



Rochester Hills Minutes

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Historic Districts Study Committee

*Chairperson Jason Thompson, Vice Chairperson Dr. Richard Stamps
Members: John Dziurman, James Hannick, Peggy Schodowski,
LaVere Webster, Murray Woolf*

Thursday, September 10, 2009

5:30 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 the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present 4 - Richard Stamps, John Dziurman, Jason Thompson and James Hannick

Absent 3 - LaVere Webster, Peggy Schodowski and Murray Woolf

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.

(Arrive Mr. Webster: 5:40 PM)

Present 5 - Richard Stamps, John Dziurman, Jason Thompson, LaVere Webster and James Hannick

Absent 2 - Peggy Schodowski and Murray Woolf

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4A. 2009-0331 July 16, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Thompson asked for any comments or corrections regarding the July 16, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Meeting Minutes.

Page 3, Item 7A, 4th Sentence Change: French
To: Colonial

Upon hearing no other comments or corrections, he called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Stamps, seconded by Dziurman, that the Minutes be Approved as Amended. The motion CARRIED by the following vote:

Aye 5 - Stamps, Dziurman, Thompson, Webster and Hannick

Absent 2 - Schodowski and Woolf

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the July 16, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Historic Districts Study Committee Meeting be approved as amended.

4B. 2009-0349 August 20, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Thompson asked for any comments or corrections regarding the August 20, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Meeting Minutes. Upon hearing no comments or corrections, he called for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Dziurman, seconded by Webster, that the Minutes be Approved as Presented. The motion CARRIED by the following vote:

Aye 5 - Stamps, Dziurman, Thompson, Webster and Hannick

Absent 2 - Schodowski and Woolf

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the August 20, 2009 Rescheduled Regular Historic Districts Study Committee Meeting be approved as presented.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

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

6. PUBLIC COMMENT (Non-Agenda Items)

Chairperson Thompson called for any public comments. No public comments were received.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairperson Thompson suggested that Agenda Item 8A (New Business) be moved ahead on the Agenda. The Committee Members agreed with that suggestion, and proceeded with Agenda Item 8A.

8. NEW BUSINESS

**8A. 2009-0332 Meeting with Economic Development Manager
- Discussion**

Dan Casey, Economic Development Manager, Planning and Development Department, City of Rochester Hills, was introduced to the Committee Members.

The Committee explained they wanted to meet with Mr. Casey to discuss development of the City while it retained one of the elements of the quality of life -

its history. They wanted Mr. Casey to be able to capitalize on the historical elements of properties so they could be preserved, rather than just bulldozed away. The City has already identified the designated properties, and has identified those properties that have the potential to be designated because of their historical nature. The potential designation might make those properties more valuable pieces of property, and may help encourage people to come to the City.

The Committee noted as the Community matures, the majority of the properties available for development are the historical pieces. That could result in requests to eliminate the historic designation because developers are not aware of the benefits of designation, such as the use of Planned Unit Development (PUD) Agreements that include special uses or allow increased density for a project. Tax Credits are also available.

The Committee explained they recognized that historical sites will be considered more frequently and they wanted to be more proactive to assist in the process to create "win-win" situations for everyone that would help protect the City's heritage.

Mr. Dziurman referred to the upcoming M-59 Corridor Study and asked how wide the corridor was, noting there were some historically designated properties along that corridor. He thought the Committee wanted to be proactive in that Study as well. Projects such as Oakland University's medical school will have an impact on the Community. Other factors such as walkable communities and trailways also have an impact. He referred to the Macomb Town Center project, which he was the design architect for, and noted that structure had historical elements on it to help protect their resources. He commented the Study Committee had met with the Planning Commission, but noted the discussion centered more on property rights than designation. The Committee wanted all the City's Boards and Commissions to work together.

Mr. Casey stated that the members of the Planning Department worked together as a team, and worked together on projects. Planning and economic development shared the same goals but might have different philosophies. Rochester Hills is about 80% developed, and is left with difficult parcels for new development. Redevelopment is also important to the Community. He noted he was aware of the historic tax credits.

A city has to weigh many factors in making decisions about property, such as zoning, use or impact on adjacent properties, tax base to the Community, and the historical quality of the property. Will a property benefit more from tax credits or benefit more if redeveloped as something else. Many factors have to be considered to make the best recommendation. Economic development decisions are made to maintain and increase the tax base of the Community, which in turn keeps the tax rates lower and benefits the entire Community. Is this the right project for the property and will the tax base increase or decrease?

The M-59 Corridor Study recognizes an area that will be redeveloping. At the time the study was initially considered, the Grand Sakwa project was in the drawing stage; medical buildings and brownfield redevelopment projects were coming forward. Now the trend is moving toward high-tech and office uses. Industrial uses are declining in Michigan as well as in the United States in general. Those buildings will have to transition to other uses and it is a matter of what the Ordinances allow to make that transition happen without negatively impacting the surrounding area.

The City's Master Land Use Plan was updated in 2007 and included economic development in the plan. The implementation of the MLUP led to the updating of the City's Zoning Ordinance to help provide the tools to effect those changes.

The purpose of the M-59 Corridor Study was to find out where the tax base would be coming from. Some residential areas are located in the Study area, which are also in the SmartZone designation, which is a State designation. The City has one of 14 SmartZones designated in the State of Michigan. The designated area includes a mobile home park, industrial areas, and older homes on bigger lots.

Being considered is what might happen over the next 15 to 20 years. Developers will begin looking at the available property for residential; commercial; light industrial or office and high-tech uses. Economic development considers how the City will transition over the next 20 year period within those boundaries and what could occur in those areas.

Dr. Stamps stated that the economic point of view and the Committee's point of view should find a way to work together. He pointed out there was a list of designated historical structures and a list of potential properties, although the Committee was still working on the potential list.

Mr. Dziurman referred to the Twist Drill property noting it had a rich history with the Community. Dr. Stamps referred to it as the "arsenal of democracy". Mr. Casey stated he had been to the property and toured the site.

Mr. Dziurman commented if the Study Committee tried to get that property designated, it probably would not happen, and the Committee realized they had to do things differently to save some of it. He noted retail was not necessarily desirable on that site, and stated he had suggested the Rochester Community Schools turn it into an art design center. He also thought the building might be used as a movie studio. He noted the buildings in the back might have to be torn down, but the building in front was very special. The availability of tax credits might save a resource.

The Committee discussed the fact the current property owners do not want to designate the property, but were leaving that option available for a future purchaser. A creative approach between the Study Committee, the City and a future developer might be necessary.

Mr. Casey commented that particular property was a good example of competing goals. The site is currently underperforming and old. The property owners did not purchase the property because it was historic. In speaking with developers or real estate agents about the site, they were very much aware of the past industrial use of the property.

Some developers are looking at greenfield sites, and find that site less desirable because of its historical background, wetland issues, and the zoning. Encumbered properties will require more dollars, more time and if considered too difficult, developers will walk away and look for a clean site.

The Committee noted that as fewer sites are available in the City, those developers will come back to those sites. Mr. Casey agreed, noting that some retailers specifically want to be in that area because they want to tap that market area; it is within 5 miles of their other stores, or they want access to the Oakland Township market.

The Committee discussed the preservation of sites that have meaning to the Community, and whether they could be adaptively reused.

Dr. Stamps relayed the success story with the Rochester College Farmstead, noting Mr. Delacourt had been the first to ask the college what the City could do to make things work. He commented that solution was creative and allowed the City and the College to work together and enhanced the value of that site.

Mr. Dziurman stated that the Committee was facing a dilemma in that nothing was being designated. It appeared that City Council wanted the Committee to become more proactive and give them a reason to designate a property.

Mr. Delacourt stated that some developers had worked with the historic designation, such as the Lorna Stone project. Developers were always advised of all the options available to them.

The Committee discussed the new medical school being built by Oakland University and whether there was an opportunity for the University to incorporate a site on the potential list. It was noted the University was building the school on their own property.

Mr. Hannick discussed the recent trend of doctors building their own facilities and supporting each other's practices, such as the UniSource facility in Troy and the WellPointe facility on South Boulevard. He pointed out there was no facility like that in the north end of the City, and asked whether the Twist Drill site might lend itself to a similar facility. He noted it was also close to Oakland Township. Mr. Casey stated that the property adjacent to the Twist Drill had been considered for such a facility, but did not materialize because the partnership considering the proposal fell apart.

Discussion continued regarding potential uses of properties based on their current zoning, and other factors such as accessibility, wetlands, environmental issues, and adjacent properties. It was determined that a mixed use type of development would be the most likely proposal for the NE corner of Rochester and Tienken Roads. Whether or not the site is designated will be a conversation with any potential purchaser, and the potential use of the site will also be a contributing factor.

Mr. Dziurman stated the Committee was trying to be creative, and commented he thought the potential adaptive reuses of the Ferry Court property had been creative. He stated the Committee wanted to help preserve the heritage of the City and did not want to be a bottleneck.

Mr. Casey stated that consideration was given to what a site did for the Community and will it have a positive affect on the quality of life. He noted that also meant looking ahead over the next 20 years and if a site will maintain the quality of life 20 years from now. He commented that any commercial development on the north side of the City proposed in a residentially zoned area would not be considered as favorably. That area is part of what makes the City unique because of its larger lots, which is part of the image of Rochester Hills. The MLUP is not a document set in stone, and does try to assist those areas and not change things.

Mr. Delacourt stated that economic development is not just about tax abatements. It also includes placemaking, parks and historic districts. Cities give tax abatements, but that does not always make them desirable places to relocate. Offering amenities such as walkable communities and downtown areas are big assets because people like to see those amenities in their communities. Sometimes it might be hard to balance planning and economic development, but the two work hand-in-hand.

Dr. Stamps asked what the Study Committee should be doing to maintain the quality of life, noting that 20 years from there will still be historic structures around.

Mr. Casey noted it was important for the Committee to establish their goals. They have a list of potential properties and should determine which ones are their Class A properties, those that should not be touched under any circumstances, understanding they may have to give on another one. They could consider the competing goals of

City Council, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, noting that the historic character is only one part of the decision. There may be some properties that are absolutely critical to be maintained, while others it might be acceptable to lose to win something else down the road.

Mr. Casey discussed a historic property that the City of Southfield felt was significant enough to purchase the structure and move it to another historical location to preserve it. The City of Southfield wanted the proposed development to occur on the original site, but also felt strongly about preserving the structure. He suggested there may be similar opportunities with the Van Hoosen Museum.

Dr. Stamps pointed out that the Van Hoosen Museum was real and had not been created by moving structures to the site. He noted other local communities had followed Southfield's approach, which was a good fallback position

Mr. Casey pointed out that at the end of the day the average person did not know the history of any particular structure, person or place. Many visited museums, toured the site, and enjoyed it.

The Committee commented that was the Greenfield Village mindset - take structures and move them to one place. With the City's designated resources, the City can say this house on this property is 150 years old.

Mr. Delacourt stated that students are taken on fieldtrips to Greenfield Village and that is the impression they have of preservation. He commented it took him some time to adjust that mindset because that is what he grew up with.

Dr. Stamps stated that it appeared the Committee and the Planning Department were on the same page and going in the same direction. As the City is approached by developers, the developers should be made aware the City wants development but also wants to preserve what's here.

The Committee discussed that fact that it was a perpetual myth that neighbors should be right next door as that was not a true representation of what the City was. There should be open space. The comment was made that at one time a golf course was planned for the property around the Van Hoosen Museum, which would have been a better representation of the pasture land that originally existed around the farm.

Mr. Hannick asked if developers were currently looking at farms or houses. Mr. Casey responded it was not the end of residential-type projects, but there was no clear yes or no answer. He noted part of his job was to try to retain companies in the City and help them grow. The other part of his time was spent trying to attract companies to the City. He noted he spent very little time on residential development.

Chairperson Thompson thanked Mr. Casey for taking the time to meet with the Committee.

This matter was Discussed

Chairperson Thompson stated that the Committee would return to Agenda Item 7 (Unfinished Business).

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7A. 2005-0537 Stiles School (3976 S. Livernois)
- Discussion

Chairperson Thompson stated that this matter had been discussed by City Council at their June 1, 2009 meeting and referred back to the Committee for additional information and research.

Mr. Delacourt provided some aerial photographs of the site dating back to 1963, which were reviewed by the Committee. He stated he had not been able to locate any of the old Sanborn maps, which were old insurance maps, as it was hard to find them. He had tried to get copies of them from both Oakland County and the Oakland County Pioneer Society, but neither entity had them for that section of the City.

In reviewing the aerial photographs, the Committee noted the building footprint had remained the same, although the sidewalk leading to the school had changed over the years.

The Committee discussed the concept of designating just the original school building. Mr. Dziurman stated he was not sure the property would qualify for tax credits if the designation was done wrong. He suggested that was something that should be discussed with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Mr. Delacourt stated he had spoken with Amy Arnold of SHPO and there was not a good answer to that question.

Mr. Dziurman suggested starting a dialog with all the Historic Districts Commissions throughout the State because all were faced with the same type of situation and find out how they worked it out.

Dr. Stamps suggested this property could become a test case. The Committee had made its recommendation by following the guidelines; took the recommendation to City Council, and City Council tabled the matter. The question was asked: Could the building be designated without additions B or C? The property owner might be willing to designate only portion A. The question to ask the State was if the City designated just a portion of the building, would that designated portion be eligible for tax credits.

He noted this could be the same scenario for the Twist Drill property.

It was noted that SHPO was aware of the Stiles School site and what had happened. The Committee discussed whether a smaller district qualified, or if the Study Committee had met the criteria. It would not meet the National Register criteria. It was noted that the additions had become part of the site over time as they had been there for 40 or 50 years.

Mr. Delacourt pointed out the current property owner (Steiner School) did not seem to be worried about tax credits. Mr. Dziurman noted that could change. He stated they could take advantage of the tax credits, explaining the parents whose children attended the school could create a process to obtain the tax credits.

Mr. Delacourt noted that the school did not pay taxes, and commented he believed a person or entity had to pay taxes in order to obtain the credits. Mr. Dziurman stated the school could sell the tax credits. Discussion ensued regarding the various methods whereby the Steiner School could help their contractors take advantage of the tax credits. The discussion continued regarding whether a contractor could take advantage of tax credits if the Steiner School as the owner of the property that was in the historic district did not actually pay taxes. Mr. Dziurman believed if the property had been designated, the contractor used by the Steiner School to repair the fire damage might have been able to take advantage of the tax credits.

The Committee agreed they needed some clarification on this matter. Dr. Stamps suggested a letter be sent to SHPO asking if just a portion of a building can be designated, and if so, would it qualify for tax credits. The Committee noted that it did not appear City Council would be willing to designate more than the property owner was willing to have designated. The letter could include a description of what would be designated so SHPO would see exactly what was proposed. There was some brief discussion about how the original school building had been heated and whether the boiler room portion would be included in the designated portion.

This matter was Discussed

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Thompson called for any other business.

The Committee noted there were many road projects underway throughout the City, and asked whether there was anything that could be done to protect the Bib Oak Tree located on Livernois, just south of Auburn. Dr. Busch had previously stated that a tree cannot be designated just because it is old, it has to meet the criteria for significance in the Community.

2007-0576 1585 S. Rochester Road
- Discussion

Mr. Delacourt advised the Committee that City Council had received a formal delisting request for the historic district located at 1585 S. Rochester Road. He explained the property owner had been sent notices of demolition by neglect from the Historic Districts Commission. The attorney for the property owner had submitted a package directly to City Council requesting delisting or elimination of the historic district. He understood the request would be scheduled for the September 28, 2009 City Council Agenda.

Mr. Delacourt reviewed the process for elimination of a district outlined in the Ordinance. City Council could refer the matter to the Study Committee to follow the process and to see if it meets any of the criteria for delisting.

The Committee noted that property was part of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Agreement and asked whether the PUD would be revised. Mr. Delacourt noted those were two separate issues. The request for delisting had been made, and the applicant could ask to revise the PUD Agreement. He noted the property owner had asked to be scheduled as a discussion item with the Planning Commission.

Chairperson Thompson stated that the next regular meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 14, 2009 at 5:30 PM. Chairperson Thompson asked if there was any other business. No other business was presented.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made and seconded, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the meeting at 6:40 PM.

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

Judy A. Bialk, Recording Secretary

{ Approved as _____ at the _____, 2009 Regular Historic Districts Study Committee Meeting }

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