

OFFICIAL MINUTES  
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
MAY 16, 2012

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, at 5:15 p.m. in the city council chambers at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Devin Pettit, Jane Reischauer, Julie Wolf, Jim Schmidt and Anna Mack. 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 March 21, 2011 meeting. There had not been an April meeting because a quorum was not present. Pettit moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Mack seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The first order of business under the CLG section of the meeting was a discussion of the proposed tax abatement program for historic buildings. Reischauer recalled from earlier meetings when Steve Boka discussed the program with the commission that he favored removing commercial buildings and only applying the program to owner-occupied buildings.

Rudisill also pointed out the current proposal included provisions for review of the application and the property site by the commission. He questioned whether the review requirement would be a potential handicap for a future commission because of the potential time commitment.

Wolf said she suspected that not many applications would actually be filed, which would reduce the amount of time commissioners actually spent on the reviews.

There was also some confusion over which final draft had actually been last distributed. Pettit provided a copy that he said Rudisill had distributed earlier, but it differed from a copy that Rudisill had in the abatement folder.

Rudisill said he would review his electronic files and forward the latest copy of the tax abatement program to commission members.

The commission next discussed the proposed comprehensive plan status.

Pettit reported he understood reviews of the various plan sections would begin in June or July.

Reischauer said she had learned some communities were turning to downzoning in an effort to preserve historic areas. She said that effort could help to preserve historic homes and prevent them from converting to multi-family housing.

Rudisill also reported he had provided city planner Andrew Fangman with a copy of the 2006 West Hill Historic District nomination recommendations, which Fangman had indicated would help form the foundation of the plan's historic preservation sections.

The status of the Historic Preservation Month activities was the next discussion item.

Pettit moved to approve the list of awards presented by the Friends of Historic Preservation; Schmidt seconded; motion passed, all ayes. Commission members said they were not sure if additional activities were planned by Friends for the rest of the month. Rudisill also reported Mayor Hopkins had issued a proclamation declaring May as National Historic Preservation Month in Muscatine.

The next CLG discussion item was MHPC membership.

Rudisill reported Ramiro Vazquez had contacted him and intended to submit his resignation from the MHPC. Rudisill said he had not yet received any official resignation letter from Vazquez.

Rudisill also said Jo Ann Carlson and Jim Schmidt's terms on the commission would expire on June 30, 2012. Carlson is completing her second term and is not eligible to be reappointed to another term. Schmidt is completing his first term and is eligible for reappointment. Schmidt said he would be willing to serve again, which means if Vazquez resigns only two vacancies will be open.

Mack said her husband had expressed an interest in serving on the commission and Rudisill said he would forward a city appointment form to her.

The final CLG discussion issue was the city's website and possible uses of it for linking historic preservation topics. Reischauer explained Boka had brought this issue up at the March meeting, suggesting there could be a wide range of sites linked to the city's webpage. He had also pointed out the website could be a useful tool for promoting local city historic preservation programming.

Commissioners were encouraged to review the city's website and forward suggestions for possible links or information ideas to Rudisill.

The commission next discussed several historic district or property issues. The first of these was an update on the commission's two Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP) grant programs or applications.

Rudisill reported he had not received any communications from Kent Sissel concerning the status of the 2011 HRDP project to update the National Register of Historic District nomination for the Alexander Clark House. Rudisill suggested the project had developed a number of twists and turns that could mean further delays in completing the nomination. He said he would wait to hear from Sissel and keep the commission advised.

The second HRDP project to be discussed was the 2012 application to fund four reconnaissance surveys in Muscatine. Rudisill reported the application had been submitted. A response is expected sometime in June. Commission members requested Rudisill to email them a copy of the application.

The next agenda item was a discussion on signage.

Rudisill reported the order for the additional signs had been faxed to Iowa Prison Industries, but he had not heard anything since then.

The commission next received reports from commission members and visitors.

Reischauer reported she had received a report from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on a study completed for the Mississippi River Corridor project involving the area around the Carver Corners (Green & Hershey). Reischauer had sent the report to Rudisill and requested he forward it to all commissioners.

Maharry reported on his recent historic preservation conference trip. He met individuals there whose counties have implemented the state's mandatory historic property tax abatement program for counties. He pointed out that program does require adhering to the Secretary of

Interior Standards to qualify for the abatement, a provision that is included in the city's proposed tax abatement proposal, but can be waived under certain conditions. He said he would email a copy of the Linn County Supervisors priority identification listings, a requirement of the state law, to Rudisill.

Maharry also reported learning of a preservation program involving historic preservationist Bob Yapp. According to Maharry, conference sponsors said they had sent a local resident to travel with Yapp and receive training on preservation of historic windows. The trainee had then returned home and was providing local workshops on what he had learned.

Maharry thought the idea was good and suggested it might be worthwhile to offer a scholarship to maintain this training conduit. He also said the training could expand to other critical historic features.

The keynote speaker at the conference, Donovan Rypkema, was also outstanding and provided an effect and precise explanation of the economic benefits of historic preservation, Maharry said. A YouTube presentation of Rypkema is available on the Internet.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:05 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair