Chairperson



Date