

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OCTOBER 20, 2010

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, October 20, 2010, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Devin Pettit, Jane Reischauer and Diane Mayer-Day. Others present were Jim Rudisill and Michael Maharry.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular September 15, 2010 meeting. Pettit pointed out the minutes incorrectly mentioned the September 15 meeting had taken place in the city council chambers when the meeting was actually held in the lower level conference room. Pettit also said Michael Maharry had not been at the September meeting. Pettit then moved to approve the September 15, 2010 minutes as amended; Carlson seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Several Certified Local Government (CLG) issues were then discussed.

Educational efforts over the past month have been minimal, with little to report. Reischauer said she was aware there had recently been an event at the pearl museum. Pettit also said the project-based education program being developed by a student at Trinity Church was proceeding.

Reischauer also reported she had started taking photographs of the properties published in the 1914 pictorial history of Muscatine. She said the newer images will provide a good comparison to the 1914 photographs.

The commission next discussed the effort to obtain a separate line item budget through the city. Pettit said he had talked to Steve Boka about the effort and had been told to write a short description of the request, listing the amount requested. The final decision on whether to include anything in the budget request would be up to city administrator Gregg Mandsager. The planned request from the commission is for \$50 per member, or a total of \$350, which would be used mostly for board member training or education.

Pettit moved to direct Rudisill to develop a budget request for \$350; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The next CLG issue discussed was a review of the city's building permit procedures. Reischauer said she had requested this item after reviewing procedures in other communities. She stressed the discussion was not over the demolition process.

Reischauer said she was interested in determining if a procedure could be developed that would prevent permanent harm to properties located in the city's national historic districts.

She said most of the communities she had examined had developed procedures to allow review proposed changes of properties within historic districts. Pettit said he would be concerned about getting any type of review authority for the MHPC from the current city council.

Maharry explained when he served on the Iowa City HPC the city's review ordinance had prohibited some features, such as vinyl siding, from being used in historic districts.

However, he said approval of that type of review authority for the Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission would be a big step for Muscatine. He suggested it might be less problematic if a review process that focused on the Secretary of Interior Standards was proposed.

He also said review of any demolition within a historic district could be another step. That type of review could be limited to establishing structural integrity. He reminded the commission of the continuing dispute between the City of Davenport and a property owner interested in demolishing a house currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The owner has been prohibited from tearing down the building and he has responded by threatening to withhold any type of maintenance.

Reischauer said her primary interest was to stabilize the city's historic districts and prevent further deterioration. Pettit agreed the historic districts had gone downhill since being formed and suggested rezoning West Hill to prevent multi-plex development could help solve any problem. He wondered if grant funding was available to stabilize historic districts.

Pettit also reported to the commission about a renovation plan for an area around the historic church property at the corner of Iowa and Sixth Street. He said the proposal could mean development of a business with up to 30 employees, but could also mean the demolition of historic properties in the area because of parking requirements.

Reischauer said the church could remain a church or be converted into a home. She pointed out Rock Island had an ordinance that only allows duplexes in historic district.

Maharry asked what the goal of historic districts was and what the intended goal of any review authority would be. Pettit said the council should allow a review of the current building permit process and possibly would accept a non-binding recommendation from the commission, especially since the commissioners are supposed to be the trained historians for the community.

Maharry suggested an unofficial effort might be the best option, especially if there was any concern over impeding what was going on now. He said there might be a concern over adding another layer of review.

Rudisill said using MAGIC to help establish some type of historic layer to properties might be feasible. He was informally directed to invite MAGIC coordinator Mark Warren to a future MHPC meeting to discuss that possibility.

Rudisill also mentioned plans by HNI to demolish the Burke Cleaners building. That building is identified in the downtown survey as potentially eligible to be individually listed on the National Register.

The final CLG issue to be discussed was a reminder from Rudisill about the 2010 Annual Report. He asked the commissioners to contact him with any reports on historic building modifications.

The commission next discussed Historic Property/District issues.

Rudisill told the commission that arrangements to finalize a contract with Paul

The commission next discussed street signs for the West Hill Historic District. Rudisill said the traffic committee would review the proposal and specifically wanted to know the number and location of any signs that would be installed.

Carlson said she would seek a quote for around 25 signs.

In other property/district reports, Pettit said he would be meeting soon with Mandsager to discuss using tax increment financing (TIF) revenue for a downtown façade program. He will also talk to Mandsager about developing a downtown revitalization district that would provide property tax abatement opportunities for owners. Pettit also announced he had recently been named to the Downtown Action Alliance's Board of Directors.

Under miscellaneous reports, Maharry reported on the recent Friends meeting, which had included a discussion on historic input into the city's comprehensive plan. Pettit said the last comprehensive plan utilized charettes, but had not included much on historic preservation.

Maharry also reported he had talked with Naura Heiman, chairperson of Preservation Iowa, who is a graduate of Muscatine High School. Heiman had indicated she was interested in hold Preservation Iowa's annual meeting in Muscatine next year (fall 2011). He said Heiman would get back in touch with him about the possibility.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:25 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair