

Landmarks Commission Meeting

June 20, 2024 6:00pm CST

City Hall

Conference Room A/B

Published: 6/11/2024

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL; DECLARATION OF QUORUM; PUBLIC NOTICE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

Landmarking Properties

No old business

Outreach to current landmark owners

- A. Discussion and possible vote on cost for replacement of failing Landmark signs on cemetery properties.

General Commission Promotion

No old business

NEW BUSINESS

Landmarking Properties

- A. Discussion and possible vote to move forward with formal letters and communications to the property owners for each of the following targeted properties:
 - a. The Franz House on Pinecrest Lane.
 - b. The Torseth House on Prospect Drive.
 - c. The Stahl House on Wehr Road.
 - d. Fire Station #2 on Sunny Slope Road.
 - e. Free Methodist Church on Sunny Slope Road

Outreach to current landmark owners

No new business

General Commission Promotion

- A. Discussion and possible vote to nominate a commission member to prepare quarterly online quizzes on behalf of the Landmark's commission.
- B. Discussion and possible vote to nominate a commission member to coordinate in-person outreach opportunities at the New Berlin Historical Park.

TABLED BUSINESS

- A. Review and approval of updated write-ups for properties for Landmark consideration as “informational” write-ups to be included on the city website.
 - a. Julius Heil House
 - b. Casper Inn
 - c. Hickory Grove School
- B. Cultural and Historic Resources Chapter 4 – Status Pending

TREASURER'S REPORT

SET MEETING DATE

ADJOURN

MINUTES OF THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING
APRIL 18, 2024
CITY HALL
CONFERENCE ROOM A/B

I. Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lori Doyle at 6:15 PM.

Present: Chairperson Doyle, Commissioners Ament, Marquardt, Orzel,
Tyskiewicz and Warczak.

Absent: Alderman La Fever.

II. Declaration of Quorum; Public Notice.

III. Approval of Minutes.

March 21, 2024 Landmarks Commission Minutes.

MOTION: Motion to Approve.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Warczak.
Second by Commissioner Marquardt.

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Treasurer's Report – Commissioner Warczak – Treasury stands at \$1960.00.

V. Communications – Chairperson Doyle – Newsletter from the Menomonee Falls Historical Society was shared.

VI. OLD BUSINESS – None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS.

A. Discussion and possible vote on replacement of failing Landmark signs and updated wording for cemetery properties.

- 1. Holy Apostles Cemetery –** we will leave it to the sign-printing company to decide if sentences “one” and “two” should be combined for a better look and understanding.

MOTION: Motion to Approve Write -up for Cemetery Signage.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Warczak.
Second by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.

Motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Sunnyside Cemetery –** the number “eighteen” in the fifth paragraph should be changed to “18.”

MOTION: Motion to Approve Write – up for Cemetery Signage.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Warczak.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Motion passed unanimously.

AMEND MOTION – to change the word “graveyard” to “cemetery” for consistency and more currently-used term.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Warczak.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Amended motion passed unanimously.

3. German Evangelical Protestant Cemetery.

MOTION: Motion to Approve Write – up for Cemetery Signage.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Orzel.
Second by Commissioner Ament.

Motion passed unanimously.

4. New Berlin Center Cemetery.

TABLE MOTION – pending a rewrite of the write-up.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Orzel.
Second by Commissioner Marquardt.

5. Per ensuing discussion:

- a. Cemetery signs will have “New Berlin Landmarks Commission – 2024” as the bottom line of each sign.
- b. Font of signs will be in Block Print Style.

B. Discussion on potential homes and businesses to target for 2024 – 2025 Landmark status.

- 1. A Letter of Proposal for Landmark Status** from 2014 was shared with the Commission. Chairperson Doyle will clarify some of the wording with the City Attorney to bring this letter up-to-date.

2. Suggestions given by Commission Members were:

- a. The Franz House on Pinecrest Lane.
- b. The Torseth House on Prospect Drive.
- c. The Stahl House on Wehr Road.
- d. Fire Station #2 on Sunny Slope Road.
- e. Free Methodist Church on Sunny Slope Road.

VIII. TABLED BUSINESS –

1. Review and approval of updated write-ups for Properties for Landmark consideration as “Informational Markers.”

a -1. Little Grove School – Commissioner Marquardt – **Tabled.**

b -1. Miller Property – Commissioner Ament – **Tabled.**

c -1. New Berlin Soap Box Derby – Commissioner Marquardt – **Tabled.**

d -1. Governor Julius Heil Home.

MOTION: Motion to take “OFF the TABLE” for Discussion.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.

Second by Commissioner Marquardt.

Motion passed unanimously.

a. Discussion ensued as to if this should be a rewrite or if we should link into the information about this house on the Waukesha County Website of Historic Places.

b. Commissioner Orzel volunteered to rewrite this description for our City Website.

MOTION: Motion to have Commissioner Orzel rewrite the description of the Julius Heil House for our City Website.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.

Second by Commissioner Marquardt.

Motion passed unanimously.

a -2. Milwaukee Astronomical Society.

MOTION: Motion to take “OFF the TABLE” for Discussion.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.

Second by Commissioner Warczak.

Motion passed unanimously.

a. Discussion ensued as to adding information and photos of this area to our City Website.

b. It was suggested that the write-up be shared with staff members at the Milwaukee Astronomical Society to verify facts and add additional information if applicable.

b -2. Wisconsin Cheese and Butter Company Building.

MOTION: Motion to take “OFF the TABLE” for Discussion.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Marquardt.
Motion passed unanimously.

- a. This building has been torn down in the last several years.
- b. The item will need to be removed from the Agenda.

MOTION: Motion to remove Wisconsin Butter and Cheese Building from the Agenda.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.
Motion passed unanimously.

c -2. Site of Round Barn – So. Calhoun Road (Future Autumn Trace Subdivision).

MOTION: Motion to take “OFF the TABLE” for Discussion.
Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Marquardt.
Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Motion to Approve to Add to City Website.
Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Warczak.
Motion passed unanimously.

d -2. Casper Inn.

MOTION: Motion to take “OFF the TABLE” for Discussion.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.
Motion passed unanimously.

- a. Discussion ensued as to the write-up containing more information than is necessary to describe this historical building adequately.
- b. Various sentences were suggested to be removed, but the Commission feels that they would like to review the rewritten description at the next meeting.

MOTION: Motion to Review the Write-up of the Casper Inn at the Next Meeting.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.
Motion passed unanimously.

- e. Hickory Grove School – Commissioner Orzel – **Tabled.**

2. Discussion on Cultural and Historic Resources Chapter 4 – Status Pending.

IX. NEXT MEETING – June 20, 2024 at 6:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room A/B, (due to insufficient quorum at next scheduled meeting, 5/16/24).

X. ADJOURN at 7:47 PM.

MOTION: Motion to Adjourn.

VOTE: Motion by Commissioner Ament.
Second by Commissioner Tyskiewicz.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Tyskiewicz
Landmarks Commission Secretary

The Boyhood Home of Governor Julius P. Heil



The Boyhood Home of Governor Julius Heil, courtesy of the City of New Berlin Landmarks Commission, April 2024.

Julius Peter Heil was one of Milwaukee's early technological innovators. A self-made businessman, Heil served as the state of Wisconsin's thirtieth governor from 1939 to 1943. His boyhood home, located at 19890 West Julius Heil Drive in New Berlin, is designated as a historic landmark by the Waukesha County Historical Society.

Julius Heil was born in Germany in 1876. His family immigrated to the United States when Julius was 3 years old. They settled on a farm in New Berlin near Prospect Hill, and built the house that still stands on the property. It is said that Julius and his brother gathered fieldstone for the foundation.

He briefly attended the nearby public school and clerked at the Winton General Store. His parents died when Julius was 12 years old.

At the age of 14, Heil moved to Milwaukee where he worked in a variety of jobs. He sold newspapers to train passengers. He was a drill press operator at Milwaukee Harvester and a streetcar conductor. Heil also served as an apprentice at the Falk Corporation where he became an expert in the new technology of welding steel track for streetcars.

In 1901, he founded his own company, the Heil Rail Joint Welding Company, which later became known as the Heil Company. One of his earliest customers was the City of Milwaukee who purchased the first Heil garbage truck bodies. Hundreds of American cities, large and small, soon followed Milwaukee's lead. By 1939, the Heil Company employed 1,800 workers. In addition to garbage trucks, Heil was a leading manufacturer of steel tanks, trailers, dump-truck bodies, bulldozers, water systems, snow-plows, and hydraulic hoists.

In 1938, although he had never run for elected office, Heil entered the race for Wisconsin's governor. He won the nomination of the Republican Party after driving his own car to campaign in 69 of the state's 72 counties. Heil defeated the three-time incumbent, Phil LaFollette, a Progressive from a prominent Wisconsin political family. As governor, Heil streamlined the Department of Motor Vehicles from five agencies into one and consolidated various social services into the Department of Public Welfare. Despite Heil's success in reigning in government bureaucracy, his most enduring legacy was coining Wisconsin's nickname, ***America's Dairyland***. Governor Heil was re-elected in 1940, but lost his bid for a third term to Orland Steen Loomis in 1942.

After serving as governor, Heil returned to the company he founded where he served as president and chairman of the board. Julius Heil died on November 30, 1949 at the age of 73.

Submitted: June 2, 2024

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The Story of Hickory Grove Elementary School

Hickory Grove, located on the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Sunny Slope Road in New Berlin, served as a public elementary school from 1952 to 1979. Several other schools preceded Hickory Grove on this very same site and share in its story.



Figure 1: Hickory Grove, 1952 – 2023. Photo taken August 14, 2023

The Early Years

Ezra “E.F.” Bennett, like many of New Berlin’s earliest settlers, was a Yankee from Onondaga County, New York. Born in 1816, he came to Wisconsin in 1839, and staked his claim of one hundred acres on what is known today as Cleveland Avenue.

In October, 1851, Bennett deeded a half-acre of his property to be used for a school. A one-room log school house was built on the site and came to be known as Bennett School. It was replaced in 1867 by an old cooper shop which was moved to the school site from a previous location within the Township of New Berlin.

By 1890, the Township of New Berlin was divided into fourteen school districts. Eight were located within the Township’s geographic boundaries, while the other six

crossed into neighboring communities. Each district was required to have one elementary school which served students through eighth grade, and its own Board of Education, elected by the citizens at the annual meeting. During this annual meeting, the residents of each district were also required to vote on their own tax rate to support school operations. Bennett School was in District No. 2, which served the northeastern quadrant of the Town of New Berlin.

At that time, many children did not attend school regularly or at all, especially in rural areas. The older children were needed to help on their family farms. Dirt roads and bad weather made traveling to school difficult and sometimes dangerous, but attitudes toward education were changing as more young people transitioned from farming to jobs in manufacturing. In 1891, Wisconsin passed a compulsory attendance law requiring all children between the ages of seven and fourteen to attend public or private school for a minimum of twelve weeks per year.

In 1897, perhaps as the result of the newly approved mandatory school attendance law, a referendum was approved to sell the repurposed cooper shop which served as Bennett School for \$15 (\$555 in today’s dollars), and build a new school on the same site. Three years later, a white, one-room frame school house was finished at a cost of \$1,000 (\$36,000 in today’s dollars). A central wood-burning stove provided heat, but there was no source of water on the property. It was carried daily from a nearby farm.

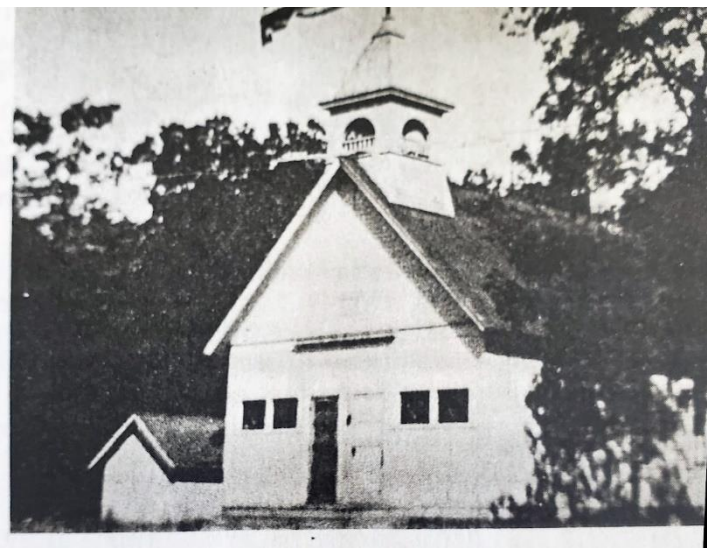


Figure 2: Bennett School, later Hickory Grove School, 1900-1951, Courtesy of the New Berlin Historical Society

A New Century Brings Change

In 1914, the Board of Education voted to change the name of Bennett School to Hickory Grove, no doubt in reference to the beautiful hickory trees that still surround the building and shade the grounds. But the seeds of more substantive changes were already planted and beginning to grow.

