

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**JANUARY 26, 2010**

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the lower-level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Dan Clark, Jane Reischauer, Jo Ann Carlson, Mary Anne Kessler, Ramiro Vazquez and Diane Mayer-Day. Others present included Muscatine Mayor Dick O'Brien, local historian Lee Miller, his brother Ron Miller and staff assistant Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular December 16, 2009 meeting. There were no changes to the consent agenda.

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

The first agenda item was a reminder from Rudisill for commission members to provide him with updated information for the 2009 Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report. Information could include rehabilitation or other repair work on historic properties in the community; any training completed by commission members and an updated set of plans for the next year.

Commission members said they had not received any copy yet of the proposed annual report and Rudisill said he would email it to everyone.

The report is due in Des Moines on February 26. The annual report must be filed to maintain eligibility for several grant programs.

The commission next discussed its meeting schedule. Currently the bylaws require the commission to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:15 p.m. The commission would need to change the bylaws to change the meeting schedule.

Reischauer reported the Friend of Historic Muscatine Preservation had discussed changing its meeting time and date to after the MHPC meeting. If that was done, Reischauer pointed out the MHPC would need to monitor its meeting length and try to adjourn by 7 p.m.

Kessler also pointed out the initial 15 minutes of the MHPC meeting is often more of a social period and the business portion of the meeting often does not begin until around 5:30 p.m.

After discussing the issue further, Kessler moved to keep the current schedule; Reischauer seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The various CLG-related activities were discussed next. Leading that list was a review of efforts to preserve the Civil War monument in the Muscatine County Courthouse yard. Lee Miller updated the commission on his activities.

Miller said his initial interest in the project had been to add the names of MHPC Minutes

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Muscatine County Civil War soldiers left off when the monument was originally commissioned. That focus eventually changed after the monument's condition became better known.

He reported that David Arbogast, a Davenport architectural historian, had been hired by local resident Tom Kautz to inspect the monument and provide a report on its safety and condition.

Miller said the Arbogast study indicated if no immediate action was taken, by the middle part of this century the monument would deteriorate to the point where it would no longer be standing. Arbogast also recommended an application of an epoxy to the original soldier that would allow the stone to breathe while providing protection from the elements.

Rudisill said Arbogast had recommended a similar solution for the Greenwood Cemetery Chapel when Arbogast was the consultant for a preservation project on that building.

Based on Arbogast's review and other discussions, Miller said the preservation team definitely was planning to replace the soldier and had identified it as the first priority. The replacement soldier would likely be manufactured from granite and not the original marble. Miller said that was causing some concern about placing the new soldier on the original stone monument. He suggested the replacement soldier could be placed on a new and shorter base (beside the existing column) to allow better viewing from the ground.

Originally, the plan had been to have the new soldier erected by July 4, but since the granite is coming from China, there will not be enough lead time to complete all the work.

The Muscatine Art Center, which has agreed to house the original soldier, is planning to develop a Civil War exhibit in 2011 in recognition of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the war's start.

Clark pointed out - and Miller agreed - that the following year, 2012, would mark the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Shiloh (April 1862), a major confrontation that saw heavy involvement of soldiers from the Muscatine area along with their first big casualties.

Next year would also mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Shiloh, a major confrontation that saw heavy involvement of soldiers from the Muscatine area.

Clark thanked Miller for his efforts and said the project was a good example of cooperation between the county and the commission

The commission next discussed the Alexander Clark Heritage District and the next steps needed to create the area.

Clark reminded the commission members the city's current ordinance does not cover establishing local historic districts. Former consultant Rebecca McCarley had also

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suggested a more appropriate description should be used, since a local historic district was an official designation of an area established under an approved local historic district.

Clark said the concept was as much of a marketing issue as anything. He and Kent Sissel were planning to meet with officials of the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry to more fully explore the marketing and tourism potential for the heritage district.

He also reported that former MHPC member and chair Jay Brady had suggested stressing the idea was tied to education not regulation. He also emphasized the commission had no authority to designate any area, but could recommend such an action to the city council.

Clark said another former MHPC member and chair, Jim Nepple, had pointed out the commission also needed to be prepared for questions from the council. Nepple said the commission needed a long-range plan and be able to discuss potential costs before presenting the proposal to the council.

Clark emphasized the proposal did not carry any direct cost, except for any plan to market the area. He did acknowledge the commission might ask the city to provide some of Rudisill's time to develop grant proposals if a National Landmark status was acquired.

He also explained there would be some cost this year to cover the expenses for collaboration with Paul Finkelman, a renowned expert in law of slavery and constitutional law at Albany Law School. Clark and Sissel have been discussing the National Historic Landmark nomination project with Finkelman in expectation he will write the section on historical significance. Clark estimated that cost would be around \$6000, including at least one visit to Muscatine. He said Sissel has about \$3000 of that cost covered and other funding could come from the Iowa Humanities Board or other sources.

Mayor O'Brien then asked what area would actually be included in the proposed heritage district.

Clark explained the area included that portion of Third Street running between Iowa Avenue and Pine Street and extending from the #2 Alley to the #3 Alley, with the West Third and Chestnut intersection as the precise center of the two-square-block district. He pointed out the area is rich in historic sites and extant (existing) structures. These include such notable resources as the the original and current sites of the Alexander Clark House, the school where Susan Clark studied (1850s Scott House, which is now part of the Welch Apartments) and the 1857 former Congregational Church (now Pro-Hair). Clark said Doug Jones (staff archaeologist for the State Historic Preservation Office) was especially excited to learn about the former church, since there are few pre-Civil War Congregational churches remaining in the state; and this one was particularly associated with antislavery activities.

O'Brien said he did not see any problem with making the recommendation, but was concerned there were no African-Americans involved in the project.

"Why don't we have them here?" he asked.

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Kessler said Annabell Luth, an influential member of Muscatine's African-American community, had attended the informational meeting on the district conducted by the MHPC last year. Clark said Luth's mother, Berniece Williams is the matriarch of that community and has taken part in various recent events on Alexander Clark and local Black history.

Clark said other community members had emailed him to assure they would collaborate with the MHPC on the project. That cooperation is expected to be reinforced during discussions on local black history during Black History Month in February. That month also makes an ideal time to present the recommendation to the council, especially since the mayor would proclaim February 21-February 27 to be Alexander Clark Week in Muscatine.

Despite the previous assurance, O'Brien said the first question council members will ask is "How much will it cost?" Once that concern is addressed, O'Brien said the council would next ask why the commission was doing this.

He told the commission members to have solid explanation and then to stick with that purpose and focus.

"Don't blindsides them," he urged the commission.

Clark then moved the Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission recommend to the Muscatine City Council that it designate that area between Iowa Avenue on the east; Pine Street on the west; and between the #2 Alley on the south and the #3 Alley on the north as the Alexander Clark Heritage District; Carlson seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The next CLG discussion item was a report from Clark on the Downtown Action Alliance (DAA). Clark said this group of downtown supporters had always held a position open for the MHPC.

Clark said Jim Nepple had initially attended the meetings and now he was attending. Reischauer had been appointed to the alliance as a downtown resident delegate. Clark said Steven Brown and Dawnese Openshaw are co-chairing the Downtown Action Alliance. He said the DAA is organized similar to Main Street with four primary sections, Business Improvement, Design, Organization and Promotion. He said the design group is focused on promoting commerce and historic preservation and is intended as the successor to the former Muscatine Appearance Projects (MAPS) team that used to meet regularly to discuss community activities and efforts.

Clark said the design group was focused on promoting commerce and historic preservation. He said Steven Brown and Dawnese Openshaw were co-chairing the historic preservation section of the group.

The alliance will be a continuing part of the MHPC agenda and Clark will provide future updates.

In a related discussion later in the meeting, Clark suggested it might be worthwhile to have representatives of the city's listed historic districts attend the alliance meetings.

Clark suggested each district might appoint a representative to the alliance, who could then give a report on their representative district to the group on a regular basis.

The commission next discussed potential tours of historic properties. Clark reported Tom Peterson is now in charge of the Weed House, but there had not been any contact with him to arrange a tour.

Several reports were then presented to the commission.

Kessler said members of the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation were excited about the Resource Enhancement and Protection report and the potential for improving historic preservation funding for this important program.

She also began explaining the various activities being planned for Historic Preservation Month activities in May. She also said there had been some discussion by the Friends about launching a top 10 Historic Structures list in the community. These structures would be non-commercial and be identified in the year opposite when the Home Tour program is conducted.

Clark suggested a possible tour of Civil War homes next year might be appropriate because of the war's sesquicentennial.

Clark also reported on rumors that the transfer of the property at 1402 Mulberry had not gone through. He said Brian Costas had assured him the property had been transferred and the project was moving forward. The tentative date for moving the house is May 14. Clark said he hoped publicity about the move, including a possible television documentary, would prove successful both as education and entertainment.

Other items Clark presented included an article in a newsletter concerning an executive order from Iowa Governor Chet Culver that state agencies locate facilities in cultural and entertainment districts, historic districts and historic buildings.

Clark also shared communication from a descendant of Henry Clay Dean (1822-1881), telling that the PBS "History Detectives" program has been researching Dean's story for a future show. Dean was a Muscatine Methodist minister known as a great orator and Southern sympathizer who managed to escape execution by Union soldiers near Keokuk during the Civil War.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:10 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission will be Wednesday, February 17, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair