

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
STAFF REPORT
February 2010

1) CLG Grant

Thomas Roberts Architect was selected through a competitive bid process by County Staff and SHPO in early December. Work immediately commenced in an accelerated manner, with substantial project completion achieved by the Architect by December 31, 2009. Due to circumstances beyond the Architect's control, including slow/delayed participation by Chelsea Center for the Arts Board Members and Staff, the project was not entirely completed in 2009.

Due to Washtenaw County Budget Cuts and the elimination of the Office of Strategic Planning effective December 31, 2009, our office received permission from the SHPO to accelerate the project performance schedule for the Rehabilitation Master Plan, with a goal of completion by December 31, 2009. SHPO was advised via telephone and email of this matter in a timely manner. We did not receive confirmation about this budget until early December 2009. Now that the Historic Preservation function and CLG status has been retained and placed in the Office of Economic Development & Energy, we now feel confident that we will be able to complete this project by the end of the grant period, which is July 30, 2010.

A 75% Complete Report was received from the Architect in early January 2010, as well as an interim invoice. We have already received comments back from the SHPO, and forwarded them on to the Architect for inclusion. A site visit is scheduled for Wednesday, February 10.

Also as part of this project, Staff has worked with former volunteer intern Denise McGeen to draft the National Register Nomination for the Chelsea Center for the Arts. It will be submitted to the SHPO for review in the coming months.

2) Budget Situation/New Office

Effective December 31, 2009, the Office of Strategic Planning was eliminated and the Office Economic Development & Energy was created, effective January 1, 2010. Staff (Melissa Milton-Pung) successfully applied for employment in the new office, and remains as the 36 CRF 61 professional of record for the HDC/Washtenaw County CLG, in addition to other workplan tasks focused on County-wide Economic Development initiatives.

As discussed over several meetings in late 2009, staffing levels and support to the HDC will undergo some changes, and will rely more heavily on volunteer interns and HDC Commissioner service in 2010. A new volunteer intern, Cynthia Christensen, has been selected to assist with HDC-related work. We are glad to bring her on board.

3) Merriman Farm

Staff received an inquiry on February 3 from Betty Jean Murray, the owner of Merriman Farm. This farm is a Washtenaw County Local Historic District, located in Manchester Township. The roof of the main house is in a state of extensive deterioration (more than 20 years old, untreated cedar shingles), and will likely need replacement or extensive repair. Staff counseled Mrs. Murray on options, including replacement in-kind of the cedar shingles (no review necessary), or proposal of alternative materials like asphalt shingles (Certificate of Appropriateness review process required). Staff also provided resources related to the State Rehab Tax Credit for homeowners, which would offer up to 25% of qualified rehabilitation costs for a project or group of projects such as the roof repair or other maintenance/improvement. Staff will follow-up with Mrs. Murray in the coming weeks, and provide assistance in making the best choice for the care of this local historic district.

Respectfully Submitted,



Melissa Milton-Pung, Principal Preservation Planner
Washtenaw County Office of Economic Development & Energy