



**Agenda Item #:** 3  
**Project Title:** Creating the City of Madison Honorary Street Name Program  
**Legistar File ID #:** 81515  
**Prepared By:** Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner  
**Members:** Present: Richard Arnesen, Edna Ely-Ledesma, Molly Harris, Katie Kaliszewski, Ald. Amani Latimer Burris, Jacob Morrison, and Maurice Taylor  
Excused: None

## Summary

Bailey provided information on the proposed honorary street name program.

Latimer Burris said that she liked the overall program and had comments. She said that if the focus is on underrepresented communities, maybe the Equal Opportunities Commission should be included as a reviewing body. Regarding the application process, she suggested that all applicants be required to do the same application rather than having additional requirements like pronunciation only for proposed non-English language names. She said that while she understood the City having the right to remove the sign at any time for any reason, she would instead like to see a process laid out for any removal. She said that they can focus on underrepresented communities, but she took issue with setting that as the whole platform. She said that history is slanted, so she understood why it was necessary, but maybe there is a different way to give a bonus to applications from underrepresented communities.

Morrison requested confirmation that because this is an honorary designation, the actual street name would remain. Bailey confirmed that it would. Morrison said that whether the proposed name used a different alphabet or different phonetic pronunciation could be taken on a case by case basis because the actual street name isn't changing. In certain cases, it could be appropriate to use a different alphabet or spelling.

Harris agreed that the policy allowing the City to remove it at any time for any reason where people wouldn't have any input strikes a different tone from the overall message of the program and idea of honorary street names, though she didn't have a solution for it. She said that naming things after people always comes with risk, whether it is official or honorary. She pointed out that any indigenous place names would be coordinated with tribal nations, but then who decides what fits in the historically unrepresented category? She said the role of a City Engineer seems like a mismatch for these applications with historical and social elements. Bailey said that a staff team for honorary street names will vet the applications, which includes the Preservation Planner and others from the Department of Civil Rights and Engineering. The applications would then be turned over to the City Engineer who can request review by Landmarks Commission. She said that the key is that this is government speech; the City decides if an application meets the criteria, and if it is something they want to publicly make a statement about honoring. The City decides if they are going to put the sign up, and they also decide if they can take it down. It is purposely not a public process in order to allow the City flexibility to put up and take down signs depending on if it is something they want to convey that they honor. Harris pointed out that potential applicants are already not allowed to have their name honored elsewhere. Bailey said that there are other people who have done significant things and there are important stories to tell. The City is coming out with a new historic markers program as part of the Historic Preservation Plan as a way to tell more diverse stories. The honorary street name program is specifically addressing the RESJI issue of how we have historically named streets; in terms of telling a more complete story, we are going to have a historic markers program as well.

Kaliszewski said the commission looks forward to seeing how this program moves forward and is supportive of its general mission. Harris agreed and said that they had comments on the proposed program, but are comfortable in the role that the Landmarks Commission would play in the process.

## **Action**

**A motion was made by Harris, seconded by Latimer Burris, to return to lead with the recommendation for approval with comments. The motion passed by voice vote/other.**

**Landmarks Commission comments:**

- Consider including the Equal Opportunities Commission as a reviewing body.**
- All applicants should be required to complete the same application rather than having additional requirements for proposed non-English street names.**
- Consider creating a process for sign removal rather than the City being able to remove at any time.**