

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes of Monthly Meeting

<p>DATE: January 5, 2005 TIME: 4:30 pm PLACE: 705 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan Zeeb Road Room 2010</p>

1. **Call to Order:**

Chair Nancy Snyder called the meeting to order at 4:39pm.

2. **Roll Call:**

Newly-appointed Commissioner Karen Brandt was introduced. Brandt is a Master's candidate in the Historic Preservation program at Eastern Michigan University, and expressed her interest in the work of the WCHDC. Present Commissioners offered brief biographical summaries and professional interests.

Present: Karen Brandt, Tom Dodd, Jean Ledwith King, Alice Ralph, Nancy Snyder and Elmer White

Absent: Paul Darling, Patricia Kelly, and Jasper Pennington (excused)

Staff: Patricia Denig, Melissa Milton-Pung

Commissioner Karen Brandt professed and Commissioner Alice Ralph renewed their solemn oaths as Washtenaw County Historic District Commissioners. Both terms are effective through December 31, 2008.

3. **Approval of Minutes of December Meeting:**

On a motion by A. Ralph, seconded by J. L. King, the minutes were unanimously approved as submitted. Amended by T. Dodd to separate motion by J. L. King from T. Dodd's report.

4. **Introduction of Guests:** None.

5. **Approval of Agenda:** Requested on motion of T. Dodd, seconded by A. Ralph, the agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

6. **Application Reviews:** None

7. **Business:**

2006 Meeting Dates: J. L. King raised a discussion regarding summer meeting dates surrounding holidays. Denig stated that the first Thursday of each month was approved at the previous meeting, and that if the WCHDC meeting wishes to change a meeting date, they may do so with 72 hours notice. E. White suggested the alternative of conference calling convenience for Commissioners under special circumstances. Denig

stated that conference calling was allowable for a public meeting, as long as a quorum was physically present at the meeting. Requested on motion of T. Dodd, seconded by A. Ralph, 2006 meeting calendar was unanimously approved.

WCHDC Representation at PAB Meetings: Denig reported that Pat Kelly is still a HDC member, with an appointment lasting until 2007. She is currently our representative to PAB, but also the PAB chair, with other extenuating obligations. A. Ralph reported that P. Kelly has expressed disappointment about her inability to attend more WCHDC meetings. N. Snyder stated any alteration of the representation structure would necessitate an alteration in the current bylaws. A. Ralph commented on the continued need of representation at the PAB, and offered to act as an observer at the PAB on behalf of the WCHDC.

Bylaws: Discussion was raised regarding the revision of bylaws, especially regarding the last known date of revision. M. Milton-Pung will report back at the next meeting with an update.

8. **Working Session:** None.

9. **Reports:**

Communications:

Milton-Pung reported that Washtenaw County has responded to five public inquiries for assistance and consultation since the last WCHDC meeting. Significant issues include the Dixboro United Methodist Church, a National Register and State Register listed property. Its owner, the church congregation, is currently considering alteration or expansion, according to a telephone inquiry by Architects Design Group received on January 4th. According to the department's records, the congregation considered similar action in 1996, only to drop plans due to considerable public outcry. Discussion followed. N. Snyder mentioned a known long-time association of the Tom Freeman family with the church, as well as a recent Saturday news feature in the *Ann Arbor News*. She also recommended staff response include reference to the Sacred Places program.

• **Staff Report—Milton-Pung/Denig**

M. Milton-Pung recapped her first full month's activities:

1. Production oversight for HistWeb III: Village of Manchester Historic District Preliminary Report, coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office and Manchester Historic District Study Committee, and direction of staff in report revisions
2. Writing and Submittal of HistWeb IV: Heritage Tourism Map Project CLG Grant Application (Copy of the application is submitted with the minutes)
3. Research and coordination of the Gordon Hall State

- Historic Marker Application, including black and white photography on site
4. Completion of the National Park Service Year-End Report Responses to Public Inquiry
 5. Standard HDC Staffing Duties

P. Denig expressed support for M. Milton-Pung's efforts in the position, and reiterated her continued availability to the WCHDC.

Conant House Study Committee – M. Milton-Pung reported that Study Committee members Ina Hanel and Kathy Holtz have conducted a substantial amount of research thus far. Holtz has concentrated efforts on the architectural descriptions. Hanel met with the Conant family on site in October, and has stated that the history of the property is largely completed. The chain of title, however, remains problematic, as a gap that includes house's date of construction remains in both the chain conducted at the County Clerk's office and in the original property abstract (in possession of the Conant family). Work on this project was put on hold in Fall 2005 as Hanel and Holtz focused efforts on HistWeb III, but is expected to resume in the next month.

- **Treasurer's Report – Denig**

Prompted by a query from J. L. King, P. Denig stated that the WCHDC has expended approximately 73% of the \$3500.00 budget. J. L. King was under the impression, based on reports from past meetings, that the remaining budget was much larger, approximately \$1700. P. Denig stated that questions was valid, and said that she wished to open a discussion regarding the state of the WCHDC budget. P. Denig recounted the absorption of the WCHDC budget into the Department of Planning and Environment budget, which took place three years ago. She expressed discomfort in continuing a less than transparent construct, one that is the perceived independent budget of the WCHDC. She pledged continued financial support of the WCHDC through the Department of Planning and Environment (e.g.: per diems, honorariums, at least one marker at no less than \$300 per year, special projects of at least \$500, supplies, printing, and some conferences).

A. Ralph asked if this transference would affect the ability of the Commission to freely act financially – if all actions would require prior approval by the Planning Services Director (P. Denig). She expressed concern for an unfunded yet mandated service, with no budget guidelines. P. Denig explained the PAB and Brownfields Redevelopment also operate in a common fund, and pre-approval would only be required for expenditures over \$500. E. White expressed disappointment in the lack of funding for commissioner

education and conference opportunities. A. Ralph advocated for a budgeting goals agenda for the WCHDC, tied to the Commission's annually determined goals and agenda. M. Milton-Pung expressed support for this planning document, which will act to chart the commission's spending habits and annual goals/agenda. J. L. King mentioned that she remembered the budget as \$4500, and suggested that the commission develop a realistic budget for future use based upon past years' activities and future goals. P. Denig promised to check records and report back on precedence. N. Snyder tabled the discussion until the next meeting.

- Report from Commissioners

- **Bridgewater Township – Snyder**

- N. Snyder announced that the township will be holding a special meeting on the evening of January 6th. Threats of ill-planned development are known to exist in the township, with specific threats to historic bridges tied to local politics and specific leaders. N. Snyder stated that the WCHDC was approached a year and a half ago to assist in preserving the Wilbur Road Bridge. The County Roads Commission was determined to replace it, but the bridge remains extant.

- **E. Delhi Bridge Study Committee—Snyder**

- N. Snyder commented on the full-color advertisement in the Sunday, January 1st edition of the *Ann Arbor News*, place by Edward Surovell Realtors and featuring the E. Delhi Bridge. J. L. King proposed a thank you note from the Commission to Edward Surovell Realtors. N. Snyder indicated that she would send the letter.

- N. Snyder also reported that the Museum on Main Street will have an exhibition on Washtenaw County bridges later this month, including an E. Delhi Bridge feature. J. L. King proposed that the WCHDC join the Museum on Main Street to remain abreast to the museum's activity. Snyder tabled the discussion until the next meeting, when yearly goals/agenda will be discussed.

- In related news, N. Snyder also mentioned that the Tuomy Gas Station, a National Register listed property located at the corner of Washtenaw and Stadium, is no longer owned by University Bank. The building is now a coffee shop, an appropriate use for this historic structure. The University Bank has moved to the Hoover Mansion on Washtenaw Street, also a historic resource of note.

- **Gordon Hall—Ralph**

- A. Ralph's report will be submitted via email.

- **Othneil Gooding House Study Committee—Pennington**

No report. Snyder commented that she has spoken with Jack Valentine, Committee Chair, on the phone a couple of times. He needs encouragement from the WCHDC and County staff to continue the Historic District Study Committee process.

Historic Markers—Dodd/Milton-Pung

Dodd – A status report on the WCHDC marker program was submitted to the Commission (included with the minutes). The Merriman Farm marker text was submitted for Commission approval. J. L. King commented on some spelling errors. The marker dedication ceremony will take place sometime in the spring. A community event for the David Byrd Center, an African American history museum located in Pittsfield Township, will take place on Sunday, January 8th, at 2:00pm. Two other potential marker sites were also included in the report: 6170 Plymouth Road in Plymouth Township and the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead Museum in Pittsfield Township.

T. Dodd also presented proposed WCHDC Guidelines for Plaques and Larger Informational Markers. Discussion on the number of markers per year was raised by E. White, P. Denig, A. Ralph, and M. Milton-Pung. The topic was tabled until the next meeting, as T. Dodd will amend wording to meet Commissioners' approval.

Milton-Pung – Recent staff efforts on the Gordon Hall State Historic Marker application were noted.

Future Agenda Items: E. White suggested that Popkins School return to the next month's agenda. N. Snyder stated that goals/agenda be added to next month's agenda, with Financial Commitments.

10. **Adjournment:** Requested on motion of T. Dodd, seconded by A. Ralph, the meeting adjourned at 6:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Milton-Pung, Historic Preservation Planner
Washtenaw County