

**OFFICIAL MINUTES  
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
NOVEMBER 19, 2008**

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, November 19, 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, Jane Reischauer, Dan Clark, Jo Ann Carlson and Devin Pettit. Others present included Michael Maharry (Friends of Historic Preservation), Mary & Carolyn Beveridge (1416 Mulberry), Maryrose and John Peterschmidt (800 W. Third), Charles Potter (KWPC), Jennifer Meyer (Muscatine Journal) and staff liaison Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed meeting agenda and the minutes of the regular October 15, 2008 meeting. Pettit pointed out the Mulberry Avenue survey was incorrectly identified as the Hershey Avenue survey on page one of the minutes. There were no other changes or any additions to the agenda. .

Carlson moved to approve the consent agenda with the correction; Kessler seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The first agenda item was the election of a new chair to replace Pettit. Carlson moved to appoint Clark as chair for the remainder of Pettit's term; Reischauer seconded. Clark said he would accept the position, if Carlson agreed to remain as vice chair. Carlson agreed to continue serving as vice-chair.

The motion was then approved, all ayes,

The next agenda item was the Mulberry Avenue Survey. Clark summarized a recent email from consultant Rebecca McCarley, in which she reminded everyone the Mulberry corridor had not been designated as a National Historic District.

McCarley had also reported on the upcoming Historic Resources Development Grant Program (HRDP). The grant deadline is May 15, 2009 and could be used for rehabilitation and other preservation efforts, including survey work.

Pettit said he had started surveying the Manjoine Apartment building after hearing recent rumors that it and other nearby buildings could be facing demolition because of potential business expansion in the area. He said Muscatine's Italian Ethnic neighborhood had been right at the edge of the area.

Clark said there was contradictory information on the potential business expansion and that was creating a concern that various buildings could be demolished before the MHPC would have time to document anything.

No other commissioner reported any significant progress on the survey.

The Mulberry Avenue Survey discussion then led to a specific discussion on the status of 1402 Mulberry, which was recently purchased by the Muscatine Art Center Board of Trustees. Portions of the discussion also included the next agenda item, the commission's role in the community.

Clark said the art center's purchase had raised concerns over the future use of the house because of the potential it could face demolition. Although art center director Barb Christiansen said there were no official future plans for the building - and he had no reason to doubt that report - Clark said the commission needed to be prepared. He stressed he did not want any discussion to appear the commission was encouraging any type of confrontation with the art center.

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However, Clark did point out the commission had been surprised in the past by demolition efforts; and when some of those efforts had been opposed by the commission, it had been criticized for not having raised its concerns earlier. He said the art center board would be meeting on November 20 and he planned to attend the meeting. Several other commission members also indicated they planned to attend.

Maharry wondered if any plans by the art center would need to go through the city council for approval. Clark said that could be a question to raise at the art center meeting. However, the consensus, particularly concerning demolition, was it might depend on whose name ended up on the property title.

Clark said the city adopted an historic preservation ordinance when it created the commission. Under the ordinance, the commission was simply fulfilling its duties to monitor the status of historic properties in the community. He said the duties could also include offering to help the art center with the house's preservation. He wondered if that should become the commission's default position when it met with the art center board.

Pettit agreed and moved to establish the commission's position as seeking to have the house preserved if possible; and offering to help the art center board of trustees accomplish that; Carlson seconded and the following additional discussion then followed:

Maryrose Peterschmidt encouraged the commission to develop an alternative position in case the art center board decided to pursue demolition as part of any future expansion plan.

Maharry questioned if the donor of the bequest used by the art center to purchase the property had intended it to be used in that manner. Reischauer said she thought the use of the fund was up to the art center board. She also reported the center actually had two different endowments: one valued at approximately \$400,000 and another at about \$300,000. That would definitely be enough to tear the building down, she said.

Pettit said the art center or city would need to come before the community to seek a bond issue or other public funding support for any major expansion. He said such an expansion could also impact the historic integrity of the museum itself. If that issue was considered, the property's potential use might only be for green space, he said.

Kessler suggested there could be at least three other options open to the art center board if it did not want to restore or demolish the house: 1) the house could be sold and moved; 2) the property could be split and the portion with the house sold; 3) the house could be developed by the art center as a reception site for weddings and other activities conducted at the art center. Clark also said it could be developed as an educational facility, especially for younger people or developed into offices.

Carlson also reported there apparently were no plans to move forward with a joint library/museum facility, which had been proposed several years ago.

Maharry said he thought the art center was likely not interested in the house and he suggested the center could donate the building to a non-profit preservation group that could then restore and eventually sell it.

Christiansen had been reported as saying the house was in bad shape and Reischauer suggested the art center could provide access to the commission to view it and determine how significant the restoration activities would need to be. The commissioners agreed the house probably could be renovated or restored and was unlikely to be as deteriorated as the Marshek house at 417 W. Third, which Maharry recently purchased and is now restoring.

Mary Beveridge and her mother Carolyn said they would hate to see the house removed and another parking lot constructed. She said any expansion of the art center should go behind the current building and not to the side.

Carolyn Beveridge recalled her home at 1416 Mulberry was once the last house on Mulberry and agreed with her daughter that demolishing 1402 Mulberry would simply chip away at the current residential neighborhood and damage the area's historic appearance.

Following this discussion, the board returned to its original motion and approved it, all ayes.

Although the commission returned to 1402 Mulberry for specific comments later in the meeting, the discussion then evolved into a review of the commission's role and relationship with the community, the next agenda item.

Prior to the discussion, Rudisill distributed information available on the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) website relating to those issues and local documents associated with the establishment of the Muscatine Certified Local Government (CLG) program.

The SHSI material included *Iowa's Certified Local government Program: How to Apply for and Maintain CLG Status*. This was a booklet published by the SHSI that explains the requirements for obtaining and keeping a CLG designation. The city followed these procedures in the early 2000s when the MHPC was established. The local documents included the signed CLG agreement between the City of Muscatine and the SHSI; and a copy of the ordinance passed by the city council to establish the CLG, including a listing of its duties and responsibilities. Several commission members pointed out Barb Christensen and AJ Johnson were both key figures in that effort.

Clark said the documents show historic preservation commissions have several roles to play in the community, including both educational and preservation activities. Kessler pointed out that HPCs have the power to acquire and operate historic properties. Maharry said a correct interpretation of the city's CLG ordinance left little doubt the ordinance required the MHPC to protect 1402 Mulberry.

Reischauer said she felt if the art center demolished the house it would be contradictory to its mission, which she read to the board. She also suggested the center might not be aware of the MHPC's duties and responsibilities, especially since commission members were not fully aware of them.

Clark said the art center had likely bought the property because it had become available, but now the opportunity was available for the center to set a good example for historic preservation.

The commission next discussed the status of two accounts established by the MHPC with the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine (CFGM). Reischauer said she had discussed with CFGM officials the possibility of transferring the accounts to the Friends of Historic Preservation. The endowment fund cannot be transferred, but a general fund balance was apparently in the process of being transferred, Reischauer reported.

Pettit said someone would need to alert the CFGM to send the next funds statement to Clark and not him.

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The next agenda item was a review of the status on various reports that consultant Rebecca McCarley has been authorized to create. These reports included the various surveys and nominations for potential historic districts in the downtown and West Hill areas. The Musser Public Library will cover the cost for creating the DVDs and will eventually transfer them to the library website.

Rudisill reported the DVD from McCarley had arrived that morning.

Carlson offered to burn additional copies of the report for MHPC members.

The 2008 Annual Report was the next item on the agenda, but Rudisill said there had not been any new developments since the last meeting. He urged commissioners to continue sending him monitoring reports on any historic properties; as well as reports on training they might have taken over the past year.

The next agenda item was the possible meeting with county officials to discuss a potential Muscatine County HPC. Clark said he had discussed the issue with supervisors Tom Furlong and Wayne Shultz.

Both supervisors are apparently interested in a Muscatine County HPC because of interest in applying for state funding to renovate historic county properties. Rudisill advised he did not believe a county HPC designation would be needed for the county to seek grant funding for any county property within the city that is already listed on the National Register or determined to be eligible for listing.

Clark said the supervisors have invited the MHPC to one of its future meetings.

The commission next discussed notices received by the MHPC and/or the city concerning the construction or modification of several communication towers in the city. After reviewing the notices, the MHPC agreed the proposed work did not appear to have any impact to existing nearby historic properties.

The Preserve America Program and a possible application to designate Muscatine as a Preserve America Community were then discussed. Maharry said the Friends of Historic Preservation wish to pursue an application, but a December 1 deadline for the next application was too close to have one ready.

He said the Friends would be targeting an application for the next review deadline on March 1. The West Hill Historic District nomination would continue to be the community project identified for the nomination.

Clark said the MHPC would assist in the application.

Maharry then presented a Friends report and specifically the preliminary planning for 2009 Historic Preservation Month in May. Proposed or potential activities include a tour of historic homes, open house of historic properties that are for sale, presentation of annual historic preservation awards, a private reception for Friends and MHPC members and possible fundraisers.

The commission also briefly discussed the Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP) and possible funding from it to conduct survey and other preservation work. No action was taken.

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The next meeting of the commission will be held Wednesday, December 17, 2008

The commission then adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair