

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
220 NORTH MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 8645
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48107-8645
(734)222-6850
FAX (734)222-6715

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wesley Prater, Chair
Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel
County Administrator

FROM: Anthony VanDerworp, Director
Department of Planning and Environment

DATE: March 16, 2005

RE: Resolution Authorizing the Appointment of a Historic District Study Committee to
evaluate the John Wesley Conant House and Farm for Historic District
Designation.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED

That the Board of Commissioners appoint individuals recommended by the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission to a Study Committee to evaluate 5683 and 5671 Napier Road, Plymouth, Michigan for the purpose of nominating the properties to be protected by the Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Ordinance #115.

Staff Recommendation:

1. Recommend a Study Committee be formed for the John Wesley Conant house and Farm.

BACKGROUND

Under Ordinance 115, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners may establish one or more historic districts in cities, villages or townships where there is a contract explicitly addressing the Washtenaw County's jurisdictional authority within that governmental entity.

Before establishment of a historic district, the Board of Commissioners shall appoint an historic district study committee. The committee shall contain a majority of persons who have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation and contain representation from

one or more duly organized local historic preservation organizations. The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission recommends that the following individuals be appointed to the Conant Farm Historic District Study Committee: Ina Hanel, Shelley Griffith, Kathy Holtz, Wilhelmina Lawson and Brian Etter (Alternate).

WCHDC Commissioners, Don Riddering and Nancy Snyder, will serve as advisors and Marnie Paulus is staff to the WCHDC. Owner Olive Conant will also advise the study committee (Attachment A).

Upon receipt of the Study Committee Report, the Historic District Commission makes a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners regarding establishment of a historic district. If a district is approved by the Board of Commissioners, the Historic District Commission shall administer the historic districts (including review and approval of any proposed change to the size or features in the district).

The Salem Township Board has adopted a Resolution (Attachment B) and has executed a contract (Attachment C) requesting the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to appoint a Historic District Study Committee to evaluate the following properties for possible Historic District designation:

The Conant Farm is located at 5683 and 5671 Napier Road in Salem Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan. The property is primarily situated in the Northeast ¼ of Section 6, Salem Township and is located west of the town of Plymouth, Wayne County. The property consists of 70 acres of gently rolling fields and forested land. The fields are no longer tilled because the land is now kept as open space under PA 116. The historic farmstead is situated along the eastern boundary of the property, bordering the public road.

The farmstead sits on a small rise above the road, includes two 19th century farmhouses, a 20th century barn (Attachment D), and numerous early to mid-20th century outbuildings. These include a milk house, garage, brooder shed, chicken coop, corn crib, and silo. A mid to late-20th century log cabin, potting shed, and gazebo have been added.

A late 19th century outhouse also stands. The farmstead is characterized by scattered groupings of diverse mature trees and flower beds. The main driveway leads to the house at 5671. A short, secondary drive is located below the house at 5683. A walkway consisting of stepping blocks leads from the main house and its driveway and garage to the second house.

DISCUSSION

The current owner of the Conant House and Farm approached Salem Township to have the property listed as a historic district (Attachment E). The Salem Township Board has asked the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, through the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, to conduct this work on their behalf.

Olive Conant and her family, current owners of the Conant Farm are interested in securing

historic district designation for this property to preserve it for the enjoyment of future generations. They feel the establishment of an historic district would be a benefit for the township and county. The creation of this historic district fits well with the recommendations from the 2004 Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County. The plan showcases maintaining a “unique sense of place”, “our rural character and lifestyle” and highlights historic preservation. *The goal from the Historic Preservation Element is to protect and preserve the historic resources of Washtenaw County including historic buildings, centennial farms, historic bridges and historic sites.*

If approved, the Conant Farm Historic District will join ten other historic districts in Washtenaw County.

IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff will need to review the property periodically.

IMPACT ON THE BUDGET

None

IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS

None

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES

This will entail cooperation and communication between Salem Township and the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES

This request conforms with County Policy

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Conant Farm Proposed Historic District Study Committee
- B. Resolution from Salem Township
- C. Service Contract between Salem Township and Washtenaw County
- D. Photo of Conant Barn and Aerial Photo
- E. Letter from Olive Conant to Fred Roperti

A RESOLUTION APPOINTING A HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE AS
RECOMMENDED BY THE WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
FOR THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATING CONANT HOUSE AND FARM FOR HISTORIC
DISTRICT STATUS

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 16, 2005

WHEREAS, the property located at 5683 Napier Road (listed on the State Register of Historic Places) and the property at 5671 Napier Road have the potential to be nominated as a local historic district; and

WHEREAS, the owner approached Salem Township to have the property listed as an historic district. Salem Township has asked the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners through the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission to conduct this work on their behalf; and

WHEREAS, under Michigan's Historic Districts Act (P.A. 169 of 1970, as amended in 1992) and Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Ordinance #115, a historic district study committee must be established to evaluate the property and determine if it meets criteria to be included in a historic district; and

WHEREAS, under P.A. 169, the County Board of Commissioners has the authority to establish such a historic district committee; and

WHEREAS, as dictated by the law, the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission is presenting a list of nominees to serve on this Historic District Committee; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission recommends that the following individuals be appointed to the Historic District Study Committee: Ina Hanel, Shelley Griffith, Kathy Holtz, Wilhelmina Lawson and Brian Etter (alternate).

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission recommends that WCHDC Commissioners Nancy Snyder and Don Riddering will serve as advisors and Marnie Paulus serve as staff. Owner Olive Conant will also advise the study committee.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby appoints individuals to the Historic District Study Committee, as follows:

Ina Hanel
Shelley Griffith
Kathy Holtz
Wilhelmina Lawson
Brian Etter (alternate)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby acknowledges that Nancy Snyder, Don Riddering and Olive Conant will serve as advisors, and the Department of

Planning and Environment will serve as staff