

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
JULY 16, 2008

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, July 16, 2008 at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at the Muscatine City Hall, 215 Sycamore. Members present included Diane Day, Jane Reischauer, Jo Ann Carlson, Devin Pettit, Dan Clark and Ramiro Vazquez. Staff present included Jim Rudisill.

The consent agenda, including the distributed meeting agenda and the minutes of the regular May 21, 2008 meeting, was reviewed.

There were no additional agenda items.

Pettit identified the following errors in the distributed May 21 minutes: (Page 1, Paragraph 2) "There were not changes..." should be "There were no changes..."; (Page 2, Paragraph 13) "Clark will co that..." should be "Clark will copy that..." and (Page 4, Paragraph 1) "and he was hoping to get some guidance from the MHPC on allowing EMCs in historic districts" was apparently left in the minutes by a editing error, makes no sense and should be removed.

After the review, Carlson moved to approve the consent agenda with the corrected minutes; Day seconded; motion passed; all ayes.

Election of officers was the first agenda item.

Carlson moved to retain all officers in their current positions; Reischauer seconded the motion. This would keep Pettit as the commission chair and Carlson as the vice-chair for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The motion passed with all ayes.

Following the vote, Pettit alerted the commission that he might resign from the chair position before the end of his term.

The commission next discussed new goals and objectives for the 2008-09 year. Pettit pointed out most of the 2007-08 goals were either accomplished or started. He requested proposals for this year's goals and objectives.

Several members suggested continuing the Mulberry Avenue survey work. As part of the discussion on continuing that work, Rudisill will contact Mark Warren to determine if he can attend a future meeting to discuss incorporating the historical information from the previous surveys into MAGIC.

Pettit then suggested that once the Mulberry Avenue survey is completed, the commission should continue survey work in Muscatine's original town. He suggested the order following the outline developed by McCarley in her Downtown and West Hill Survey Reports.

That order would include: complete the Mulberry Avenue survey; survey Seventh and Eighth Streets; and East Fifth, Sixth (east of Mulberry).

Clark said he agreed with a focus on the Original Town, but was not concerned about the order. He said Seventh and Eighth Streets contained the houses of more prominent people and was more "glamorous", but the houses on Fifth and Sixth Streets were likely more endangered.

Carlson said she was more interested in completing the Mulberry Avenue survey rather than identifying new project areas.

Reischauer suggested continuing the discussion without making any final decision, explaining she was also interested in seeing what happens on Fourth Street. She also reminded the commission that East Fifth and Sixth Streets had been the Jewish community area and provided an opportunity to examine Muscatine's cultural heritage.

Pettit then asked if the commission wished to stay in the Original Town or move to other areas. The consensus was to stay in the original town.

Pettit suggested another 2008 goal and objective would be a bylaw change that would eliminate the standing committees and replace them with ad-hoc committees. He also suggested the commission chair might need to assign more duties to various members to insure the work load is distributed more equally among the members. Pettit said his work load had increased because of interviews, group meetings and other activities that could be partially absorbed by other members. There was no disagreement with the committee switch, although Clark questioned if a bylaws change was needed to make that alteration.

Pettit also pointed out he is currently serving as a member of the Downtown Action Alliance, which was formed several months ago to replace the Greater Downtown Merchants Association (G.D.M.A.) and said another commissioner would need to be appointed to his position with this group if he was to resign.

Clark also suggested the MHPC adopt a goal/objective to start discussions with the Louisa County Historic Preservation Commission to hold a joint meeting. He also suggested meeting with the Muscatine City Council and the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors to discuss preservation efforts.

There was no final action establishing a 2008 MHPC Goals and Objectives List.

The commission next discussed the current status of each members' efforts on the Mulberry Avenue survey. Carlson and Day reported they planned to conduct team research the following day. Vazquez said he would meet with Rudisill for research training.

The posting of 213 E. 2nd by the city was then discussed. Pettit said he was unsure why the building had been posted "not safe for occupancy", but was concerned because it is a contributing building to the downtown historic district.

Rudisill reported he had been unable to talk to city inspector Ken Rogers concerning the posting, but will continue contact efforts.

The commission then discussed purchasing digital copies of the West Hill and Downtown surveys, Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nominations and both historic district nominations from McCarley.

The cost for this service would be \$350, with higher costs for enhanced quality and other details.

Carlson agreed to ask the Friends of Musser Library to fund the cost and install it on its website.

Rudisill will check with the state to determine if there are any copyright issues that need to be resolved. He will also inquire if state officials are aware of CDs being developed for other surveys or nominations.

Committee reports were then presented.

Reischauer reported that during the recent Friends meeting, Mary Anne Kessler had made a presentation on a photo book she is developing as a possible fundraiser. The book was originally done as a display for the PatriART program. The displays included close-up images of special features of a home and a full image of the building.

Clark reported on the apparent lack of any city policy concerning removal of street car/brick streets historical assets. He said his most recent concern focused on the removal of street car rails and bricks from Oak Street, an entryway into the city as part of the Interurban railway system, until the 1930s. He said the rails and bricks were exposed on Oak Street during a recent sewer installation/street repair project. When he first saw the items they appeared in excellent condition and he was able to take some pictures of the intact rails and bricks. In a later visit, both the rails and bricks had been removed and the street packed with sand in preparation for a new street surface.

He called Public Works Director Randy Hill to inquire about recovering a small piece of the rail as a memento. He said Hill appeared to be uninformed about the rails and did not know their location. Clark was later notified the rails were at the public works department and he could take a short section if he could find someone to cut it from the longer lengths.

Clark said the incident, along with other recent incidents involving street car assets – such as the power plant that was demolished a few years ago by HNI and the non-historic renovation of a street car barn by Heinz, USA – was a concern because if the trend continued, the few remaining historical street assets would soon disappear.

He said there was still interest in the street car and rails, and pointed out reporter Melisa Regennitter had contacted him concerning an exposed rail in front of the Muscatine Journal office. He said she had reported numerous calls from individuals wondering about the rail.

Clark said he had reviewed a 1917 map of the rail system and discovered the map was accurate, based on his observations during street repair work or other times rails were exposed.

He posed the question if the city should have some type of policy relating to the street car rails and their removal and indicated he would continue to study the issue.

The commission then adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair