

OFFICIAL MINUTES  
MUSCATINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
JUNE 25, 2013

The Muscatine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) met in regular session on Tuesday, June 25, 2013, at 5:15 p.m. in the city council chambers at Muscatine City Hall. Members present included Devin Pettit, Jane Reischauer and Jim Schmidt. Others present included Rochelle Conway, 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 28, 2013 meeting. Pettit moved to approve the minutes as presented; Schmidt seconded; motion passed, all ayes. Reischauer also introduced new commission member Rochelle Conway. She will officially assume her position on July 1.

The commission's first discussion item under Certified Local Government (CLG) activity was the city's proposed historic property tax abatement plan.

In response to a question from Schmidt, Pettit reported the eligibility threshold for new home construction had been reduced by the council to \$175,000.

Rudisill said there was no additional new information on the program. Muscatine Community Development Director Steve Boka is developing forms the commission could use in evaluating abatement applications for historic properties.

The commission next discussed membership.

Rudisill updated the commission on the length of terms of the current members.

The next general agenda item was a discussion on historic districts and properties.

Rudisill reported that consultant Paul Finkelman had submitted a preliminary draft of the Network to Freedom application. A preliminary draft of an updated Alexander Clark House National Register nomination will use much of the same information. Under the terms of the contract with Finkelman, Rudisill said a \$3,750 payment was due to the consultant.

Schmidt moved to approve the payment; Pettit seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

The commission next discussed submitting a Certified Local Government application to fund either a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the proposed Fair Oaks and Colver Street National Historic Districts; or if the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) rejects the recently submitted reconnaissance surveys of those areas, an application for an intensive survey and evaluation of both.

Reischauer moved to submit a CLG application for one of those activities, depending on the SHSI response to the reconnaissance surveys; Pettit seconded; motion passed, all ayes.

Pettit suggested Conway be provided with a CD of the reconnaissance surveys. Conway said she would stop by and pick one up or Rudisill would mail one to her.

Reischauer also asked if the community foundation has sent a check to the city to cover its portion of the funding support for the surveys. Rudisill was directed to check on the payment.

Miscellaneous reports were then presented to the commission.

Pettit reported demolition of the building adjacent to the Walnut Street Church had been completed. He also reported the new owners of the former VFW Building at the corner of Mulberry and East Fifth planned to construct lofts in the upper floor. He said they also planned to restore an arch located on the first story.

Pettit also said he had read in the city administrator's report to the council that the Muscatine School District was planning to donate several houses along East Ninth Street to the city for police/fire training.

Maharry said the previous school superintendent had told him the houses would be donated for moving, so if Pettit's information was correct, the city could be facing a substantial cost for disposing of the houses. Reischauer said she would contact Muscatine City Administrator Gregg Mandsager for clarification.

Rudisill announced he had submitted a retirement letter to Boka, effective September 27, 2013. Pettit said he hoped whoever replaced Rudisill as the commission's staff assistant had historic preservation experience. Two possibilities included current city planner Andrew Fangman and current Muscatine Art Center Director Melanie Alexander.

Pettit also reported the former Button Factory would be reopening, possibly in August, as a restaurant. The owners of the Lark in Iowa City would be managing the new restaurant, which was not yet named. Pettit said the mezzanine level would operate as a speakeasy. He also said there was a report the former Marie Lindsay building might be converted to a convention center.

In other miscellaneous reports, Rudisill reminded the commission about the Downtown Summit conference scheduled for Burlington this summer. He said Boka would consider providing the early bird registration of \$50. Rudisill asked any of the commission who might wish to attend to notify him of their interest as soon as possible.

Reischauer reported the Muscatine County HPC was continuing to move forward with seeking CLG status for the county, but had decided against increasing membership to seven. She said there had not been any new information concerning the status of the old jail.

Under the Friends report, Maharry reported Governor Terry Branstad had item vetoed the increase in historic tax credits. Maharry indicated Branstad wished to see the state's entire tax credit program reviewed.

There also had not been any information provided by the SHSI on the Historic Resources Development Program application for 315 E. Second. Rudisill said he would contact Kristen VanderMolen about the application and notify the commission.

Rudisill also reported there was no new information on Muscatine's Downtown Revitalization grant. Final approval of the grant is still pending federal budget action. Rudisill reported there had recently been a tour of the proposed target area by a state team that examined storm water management options for the area.

The meeting then adjourned at approximately 6 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Tuesday, July 23, 2013 at 5:15 p.m. in the Muscatine City Hall lower level conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair