

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting Minutes

DATE:	Thursday, August 13, 2009
TIME:	5:30 p.m.
PLACE	Washtenaw County Learning Resource Center (LRC) 4135 Washtenaw; Ann Arbor, MI 48107

Call to Order:

- Nancy Snyder called the meeting to order at 5:38p.m.

Roll Call:

- **Present:** Paul Darling, Charles Gray, Peter Kelley, Jasper Pennington, Nancy Snyder, Alice Ralph, Elmer White
- **Absent:** Martha Churchill (excused), Jean King (excused)
- **Staff:** Melissa Milton-Pung
- **Also Present:** Conan Smith

Alice Ralph moved for approval of Consent Agenda as amended, with support from Paul Darling. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

None.

Business:

USS Washtenaw County Exhibition Repair

Mr. James Leacock of Multiform Studios appeared in person, at the invitation of staff, to discuss the planned redesign of the USS Washtenaw County artifacts exhibition. Conversation focused on the proposed location of the exhibition (200 N. Main, Ann Arbor), opportunities for connection with Vietnam Veterans and private fundraising for the cost of the exhibition repair/redesign. The Commissioners expressed a desire for an attainable project scope with a desired completion timeline by the end of 2009. Conan Smith personally pledged \$100 toward the cost of the project.

Motion by Peter Kelley to establish a committee of three HDC members and no more than five members of the community and former crew of the USS Washtenaw County to study options for exhibition of artifacts contained in the designated local historic district *USS Washtenaw County Artifacts*, and to make recommendations to Mr. Leacock of Multiform Studios, and to engage in fundraising for said exhibition. Supported by Charles Gray. The motion carried unanimously.

Goals

New HDC Brochure

Commissioners reviewed the revised version of the proposed HDC brochure, which included reduced color saturation and reorganized content, and expressed their general approval. Alice Ralph indicated that she would provide staff with further suggestions for text revision.

Motion by Peter Kelley to approve the revised HDC brochure with amendments submitted by Alice Ralph, to include additional verbiage on the duties of the HDC. Supported by Paul Darling. The motion carried unanimously.

Role of Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County

Conan Smith led the discussion with the HDC, which examined the current financial state of the County, potential budget cuts, and the possible long range strategic plan for HP in Washtenaw County. Smith reported that Staff met with him internally since the last meeting, and brainstormed several viable approaches for consideration.

Discussion topics included:

- Current budget conversation at the BOC level is focused on state/federal mandated vs. non-mandated services. Activities under County Ordinances (such as the HDC), are not considered mandated services for the purposes of the County budget discussion.
- If the HDC is eliminated, the County's CLG status and 12 local historic districts may also be lost.
- Some public perception as local and even state level is that historic preservation activities are frivolous or irrelevant to the mission of government services, e.g., the elimination of the Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries (HAL).
- The best tool to raise support for HP is the economic redevelopment approach, focusing on the correlation between heritage resources/historic property reuse with tax incentives and the generation of local reinvestment/job creation.
- Recent conversations with area Convention and Visitors Bureaus about importance of HP for local sense of place and cultural heritage tourism; the creation of additional heritage tours to drive interest in Washtenaw County region; and also potential assistance in locating historic/cultural settings for the film industry.
- Economic Development purpose: there is still a potential ½ mil tax to attract businesses, promote Washtenaw County (Act 88). This tax is not subject to a voter referendum.

HDC Commissioners voiced their interest in and support for the approach of promoting the economic development side of historic preservation, and encouraged further exploration of various tools for this purpose. Several Commissioners indicated their interest in submitting a letter to the BOC to support historic preservation efforts for economic development at the County or in speaking with colleagues to generate support. Staff offered to provide assistance upon Commissioners' request.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 5:30 p.m. at the Learning Resource Center (LRC), 4135 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor.