

**WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of Monthly Meeting**

<p><b>DATE: September 1, 2005</b> <b>TIME: 4:30 p.m.</b> <b>PLACE: 705 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan</b> <b>Zeeb Road Room 2010</b></p>
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1. **Call to Order-** Chair Nancy Snyder called the meeting to order at 4:44 pm.
2. **Roll Call:**  
Present: Paul Darling, Tom Dodd, Jasper Pennington, Alice Ralph, Don Riddering, Nancy Snyder and Elmer White;  
Absent: Pat Kelly, Jean King and Don Riddering.  
Staff: Patricia Denig.
3. **Approval of Minutes of April Meeting:** On a motion by T. Dodd, seconded by A. Ralph, the minutes were approved as amended.
4. **Introduction of Guests:** Brian Shorkey (Washtenaw County Road Commisison) and Paul Cousins (Dexter Area Historical Society)
5. **Approval of Agenda:** Agenda amended to add Working Session for Status of Gordon Hall after Business; and discussion on Artifacts of USS Washtenaw missing under Reports from Commissioners. On motion of T. Dodd, seconded by J. Pennington, agenda was approved as amended.
6. **Application Reviews:** None
7. **Business:**  
WCRC presentation on Dexter/Main Street Bridge project – The WCRC met with Dexter Village officials and now some direction of where we are headed. The feasibility study for this project has been completed and submitted to WCRC Board. It looked at number of alternatives for this project and any alternative that threatened railway underpass was immediately eliminated. At the moment there are two very strong possibilities: 1) Replace the bridge (with removal of dam which Dexter Village is taking the lead on doing); or, 2) New bridge, new alignment, new railroad underpass, realignment of Island Lake Road which requires acquisition of right-of-way from Gordon Hall Property (approx. 2-1/2 acres) which the Dexter Area Historical Society is supportive of as they believe it is the least invasive process proposed. Commissioner White asked if funds gained from acquisition of the Gordon Hall right-of-way. Have agreed additional engineering work still needs to be performed and will then have better idea of numbers when talking to the Village. Commissioner Ralph asked what next steps would be and who is contractor. Mr. Shorkey replied that next steps are an addendum to the feasibility study for engineering work, perform additional engineering work, and then have a conversation with the Village, and that the contractor is JJRSmith. Commissioner White stated that he would like to see the WCHDC pass a Resolution encouraging the WCRC  
Commissioner Snyder asked when the work would begin, Mr. Shorkey stated that construction could be targeted for 2007, but that date is not firm at this point. Commissioner Dodd asked if there is still talk about a bypass going the other way around, and Mr. Shorkey responded that

there is just talk at this point and that the feasibility study states it is a good thing but it is not part of this project.

8. **Working Session:**

Mr. Cousins first stated he would like to make a few comments on the WCRC presentation. He said that the conversation goes back to 1995 when issue came up publicly for the first time. It was called Parker Road bypass and considered justified because there was going to be a new interchange on I-94 at Parker road. Village questioned this and voted 9 to 1 to instead address it as stated by the WCRC, option two, in today's presentation. All four surrounding townships (Lima, Dexter, Scio and Webster) and Village of Dexter supported this through resolution, including any work to be done should maintain historic character of area, protect any historic sites within project area, and protect and preserve vitality of downtown area.

Mr. Cousins that he is talking to the WCHDC as a co-chair of the "Save Gordon Hall" group and wanted to give a update on their work. Mr. Cousins stated that there was potential of a millage (1/10<sup>th</sup> or 1/20<sup>th</sup> of mil) attached to school districts to preserve Gordon Hall, waiting for month for consultants to tell us if this was legal and received word last week that it would not be legal as there was not enough connectivity from schools to Gordon Hall Historic District. New options for raising money, 1) Sell 2.1 acres to WCRC for right-of-way; 2) Webster and Scio Township to contribute by doing a conservation easement of 30 acres each at \$5,000 acre (\$300,000); 3) Village of Dexter is willing to contribute dollars; 4) Funds resulting from the sale of the Dexter Area Historic Society museum building; 5) Washtenaw County Parks and Rec Commission contribution as part of a walk/bike path from Dexter to Dexter Huron; and, 6) Possibility of Huron Clinton Metro Parks as part of Hudson Mills connection. This totals between \$500,000 and \$600,000 that we think we can raise to mitigate the bid we will submit for the Dexter Area Historical Society to purchase Gordon Hall. Next considerations: 1) How to fund operating expenses by considering leasing out two other buildings on property that could come to \$20,000 per year; and, 2) What to do with property once purchased by ensuring it is put back in the public hands with many options to consider for public use.

9. **Reports:**

**Communications:** - none

**Staff Report:** Histweb III is in its beginning stages, and we are still waiting for the Manchester Historic District Study Committee to submit their preliminary findings. The company who used to do markers (Photo-Tec) has gone out of business, so trying to find a new vendor for doing the markers. Updating the website has been delayed but hoping to begin targeting this work in October. The Historic Preservation Planner position is still only hold.

**Treasurer's Report:** P. Denig reported that approximately 50% of the budget has been expended for the Historic Preservation program through the end of August.

**Reports from Commissioners:**

**East Delhi Bridge Study Committee: (N. Snyder)** Commissioner White stated that today was the day the citizen's committee was supposed to announce what they have raised to save the bridge. Commissioner Snyder reminded the Commission that the WCRC has asked for comments on their Section 106 application for E. Delhi Bridge and if you have not yet submitted them please do so as soon as possible. Commissioner Snyder then stated that the National Register nomination submitted by the E. Delhi Conservancy was rejected by the State Historic Preservation Office, with the main issues being that the E. Delhi Conservancy relied heavily on hearsay. Commissioner White asked if the WCHDC can legally do a Historic District in a Zoned Township.

**Gordon Hall: (A. Ralph)**

The bidding period established by the University of Michigan Business and Finance Office for the sale of the Gordon Hall Historic District property begins today. The period ends on November 15. The State of Michigan fiscal year affecting both budgeting and appropriations, ends September 30. Outside the University, efforts to increase public access to the Gordon Hall Historic District continue. Proposals for lasting stewardship are still being promoted. The next 10 weeks will be critical.

In lieu of public comments by A. Ralph, a telephone conversation with Robert Tetens of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission indicated extremely limited opportunity for inclusion of the Gordon Hall Historic District in Parks' plans. The primary obstacle is funding for operations and maintenance of county parks and facilities. Tetens said staff capacity is another important limitation for both park development projects and ongoing supervision. As opposed to the August staff outing and meeting, the September meeting may offer better conditions for public comments regarding the Gordon Hall Historic District.

A. Ralph made public comments at the August 16 Dexter Township Board meeting and responded to questions from the Township Board. Significantly, a PDR program was one of the issues before the Board.

The University is still committed to the use of their bid process. Dexter Area Historical Society is assembling a bid proposal that will depend on a variety of public and private participants. Last week, bond counsel determined that the Dexter school district could not participate in a millage of the kind that had been discussed to help with local plans for the Gordon Hall Historic District. This disclosure increases the challenges for both acquisition and sustained fundraising.

Another visual archeological survey was conducted on Sunday 21 August with A. Ralph among the participants. Henry Wright of the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology drafted a report of the preliminary results and submitted it to Mary Krasny, Assistant Director for UM Real Estate and Support Services, Real Estate, Plant Extension Operations. The report described both paleo-Indian and historical

evidence, and suggested further study with limited excavation. A map of finds to date will be completed later.

A joint resolution to support the preservation of the Gordon Hall Historic District has been suggested. The signers would include townships, the village of Dexter. Such a resolution could be coordinated with the original 17 October 2001 resolution of the County Board of Commissioners.

**Conant House Study Committee:** (As reported in an email from Ina Hanel). Ms. Hanel-Gerdenich reported there was not much of an update for the Conant property since last month. She is still expecting to meet and interview the two Conant sons who may visit in Sept. or Oct., but it is not yet confirmed. Other committee members are working on the architectural descriptions, hunting down a few more maps from Wayne County, more deed searches at the Clerk's office to clear up some of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century ownership history. The committee hopes to have all the miscellaneous information in hand by the end of September, so they can finish writing the report as soon as the Conant interviews are done.

**Othneil Gooding House:** No report.

**Marker Report: (T. Dodd)**

Commissioner Dodd distributed a one page status report on historic marker proposals, including the revised text for the Park Lawn Historic Marker which is ready to go to production once the text is approved.

**USS Washtenaw: (P. Darling)**

Commissioner Darling reported that he had read in the newspaper a few weeks ago that some of the artifacts for this Historic District were reported missing and wondered what the WCHDC role should be around this. Staff will look into this and report back at the next meeting.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denig, Director of Planning Services  
Washtenaw County