

OFFICIAL MINUTES
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
DECEMBER 4, 2012

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Tuesday, December 4, 2012, at 5:15 p.m. in the city council chambers at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Devin Pettit, Jane Reischauer, Julie Wolf and Jim Schmidt. Others present included Jim Rudisill. Following the roll, the commission reviewed the consent agenda, including the distributed agenda and the minutes of the regular July 18, 2012 meeting. Pettit moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Wolf seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission's first business was election of officers for 2012-13. Pettit moved to elect Reischauer as chair; Wolf seconded; motion passed, all ayes. Reischauer moved to elect Pettit as vice-chair; Wolf seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission then discussed Certified Local Government (CLG) activities.

The first discussion item was the pending property tax abatement program the city council is considering. Rudisill updated the commission on the latest plan that will be presented to the council by city staff.

It would provide a specific abatement of property taxes to owners of contributing properties located within recognized historic districts in addition to properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) around the community. A different schedule of abatement would be offered to non-contributing properties within the historic districts. The specific abatement amounts and schedules have not been determined.

The commission would continue to have a role in the abatement application process, but that responsibility has not yet been determined.

The next CLG discussion issue was an update on the city's comprehensive planning process. Rudisill said he did not have any new information on that and would drop it from the agenda until more specific information was available.

The commission next received an update on the recent modification of the Muscatine Historic Preservation Ordinance. Under the amendment approved by the city council earlier in the year, the commission membership was reduced from seven to five. Commission terms have also been staggered so one commission vacancy would occur each year. In order for the staggered terms to go into effect, the current terms of Reischauer and Pettit would be extended. The final change, although existing city policy already required this, would be that all commission members be residents of Muscatine.

The next issue discussed was the commission's meeting schedule.

Following discussion, Schmidt moved to hold commission meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 5:15 p.m. in the lower level conference room of city hall; Wolf seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The final CLG activity discussed was the 2012 Annual Report.

Rudisill advised the commission members the deadline for the report would be February 28, 2013. He requested each commission member provide information on any training they took in 2012 and also a list of any historic properties they noticed had undergone a substantial amount of alteration or repair in 2012.

The commission next discussed issues related to historic districts and property.

The first issue was the status of the Alexander Clark NRHP Update Nomination. Rudisill said he had not recently heard anything from Kent Sissel. The last contact was several months ago when Sissel said he was still discussing the nomination with state and federal officials. Rudisill said the Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP) grant funding the project would expire in May 2013. He said he was not optimistic the nomination would be completed by then; or even if it will ever be completed.

Rudisill said he would contact Sissel and request an update.

The next issue discussed was the status of the Fair Oaks/Colver Street Reconnaissance Survey Project. Consultant Rebecca McCarley has started some work, but is still finishing up a project in Burlington and would not be devoting more time to the Muscatine surveys until that was over.

In the meantime, she had inquired into the availability of volunteers to work on some property research she said would improve the final survey products. Pettit said he was busy and would be unable to help much. Schmidt said his wife might be available for typing; and he was also willing to help. Schmidt said he would contact McCarley.

Pettit also said he would contact former MHPC member JoAnn Carlson about volunteering.

The final historic property/district discussion focused on the possible loss of the Jefferson School building and the houses across the street the school is purchasing. The school cannot meet current standards and the cost of retrofitting the building would be high. Pettit said his concern was over the future of the houses on Mulberry the school district is acquiring, possibly as parking areas for any future development.

There were no reports presented.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6:15 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Tuesday, January 22, 2013 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair