

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
AUGUST 27, 2013

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Tuesday, August 27, 2013, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Devin Pettit, Julie Wolf, Rochelle Conway and Jane Reischauer. Others present included Michael Maharry and Jim Rudisill. Following the roll, the commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular July 23, 2013 meeting and the July 29, 2013 special meeting. Pettit moved to approve the consent agenda; Wolf seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission first discussed the city's approved historic property tax abatement plan under Certified Local Government Activities. Rudisill distributed copies of an application form developed by Muscatine Community Development Director Steve Boka. Residents would complete the form, which would include a question on whether the commission had been consulted about the application. Maharry suggested the commission follow a process similar to one used for state tax credit applications. He said pictures are used to document the prior condition of the interior and the residents need to fully explain what is going to be done. He also said they should describe how the exterior would be affected and how those activities would not cause any harm to the resource.

Wolf said the residents would likely need to complete Boka's form and then come to the MHPC for further action. She suggested a short explanation of the project scope should be requested by the MHPC.

Rudisill asked if the commission wanted to establish a committee to review the applications or conduct that review during a regular meeting. He indicated monthly meetings might delay MHPC action.

Pettit said the commission could remain flexible, with special meetings a possibility if necessary.

The next discussion item was commission staffing.

Pettit reported Muscatine Art Center Director Melanie Alexander had told him she would be willing to assume the MHPC liaison duties if city administrator Gregg Mandsager approved and the new planning coordinator did not have any interest in historic preservation.

He said Alexander also asked about Friends assisting the art center with obtaining tax credits for HVAC work. She had also stressed the desire to build a better relationship between the art center and the MHPC.

Maharry indicated the Friends would welcome the opportunity to work with the art center on tax credits.

Historic districts and properties was the next general agenda item discussed.

There again was no progress or other news to report on the Network to Freedom/National Register of Historic Places applications/update for the Alexander Clark House.

Rudisill then provided a review of the FY 2014 Certified Local Government grant application that had been submitted for funding of a Fair Oaks Historic District nomination. A new component to the application was additional funding to study the potential of adding Weed Park to the historic district.

Maharry wondered if the addition would jeopardize the rest of the application. Wolf also reported the Indian burial mounds located in the park are not authentic and the city should have the documentation on that.

The MHPC then discussed other historic district issues and properties.

Maharry reported Scott and Ann Lesnet were apparently in the process of acquiring the property at 315 W. Second. He said the HRDP grant that had been awarded for repair work to the house could be transferred to a new owner if the transfer was in the best interest of the resource. He said the Lesnets had indicated they planned to spend \$200,000 in the house and create a high-end rental. He said that would include installing a new full basement.

Several miscellaneous reports were then made.

Maharry said the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors did agree to certify the county's Certified Local Government application.

He also said the supervisors remain determined to tear down the old sheriff's office, despite it qualify workmanship and good condition. He said putting the Muscatine Tourism and Visitors Bureau in the building is the most feasible use for it. The supervisors have offered to lease the building for \$1 per year, provided whoever moves into it maintains it.

He said the supervisors had provided a 30-day deadline for a group to develop a business plan and present it to save the building. In the meantime, the board will obtain bids for demolishing the newer addition to the office.

He also announced six houses would be demolished across from Jefferson School as part of the school district's decision to build a new facility. He said there was a three-week window to salvage items from the houses. Scott Lesnet is interested in obtaining some material for use in 315 W. Second.

Maharry also reported meeting with Rebecca McCarley at the recent Burlington conference. McCarley told him there had been some recent changes in the state historic tax credit program and churches could now apply. He said restoration work proposed or planned at St. Mathias, Trinity and St. Mary's could all now be eligible for the tax credits.

He also reported the Burlington conference had been excellent. Rudisill reported that Jim Schmidt had also attended the conference.

In a final report, Rudisill updated the board on the city's planned Downtown Revitalization Program. Board members expressed support for the effort.

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

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair