

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 17, 2010**

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, February 17, 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 and Jim Schmidt. Others present included Michael Maharry and staff assistant Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular January 26, 2010 meeting. Kessler reported the agenda listed the minutes as dated January 20 instead of January 26. After further review, Carlson moved to approve the consent agenda with the correct date noted; Kessler seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Clark also reported that Jane Daufeldt of the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GMCCI) had recently expressed a concern with the October 21, 2009 minutes. Those minutes had implied Amanda Landers-Each was no longer working with the GMCCI, which is not correct. She is still with the GMCCI, although no longer managing the Cultural and Entertainment Districts. After reviewing those comments, Kessler moved to amend the October 21, 2009 minutes to reflect Landers-Each is still on the GMCCI staff; Reischauer seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The proposed 2009 Muscatine Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report was then discussed.

Kessler pointed out in the top paragraph of Section 3 of the attachments, it was reported there had not been any special meetings in 2009. She reminded the commission the July 23 meeting was a special meeting.

Clark also reported on Page 3 the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation was incorrectly identified as Friends of Historic Muscatine.

After noting those errors, Reischauer moved to approve Muscatine's 2009 CLG Annual Report; Kessler seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission next discussed CLG-related activities.

Clark reported there had been a flurry of meetings between the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Muscatine County officials regarding the repair and restoration of the Civil War Soldiers Monument in the courthouse square.

Among items discussed has been the insurance obtained by the VFW to cover various portions of the work. The county has requested additional information on the insurance.

Clark also reported volunteers had examined the soldier and Muscatine Power and Water (MPW) will apparently do the actual removal of the soldier. MPW would rather do the move while the ground is still frozen. The supervisors are expected to approve the removal during their March 1 meeting and MPW should then removal the soldier soon after that action is taken. If anyone wishes to assist, they should contact Clark.

Clark said project coordinator Lee Miller is continuing to seek funds to cover the project cost; and had not yet met with Judi Holdorf of the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine.

In other financial discussion involving CLG activities, Clark said newly elected councilmember Mark LeRette had recently emailed him to express frustration over not getting funding of areas LeRette supports into Muscatine's 2010-11 budget. According to Clark, LeRette wanted to do more with historic preservation and the riverfront. One proposal LeRette suggested was development of a history festival on the riverfront in May next year. That festival could be held to coincide with the biennial tour of homes organized by the MHPC.

Maharry also reported LeRette had contacted him to discuss tax credits and easements. Maharry suggested the city should consider freezing of property taxes for individuals in historic districts, especially commercial building owners.

The commission next discussed the status of the proposed Alexander Clark Heritage District. Clark said he; Kent Sissel; and Heather Shoppa, Muscatine GMCCI Convention and Visitor Bureau Manager, had met earlier in the day with Muscatine City Administrator Gregg Mandsager. Clark said Mandsager felt the proposed district was non-confrontational and would likely be approved by the council when presented.

Mandsager thought Maharry's description of "heritage district" as an "ornamental designation" was a positive portrayal of the area, Clark said, adding he felt the consensus from the meeting was that the designation was a commission project, which likely would not receive a strong negative response from anyone.

Clark also reported Shoppa was excited about the designation because of the potential marketing opportunities and general lack of association with other efforts.

Maharry asked if signage could be arranged for the area. He thought attaching a sign to existing street signs might be one option. Clark also saw some potential for signs on the new River's Edge wall and possibly an extension into other portions of the Pearl City Cultural and Entertainment District neighborhood.

The next commission agenda item was a discussion on historic properties or districts. The first property discussed was the status of the Weed Park log cabin. Schmidt reported there had not been any additional work done on the cabin and he suspected there would not be any work until this spring.

Schmidt also reported he would talk with Fred Edwards, manager for the Blackwell Mansion and try to arrange a March 6 tour for the commission members and other invited guests. After getting an update from Edwards, Schmidt said he would contact Rudisill, who would send out a final notice for the tour.

There was no update provided on any other house tours.

Various reports from other groups or activities were then provided to the commission.

Kessler reported the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation would be meeting in the lower level conference room at city hall shortly after the MHPC adjourned.

Clark next reported on a chance meeting he recently had with Bill Sherman, who is associated with the Iowa Preservation Alliance. Sherman had attended the recent Eagles and Ivory program in Muscatine and rode on Clark's trolley during the event. Clark said he recognized Sherman's name and the two discussed the possibility of Clark serving on the Iowa Preservation Alliance Board. Clark said he was trying to get out of some of his commitments instead of adding to them and wondered if any other MHPC member might be interested.

He said he had sent information on the Jayne House to the alliance in hope it would be published in its Iowa History Journal magazine. However, nothing had come out, so he wondered if having someone on the board would not help get Muscatine's historic story out. He said he would consider the offer and would also present the idea during the Friends meeting.

Maharry suggested a one-year commitment might be possible.

Clark next provided an update on issues concerning the MHPC.

He reported he had recently talked with Anna Mack and learned she is still interested in serving as a commission member.

Clark also said he had attended a February 6 legislative forum and asked the legislators who attended to support historic tax credits. He also said Dubuque had recently won a \$5.6 million transit grant to create a more walkable, transit-friendly downtown. He said the grant was likely tied to Iowa raising tax credits and attracting IBM to the state.

Maharry also gave some of the credit to Iowa's health care system.

Another report provided by Clark focused on recent discussions by the Downtown Action Alliance. The Design Group, which is basically composed of members of the former MAPS organization, has been identified as the facilitator to handle façade improvement in the downtown.

The façade improvement program is supported through donations by three banks, although Clark was unsure of the present funding status.

Maharry suggested the program could be combined with an easement and property tax abatement program. He said the improvements completed under a combined program would initially not be taxed, but eventually they would be and the city would ultimately benefit. He said the MHPC could become involved by approving proposed design plans.

Clark said he would contact Tom Bankhead and Kathy Keane to report to the MHPC on the program's current status when they return from a vacation.

Clark also reported he had recently began to talk with members of the Stanley family concerning the condition of a family home at 115 Sunset. Clark said the house was originally designed by C. Maxwell Stanley, founder of Stanley Engineering.

David and Jean Stanley now live in the house, which has not been updated since it was designed and built in the 1940s. Clark said he had talked to the Stanleys about using historic tax credits for upgrade work and was pleased to discover they were interested.

Maharry said he would be willing to explain the process, which he is currently following on his properties. He explained the process has a multiplier effect and that on his house alone, he already had used 28 different people.

Maharry also reported a public hearing was being held that night in Iowa City to discuss the nomination of Manville Heights as a new historic district in the community.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:15 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Chair