

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
STAFF REPORT
May 2010

1) Commissioner Appointments

Thanks to those WCHDC Commissioners who have expressed their continued interest in serving on this Commission. Letters of interest were received by Jason Brooks at the Washtenaw County Clerk's Office on time and in order. Unfortunately, due to pressing business before the County Board of Commissioners, HDC Commissioner reappointments/appointments have been postponed until a BOC meeting date in May. Staff will pass along any pertinent information as it comes available.

2) CLG Grant(s)

2009-2010 Grant Cycle: Chelsea Center for the Arts

The National Register nomination was overseen by Melissa Milton-Pung and largely created by intern Denise McGeen. It was submitted to the SHPO in March 2010. We have received comments back from the SHPO, and are presently revising the document. It is expected that the NR Nomination will go before the Michigan Historical Commission at their September meeting. A formal Rehabilitation Master Plan was written by Thomas Roberts Architect, the successful bidder from the formal RFP process last year. The 95% Completion report was received in March 2010 and submitted to the SHPO in April 2010. We are on track to complete the grant performance schedule on time this summer.

In addition to the work described in the scope and contract with the Architect, Thomas Roberts and Melissa Milton-Pung attended an event for the Chelsea Center for the Arts on March 25. This benefit of membership party featured the work completed by the Building Committee, Thomas Roberts Architect, and Washtenaw County to produce a Rehabilitation Master Plan and National Register Nomination. (There was no fundraising at this event.) Melissa and Tom were introduced by Aubrey Thornton Martinson (Executive Director of CCA). Aubrey discussed the development of these useful documents and plans from initial conversation between Aubrey and Melissa several years ago, to the CLG grant, to the creation of the Rehab Master Plan and NR Nomination. Tom also provided a nice 3D scale model of the proposed rehabilitation and expansion of the historic St. Mary's School/CCA Building. After a difficult year, when at times it was unclear if we would indeed complete the project, this was a triumphant culmination for historic preservation in Washtenaw County. A particularly gratifying moment was seeing the board of the CCA come full circle from disinterest in historic preservation for their important building to full support for its care, reuse, and expansion on-site. This project has absolutely met the goal of raising awareness of historic preservation in Chelsea, and tied it to key arts and culture leaders in the community.

2010-2011 Grant Cycle: Gordon Hall Application

Staff worked with HDC Commissioner Alice Ralph to prepare this year's CLG Grant Application, this time for Gordon Hall, a WCHDC Local Historic District. The application was submitted in record time, on March 30, accompanied by a letter of support from HDC Chair Nancy Snyder. Special thanks to Alice Ralph for her assistance in this grant application.

Similar to the most recent CLG Grant, we proposed funding for a Rehabilitation Master Plan, among other research. This RMP would provide a guiding document for the Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum (DAHSM), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit and the owner of Gordon Hall, and follow the site care recommendations made by Washtenaw County Staff several years ago. This document would assist the organization in appreciating its built assets, which have already been listed on the National Register and recorded by HABS/HAER. Finally, the product of this proposed project would put into place the historic resource documentation, evaluation, and implementation plan necessary to assist DAHSM in seeking funding for future rehabilitation and interpretation projects at Gordon Hall.

It's important to note that due to budgetary cut-backs, Washtenaw County has not allowed time in Staff's work plan to donate in-kind project management for this project. If our proposal is selected for funding, a portion of the grant award must be retained by Washtenaw County to cover the cost of staff oversight. We're excited to see the efforts put forth by the Dexter Area Historical Society & Museum in raising matching funds (40% of the project value) to make this attractive grant proposal. We are waiting anxiously for word of our project's selection.

3) Section 106 Reviews for Projects Funded with Federal Stimulus Money

The Washtenaw County Office of Community Development (OCD) is contracting with the Washtenaw County Economic Development and Energy Department (EDE) to perform the appropriate review and evaluation of identifying historic properties impacted by CDBG, HOME, NSP I and CDBG-R funding, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 for the term beginning April 1, 2010 and ending June 30, 2011.

The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has traditionally conducted Section 106 Review oversight for Federally-funded projects such as these. Due to high volume and a number of time-sensitive projects, Washtenaw County staff member Melissa Milton-Pung will now be the reviewing authority. Staff will be conducting the appropriate level of historic resource reviews as a means to streamline the federal compliance process for the City of Ann Arbor/Washtenaw County Community Development. As you know, Melissa holds a masters degree in Historic Preservation and have had many years of experience in the field, and therefore meet the Federally-defined standards of 36 CFR 61 to conduct these reviews as needed.

The purpose of this Programmatic Agreement is to streamline the reviewing procedure for Federally-funded Washtenaw County Office of Community Development projects. The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission is invited to concur on this agreement. Attached in this board packet is a copy of the proposed Programmatic Agreement, and also attached is sample language for you to use in providing concurrence on City letterhead. **A resolution by the HDC is requested to allow the HDC Chair to issue a letter of concurrence. Once this Programmatic Agreement is in place, complete with the concurrence of the WCHDC and other HDCs of Washtenaw County, we will not require any additional participation by the WCHDC.**

4) 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 needed 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. The project was delayed somewhat in March and April, due to personal circumstances on the part of Mrs. Murray.

Per a March 17 conversation with HDC Chair Nancy Snyder and review of supporting documentation (photographs of roof, two competing bids for replacement-in-kind and a bid for asphalt shingle replacement), Snyder granted Staff the permission to administratively approve the asphalt shingle roof. This approval was made on the grounds that the roof being replaced was not original, that the proposed asphalt replacement material was within the Secretary of the Interior's Standards design interpretations practiced by the SHPO (profile, texture, overall appearance), and finally, the cost-prohibitive nature of replacing the existing roof with cedar shingles (estimated \$44,000 to \$47,000 for cedar versus \$29,000 for asphalt). Staff provided a letter of approval to Mrs. Murray on April 22, 2010.

5) Local Historic District Applications

Per February's WCHDC meeting, Staff presently has two Local Historic District Designation Applications waiting for presentation before the Washtenaw County BOC.

1. *Harwood Farm, Pittsfield Township*

This application is complete. We have the application from the property owner, and the resolution of support has been passed by Pittsfield Township. We need to fill the Study Committee before proceeding, as Staff does not have the ability to provide significant time to this endeavor. Further complications have just come to Staff's attention in that it appears that Pittsfield Township may be in the process of seeking to create their own Historic District Commission. We are presently conferring with the property owner about the wisdom of designating a Washtenaw County LHD in a jurisdiction that may soon be covered by another HDC.

2. *L.C. Allen House, York Township*

This application is complete. We have the application from the property owner, and the resolution of support has been passed by York Township. Staff personally provided comment at a Township meeting to satisfy local interest. Further conversations were also conducted between Staff and SHPO about the eligibility of a moved historic structure for local historic designation. We now need to fill the Study Committee before proceeding, as Staff does not have the ability to provide significant time to this endeavor.

Respectfully Submitted,



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