

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, September 15, 2010, at 5:15 p.m. in the city council chambers at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Ramiro Vazquez, Jim Schmidt and Devin Pettit. Others present were Jim Rudisill and Michael Maharry.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular August 18, 2010 meeting. Schmidt moved to approve the consent agenda; Pettit seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The initial discussion included several Certified Local Government (CLG) issues.

Pettit reported he had not talked to the student doing the church history project. Carlson suggested more education outreach with the schools might be good.

The commission then discussed the city's upcoming budget discussions and possible methods to seek some funding support for the MHPC. Pettit said city administrator Gregg Mandsager appeared to have a more formal budgeting process. Carlson asked Pettit to develop a list of possible costs the MHPC might face next year. Schmidt wondered about advertising costs for commission activities, but Pettit said the Friends were more involved in the outreach efforts that would require advertising.

Vazquez asked who had paid for the recent training activity conducted in Davenport. Carlson said the Friends had handled those costs and also suggested the commission examine other programs to determine what those cost. A \$50 per member figure was suggested as a possible starting point.

Pettit said he would talk with Mandsager about potential funding for the MHPC, with an estimate of approximately \$350 as a possible budget request.

In other training and education discussion, Schmidt said he would be willing to conduct an educational/training class on restoration of decorative plaster. Either he or Rudisill would contact Paula Mohr, State Historical Society of Iowa CLG Coordinator, about the requirements needed to offer the course and the overall possibility of holding it.

The commission next discussed several historic property/district concerns.

The first included activities relating to the Alexander G. Clark Heritage District.

Rudisill reported the National Historic Landmark project was still gearing up. Local historian Kent Sissel was making most of the contacts between the state, consultant Paul Finkelman and others. A contract would need to be signed between the city and all consultants and developing that document had been slow, but would continue to move forward, Rudisill explained.

Finkelman was currently in the community conducting talks on slavery and other issues, including Clark's role in national and state civil rights and other causes. Rudisill said Finkelman had met that morning with others to discuss the proposed National Historic Landmark project and possible contract provisions.

Based on that meeting and continued contacts with Kent Sissel and others, a contract would be written between Finkelman and the city for the nomination's development and presentation to the National Park Service.

The commission also continued a discussion on signage for the West Hill National Historic District. Carlson has been in contact with Iowa Prison Industries (IPI) and earlier had emailed examples of those signs to commission members and staff. Those signs, which would cost between \$17.60 and \$21.60, depending on size and other factors, would fit on top of the existing street signs at city intersections.

Pettit told the commission those plans might be affected by the city's decision to replace the current signs with larger ones. He said around 150 new signs are expected to be installed this year, with the first signs going up at the Clermont Drive and Baton Rouge Road intersections with Mulberry.

Vazquez wondered about paying for the signs. Carlson the hope was the Friends and fundraising would cover the cost. She agreed to contact IPI for an update.

Pettit reported there was nothing new on the status of the Trinity Church repairs.

In other historic district/property reports, Pettit told the commission of plans by developers to begin rehabilitation/restoration work on the Union Block. He also reported the developers were investigating the acquisition or control of additional areas along Mulberry. Part of that work could involve demolition of some buildings, which he said would help to stabilize and preserve other sections of that area. Part of that development would include around 30 elderly housing units with garden plots.

In final discussions, Pettit reported he was planning to talk with Mandsager concerning the city's downtown tax increment financing (TIF) district and the potential for using it to generate funds for a façade improvement program.

He also pointed out the city's tax abatement program is not being used much by downtown property owners and questioned if it could be promoted more. He felt between the TIF funding and tax abatement program, downtown restoration work seemed feasible.

Currently some downtown property owners are willing to sell, but it is difficult to find developers willing to invest in restoration or adaptive reuse of buildings, he said.

Pettit also reported the meeting/tour with the Mt. Vernon historic preservation group earlier in the month had gone well and everyone was pleased with the visit.

The Friends are scheduled to meet September 25.

Rudisill next reported on the Broom Factory building, explaining the city had received a report of doors being left open and poor maintenance.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:20 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair