



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Historic Districts Study Committee

1000 Rochester Hills Dr
Rochester Hills, MI
48309
(248) 656-4600
Home Page:
www.rochesterhills.org

Chairperson Julie Granthen, Vice Chairperson Jason Thompson
Members: Melinda Deel, Bryan Lemanski, David McCracken, Michael McGunn, Charles
Tischer

Thursday, October 12, 2023

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Granthen called the Historic Districts Study Committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 4 - Julie Granthen, David McCracken, Michael McGunn and Charles Tischer

Excused 3 - Melinda Deel, Bryan Lemanski and Jason Thompson

Others Present:

Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2023-0470](#) August 10, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by McGunn, seconded by Tischer, that this matter be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 4 - Granthen, McCracken, McGunn and Tischer

Excused 3 - Deel, Lemanski and Thompson

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

[2023-0268](#) PUBLIC HEARING

Consideration and Request for Adoption of the Final Historic District Study

Committee Report - Winkler Mill Pond Historic District - Boundary Change
(McLeod memo dated 10-4-23, Staff Report prepared by K. Kidorf dated 10-02-23, SHPO letter dated 9-29-23, Draft Final HDSC Report (October 2023), Email from Linda Monks-1921 Washington, Notice of Public Hearing and reminder, draft Planning Commission minutes dated 9-19-23, McLeod memo to the Planning Commission dated 9-19-23, draft minutes from HDSC meeting of 8-10-23, McLeod memo dated 8/3/23, Staff report prepared by K. Kidorf dated 8/1/23, Preliminary HDSC Report, Winkler Mill Pond District Boundary Change dated August 2023, and HDSC Draft Minutes 6/13/23, had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof.)

In attendance was Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting.

Chairperson Granthen stated that the Committee will hold a public hearing today regarding changing the limits of the Winkler Mill Historic District. She noted that she had emailed Mr. McLeod and Ms. Kidorf with some questions but had a few more. She asked if those who would lose historic district status realized that there could be a change to the speed limit of the road, or that an extra lane or two or a sidewalk could be put in.

Mr. McLeod responded that there has not been any official communication to that effect. He noted that when the public open house was held the question was raised in terms of what would happen to the road itself, and it was felt at that time to have that conversation with the entire Study Committee. He mentioned that the public hearing notice was re-sent prior to this meeting to remind everyone. He commented that there are a number of different factors that go into changing this district, and the roadway conditions would be one of them. He cautioned that just because the district would change, it does not automatically mean that these things will happen. He stated that they would still take City Council and Road Commission actions to change things. He added that there would still be portions of the road that may be within the historic district even if the district does change in some form or fashion.

Ms. Kidorf stated that a speed limit change would not be a physical change so it would not come before the Historic Districts Commission, but any physical or dimensional change to the district would come before them. She suggested that the Committee keep in mind that Washington Road from Mill Race south to the roundabout would remain in the Stony Creek Historic District, and it would just be from about Winkler Mill Road north to the city line that would be out of the district if the Committee so decides.

Chairperson Granthen stated that while it is just anecdotal evidence, Dr. Stamps who was her predecessor as Vice Chair had told her that years ago it was proposed to increase the speed limit, but because it was a historic district they declined.

Ms. Kidorf stated that she remembered that it was more than just a speed limit change, and commented that in order to increase the speed limit they had to do some adjusting to the road itself.

Mr. McLeod stated that the only change from what the Committee has last seen

has been made is the removal of one property at 1725 Washington Road based on the recommendation from the State's review.

Ms. Kidorf noted that the other changes included incorporating all of the comments from the State Historic Preservation Office in clarifying the property count, adding a paragraph toward the end that focused on what was being removed for the district and the reasons for that.

Chairperson Granthen questioned the 6250 Winkler Mill address, noting that there is a historic barn on that property along with a newer house. She asked whether it is possible to keep that barn in the district.

Ms. Kidorf responded that if the parcel is split such as is being done on the pond side, it would be possible to keep the barn.

Chairperson Granthen noted that the owner of 1921 Washington Road came to the information session last month and provided some information, and questioned whether it would be possible to keep that house in the district. She stated that the owner is in attendance this evening with more information and called the owner forward, opening the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Linda Monks, 1921 Washington Road, noted that she provided information to the Committee and had much more with her this evening.

Thomas Monks, 1921 Washington Road, asked what the point of this was and commented that it seemed vague as to why the district would be changed.

Mr. McLeod stated that this started about 20 years ago when the District Study was created and it recommended that the Winkler Mill Pond District be reevaluated to potentially remove those houses that were deemed non-contributing, or non-contributing structures within the district. He stated that fast-forwarding to 2019, City Council as a part of the City's ongoing commitment to reevaluate and continue our Certified Local Government status as a part of the State Historic Commission, decided to take a look at this district to see if it really was a value to remove what was deemed to be non-contributing structures. That study progressed over the time during Covid from 2019 to this point. The study provided confirms the findings of 20 years ago, that there are a number of houses that are non-contributing to the district.

He explained that a historic district should be as pure as possible to the time frame in which the district was originally established. From that standpoint, the City is now considering potentially removing a number of houses from the district and that would remove the historic regulations from those houses. He noted that this is not to say that those houses would change or someone has to change them, it simply means that they would no longer have to come before the Historic Districts Commission in terms of any review or input. He stated that the house in character could change, but from the standpoint of the City they want to promote historical houses even though they may not be from the contributing time frame upon which the district was created. He commented that the district right now could potentially get smaller based on the time frame in which the historic relevance of the district was originally established. He added

that ultimately City Council will be the one to make the final determination as to whether the district would change or not. This body is charged with making a recommendation as to whether it is appropriate to modify the district boundaries or not.

Mr. Monks asked if it was about paving the road or taking people off of the historic roll so that their taxes could be raised. He questioned the time frame that this has been considered, noting that 20 years ago it began and four years ago it was considered.

Ms. Kidorf stated that it took time for the City to have the funding to promote the study of the district. She noted that in the initial 2002 survey, some of the homes were built in 1989, 1980 or 1970 and to add a deck to the back of their home or replace their windows they have to come before the Historic Districts Commission. She stated that the reason City Council asked to look at this was to try to relieve some of the burden of those owners with non-historic or non-contributing houses any time they wanted to make a change to the exterior of their property. She added that there are no property tax breaks or increases for historic properties. She stated that currently if the County wanted to make any physical changes to Washington Road they would need to come before the Historic Districts Commission, and for this reason the Committee may decide not to change the district boundaries. She commented that there is no decision made yet and this is why they are having the public hearing to hear input from those who live in the district and in the City. She stressed that it may end up that this Committee decides to leave the district boundaries as-is.

Mr. Monks asked how many proposals are received per year that have to go through the Commission. He stated that he lives on the pond and sees very few people making changes to anything. He questioned why someone wants to change the rules on an entire area if there are no plans.

Ms. Kidorf noted that they will review as many applications as come in, and perhaps 20 to 25 applications come in per year across all of the historic districts. She commented that as a City Consultant or staff member, nothing is gained or lost and whatever this Committee decides to do is fine.

Mr. McLeod noted that it was originally proposed in a study 20 years ago, and the City let it lie at that time because it was not a big priority.

Leslie Sheidler, 1650 Washington Rd., asked for confirmation that the Committee makes a recommendation and then someone else decides.

Chairperson Granthen responded that City Council will act on the Committee's recommendation.

Melinda Hill, 1606 Boulder Court, Rochester, noted that she has been a 45-year resident of the area and only moved out of Rochester Hills into Rochester two years ago. She added that she was on the HDC for nine years, on City Council for 10, and is a longtime active member with the Michigan Historic Preservation Network. She stated that she is familiar with the study that went on 20 years ago that said to look at the district and to see exactly what it is comprised of.

She noted that there has been very little new infill since the district was designated back in 1978 and some minor changes to some homes. She commented that one can ask what the intent was when the district was designated, and yes, there are some very old properties but also some newer ones that were maybe fifties homes. She stated that the progression of time was there and they did not say at that time not to have those homes in there. She commented that a few of the houses have disappeared as the City did not take much action. She expressed concern if the Winkler Mill and Stony Creek districts are separated, and she recalled that for three years the people along Washington Road fought to keep the road from being paved. She stated that the Friends of Tienken Road are being honored for their educating and preserving the community's historic resources and this piece of Washington Road is a great part of that. She noted that paving would change the history forever. She commented that breaking up the district would start to make things disappear. She stated that having some things that have progressed are not detrimental to what history is and it would be a huge mistake to dissolve probably 90 percent of the district when only 10 percent of the district is infill.

Mrs. Monks stated that they bought their home at 1921 Washington Road back in 1990 and were given an information packet from the sellers which included five owners' worth of documentation, which includes pictures of the school teachers who built the house back in the early 20s along with letters from their family discussing what the house used to look like. She stated that the main house still has original windows in part from the 1920s, and the middle part was put on by another family in the 1950s. She added that she has documentation that it was the house of the week in the Pontiac Press. She noted that the people they bought from put a garage on in the 1980s, and the garage and anything done to the exterior of the home at that time came before the Historic Districts Commission and was approved. She mentioned that when they bought the house everything was dirt down to 24 Mile Road. She stated that they want the area maintained as it is.

She described that the blue aluminum siding was put on in 1987 and mentioned that they have done nothing to the exterior of the house and noted other interior features in her home such as a cistern in the basement. She pointed out that she has documentation from the Avon Historic Commission that her house is historically significant and cannot understand how all of a sudden that it is not. She mentioned that while Rochester Hills is wanting to shrink the district, Rochester has reduced the cost of their historical plaques and are urging people who have a house built before 1973 to display a historic plaque by their house.

Chairperson Granthen stated that she wanted to reiterate that City Council directed the Committee to undertake the study.

Ms. Hill stated that she wanted to point out that one of the things SHPO pointed out was the focus of the report. She commented that there isn't much depth in the report as to why there are "x" number of houses being eliminated from the district.

Chairperson Granthen asked Ms. Kidorf whether the report had been redone to focus on what was going out rather than what was being retained.

Ms. Kidorf responded that she added a few paragraphs which is what SHPO suggested to address those comments. She noted that she could go back and rework the report more if that is the Committee's desire.

Chairperson Granthen asked for any additional public comments. Seeing none, she thanked those who came and shared with the Committee. She asked if any Committee member felt comfortable making a recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Tischer asked if there were any comments received from the non-contributing owners at this point.

Mr. McLeod responded that includes comments from the residents who were here tonight, along with at least one phone call prior to the public input session. He stated that there was one other resident that attended the public open house, but one person indicated that they were glad to be proposed to be out of it. He noted that it becomes a question of realistically whether the Committee feels it is the appropriate for the district moving forward. He stated that there will always be some people who will be upset and some people who will be happy whether they have those regulations or not.

Mr. McCracken noted that looking at the proposal for Washington Road, it appears that the historic district would be shrunk down but a portion of Washington Road would still remain in the district. He asked how likely it would be that the road would be paved, and then dirt, and then paved again, or whether it would be more likely that it would remain as it is.

Ms. Kidorf responded that only the Road Commission can answer that question.

Chairperson Granthen asked if it would be both Macomb and Oakland County.

Ms. Kidorf responded that it would be only Oakland County.

Mr. McGunn suggested that perhaps the five or six paragraphs added about things being removed could be expanded upon to the same depth as the description of that staying in.

Chairperson Granthen asked how the members would feel about the potential of keeping the Monks' house in the district along with the historic barn, and how people would feel about that as their recommendation to Council.

Mr. McCracken responded that he would be in favor.

Mr. Tischer and Mr. McGunn indicated their agreement as well.

Chairperson Granthen stated that the houses far after 1978 perhaps would not be in the district but the older houses would.

Ms. Hill stated that she is not hearing anything out of this Committee that is saying that they think this is a wonderful idea. She noted that while the Committee would be accepting the report, they also have the option to say that

their recommendation would be not to change the district, and she is not hearing their reasons why they are so anxious to change the district.

Chairperson Granthen stressed that the question has to go to City Council.

Ms. Hill stated that she is concerned about the whole streetscape as what is out there today has changed very little, and wants to hear why they want to do this.

Chairperson Granthen stated that she was not advocating one way or another, and just looking at all possible alternatives.

Ms. Kidorf stated that she would try to clarify that the 2002 survey of the entire city of Rochester Hills not only looked at the existing historic districts that were designated in 1978 but also any potential new districts. She explained that this is why Twist Drill ended up becoming a historic district. She mentioned that Frank Farm did not end up becoming a historic district. When the 2002 survey looked at the existing districts, both Winkler Mill and Stony Creek, they used the National Register. She stated that State Law has changed significantly since 1978, and they would today again use the National Register, which does not encourage keeping non-contributing properties or land. She explained that this is where that recommendation, both in 2002 and the currently recommendation, came from; however, that does not mean that this is what the Committee should do. She stressed that the Committee can recommend to Council to do nothing and leave the district as it is, or it can recommend to alter the boundaries in any way the Committee sees fit.

Chairperson Granthen asked if the Committee felt comfortable making a decision while missing a few members or if it should wait until they have a full crowd.

Mr. Tischer responded that this process started a number of months ago and a lot of work has gone into this. He stated that he would make a motion to postpone action for another month until more Committee members would be present, and also to potentially hear from more residents that are non-contributing. He thanked those in attendance for their passion on this. He stated that he sits on the Historic Districts Commission and takes this very seriously. He mentioned that when they initially started this process they really did not hear anything.

Mr. Monks stated that the reason nobody is here is because this is so vague and it appears to be a big blank piece of paper. He commented that he believes someone wants to do something.

Mr. Tischer responded that he does not see an ulterior motive here and would not get into a debate. He made a motion to postpone action on the final committee study report for the Winkler Mill Pond District to allow the Committee to collect some additional information and consideration at our next meeting.

The motion was seconded by Mr. McCracken.

Mrs. Monks suggested she could leave the information on her home with the

Committee.

Chairperson Granthen called for a roll call vote on the motion to postpone. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Kidorf asked whether there was any specific direction to staff before next month.

Chairperson Granthen suggested that each property being taken out be contacted with a personal letter asking them to come talk to the Committee on November 9 and listing the potential ramifications of being taken out of the district.

Mr. McLeod commented that he would be leery in suggesting what may or may not happen if they are in or out of the district. He stated that they can definitely re-notice the meeting, but would be leery of putting into a letter what may or may not be important to someone. He commented that the letter would probably be drafted to everyone in the district. He noted that the first notice satisfied the requirement for the public hearing notice and the notice that went out prior to the public open house. He stated that staff will be glad to take a little different tact in terms of how the letter is drafted and send that out as well.

A motion was made by Tischer, seconded by McCracken, that this matter be Postponed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 4 - Granthen, McCracken, McGunn and Tischer

Excused 3 - Deel, Lemanski and Thompson

Resolved, that the Historic Districts Study Committee hereby postpones action on the final committee study report for the Winkler Mill Pond District to allow the Committee to collect some additional information and consideration for presentation at the Committee's next meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- November 9, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business to discuss, it was moved by Tischer, seconded by McGunn to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer MacDonald

Minutes were approved as presented/amended at the _____ 2023

Regular Historic Districts Study Committee Meeting.

*Julie Granthen, Chairperson
Rochester Hills
Historic Districts Study Committee*

Michael McGunn, Secretary