OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
JUNE 20, 2012

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, June 20, 2012, at 5:45 p.m. in the city council chambers at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Devin Pettit, Jane Reischauer, Julie Wolf 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 May 16, 2012 meeting. Mack moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Pettit seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission's first issue was a discussion of the proposed tax abatement program for historic buildings under the Certified Local Government category. Rudisill updated the council on a recent meeting he held with Muscatine County Assessor Dale McCrea, Muscatine Auditor Leslie Soule and deputy auditor Betty Wamback on the proposed abatement program.
McCrea reported he had reviewed the proposed program and pointed out the county did not have any capabilities of separating just the city taxes from any abatement. Both he and Soule said the computer program used by the county would abate all the taxes on any approved property under the program.
An alternative to abating all the taxes would be to initiate a rebate program that would require the city to pay back to the approved property owners the portion of city taxes they would be eligible to receive under the abatement program.
Rudisill said he had talked to Muscatine Community Development Director Steve Boka about that option, but Boka did not favor it. Commissioners said they also favored keeping the tax abatement policy intact, pointing out there likely would not be a large number of applicants.
The commission also discussed the May 15 deadline to submit pre-applications to the city. The applications do not need to be forwarded to the assessor until February 1. Collecting applications in May would mean a nearly 18-month gap between the application submittals and actual tax payment. Commission members agreed an initial December 31 date was more feasible.
There was also discussion on the abatement program language concerning adherence to the Secretary of Interior standards. Maharry had earlier provided the language used by counties currently participating in the mandatory state historic property tax abatement program. Maharry said after reading the language in the city's abatement program, he felt it contained the same requirement. There was also agreement among the commission members that guidelines would need to be developed to assist future commissions with determining eligibility and other parts of the program.
After additional discussion, Rudisill was directed to update the latest version of the document and provide it to commission members for final review. A vote on the program and recommendation to the city council will then be added to the commission's July meeting agenda.

The commission next discussed the proposed comprehensive plan status.
Muscatine City Planner Andrew Fangman has started holding town meetings in the various planning districts to explain the comprehensive planning process, answer questions and recruit volunteers wishing to participate in committees and other groups.
Meetings that could directly impact the Downtown Commercial Historic District and

West Hill Historic Districts will be held soon; and commissioners agreed those meetings would offer opportunities to support historic preservation efforts in the comp plan.

The final CLG-related agenda item concerned commission membership.

Rudisill reported Dan Mack had submitted his application, which would be part of the city council's June 21 agenda. He also reminded the commission of Ramiro Vazquez's intent to resign from the commission, but said he had not received any official resignation letter. Rudisill had attempted to call Vazquez prior to the meeting, but had to leave a message.

Historic district or property issues were then discussed.

Rudisill said he and Kent Sissel had not communicated on the Alexander Clark-HRDP grant for some time. He will wait until either Sissel contacts him with information on the report's status; or the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) requests an update.

The commission next discussed the status of the historic district signs.

Rudisill reported he did not know if the city's public works department had started to install the signs, but all the signs had been delivered. He also reported supervisor Randy Howell had reported getting the posts ready and utilities located.

Rudisill also was unsure on the status of the HNI reimbursement. He said he would talk with Muscatine Finance Director Nancy Lueck and ask if the bill has been paid and reimbursed.

The final historic district/property discussion was the status of the city's 2013 Historic Resources and Development Program (HRDP) application. Rudisill said there had not been any release of awards by the SHSI as of the meeting. Pettit said a review of the 2012 award notification showed they had been announced shortly after the June MHPC meeting, so he expected this year's awards to be announced within a day or two. Rudisill said he would continue to monitor the SHSI website and report any notification to the commission.

Commission members agreed to delay any discussion on possible survey options, until they learn if the city's application has received any funding.

The commission next received reports from commission members and visitors.

Maharry reported the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation, Inc. will have its five year anniversary this fall. He said some type of celebration will be held to help the group reset, re-advertise and re-promote itself.

Wolf also announced the Colver Street Broom Factory had recently been sold.

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

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, July 18, 2012 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair