

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes of Monthly Meeting

<p>DATE: December 1, 2005 TIME: 4:30 pm PLACE: 705 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan Zeeb Road Room 2010</p>
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1. **Call to Order:**

Chair Nancy Snyder called the meeting to order at 4:40 pm.

2. **Roll Call:**

Present: Paul Darling, Don Riddering, Tom Dodd, Jean King, Jasper Pennington, Alice Ralph, Nancy Snyder and Elmer White

Absent: Pat Kelly

Staff: Patricia Denig, Melissa Milton-Pung

3. **Approval of Minutes of April Meeting:** On a motion by A. Ralph, seconded by D. Riddering, the minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

4. **Introduction of Guests:** Paul Cousins delivered a moving background of Gordon Hall, beginning with the local grass roots effort in the late 1990's to preserve Gordon Hall, touching upon the WCHDC's work to establish the Gordon Hall Historic District in 2001, and culminating with the most recent success of the Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum's (DAHSM) winning bid to purchase Gordon Hall. As the DAHSM moves forward with the purchase and consideration of future use, possible restoration as well as ongoing operations and maintenance of the property, a Gordon Hall management group will be created which will include an appoint of a WCHDC Commissioner to group.

5. **Approval of Agenda:** Request to add Popkins School under Report from Commissioners. On motion of P. Darling, seconded by A. Ralph, Agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

6. **Application Reviews:** None

7. **Business:**

Introduction of New Historic Preservation Planner – Melissa Milton-Pung, the newly hired Historic Preservation Planner was introduced to the Commissioners as they arrived and before the meeting started.

Recognition of Don Riddering's years of Service to the WCHDC – P. Denig read the formal Resolution of the WCHDC, thanking him for his 15 years of service and valuable work for the WCHDC (copy of resolution attached as part of the minutes).

2005 WCHDC Meeting Dates – On motion of T. Dodd, seconded by J. Pennington, the 2005 WCHDC Meeting Dates (first Thursday of every month, 4:30pm to 6:30pm) were unanimously approved.

8. **Working Session:** None

9. **Reports:**

Communications: None

Staff Report (P. Denig): Staff reported that the biggest report was bringing Melissa Milton-Pung on board the past Monday (November 28th), stating that she has already hit the ground running because of the efforts to wrap up the submittal of the Manchester Village Historic District Committee's Preliminary Study Committee Report (a deliverable of the HistWeb III grant) to the State Historic Preservation Office by tomorrow (Dec. 2nd). M. Milton-Pung then gave a short background of her experience and efforts before coming to the County, as well as her expectations and commitment to the program and historic preservation in general.

At the request of Chair, N. Snyder, P. Denig then gave a brief update on the HistWeb IV grant application that is being targeted for submittal by December 15th. The topic for HistWeb IV is "Heritage Tourism" and the work expected to be accomplished through the grant is to develop themed tours with maps and context narratives of some of the historic resources already documented on the HistWeb website. WCHDC members suggested the Underground Railroad, the US-12 Corridor, and/or the Motor City National Heritage Area as possibilities for themed tours. WCHDC also encouraged staff to consider collaborating with area historic preservation resources and organizations (such as the Kempf House) in this effort.

Treasurer's Report: P. Denig reported that approximately 68% of the budget has been expended for the Historic Preservation program through the end of October.

Reports from Commissioners:

East Delhi Bridge Study Committee: (N. Snyder) Commissioner Snyder reported that on Monday the E. Delhi Conservancy signed a contract with the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) to pay for a portion (50%) of a new engineering study that will be done on the bridge. The Committee has not met since the meeting held in October, but the Committee expects to gear up efforts in the first of the year. Additionally, the Committee is waiting to learn what direction the WCRC will take, as it may impact the work they are doing.

Popkins School: (N. Snyder) Commissioner Snyder reported that she has spoken to Mrs. Stewart and nothing further has happened with Popkins School to date, but she believes Ann Arbor Township will be meeting with the current developer in the near future.

Gordon Hall: (A. Ralph)

A. Ralph accompanied Gil Campbell and Paul Cousins to turn in the Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum bid for the Gordon Hall

Historic District on November 15. A. Ralph made a third statement on the GHHD to the UM Regents at their regular monthly meeting on November 17 after the bidding period closed. [Text of comments and a copy of the proposal summary handout are submitted for the HDC files with this report.] The University of Michigan accepted the DAHS bid and publicized their decision on Monday November 21.

The acceptance is the culmination of efforts that actually began in 2000. Activity has been especially intense since February 2005 when the UM re-opened its plan to sell the GHHD. Substantial contributions from individuals, local authorities, and businesses mounted rapidly in the final two weeks of negotiations by DAHS representatives Paul Bishop and Paul Cousins. These were surely spurred by articles in the press and continued in-person presentations to area boards and commissions. Letters of support were promised by MHPN and the Michigan SHPO at the preservation workshop attended by A. Ralph in East Lansing on November 4. These letters and others were included with a "bid proposal" written by A. Ralph in cooperation with the DAHS representatives. Several steps will have to be completed before closing on the Gordon Hall Historic District. Many steps will be taken from now into the future to ensure the protection and public enjoyment of the GHHD.

On motion by D. Riddering, seconded by J.King, a motion was made to record as an official part of the minutes, "The WCHDC's recognition of Alice Ralph's extensive contributions to the efforts to purchase Gordon Hall." Motion was unanimously approved.

Conant House Study Committee: (P. Denig, Staff) P. Denig reported that she does not have an update for Conant House, as the study committee chair, Ina Hanel-Gerdenich (in her role as HistWeb III Rural Specialist), has been working extensively on preparing the Preliminary Study Committee Report for the Village of Manchester's proposed historic district, which is due tomorrow. P. Denig expects to have an update for the January WCHDC meeting. It was also noted that D. Riddering intends to remain on the Study Committee after stepping down from the WCHDC.

Othneil Gooding House: No report.

Marker Report: (T. Dodd) Commissioner Dodd reported that Marker Ceremony for the 53rd marker, Park Lawn, was a huge success and had approximately 80 attendees. Commissioner Dodd then reported that he is already working on the final verbage for Historic Marker 54, Merriman Farm, and then expects to begin work on Historic Marker 55, Sutherland Wilson.

Commissioner Dodd stated that he will bring a proposal for one set of guidelines on Historic Markers to the WCHDC for action in January. On motion of J. King, Seconded by D. Riddering, the WCHDC unanimously approved using 2005 left over budget funds to assist in the purchase of a State Historic Marker for Gordon Hall. Staff committed to starting the process so that were expended for this purchase before the County cut-off date for final expenditures in 2005 (estimated to be around 12/16/2005).

10. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 6:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Milton-Pung, Historic Preservation Planner
Washtenaw County