

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
APRIL 20, 2011

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, April 20, 2011, at 5:15 p.m. in the city hall lower level conference room. Members present included Jane Reischauer, Devin Pettit, JoAnn Carlson and Diane Mayer-Day. Also present were former MHPC member/local historian Dan Clark, contractor Kerry Vanblarcom and MHPC city liaison Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular March 30, 2011 meeting. Pettit pointed out his last name had been misspelled (Petite) in paragraph 2 of the minutes' second page. Pettit moved to approve the consent agenda with the corrections; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission began with a Certified Local Government (CLG) activities discussion on potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nominations. During the March meeting, McCarley had suggested using the Community Foundation of Muscatine to obtain funding support to complete windshield surveys of the four primary potential districts. These would include Mulberry Avenue, Colver Street, Country Club Hills and Fair Oaks/Weed Park.

Depending on the results of those surveys, the city could then proceed with NRHP nominations.

Rudisill was directed to contact McCarley and request cost estimates for conducting a comprehensive windshield survey for all four potential districts and a cost estimate for doing each one separately.

The next CLG activity discussed was membership.

The terms of Diane Mayer-Day and Ramiro Vazquez expire on June 30. Day is completing her second term on the commission and is ineligible to be reappointed this year. Vazquez can be reappointed by the mayor for a second term, but he has not indicated if he will request a second term.

Rudisill requested members to begin searching for at least one new member. Rudisill and Carlson were unable to recall the name of a person who works for the school district who indicated some interest last year. They will continue to search for that name. Pettit also wondered if Michael Maharry might be interested.

The commission next was presented with a Request for Comment concerning a modification to an existing cell tower apparatus. Rudisill reported he had received the request as part of the cell tower company's environmental review process. The commission had no comment.

The commission next moved to Property/Historic District discussions, with the first item a review of the Alexander Clark Heritage District/National Historic Landmark (NHL) status.

Clark reported a number of new avenues and initiatives concerning the project had developed in the last several months and provided a summary of those efforts. One development has been the potential acquisition of the Alexander Clark House by the Muscatine Community College.

Clark said that initiative had been originally launched by Jeff Armstrong, who was possibly in line for a job change. That could affect the acquisition, since Armstrong might be unwilling to encumber a potential successor with that obligation.

Another development has been the production of a film on Alexander Clark which is scheduled to be broadcast on IPTV during Black History Month in February 2012. The film is being produced by Jacob Rosdail, Oskaloosa; directed by Marc Rosenwasser, New York; and underwritten by Joe Crookham, Oskaloosa, president of MUSCO Lighting. The film will focus on Clark's equal and civil rights fights.

The MHPC also discussed the continuing effort to add signage to the city's two national historic districts. Carlson said she is still working on developing the signs and identifying their locations.

Reischauer said HNI had earlier indicated it would consider supporting the manufacture and installation of the signs.

The final Property/District Discussion focused on the status of Muscatine County's pre-Civil War jail (1856-57) and the early 20th century (1909) sheriff's office/jail. Several months ago, the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors formed a committee to examine the buildings and report on future options for them.

Clark said the committee presented its report to the supervisors on April 4. Several options were included in the report, including demolition. Since the committee cannot see any use for the sheriff's office, the demolition option was recommended. The old jail is still used to house heating equipment for the courthouse and demolishing it would require a replacement. Clark said no final decision on either building had been made, although the supervisors did mention their long-term goal was to use the area as green space. He also said a more recent cement-block addition to the sheriff's office would likely be demolished, even if the building remained.

Commission members indicated they were not concerned over that phase of demolition, but did not favor any additional removal. Members suggested the buildings could be used for offices or other space.

Clark said he would ask county auditor Leslie Soule, who chaired the building committee, to schedule a tour of both buildings for the commission. He said the supervisors were not rushing the issue.

Clark also reported Duffy DeFrance was interested in raising the level of concern for the former synagogue on Spring Street. She is hoping to discuss it with the commission.

The commission next discussed the upcoming 2011 Preservation Iowa Annual Conference. Carlson said Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation President Michael Maharry was scheduled to hold a conference call on the conference today, but she had no additional information.

Carlson also inquired on the list of 2011 award winnings. She was told the commission agreed with the Friends' list.

Under other reports, Pettit reported there has not been much information released

on the pending designation of community areas as an enterprise zone. He said Ann Meeker had reported the designation would basically follow Main Street guidelines and fulfill the same purpose.

The final report was provided by Kerry Vanblarcom. He is renovating the old ice house at 311 Green Street for his brother. The commission provided Vanblarcom with information on historic tax credits, potential grants and other information.

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

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18, 2011 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair