

Proposed Staff Approval/Consent Agenda

At the December meeting the Landmarks Commission had preliminary discussion of the possibility of shifting some Certificates of Appropriateness to staff approval. This was based on a Community Development Department goal from the 2024 City Budget. The Budget goal reads “Streamline the process for residents in Landmarks Districts to receive approvals for routine maintenance.”

The consensus at the December meeting was against transitioning to full staff approval. However, several Landmarks Commissioners were interested in having more discussion of possibly switching to a version of the Consent Agenda for some approvals. Currently the Common Council and the Plan Commission have regular Consent Agenda items on their agendas, handled somewhat differently.

Most items on the Council agenda are reviewed by a separate committee before they come to the full Council. The committee make recommendations for the Council to act on. If a committee unanimously recommends an item for approval it can go on the Consent Agenda when it comes before the full Council.

Plan Commission items are more similar to Landmarks Commission COA’s. They are reviewed by staff before the meeting but not by any other board. However, some of the approvals are mostly technical and have limited opportunity for discussion. In those cases, when an application meets all of the standard conditions for approval, or any staff comments are minor and acceptable to the applicant, the items are placed on the Consent Agenda. Common Plan Commission Consent Agenda items are Certified Survey Maps, which combine or divide properties or otherwise shift lot lines, and Minor Site Plan and Architectural Reviews, which involve small scale alterations to commercial properties.

For both the Council and Plan Commission the items and all their attachments are included on the agenda, and in both cases board members have the option to remove them for discussion and a more detailed review. If no board member makes a request to remove an item it is approved by unanimous consent at the beginning of the meeting.

A Consent Agenda or something similar for the Landmarks Commission could include projects which have already been approved for Historic Preservation Tax Credits, since the standards for tax credits are a stricter version of the Landmarks Commission’s standards. It could also include work that has very specific recommended standards.

Projects which could potentially be approved on a Landmarks Commission Consent Agenda:

- Projects where Historic Preservation Tax Credits have been approved.
- Tuckpointing – standard condition is to match the hardness, color, and texture of existing brick and mortar.
- Roof replacement with 3-tab shingles or when the shingle type has been approved for other Landmark properties (Certainteed Landmark Series, GAF Timberline Natural Shadow, etc.)
- Like for like replacement of flat roofs, K-style gutters, flashing, or other features that are not character-defining.
- Air conditioners, radon venting systems, or other mechanical systems, provided they are in a location with minimal visibility.

If the Landmarks Commission does decide to go forward with a Consent Agenda, it should be clearly differentiated from the Consent Agenda process used by both the Plan Commission and Council. The simplest way to do this would be to retain the name "Consent Agenda" and provide an explanation for how it is different, which would be included on the meeting agendas. The current explanations from the Council and Plan Commission agendas are included below, along with a proposed explanation for the Landmarks Commission. Another solution might be to use a different term from Consent Agenda.

Council Consent Agenda note:

Items under the Consent Agenda have passed unanimously out of committee. Unless a member of the Common Council specifically request that an item on the Consent Agenda be removed and considered separately, items on the Consent Agenda are then approved unanimously by general consent. Any item removed from Consent Agenda will be discussed under the appropriate committee, board or commission on the Regular Agenda.

Plan Commission Consent Agenda note:

Approval with staff comments and conditions.

Possible Landmarks Consent Agenda note:

Items under the Consent Agenda are recommended for approval with staff comments. Either they have already been reviewed and approved for Historic Preservation Tax Credits or the proposals meet objective design standards for the work. Unless a member of the Landmarks Commission specifically requests that an item on the Consent Agenda be removed and considered separately, it will be approved unanimously by general consent. Any item removed from Consent Agenda will be discussed under New Business.

Alternative names to Consent Agenda:

- Business Items Recommended for Consent Approval:
- Staff Approval Recommendations:
- Others?