A couple of years earlier, in 1912, Otto (Wilbur) Conrad, a West Allis business man, purchased about 60 acres of land for development in the northeastern section of the Town of New Berlin. He believed this area, with its easy access to the interurban railway, would make ideal home sites for the families of blue-collar workers who commuted daily to the nearby Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Plant in West Allis.

Wilbur Conrad was right. New Berlin's first subdivision, known as Conrad Park was a success. More land was purchased in 1928 for a second subdivision on the corner of Greenfield Avenue and Sunny Slope Road, with space for 188 lots. Even during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the home sites continued to sell.

These sales, of course, had a direct impact on the enrollment of Hickory Grove Elementary School. By 1932, its days as a one-room school house were over. The white, one-room frame school house was remodeled and expanded again in 1941 and 1946.



Figure 3: One of additions to Hickory Grove completed in the 1950s. Note the beautiful trees that still surround the school. Photo taken August 14, 2023

The years following the end of World War II, known as the Baby Boom Era, brought even more new homes and families to the area. In 1951, the Hickory Grove School Board approved plans to build an elementary school with four classrooms and a multi-purpose room for a total cost of \$76,500 (\$857,000 in today's dollars). The new Hickory Grove Elementary School opened its doors on April 7, 1952, to welcome 135 students. But the population continued to increase, and two more additions were made before the end of the decade.

By 1960, the enrollment of Hickory Grove had grown to 780 students. It was one of the two largest school populations among non-consolidated school districts in Waukesha County; the other was the neighboring district of Calhoun. Barracks were erected at Hickory Grove for use as classrooms and four sections of kindergarten were housed at nearby Forest Park Presbyterian Church.

With no room available to expand Hickory Grove, the Board of Education opted to build a second elementary school. Located about one mile north on Sunny Slope Road, Orchard Lane, was opened in 1961. That year Hickory Grove and Orchard Lane shared an enrollment of 850 students.

Earlier that spring, the voters approved a referendum to consolidate twelve of New Berlin's fourteen elementary school districts into one with a district-wide school board. In 1958, town officials had filed a petition with Waukesha County to form a New Berlin High School District. The new high school, now known as New Berlin West, was scheduled to open in 1962 so a more unified approach to school governance and planning was needed.

The consolidated School Board faced many challenges, but the most consequential continued to be enrollment. The number of students attending New Berlin's public schools grew from 1,500 in 1958 to over 6,000 by the mid-1960s. To meet the growing demand, Glen Park Middle School was opened in 1966 and a second high school, New Berlin

Eisenhower, was opened in 1969. By 1970, the total enrollment in New Berlin Public Schools peaked at about 7,000 students.

And just like that...the pattern of rapid growth was replaced with more than a decade of declining enrollment. There were several reasons. The children in the older subdivisions were growing older and graduating, but their parents didn't move. Many years of high inflation followed by a recession in the early 1980s made it difficult for young families to purchase homes, and families were having fewer children.

The School Board needed to shift gears.

Hickory Grove: The Final Chapter?

At the end of the 1978-79 school year, the Board of Education closed Hickory Grove. A church rented a portion of the building for a few years, and it served as a home to the New Berlin Senior Center and Food Pantry. But in 1983, Hickory Grove began a new chapter. The City of New Berlin purchased the building from the school district for one dollar to serve as an Activity and Recreation Center. Over the years, a wide variety of classes were taught for students of all ages and abilities including cooking, dancing, yoga, technology, sports and even a summer day camp. In 2020, thanks to growing demand, the City Council approved the construction of a new Activity and Recreation Center. *The ARC*, located at 15321 W. National Avenue, opened in June 2022, but Hickory Grove remains an integral part of the New Berlin Community continuing to serve as the Senior Center and Food Pantry.

Sources

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