



Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Agenda

Monday, August 3, 2026 - 3:00 PM

City Offices (Building 18, Legacy Plaza) - Large Conference Room
303 W 4th St N, Suite 501
Newton, IA 50208

- I. Roll Call
- II. Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting: 7.6.2026
- III. Items from City Staff
 - 1. Historic District Design Guidelines
- IV. Items from Commissioners
- V. Items from Citizens
- VI. Communications from State Historic Preservation Office and Department of Public Affairs
- VII. Adjourn

ADA Compliance: The City of Newton is pleased to provide reasonable accommodations, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, for those individuals or groups who require assistance in being able to participate in the meeting. Please contact the Community Development Department at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting by calling 641-792-6622 to arrange for accommodations to be provided.

Chair: Larry Hurto; **Members:** Wes Ranard, Rita Reinheimer, Toni Peska, Kelly Bennett

HPC Meeting Minutes

NEWTON HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Community Development/Community Services/Public Works
Large Conference Room
303 West 4th Street North, Suite 501
Newton, IA 50208

Date: July 06, 2026

Time: 3:00 pm

Meeting called to order by: Chair Hurto

ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Hurto, Ranard, Peska

Board Members Absent: Reinheimer, Bennett

Staff and Others Present: Varsha Borde – Sr. City Planner
Nicholas Alexander – City Planner
Erin Yeager, Executive Director Main Street

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Chair Larry Hurto questioned if there was anyone present that may require special assistance in being able to participate in this public meeting. There was no response.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ranard to approve minutes of special meeting; **Seconded by** Peska. **Approved by** VV (2-0) Peska abstains from voting as she didn't attend the previous meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF IOWA OPEN MEETINGS LAW

Borde confirms.

ITEMS FROM CITY STAFF

- There were no items from City Staff.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS

- Bennett - None
- Ranard – None
- Reinheimer – Commissioner Reinheimer shared an update on Mary Jo Niskin.
- Hurto – Larry's HPC Report – July 6, 2026

1. HPC Staffer Varsha Borde and I attended Preserve Iowa Summit 2026 June 2-3 at DMACC in Ankeny. I was able to meet CLG Coordinator Allison Archambo, of the State Historic Preservation Office

(SHPO), who was one of the breakout session presenters. It was a pleasure to see and spend some time with Kathy Gourley, formerly of SHPO, who's now retired. The Welcome, Keynote and Award Ceremony was held on the first day following lunch. Gray Moon Public Market won one of Preservation Iowa's Preservation at its Best Awards, and Jerry Schwaller was there to accept. Many thanks to Commissioner Ranard for writing the nomination with the assistance of Newton Main Street Director Yeager and City Councilor Hallam.

2. On June 9, I heard again Darrin Crow, of Cedar Rapids, speak on The Underground Railroad in Iowa, at the Newton Public Library. He shared the fascinating story of the small town of Salem, Iowa, and the heroic citizens who helped hundreds of enslaved persons find their way north to freedom.

3. Bob Galloway asked me for some history re: the Fred H. and Josephine Bergman House, 429 1st Ave. W., which is a contributing property to Newton's 1st Avenue West Historic Residential District. I emailed him a copy of Volunteer Researcher Susan Grigsby's Site Inventory, which can be found at <https://www.newtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/5274/429-1st-Ave-W-Fred-and-Josephine-Bergman-House-50-01825>, on June 23.

4. On June 24, Dr. Joe Otto, Jasper County Recorder, informed me that Sondra Lage, of Bangor, Maine, and formerly a resident of Jasper County, was seeking information about the present location of Richland Township No. 2 country schoolhouse. I emailed Joe and CC-ed Ms. Lage the following day that what happened to buildings removed from their original locations is for the most part impossible to track. I informed them that I know of only two country schoolhouses still extant in Jasper County, and neither of them is this schoolhouse.

5. Carol Twedt, an RSVP member, sent me an email from Sarah Patterson, Jasper County RSVP Program Director, re: a stack of World War II military letters she shared with Sarah from her great uncle, Orville Schroeder, U. S. Army, to his sister, Alice (Mrs. Leo) Udelhoven (Carol's grandmother). They are sent to Alice in care of Newton Welding Shop, the family business. Sgt. Schroeder was stationed in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg, among other places. Sarah summarized some of the highlights of the letters in her email, dated June 24.

ITEMS FROM CITIZENS –

- Erin Yeager shared that the parade went well.
- Peska asked about the former Newton Daily News Building, and the plans for it. Erin shared that the person who previously bought the property is planning to still develop the building and has been getting ideas for this space.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE AND/OR DEPT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS.

Larry shared the communications from SHPO.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned by Peska, **Seconded by** Ranard, **Approved** 3-0 by VV. Adjourned at 3:30 pm.



Memorandum

To: Historic Preservation Commission
From: Erin Chambers, Community Development Director
Date: July 30, 2026
Re: Downtown Design Guidelines

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide my feedback and guidance, as the director of the Community Development Department, to the commission regarding the idea of adopting downtown design guidelines as mandatory and enforceable codes.

Background. In 2014, the Newton Downtown Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This was the pinnacle of a number of years of hard work by the Historic Preservation Commission to research and document the development and evolution of Newton's Downtown.

Shortly after the designation, the City of Newton began working on plans to support and preserve the downtown. This included development of The Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines with the help of consultants Bergland + Cram and Bolton & Menk.

The Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines were approved as an official guiding document for the City of Newton by Resolution 2015-287 (December 2015). As of today, the guidelines are optional for property owners to implement when doing improvements, unless they are seeking Downtown Improvement Grants.

The Downtown Grant Review Board was established as a public board that reviews proposed projects and works with grant seekers to ensure that city funds are going towards projects that align with the recommendations of guidelines. Their role is critical in creating a public review process which includes citizen experts who can help owners navigate the subjective nature of some of the guidelines.

Adoption of Guidelines as Code Requirements. It is my understanding that the Historic Preservation Commission is considering making a recommendation to the Newton City Council to review a proposal which establishes some or all of the guidelines as code requirements.

There is benefit in the pursuit of codifying the design guidelines, as it continues preservation

efforts beyond a voluntary manner and will help prevent non-conforming improvements from being made that are irreversible. That said, codifying the whole document provides some significant challenges that I would like to highlight for your consideration:

- 1.) Not everything the guidelines provide recommendations on require City reviews or permits. Adding new processes would create an administrative burden in a time when City budgets are become much tighter.
 - For example, painting does not require permits. There is not currently a mechanism to enforce the paint colors recommended by the current guidelines.
- 2.) Work activities that would ultimately be regulated by the guidelines are currently subject to administrative reviews. Any changes to the process would create longer review times and possible development delays.
 - Adding additional review layers before a board or commission creates roadblocks for current and future owners. City Council has expressed a desire to maintain Newton's current balance of timely administrative development reviews when possible (building permits, site plans, etc.) with other development reviews that have impacts beyond property boundaries before appointed/elected bodies (variances, conditional use permits, subdivisions).
- 3.) A number of the design guidelines are subjective in nature. Terms like "compatible" or "appropriate" can be interpreted differently by various staff members. This does not work for code language.
- 4.) Some of the guidelines, while benefitting the preservation of the historic fabric of the building, may be counter to energy efficiency or sustainability measures.

That said, The Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines do serve a vital role in our community by promoting the following:

- 1.) Preserving district character
- 2.) Encouraging Tourism
- 3.) Protecting Newton's heritage

Community Development Director Recommendation. In light of the points discussed above, I do not recommend the codification of The Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines in their entirety.

I do recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission advise City Council on considering the codification of some elements that align with current permitting and approval processes and

that have significant impact on the district. My recommendation for those items are as follows:

- 1.) Signage: Signage shall not be internally illuminated. (Applicable to all properties in historic district)
- 2.) Signage Placement: Signs shall only be installed on historic buildings in locations that are historically accurate as proven by historical (50 years +) photography or plans or in locations that do not require permanent damage to exterior building materials. (Applicable to only contributing structures to the historic district)
- 3.) New Construction Setback: New construction within the Downtown Historic District shall have a front setback no less than the abutting property. In the case of two abutting properties, the new construction setback shall be no greater than the average of the two setbacks. (Applicable to all properties in historic district)
- 4.) Awnings: Dome or umbrella shaped awnings are not permitted unless historical (50 years +) photography indicates the shape is historically accurate. (Applicable to only contributing structures to the historic district)
- 5.) Window Openings: Historic window openings shall be preserved in shape and size. Historic window openings shall not be closed, removed, or reduced in size. (Applicable to only contributing structures to the historic district)
- 6.) Windows, Reflective Glass: Reflective glass is not permitted in the Downtown Historic District (Applicable to contributing structures to the historic district)
- 7.) Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS): Exterior Insulation Finishing System shall not be installed on historic buildings. (Applicable to contributing structures to the historic district)

Thank you.