

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 17, 2008**

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, September 17, 2008 at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at the Muscatine City Hall, 215 Sycamore. Members present included Mary Anne Kessler, Ramiro Vazquez, Diane Day, Devin Pettit and Dan Clark.

The consent agenda, including the distributed meeting agenda and the minutes of the regular August 20, 2008 meeting, was reviewed. Kessler asked Pettit what concerns he had over the proposed book project involving the Savages. Pettit said he had not real concerns. There were no other questions over the minutes.

There were no additional agenda items.

Kessler moved to approve the consent agenda; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The first discussion item was the status of the Mulberry Avenue Survey.

Kessler reported problems tracking the ownership of 1220 Mulberry, even though she has been able to view the property abstract. There appears to be a gap between when the area that includes the property was subdivided and when the property was sold. Other neighboring properties might have the same problem.

Pettit reported he is continuing to work on his projects, but at a slow pace. He said he had also talked with Jerry Lange about his list. Pettit said he had reminded Lange about Lange's earlier assurance that he would continue to work on his list of properties after his term on the commission was over.

Day reported she and Carlson had not made much progress on their properties.

There were no other reports.

The commission next discussed the status of MHPC funds remaining in the Community Foundation account and the potential to transfer those funds to the Friends of Historic Muscatine. Based on earlier reports, there is \$276.56 in the foundation account and \$272.01 in the endowment.

Pettit said the community foundation appears to be in basic agreement with the proposal to transfer funds to the Friends, although the endowment might contain limitations.

During the discussion on the foundation funds, Pettit pointed out his authority as MHPC chair was the primary reason he was involved in working on this issue. Since he was planning some future activities that would impact the amount of spare time he would be available, he would be resigning his position as chair of the MHPC, effective immediately; and the new chair or a designee would need to assume the foundation fund oversight responsibilities Pettit stressed his resignation would not extend to his commission position.

There was no final action on the funding issue; although discussions on it and Pettit's resignation were continued under the general discussion on bylaws that followed.

The bylaws discussion, which was the next agenda item, had been proposed earlier by Pettit. He was concerned about the standing committees and the general shift of their duties to the chair. He had recommended dropping any reference to standing committees and allowing the chair to establish ad-hoc committees.

Day said she saw a need for some committees, but agreed not all of the current ones were needed.

Clark said any bylaw language should allow the chair to appoint members as needed to the appropriate committees. Kessler said she agreed with Clark's suggestion.

During this discussion, there was also a review of the chair's duties, especially as they relate to speaking engagements and other activities identified in Bylaw #6 – Ex-Parte Communications and Bylaw 4A – Chair. Pettit said a key point would be to allow the chair to designate speakers and other individuals who could present programs at meetings and similar events. That could potentially ease some of the demand on the chair's time and spread more of the commission duties among the members.

The commission continued to discuss language options and eventually agreed to the following changes: eliminating standing committees for Education, Research & Documentation and Projects; allowing the chair to appoint committees as necessary; identifying the duties for the ad-hoc committees to include, but not be limited to the duties originally assigned to the standing committees; and dropping the language that identifies the chair as an ex-officio member of any committee.

After further discussion, Kessler moved to amend the MHPC Bylaws by replacing the current section with the following:

“J. Committees – The Chair shall appoint any committees as necessary to facilitate business before the Commission. With the concurrence of the Commission, committees may include residents of the city who are not members of the Commission. Duties may include, but not be limited to,” (continue with existing language); Clark seconded: motion passed, all ayes.

The commission continued to discuss the Chair's duties. Pettit said adding by-law language that would identify responsibilities for speaking to the media, organizations and other groups would help.

Kessler moved to amend Section 4A by adding “The chair or designee will speak before the city council and the public”; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Pettit said he would continue to temporarily meet with the Downtown Action Alliance, another duties that has been assumed by the Chair.

The commission also began to discuss Section 9 – Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission Fund. However, Pettit pointed out until the foundation establishes what the Friends can do, any proposals might be premature. He suggested the issue be scheduled for a later discussion. The commission members agreed.

After agreeing to postpone any discussion on the community foundation fund, Kessler moved to approve the revised bylaws with the changes approved regarding committees and chair duties; Vazquez seconded; motion passes, all ayes.

The next agenda item discussed by the commission was the status of efforts to obtain digitized copies of the Downtown and West Hill survey and evaluations, National Register of Historic Places nominations and Multiple Property Documentations. Rudisill reported on email communications he had with consultant Rebecca McCarley, Musser Public Library Director Pam Collins and Musser Public Library Photo Archivist Sheila Chaudoin.

Chaudoin has been assigned the responsibility for determining formatting and other issues associated with the CDs. Rudisill will continue to coordinate the effort.

The commission next discussed the 2008 CLG Annual Report. Rudisill reminded the members of the need to monitor properties listed on the National Register (either individually or through historic districts). He requested any commissioners who were aware of alterations being made to historic properties to send him an email identifying the affected property and the work completed.

The next discussion item was the Preserve America grant program. An earlier email from Paula Mohr, State Historical Society of Iowa CLG Coordinator, was sent to commission members identifying the program website and general guidelines.

One of the requirements for the program, which recognizes and supports efforts to boost historic tourism and other efforts, is to identify a qualifying local project. Possibilities include the West Hill Historic District nomination, PatriArt program or other efforts. Pettit said the Preserve American program might provide funding assistance to help with the Mulberry Avenue survey.

No final decision on the program was made, but Rudisill was directed to contact Mohr to determine if using the West Hill Historic District nomination would qualify in a Preserve America application.

The next item on the agenda was committee reports. Although no formal reports were presented, information on several proposals or upcoming events was provided.

Clark reported he had talked to Muscatine County Supervisor Tom Furling and interested residents concerning the possibly formation of a county historic preservation commission. Furlong had responded with an email and suggested Clark talk to Muscatine County Budget Coordinator Sherry Seright. Clark said he would pursue that contact and also that he and Kent Sissel would discuss Louisa County's countywide program with members of the Louisa County Historic Preservation Commission.

Clark also reported on recent repair work completed by Heinz, USA on the former street car barn. A 2007 tornado damaged the building's roof Heinz has completed repairs.

Clark said he hopes to contact local Heinz officials and request a tour of the building. Wesley Bender, operations superintendent of the Midwest Electrical Railway Corporation, a multi-state organization that operates a rail system at the Old Threshers Reunion Grounds in Mt. Pleasant, is planning to come to Muscatine on October 7 and be a guest on Clark's radio show. Clark hopes to arrange the tour while Bender is in town.

Pettit also reported on a tentative schedule for Historic Preservation Month activities in Muscatine in May. Proposed dates and activities at this time include a May 8 gathering with the Friends; May 9 public program; and a May 10 tour of homes.

The next meeting will be on October 15, 2008 at the regular time and place.

The commission then adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair