

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
APRIL 21, 2010

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, April 21, 2010, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower-level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Dan Clark, Mary Ann Kessler, Diane Mayer Day, Jim Schmidt and Ramiro Vasquez. Others present were Mike Miller, Lee Miller, Mark Robinson and Kent Sissel.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular February 17, 2010 meeting. A meeting scheduled for March 17 was not held because of no quorum. Clark pointed out the February minutes should have the words "American Legion and" added to the ninth paragraph before the words "Veterans of Foreign Wars.."

Kessler then moved to approve the consent agenda with the changes; Schmidt seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Clark then introduced Lee Miller, chair of the committee working on replacing the county's Civil War memorial. Miller reported since February there has been an agreement with the Muscatine Board of Supervisors to replace the soldier atop the column. Other details still needed to be approved.

He explained the process of removal and replacement was now estimated to cost \$255,000. All 502 soldiers from Muscatine County who died in the war would be named, completing the list that was incomplete when the monument was constructed in 1875 and rededicated in 1925.

Miller said the new monument was proposed to be constructed with Vermont Granite, which reportedly would last forever. Two companies are bidding for this project.

An account set up with the Community Foundation of Muscatine by the committee would accept donations for the work. Miller also reported a new member of the group was Pam Knott, who would be leading planning for a fundraiser auction that would include various community groups.

The Muscatine Art Center had also started planning for an exhibit and would be displaying a preserved Civil War flag. Miller said he considered the whole project to be a community project and wanted to get various groups involved. A dedication is planned for July 4, 2011. Clark said he attends most of the committee meetings on behalf of MHPC.

The commission next discussed the Alexander Clark Heritage District. Clark reported that on March 4 the city council approved creation of the Alexander Clark Heritage District as proposed by MHPC.

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The next discussion concerned the property at 213 West Third, which is owned by Mark and Mary Robinson. The house needs considerable work and the city has warned that the garage must be stabilized.

Neighbors Mike Miller (217 W. Third) and Kent Sissel (203 W. Third) told the commission the Robinsons would need help in cleaning things up in order to sell the property. Both said they had told the city's building department they would work with the Robinsons on the garage problem.

Mark Robinson said he was willing to work with Miller and Sissel and expressed appreciation for the commission's interest. Clark said MHPC has no enforcement authority for historic districts or the new heritage district but was very concerned and would continue to track appearance problems and improvements.

Grant applications to Humanities Iowa and the State Historical Society of Iowa (Historic Resource Development Program - HRDP) were discussed next. Clark and Sissel said they had requested permission from Steve Boka to allow Jim Rudisill time to develop funding proposals to each program.

The Humanities Iowa grant would fund speakers and other presenters to come to Muscatine and provide public programs on Alexander Clark. The HRDP request would focus on a National Historic Landmark nomination for Clark's existing house at 203 W. Third.

After discussion and noting a May 17 deadline for the HRDP application, Kessler moved to approve the development of an HRDP grant application to seek funding assistance for a National Historic Landmark nomination for the Alexander Clark House at 203 W. Third; and a Humanities Iowa grant to assist with funding for guest speakers and presenters; Vasquez seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission also discussed various ideas for developing and promoting the Alexander Clark Heritage District. Ideas to be explored include developing a "garden" in the new green space across from the Alexander Clark House, erecting a Clark sculpture, relocating the Clark gravestone, installing plaques/signs, and designation of the city parking lot on W. Third Street as a "plaza" for the heritage district.

Sissel said he had already discussed some or all of these ideas with Master Gardeners, ISU Extension Service, the Muscatine Art Center and others. He said all had encouraged his efforts.

Clark and Sissel also reported they had recently presented this "exploration" to the Mayor's Community Improvement Advisory Team (CIAT) and received unanimous encouragement for MHPC to take the lead in requesting city council authorization.

Kessler moved that council authorization be requested for further exploration with expectation of developing specific proposals; Day seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

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Clark next reviewed the Downtown Action Alliance. There was discussion of a Main Street project and Clark said he would work with the alliance's design committee. The committee would be looking to the banks to make loans for property owners.

Clark reported the Downtown Action Alliance board has discussed the historic preservation part of their mission and wanted to revive its design committee, which is the successor to MAPs and the Muscatine Main Street program. Clark said he was willing to chair that DAA committee. He also said they would be looking into the status of the facade improvement fund and local banks' loans to downtown property owners.

The commission next discussed Historic Preservation Month activities. The annual presentation of recognition certificates is a joint effort with the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation. Carlson will email the addresses of the properties to be recognized and also agreed to prepare the certificates.

Clark said he would speak with Chad Bishop about a promotional video that would include the properties. He also said an open house was planned for Michael Maharry's house at 417 West Third on May 22 from noon-4 p.m. It was agreed this could be a good time to present the awards.

The Jayne House move would be shown May 20 on the "Heavy Haulers" show on the TLC cable-TV channel. The Muscatine Art Center plans to submit a grant for a garden area where the Jayne House stood. Clark said he intended to help art center director Barb Christiansen with the writing for a plaque commemorating the site.

In other reports, Clark reported the Maharrys may be honored by the state for the use of tax credits to renovate and restore their property on West Third.

Vasquez reported that all property owners in the West Hill district should have received a letter from the city about the recent gang activity and the police presence there. Landlords were to sign the letter so they would be aware if there was someone in that area that did not belong there.

It was also reported that Dave Armstrong had purchased the Weed House near the park from Helen and Stan Howe.

In a discussion concerning MHPC membership, several names, including Anna Mack, Gene Paxton, Steve Armstrong and Dave Armstrong were identified as potentially interested. Terms end on June 30 for Clark and Reischauer. Clark is ineligible to be reappointed. Kessler will also be resigning because her family is moving to Des Moines.

Members agreed to think about potential new members and encourage any interested persons to contact Jim Rudisill for the application form.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission is scheduled for

Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair