

draftminutes

Historic District Commission

Wednesday, May 28, 2014
Special Meeting - 7 p.m.
First Floor Conference Room
Monroe City Hall

1. Roll Call – 7 p.m.

Present: Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Egen; Commissioners: Bates, Bentley, Caldwell, Markham, and Ryland.

Excused: None

Staff: Jeffrey Green, AICP, Historic Preservation Officer / City Planner
Ginny Schomisch, Planning/Preservation Assistant

Public: Jeanne Micka

2. Introductions

Mr. Green introduced Ginny Schomisch. Ginny is a graduate student at Eastern Michigan University in the Historic Preservation Program and will be working in the Planning Department over the summer.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Vice Chairman Egen "To approve the Agenda, as presented."
Second by Commissioner Caldwell.

Motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Vice Chairman Egen "To approve the minutes of the January 15, 2014, Regular Meeting." Second by Commissioner Bates.

Motion passed unanimously

5. Election of Officers

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Green to conduct nominations for Chairman.

Commissioner Caldwell made the motion to "Retain the current chair and vice chair." Second by Commissioner Bentley.

There being no discussion. The vote was taken.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Johnson and Vice Chairman Egen will continue in their respective positions for the upcoming twelve months.

6. Budget

Mr. Green presented the budget, which reflects \$1,650 available for use. He indicated that at the last meeting, he had suggested committing funds for upgrading the HDC website. The commission agreed. Mr. Green stated that he had been in contact with Jeff Thomas, who currently maintains the website and he was more than happy to assist the HDC.

Mr. Green also noted that he would continue to look for a workshop or training that the commission could host, which may use some of the remaining funds, as well. And if the commission was amenable, if something were found he would commit the necessary funds. The commission agreed.

There being no further discussion on the budget, Chairman Johnson asked if there was a motion to approve?

Commissioner Bates made the motion "To accept the budget report, as presented." Second by Commissioner Ryland.

Motion passed unanimously

7. Project Reviews

Commission

- None

Administrative

- None

8. Old Business

HDC Website

Chairman Johnson noted that the website had already been discussed, unless there were additional comments from staff or questions from the commission. There being none, he asked Mr. Green to update the commission regarding the Historic Church & Stained Glass Tour – 2014.

Historic Church & Stained Glass Tour – 2014

Mr. Green noted that the *Historic Church & Stained Glass Tour* was proposed for the 2014 Easter Season. Unfortunately, the subcommittee was unable to finalize a date and had slow or no responses from several churches that had participated previously. As such, the subcommittee opted to shift to Christmastime 2014.

Mr. Green noted that planning a project like this requires a substantial time commitment by the department. And now with a Preservation and Planning Assistant available to help, planning for the tour will get underway shortly. He also asked commissioners about possible ideas for a presentation and/or speaker for the tour. He told them they could contact him directly.

Preservation Awards for Residential & Commercial Properties

Mr. Green stated that as in the past he was anticipating submitting properties to the City Council in early fall for joint recognition by the HDC and City Council. He asked commissioners to forward potential nominees to the department.

Vice Chairman Egen thought that the former "Steve's Tavern" building [the Lauer Building] would be an ideal candidate when completed.

Educational / Training Workshops – 2014

Mr. Green stated that, as discussed during the budget portion of the agenda, he would continue to look at possible educational workshops or training that could be made available to both historic property owners and residents-at-large.

By-Laws

Commissioner Caldwell noted that there had been discussion at the previous meeting regarding by-laws for the commission. Mr. Green indicated that he was seeking direction from the commission. If the commission felt that by-laws would be beneficial then staff would begin preparing them for review.

The commission directed staff to prepare draft by-laws for review by the commission.

9. New Business

Decorative Fences

Chairman Johnson introduced the topic and then turned it over to Mr. Green. Mr. Green stated that over the course of the past year or more, the Planning and Building departments had been dealing with fences and, more specifically, what constitutes a decorative fence. He noted that during this time Commissioner Caldwell has been an active participant in the ongoing discussion of what constitutes a "decorative fence."

Commissioner Caldwell explained what had occurred with the property adjacent to his home. Mr. Green provided several photos of the property boundary fence that was allowed to extend into the front yard next to the Caldwell property.

There was discussion by the commission regarding what constitutes a decorative fence versus a "non-decorative" fence; fences in the front yard; types of fences; and fence materials including "non-traditional" materials (as called out in the zoning code).

Mr. Green circulated photos of the fence installed by the adjacent property owner on the purported property line between that property and the Caldwell property. Commissioner Caldwell asked the commission, as a starting point, if it considered this "decorative" or not. The consensus of the commission was that the fence projecting in front of the Caldwell home and delineating a boundary between the Caldwell property and the property to the south was not decorative.

Mr. Green read several excerpts from the zoning code regarding definitions for fences and decorative fences and the section dealing with installation of fences, i.e., height, materials, locations, etc. He also referenced the memo prepared by Ms. Schomisch on fences, in which she researched fence ordinances and requirements for several surrounding or nearby communities.

The commission directed the staff to continue research on fence ordinances and requirements in nearby communities, as well as prepare language changes and definitions of appropriate materials, styles, and the term “decorative fence.”

10. Project Updates

None

11. Commissioner Comments

Chairman Johnson noted that Trinity Episcopal Church recently held a reception to celebrate the dedication of their State Historic Marker. The event was well attended and also celebrated the completion of restoration activities in the church.

Commissioner Caldwell noted that City Council has been researching Neighborhood Enterprise Zones for the Old Village Plat as a way to encourage improvements in the area.

12. Council Liaison Comments

No comments.

13. Staff Comments

No comments.

14. Communications

Mr. Green stated that in early May letters were sent to property owners in the historic districts. The letter reminded property owners of their property's designation and briefly offered guidance for quick project approval. Additionally, staff's property owner records have been updated to reflect house sales within the past year.

15. Preservation-related Articles

MHPN Conducts Innovative Survey, Network News, April 2014
Students Help Rebuild Vermontville Landmark, Battle Creek Enquirer, May 1, 2014

Welcome to the Future: Meet The New York State Pavilion, Our Newest National Treasure, PreservationNation Blog, April 22, 2014

16. Public Comment

Jeanne Micka spoke on several non-HDC related items.

17. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Johnson stated that a motion to adjourn would be in order.

Motion by Commissioner Ryland "To adjourn." Second by Commissioner Caldwell.

Motion passed unanimously.

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