



Rochester Hills Minutes

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Rochester Hills, MI 48309
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Home Page:
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Historic Districts Study Committee

Chairperson Jason Thompson, Vice Chairperson Dr. Richard Stamps
Members: John Dziurman, David Kibby, Dennis Mueller,
Peggy Schodowski, LaVere Webster

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

6:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

MINUTES of a **ROCHESTER HILLS REGULAR HISTORIC DISTRICTS STUDY COMMITTEE** meeting held at the City Municipal Offices, 1000 Rochester Hills Drive, Rochester Hills. Oakland County. Michigan.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Thompson called meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present 4 - **Richard Stamps, Jason Thompson, LaVere Webster and Peggy Schodowski**

Absent 3 - **John Dziurman, David Kibby and Dennis Mueller**

Others Present: Derek Delacourt, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Judy Bialk, Recording Secretary

3. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairperson Thompson stated for the record that a quorum was present.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Thompson asked if there were any announcements or communications. No announcements or communications were provided.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT (Non-Agenda Items)

No public comments were received on any non-Agenda items.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairperson Thompson announced that the Study Committee would hold a Public Hearing regarding the following property and for the following purpose:

6A. 2005-0537 **PUBLIC HEARING - FILE NO. HDSC 05-002**

Location: 3976 S. Livernois Road, located on the northwest corner of Livernois

Road and South Boulevard, and further identified as Parcel Number 15-33-476-027 and the southern 90-foot (approximately) of Parcel Number 15-33-476-014, zoned R-4 (One Family Residential).

Purpose: To receive public comment regarding a proposal to establish the subject property as a Historic District within the City of Rochester Hills, in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976 (MCL 15.261 et seq., MSA 5.3407(3) et seq.) and the Rochester Hills Historical Preservation Ordinance, Section 118-131.

Chairperson Thompson explained the information received at this Public Hearing would be included in the Historic Districts Study Committee (HDSC) Final Report for the property commonly identified as 3976 S. Livernois Road.

Chairperson Thompson stated that 3976 S. Livernois had been studied by the Historic Districts Study Committee in accordance with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and a Preliminary Report had been prepared. He explained the Minutes from this Public Hearing would be included in the Final Report, along with all other relevant material. He noted that once the Final Report is completed, it would be forwarded to City Council for action.

Chairperson Thompson summarized the procedure used to establish a district. He explained the duties of the Study Committee outlined in Section 118-130 of the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances included conducting a photographic inventory of the resource; conducting basic research regarding the proposed historic district; determining the number of historical and non-historical resources within the proposed district; preparing the Preliminary Report, which included the charge of the Committee, the composition of the Committee, the boundaries of the proposed historic district, the history of the proposed historic district, the significance of the proposed district, and the Committee's recommendation to establish, modify or eliminate.

(Arrive David Kibby 6:34 PM)

Present 5 - **Richard Stamps, Jason Thompson, LaVere Webster, Peggy Schodowski and David Kibby**

Absent 2 - **John Dziurman and Dennis Mueller**

2005-0537

Chairperson Thompson stated the Study Committee transmitted a copy of the Preliminary Report for review and recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Office on November 30, 2007. He noted a Staff Report and Comments were received from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the State Review Board on January 29, 2008.

Chairperson Thompson stated that in accordance with Section 118-131 of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Public Hearing is to be held sixty (60) days after the transmittal of the Preliminary Report to the SHPO. The Public Hearing is held in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended (the Open Meetings Act), which includes notice to the property owner of any proposed district no less than fourteen (14) days prior to the Public Hearing. He noted written notice was provided to the property owner of record on April 11, 2008.

Chairperson Thompson stated that notice of the Public Hearing was published in the Rochester Eccentric on April 13, 2008, as required by Ordinance to be published one time only at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of hearing.

Chairperson Thompson stated that in accordance with Section 118-132 of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Study Committee would prepare a Final Report with a recommendation, along with any recommendation received from the Planning Commission, to be submitted within one (1) year after holding the Public Hearing to the Mayor and City Council. He noted if the Study Committee's recommendation was to establish a district, the Final Report would include a draft Ordinance Amendment.

Chairperson Thompson noted for the record that if the Study Committee's recommendation was to establish a district, any final action on this matter would be taken by City Council.

Chairperson Thompson stated the intent of the Public Hearing was not to conduct a debate or dialog between the members of the HDSC and the public, but rather to allow the public to place any comments or concerns they may have on public record to be provided to City Council. He noted the HDSC Members would be available for questions at the conclusion of the Public Hearing.

Chairperson Thompson opened the Public Hearing at 6:37 PM.

Mark Gavulic, 520 Nichols Drive, Auburn Hills, stated he was present representing the Oakland-Steiner School. He explained the school's Administrator had intended to be at the meeting but was out of the country.

Mr. Gavulic stated that the Oakland-Steiner School was the current owner of the Stiles School Building. He indicated he had been a parent at the school since 1990, and noted the school was founded in 1989 so he was considered one of the founding parents of the school. He commented his three-year old son would attend the school, and by the time his son completed his education at the school, he, himself, would be associated with the school for over thirty years.

Mr. Gavulic stated he was credited with bringing the Stiles School to the attention of the Oakland-Steiner location committee as they had outgrown their Bloomfield

Hills location. He noted he was attracted to the building because of its architecture, and knew it was a wonderful match for a Waldorf School. He indicated his sister was a chairperson of a historical committee in Genesee County in the 1970s, and his brother is a historical preservation architect in Clarkston. He stated he had a deep appreciation for the building and its significance.

Mr. Gavulic stated he was the chairperson of the school's master plan committee, and now that the school owned the building and the site, they had to begin the process of figuring out how to make it their own, which he did not take lightly. He applauded what the Study Committee was doing, and noted he had an opportunity to read the Preliminary Report and it was excellent, thorough work. He was impressed with the resources the Committee used to prepare the Report.

Mr. Gavulic stated that Waldorf Schools were very sensitive to materials. He explained Rudolph Steiner spoke of the "touch sense" which was very different than the sense of touch. He stated it was fundamental in their education process, and natural materials such as wood and stone were universally important to them. He commented they sometimes had trouble with the regulators who came in to the school and wanted to know where the plastic toys were, and the school continually has to explain they will not cover a wood floor with carpet.

Mr. Gavulic felt that the school and the Study Committee had the same goal, which was to protect the building as the touchstone it was and the Community gem it was in the past in terms of being a community center. He stated the Oakland-Steiner School wanted to use the building as it was and restore the Community access. He commented they wanted their neighbors to be glad they were there, and wanted everyone to be proud of their beautiful building.

Mr. Gavulic stated that as the proposed designation stood, the Oakland-Steiner School could not support it, for the following reasons:

First, they appreciated they were only stewards of this property and the decision that will be made will affect generations. He noted the proposed district included the 50-year old wings that the State Historic Preservation Office called "inappropriate additions" and "non-contributing resources". The Oakland-Steiner School did not believe they should have to preserve those errors in perpetuity, especially because those additions themselves were ruined in the 1970s when EIFS was added to them. He stated the school would like the right to raze those wings and construct something more complementary to the original school building that adhered to the Department of the Interior Standards and guidelines. He noted he had been told that similar projects were done in both Clarkston and Birmingham. He stated the Birmingham project was a 1920s school that added an addition that did not attempt to duplicate what was

there, but created a beautiful building that complemented the original. He was told there was a similar situation in Clarkston with a 1920s collegiate gothic building with a 1950s single-story, rectangular addition. The addition was razed, and a new addition added on to the original 1920s building in a very tasteful way.

Secondly, the designation would cost the school immediately. He stated it would be an immediate financial penalty for the school, and there were no tax advantages to offset that since the school was a tax-exempt entity. He noted that about a year ago there was a lightening event that caused some damage to one of the additions on the school. He stated they were still in the process of recovering from that event, and the entire process was still going on and had not been settled at this point. He indicated that the school's insurance agent, who was in constant contact with the school, was told about the proposed designation, and advised the school they absolutely should not go along with it and should fight it because the insurance agent felt their insurance rates would quadruple. He noted that at this point the school had not been able to ascertain whether that was factual information or whether there were alternatives. He stated the school had not yet received their new insurance rates based on the restoration of the building, so they did not know what that cost might be. With the current economic times, that affected their enrollment and their programs. He explained if they became a historic district and had to pay the insurance rates, it would come at a direct expense to their programs.

Thirdly, the proposed district includes land that is significantly removed from the original Stiles School building, and the Oakland-Steiner School is worried that local Ordinances, such as setbacks from the proposed historic district, would inadvertently limit what they could construct on the property, including structures that would be removed from the original building and would not affect that building.

If the proposed historic district could be reduced within a reasonable interpretation of the enabling legislation to include only the property that the 1929 building occupied and the 1929 building itself, then the Oakland-Steiner School would reconsider their position. He noted that the inappropriate non-contributing 1957 and 1963 additions are functionally free-standing. He commented when the Oakland-Steiner School moved in, they did not use the Stiles Building proper for two years and it was shut down and not heated. The additions and the heating plant, which is part of the additions, are functionally independent, and the 1929 building functions as an annex to the newer construction. He believed it was within the Committee's reasonable discretion to declare the additions are two attached buildings and, therefore, under the Department of Interior rules, the Committee could shrink the proposed district.

Chairperson Thompson asked if anyone else wished to speak on this matter. Upon hearing none, he closed the Public Hearing at 6:50 PM.

Chairperson Thompson stated the Committee was pleased to receive the input and thanked the representatives from the school for attending the Hearing.

This matter was Discussed

6B. 2006-0425 PUBLIC HEARING - FILE NO. HDSC 04-005

Location: 1290 E. Auburn Road; 1304 E. Auburn Road; 1344 E. Auburn and 1356 E. Auburn Road, located on the south side of Auburn Road, east of John R Road and west of Dequindre Road, and further identified as Parcel Numbers 15-36-126-004 (1290 E. Auburn); 15-36-126-005 (1304 W. Auburn), and 15-36-126-029 (1344 and 1356 E. Auburn), zoned R-3 (One Family Residential).

Purpose: To receive public comment regarding a proposal to establish the subject property as a Historic District within the City of Rochester Hills, in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976 (MCL 15.261 et seq., MSA 5.3407(3) et seq.) and the Rochester Hills Historical Preservation Ordinance, Section 118-131.

Chairperson Thompson explained the information received at this Public Hearing would be included in the Historic Districts Study Committee (HDSC) Final Report for the properties commonly identified as 1290 E. Auburn Road, 1304 E. Auburn Road, 1344 E. Auburn Road and 1356 E. Auburn Road.

Chairperson Thompson stated that 1290 E. Auburn Road, 1304 E. Auburn Road, 1344 E. Auburn Road and 1356 E. Auburn Road had been studied by the Historic Districts Study Committee in accordance with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and a Preliminary Report had been prepared. He explained the Minutes from this Public Hearing would be included in the Final Report, along with all other relevant material. He noted that once the Final Report is completed, it would be forwarded to City Council for action.

Chairperson Thompson summarized the procedure used to establish a district. He explained the duties of the Study Committee outlined in Section 118-130 of the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances included conducting a photographic inventory of the resource; conducting basic research regarding the proposed historic district; determining the number of historical and non-historical resources within the proposed district; preparing the Preliminary Report, which included the charge of the Committee, the composition of the Committee, the boundaries of the proposed

historic district, the history of the proposed historic district, the significance of the proposed district, and the Committee's recommendation to establish, modify or eliminate.

Chairperson Thompson stated the Study Committee transmitted a copy of the Preliminary Report for review and recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Office on November 30, 2007. He noted a Staff Report and Comments were received from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the State Review Board on January 29, 2008.

Chairperson Thompson stated that in accordance with Section 118-131 of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Public Hearing is to be held sixty (60) days after the transmittal of the Preliminary Report to the SHPO. The Public Hearing is held in accordance with Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended (the Open Meetings Act), which includes notice to the property owner of any proposed district no less than fourteen (14) days prior to the Public Hearing. He noted written notice was provided to all property owners of record on April 11, 2008.

Chairperson Thompson stated that notice of the Public Hearing was published in the *Rochester Eccentric* on April 13, 2008, as required by Ordinance to be published one time only at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of hearing.

Chairperson Thompson stated that in accordance with Section 118-132 of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Study Committee would prepare a Final Report with a recommendation, along with any recommendation received from the Planning Commission, to be submitted within one (1) year after holding the Public Hearing to the Mayor and City Council. He noted if the Study Committee's recommendation was to establish a district, the Final Report would include a draft Ordinance Amendment.

Chairperson Thompson noted for the record that if the Study Committee's recommendation was to establish a district, any final action on this matter would be taken by City Council.

Chairperson Thompson stated the intent of the Public Hearing was not to conduct a debate or dialog between the members of the HDSC and the public, but rather to allow the public to place any comments or concerns they may have on public record to be provided to City Council. He noted the HDSC Members would be available for questions at the conclusion of the Public Hearing.

Dr. Stamps asked if all the property owners were notified about the Public Hearing. Mr. Delacourt stated that copies of the Preliminary Report and Notice of the Public Hearing were sent to each of the affected addresses and to all addresses associated

with the tax rolls for the parcels. He stated the Planning & Development Department did not receive any comment back from any of the property owners, and those notices were mailed to the same address used for water and tax bills.

Chairperson Thompson opened the Public Hearing at 6:55 PM.

Anita Holtz, 1290 E. Auburn Road, expressed her concern about the 1304 E. Auburn Road property and whether that property owner actually received notice of the Public Hearing.

Mr. Delacourt noted that property was a rental property and stated that notice had been sent to the property owner of record, as reflected on the City's tax rolls, along with a second address recently added to the tax roll information. He commented no response had been received from that property owner. He noted the City had attempted to make contact with that property owner on several occasions and had not received any response.

Ms. Holtz stated she was part of the bloodline of the Frank family that was born and raised on the property, noting her mother still resided at 1290 E. Auburn, as does her cousin, Ray Frank, who resides at 1356 E. Auburn Road. She commented that the third house, 1344 E. Auburn Road was still within the Frank family. She noted the rental property, 1304 E. Auburn Road, is no longer in the family.

Ms. Holtz stated the family members had concerns that there were elderly family residents residing at 1356 E. Auburn and 1290 E. Auburn, and eventually the next generation would inherit those properties. The next generation's concern about becoming a designated historical property is that the houses were built in the late 1940s, modified in the 1950s, and the structures themselves did not really have any historical significance. She agreed the property had been in the Frank family since the early 1800s, but if it became a historic district, it would be difficult to sell the property. She noted the children of the current residents would not be living on the property, and that was one of their biggest concerns. She commented that had the designation happened twenty years ago and there was something of great building significance left, she would be One Hundred Percent for the designation and would have pitched in to help it along. However, unfortunately now it would become a white elephant if it became a historic district. She did not know how they could sell the properties or market them when people were looking for new modern, updated items, and these were just older, single-story family homes. She stated it would be very difficult to entice buyers, other than the fact they sat on a lot of property. If the property is designated historic, then the existing homes could not be razed and new homes built.

Ms. Holtz stated that was their dilemma. They loved the property; they were born and raised there, and it was their roots and their earth. She noted her mother was in

her mid-80's, and her cousin was in his 90's, and the next generation was concerned about what they would do with the property after the older generation is gone.

Ms. Holtz referred to the house located at 1304 E. Auburn Road, and stated she would love for someone to embrace that home and to restore it to what it was, and she would be willing to help them do that. She did not think there was enough money to restore it, and the gentleman who owned it right now would not even have a hint of interest in restoring the home, unless he could be enticed with a large paycheck to take the house off his hands. She noted the home was only a rental to the current owner, and he did not have any attraction to the home.

Ms. Holtz stated she was not aware of the process, but asked if that house was deemed historical, whether the City could purchase the home and restore it to what it was, although she understood that was not the purpose of the Study Committee. She commented even the 1304 E. Auburn Road house had expired; it was past its time; it was over 143 years old; and although it was a grand structure, it was falling apart. She stated that was unfortunate, but true. She commented she had read the building materials on that house, and it was listed as asbestos, that some of the walls were made of asbestos, which was not a real positive thing to have in trying to restore a house. She stated she did not believe the current owner would do any restoration to the home, and commented that perhaps it would be struck by lightning and the house go out in a blaze of glory. Otherwise, the house will just fall down. She noted that if designated, the home would be considered demolition by neglect.

Ms. Holtz stated that as much as the family would love for the properties to be historical properties, or as had been mentioned by Dr. Stamps, become a part of the community and become an active working farm for the education system, she felt the buildings that would have been important for that to happen are already gone. She stated if the properties were to become historical, they would become albatrosses for the family.

Ms. Holtz stated that was how the family felt at this time, and stated they appreciated the Study Committee's time and efforts. She requested to be advised of the next step in the process.

Chairperson Thompson called for any other public comments. Upon hearing none, he closed the Public Hearing at 7:01 PM.

Chairperson Thompson thanked Ms. Holtz for her comments and stated the Committee appreciated the input.

This matter was Discussed

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Thompson called for any other business.

Chairperson Thompson asked the Committee how they wanted to proceed. He asked if the Committee wanted to discuss the two properties at the next regular meeting with respect to finalizing the Report.

Dr. Stamps suggested the Committee take the Public Hearing input and discuss the properties, noting there were some serious concerns stated regarding both properties.

Ms. Schodowski commented the Oakland-Steiner School had some serious concern about the insurance for the building, and did not know how things stood after the fire. She wanted to keep the dialog open between the school and the City so that everyone was on the same page. She noted the comment about reducing the size of the proposed district, and would like to explore that option further.

Chairperson Thompson stated that both properties would be discussed at a future Study Committee meeting.

Chairperson Thompson stated he appreciated the input from the Oakland-Steiner School, and would like to invite the school to attend a Study Committee meeting to discuss the matter and work with the school. He suggested the school contact Mr. Delacourt and arrange a mutually agreeable time to meet with the Committee.

Mr. Delacourt stated he would advise both property owners when the properties were scheduled for a Study Committee Agenda, and invite them to attend the meeting to discuss the matter or provide further input.

Mr. Kibby asked the representatives from the Oakland-Steiner School if they had any idea when they would get numbers from the insurance company. Mr. Gavulic responded he did not have any idea.

Chairperson Thompson reminded the Study Committee they had a year from the date of the Public Hearing to finalize the Reports, and the properties would be discussed at a future meeting.

Dr. Stamps suggested the Oakland-Steiner School contact their insurance agent and ask for more specific information about the insurance rates if the property is designated. He noted the Committee had held back on moving forward with the report because they had not received any feedback from the school, then the fire happened, and the Committee wanted to give the school some time to sort through those issues.

Mr. Gavulic stated that the most significant factor was whether the entire current building would fall under the designation, or whether it would just be the 1929

building. He noted the school would be dealing with replacement costs. He stated the school's master planning architect, and the person who got them through the fire restoration, was adamant that the school would have to manufacture the tools to make the trim, to make the windows, to put them back to their 1929 original state, which scared them. He noted the school had enough problems with the State of Michigan regulations because they wanted the school to use carpet squares. The school also discussed whether tempered glass could be used because that was not original or available in 1929. He stated those types of questions had come up, although he had been told by his brother that that was not the case.

Mr. Delacourt stated that whomever the school was speaking to had a slight misunderstanding of what it meant to be part of a designated district. He offered to sit down with representatives of the school, noting he had recently met with Ms. Katherine Thivierge, the school's administrator. He thought there was some misunderstanding about what a non-contributing resource in a district was required to do, as well as what was involved in replacement or updating of damaged materials, even on a contributing resource. He explained that was something that was separate from the Study Committee, and was the responsibility of the City's Historic District Commission if the property is designated. He stated that a non-contributing portion of a building on a designated district did not prevent that addition from being razed or removed, which had happened in the City. He noted approval for that removal had to come from the Historic Districts Commission, but it did not automatically prevent that from happening, and it did not mean identical pieces had to be used to replace items.

Mr. Delacourt commented that the person advising the school may have had a different experience somewhere else; however, he would be glad to sit down and talk to them, and any representatives from the school. He suggested that time could be arranged for the school to meet with the Historic Districts Commission to review what was being proposed with the school's master plan, and what the Historic Districts Commission thought would be approvable or not.

Chairperson Thompson stated the Committee really wanted to work with the school regarding this matter.

Mr. Gavulic stated the school wanted to work with the Committee as well. He noted the building was an integral part of the school and its architecture was very much appreciated by the school. He stated they put the oldest children in that wing because they have a mature enough sense of art and form to appreciate that architecture.

Chairperson Thompson stated the Committee would love to hear more from the school, and hoped arrangements could be made for a meeting between the school and the Committee.

Ms. Schodowski stated she had learned that the architect of the school was Frederick Madison from Royal Oak, Michigan. Mr. Madison also built some schools in Royal Oak; however, those schools had been demolished. She commented on the magnitude of the potential resource, noting Mr. Madison did quite a bit of excellent work. She knew the school would take care of the building no matter what, but wanted the school to know the building was one of the few pieces still left from Mr. Madison's work.

Chairperson Thompson asked for any other comments. No other comments were provided.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made and seconded, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Jason Thompson, Chairperson
City of Rochester Hills
Historic Districts Study Committee

Judy A. Bialk, Recording Secretary