

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OCTOBER 13, 2011

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Thursday, October 13, 2011, at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Jo Ann Carlson, Devin Pettit, Jim Schmidt and Gina Chesling. Others present included Michael Maharry and Jim Rudisill.

With both the chair and vice-chair absent, the commission agreed to appoint a temporary chair. Schmidt nominated Pettit for temporary chair; Carlson seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission then reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular August 17, 2011 meeting. The September meeting had been canceled because no quorum was available. Carlson reported that "windshield" was misspelled on page one, paragraph six of the August minutes. Following additional review, Schmidt moved to approve the consent agenda with the correction; Carlson seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Two Certified Local Government (CLG) issues were the first agenda discussion items.

The first was a review of the funding status and applications for proposed historical survey work on Mulberry Avenue and other areas in the city.

Rudisill reported MHPC Chair Jane Reischauer and he had completed and submitted a \$24,100 application to the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust. The application used the \$2100 approved by the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine and a \$1000 donation from the Friends of Muscatine Historic Preservation as leverage for the grant request. An additional \$100 in city in-kind support was also included in the application. The total project cost of \$27,300 would cover the estimated cost submitted by consultant Rebecca McCarley to complete four reconnaissance surveys of Mulberry Avenue, Colver Street, Fair Oaks area and Country Club Hills area.

Pettit reviewed what the reconnaissance survey would include. He pointed out there would be no state inventory sheets completed on the individual resources within the target area, but a final neighborhood inventory form would be part of the survey. His basic concern with the four areas was the general lack of focus on 19th century historical resources. He suggested the 20th century properties were not as in danger of deterioration as the older properties.

He also pointed out the future of Mulberry Avenue resources south of Parham and other selected properties, such as the Jefferson School, might be more at risk than other Mulberry Avenue resources. Overall, he suggested survey work within the original town area might be more critical than work on some areas identified by consultants as higher priorities.

Maharry wondered if a change in focus of the surveys might be possible. He also questioned whether nominations of potential districts for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) could be submitted based on a reconnaissance or windshield survey.

Pettit said the integrity in the proposed areas was good and he assumed a reconnaissance survey could provide enough documentation for a NRHP listing or McCarley would not have recommended that type of survey. Pettit then requested the commission members be emailed and review a copy of the reconnaissance survey McCarley had completed for another client.

The commission next discussed the historic preservation component of the city's planned comprehensive plan update. Rudisill reported the discussion item had been added because Reischauer had submitted an initial historic preservation draft to city planner Andrew Fangman.

Since Reischauer was absent, there was no lengthy discussion on the draft or other parts of the comp plan. Rudisill did report that he is reviewing property tax abatement policies developed by other communities. Muscatine Community Development Director Steve Boka has indicated the city may identify a tax abatement program as a policy tool for historic districts.

Pettit requested Rudisill provide a copy of Reischauer's draft and other comp plan information to the commission. Maharry also said he was concerned the Muscatine Planning and Zoning Commission was not doing enough with historic preservation efforts.

The next general category of discussion involved historic property and district discussions. The first discussion item was an update on the renomination of the Alexander Clark House to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This project had formerly been an effort to identify the house as a National Historic Landmark, but at the suggestion of the National Park Service was switched to a renomination to the NRHP. Rudisill reported he had not had any recent contact with Kent Sissel or other project participants.

The commission next discussed signage efforts for the city's existing national historic districts. Carlson said she was not aware of any new updates, but that Reischauer had assumed the planning duties and might have more information.

Rudisill also reported he had put the Muscatine County Courthouse renovation on the agenda because of the on-going repairs. There was some discussion on the responsibilities of the city's HPC concerning the building since Muscatine County has now formed its own HPC.

Rudisill said he believed the city retained the responsibility to monitor the work since the building was located within the city, even though it was owned by the county. Because of that question and the possibility of other potential issues developing between the two, Rudisill suggested it might be a good idea to hold a joint meeting of the two commissions. He will contact Paula Mohr and request she attend to act as a moderator. In the meantime, Maharry reported the work on the courthouse was following the Secretary of Interior standards.

Miscellaneous reports were then made to the commission.

Pettit reported on the recent Mississippi Corridor Study meeting. Maharry questioned the MHPC role; and who would provide information on the development's impact to historic properties. The State Historic Preservation Office will play the lead role.

Maharry presented a Friends report. The 205 Cherry tax credit processing is progressing.

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

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair