

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MAY 19, 2010

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, May 19, 2010, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower-level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Dan Clark, Mary Ann Kessler, Diane Mayer Day, Jim Schmidt, Ramiro Vasquez and Jane Reischauer. Others present were Kent Sissel, Michael Maharry and Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular April 21, 2010 meeting. Clark requested the first three sentences in the Downtown Alliance discussion section be deleted from the minutes.

Schmidt moved to approve the consent agenda with the corrections; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission then discussed the continuing efforts to renovate the county's Civil War Memorial. Clark reported a committee has started meeting every Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the VFW Hall. He said a large number of local groups are already represented at the meeting, but anyone interested is welcomed to attend. He also pointed out that information about the effort was beginning to extend out from Muscatine and donations were being received from people outside of the area. He said a person in the Quad Cities has recently donated four \$1 bills.

A fundraising event, which includes an auction, has been scheduled for Saturday, June 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Muscatine County Environmental Center. He said the committee is actively seeking donations of items that could be sold at the auction. Anyone interested in donating an item should contact Pam Knott. Kessler announced she had a pipe organ she would be willing to donate.

Clark also announced a contract had been signed with historian David Arbogast to provide consultant services for the work. The local committee had agreed at the last meeting to replace the present column. The estimated cost for the entire project is \$255,000. A local resident has donated \$25,000 to help seed the fundraising. Maharry asked if there were any plans to locate other potential "seeders". Clark said committee organizer Lee Miller had talked to Judi Holdorf, Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine (CFGM), about the fundraising effort, which would include identifying other potential supporters. The CFGM has set up a specific fund for the Civil War Memorial fundraising and is also assisting with the June 12 activity.

Maharry said he believed the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation would want to be identified as a supporter of the project. Clark said other support is also coming from the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He said Jane Daufeldt was planning to develop a Civil War theme for this year's Fourth of July parade. He pointed out with the sesquicentennial anniversary of the war's start would be next year and that would generate renewed increase in the war as the anniversary approached.

He said he would continue to provide reports to the commission.

The next discussion issue was the Alexander Clark Heritage District.

Clark reported the city council had approved submitting a Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP) grant application to the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) last week. The application would help fund the development of an application to identify the Alexander Clark House as a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

Announcement of awards is set for July 1.

Sissel said he and Clark had recently met with a potential supporter of establishing the landmark and also efforts to bring constitutional scholar Paul Finkelman, to southeast Iowa for seminars and talks. Finkelman, along with others, is identified in the grant application as a key consultant and the developer of the NHL application.

Sissel also said efforts for additional funding for Finkelman's trip and presentations would be developed through the Humanities, Iowa program. The total cost for Finkelman's trip is estimated at around \$8000. The Humanities, Iowa program would be able to provide up to \$2500 in assistance if an application is approved.

In a later discussion on the possible exploration of development ideas for the Alexander Clark Heritage District, both Clark and Sissel provided updates on their efforts.

Sissel said he had looked at the historic marker at the West Liberty train station as a possible model for a similar sign identifying the heritage district. He said that sign had cost around \$250. He also explained that a sign design and possible location would be needed before holding any talks with city administrator Gregg Mandsager.

Sissel also provided the commission with an overview of a possible exploratory to locate a Clark memorial area. He reported there is interest to pursue plans to assist in the exploratory from Iowa State University landscape architecture students, Muscatine High School, Master Gardeners and other volunteers.

Both also reported that at a recent Community Improvement Action Team (CIAT) meeting, they had been encouraged to present their request to move forward with the exploratory to the city council. Sissel said council approval was needed because technically not even trash could be picked up from any site without council approval.

Clark said in the past when he appeared before the council on other issues he had been reminded about earlier problems associated with commission projects. He said his dream would be for the city to support the landmark and exploratory efforts as a way to embrace its heritage.

Sissel said he had talked with Mayor Richard O'Brien; Mandsager; Planning, Zoning and Building Safety Director Steve Boka; and council member Mark LeRette about the planning. He said everyone was supportive.

Maharry suggested the entire effort could be identified as an economic development issue that would benefit the local economy. Clark said any proposal could also be boosted by providing the library with additional information on Alexander Clark. He said during a recent meeting with a potential funder, they handed over a folder of research material developed on Alexander Clark by local historian Bette Veerhusen. The funder had directed his office staff to scan the material and put it on a DVD. That disc would eventually be offered to the library and allow searches and other work to be done.

Rudisill cautioned however that presenting any type of action to the council without first going through staff could lead to opposition. He suggested holding a special meeting to give the staff an opportunity to respond.

Schmidt then moved to hold a special meeting on May 26, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room of city hall and invite those staff directors most affected by any heritage district development to attend; Kessler seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Sissel said quite a few details had already been completed and he would bring copies of that information to the meeting.

The commission next discussed the upcoming Historic Preservation Month activities.

Clark reported the planned showing of the Jayne House move on TLC's Heavy Haulers Show had been delayed. He did not know when the show would be airing. He did report the current owner is still interested in getting the house listed on the National Register of Historic Places and apply for tax credits.

Clark also said the owner was also interested in doing some interior remodeling to install a laundry on the second floor. However, the owner was concerned about violating any historic guidelines. Maharry said the guidelines generally focus on the exterior and normally allow owners to update interiors to accommodate current use.

Maharry then reported on the planned May 22 Open House of the Marshek House. The walk-through is scheduled for noon to 4 p.m., with refreshments available. He said "before" photos would be available so visitors could make comparisons of the same views with work completed or in progress. He said he hopes to conduct another tour once all the work has been completed. An informational booth on the efforts to restore the Civil War monument might also be set up during the tour.

In other preservation month activities, Clark said he planned to issue a historic preservation month news release and had learned from Chad Bishop that a video on the Underground Railroad had aired April 24. Sissel said he had not seen anything about the program on the Muscatine Power and Water cable schedule.

Clark also reported the effort to have Mayor O'Brien issue a proclamation for Historic Preservation Month had not been set up soon enough and would not happen despite the good intentions. He would check to see if the mayor would be available to distribute certificates to the winners of the 2010 Historic Preservation awards.

Recommended winners this year included: Michael & Kerri McKim, 1420 Mulberry, Historic Paint; Dave Armstrong, 1518 E. 5th, Commercial Property; John & Ann Parks, 503 W. 2nd, Porch Restoration; Tom & Cindy Kautz, 205 Cherry, Portico; and Michael & Shelly Maharry, 207 Broadway, Whole House Restoration.

After reviewing the recommendations, Kessler moved to approve all awards and issue certificates to those identified; Schmidt seconded; motion passed, all ayes.\

The tour of the Weed House was discussed next. Clark said Dave Armstrong was still willing to give a tour to commission members. No date was set.

In other reports, Clark asked if anyone had talked with Peg Griffin, the Grandview woman who had contacted him seeking contractor information. Clark had sent out an email earlier asking anyone with background in building renovation to contact her. Since no one had contacted her, Clark said he would respond.

Clark also asked Rudisill if anyone with the VFW had contacted him about grant funding for restoration of its building at 421 Mulberry. This building was originally the city's Fire Station #2 and likely is a significant historic building. Rudisill said no one had contacted him. Kessler said Devin Pettit might have done a report on the building as part of the commission's Mulberry Avenue survey work. That building had been part of his list. Rudisill will check on it and wait for the VFW to call.

Clark also updated the commission on a Downtown Action Alliance (DAA) meeting that had been held earlier in the day. He said a new downtown manager has started working with the alliance. The focus of the group is for events and marketing. Clark said Ann Meeker would join him on the design committee, along with Tom Bankhead. Clark said he would chair one meeting of the committee and continue serving on the DAA until December. Maharry said he would volunteer to also serve on the design committee.

The commission also discussed signs for the community's national historic districts. Maharry suggested the Iowa Prison Industries (IPI) be contacted for price quotes and availability. Schmidt moved to request staff contact IPI to inquire into sign costs and availability; Vazquez seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Rudisill next reported on a cell tower being installed in the community. The tower had already been approved by the State Historic Preservation Office

Rudisill also reminded commissioners to contact anyone who might be interested in serving. The terms of Clark, Kessler and Reischauer all expire on June 30. Clark has served the maximum two consecutive terms and is ineligible to be reappointed; while Kessler is moving from the community. Reischauer has served only one term and is eligible for reappointment. Prospective applicants can contact either Rudisill or executive secretary Fran Donelson.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, June 16, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair