

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 16, 2011

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Wednesday, February 16, 2011, at 5:15 p.m. in the city hall lower level conference room. Members present included Jane Reischauer, Ramiro Vazquez, Anna Mack, Devin Pettit and Jim Schmidt. Also present were Michael Maharry and Jim Rudisill.

The commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular January 19, 2011 meeting. Pettit moved to approve the consent agenda; Vazquez seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The first agenda items were under Certified Local Government (CLG) activities. Rudisill presented copies of the city's monthly building and demolition permits, which he is now able to access. Commissioner members requested the reports be distributed with the regular meeting information.

The next item discussed was the possibility of meeting with Andrew Fangman, new city planner; and Steve Boka, Community Development Director. Reischauer said she thought it would be useful to have Boka attend a meeting to update the commission on various issues. Fangman was included because his position will be involved in many projects with a historic preservation association. Members agreed to invite both to the same meeting as soon as possible.

The 2010 CLG Annual Report was then presented to the commission for action. Schmidt moved to approve the report; Pettit seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission next discussed potential nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. John Peterschmidt recently submitted a draft report on the Oscar Grossheim House at 110 E. Eighth Street, identifying it a potentially eligible for the register. However, he also asked the commission to discuss whether its focus should be on identifying individual properties or districts.

Reischauer pointed out the commission had worked on a Mulberry Avenue designation, but it had been recommended that project stop. Pettit said he had made that recommendation because the project was basically not moving forward. He also explained the commission had been developing partial reports on Mulberry Avenue properties because of the high cost of using a consultant.

Maharry said Historic Resource Development Project (HRDP) grant applications are due in May. In-kind contributions could help reduce the amount of local match required through this program and Maharry said the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation might be willing to help with assistance or funding. He reminded the commission that Peterschmidt had developed the Grossheim report and wondered how much additional work from a consultant it would take to complete the report. Reischauer suggested asking consultant Rebecca McCarley, who has conducted previous work in the city, for a bid on completing the report.

Pettit said he would favor conducting district surveys rather than individual property reporting. He said Mulberry Avenue could be divided into two separate survey sections – one in the south end of the street that would deal more with 19th buildings; and one in the north end that would focus on 20th century construction.

Reischauer said the issue should be left on the agenda and McCarley contacted to provide cost estimates for completing a site inventory/historic register nomination for the Grossheim house; and an estimate for completing a district-wide survey and nomination. Maharry said he would forward McCarley an email detailing the HRDP application process; and Rudisill said he would ask her to present cost estimates for an individual and district survey/nomination.

The commission next discussed historic property and district issues.

Rudisill updated the members on the status of the Alexander Clark National Historic Landmark project. He reported the process is continuing, but according to an earlier phone discussion between him and Kent Sissel, the project may extend longer. Rudisill said Sissel had reported he was still talking to the National Park Service (NPS) on developing a Network to Freedom (Underground Railroad) application for the Alexander Clark House. Sissel said the NPS favored submitting the Network to Freedom application before the National Landmark. Rudisill said he had pointed out to Sissel the city's grant agreement for the National Landmark nomination expires in November 2012, but Sissel had indicated state officials had told him that date was flexible. Sissel had also indicated possibly moving ahead with the National Landmark project without city participation, if he would be able to have the current grant transferred, Rudisill explained. That discussion had taken place several days before the MHPC meeting and no additional contact had occurred since.

The remaining discussion item under historic property and district issues was the status of the proposed district signage. That discussion was tabled.

The 2011 Preservation Iowa Annual Conference, set for August 5-6 in Muscatine, was discussed next.

Maharry said the Friends were continuing to review possible locations for the conference, which could draw as many as 200 participants. Potential sites identified have included Muscatine Community College; Riverview Center; Masonic Lodge; Hotel Muscatine; and possibly other sites. The Riverview Center would not have any charge if the MHPC was a conference sponsor.

Maharry said plans being discussed included eating at the Button Factory, taking a river cruise and conducting seminars and workshops on selected topics. Possible topics included tax audits, Muscatine history and possibly a program from Jim Schmidt on historic plaster restoration. Maharry said a representative from the Center for Nonprofits might be asked to speak.

He said the Friends had decided to move its historic house tour to Saturday afternoon.

The conference cost will be \$35 per person. This would match the amount requested by the commission for the 2011 budget, but it was not known if this request was included in the proposal presented to the city council.

Maharry said the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Convention and Visitors' Bureau (CVB) had agreed to print 500 brochures on the conference and would also assist with booking a block of rooms in area hotels. The CVB had also agreed to provide a "goodie" bag of local items for distribution at the convention.

Maharry said he expected additional issues to be settled during a telephone conference call the next day. In the meantime, he requested the commission approve a motion to help sponsor the event.

Schmidt moved the MHPC agree to become a co-sponsor of the 2011 Preservation Iowa Annual Conference with Preservation Iowa and possibly the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation; Mack seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Schmidt next moved to request \$35 from the city for each commission member wishing to attend the annual conference; Mack seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Maharry next presented a miscellaneous report from the Friends.

He identified several homes that might be included in the tour of homes in May as part of Preservation Month activities.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, 2011 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair