

**CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS
HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, June 14, 2007**

MINUTES of the **REGULAR ROCHESTER HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION MEETING** held at the Rochester Hills Municipal Building, 1000 Rochester Hills Drive, Rochester Hills, Oakland County, Michigan.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Hill called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Melinda Hill; Members Maria-Teresa Cozzolino, Brian Dunphy, Paul Miller, Michael Sinclair, Dr. Richard B. Stamps, Jason Thompson

Absent: Members John Dziurman, Michael Kilpatrick

Quorum Present

Also Present: Derek Delacourt, Deputy Director, Planning & Development
Judy A. Bialk, Recording Secretary

3. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairperson Hill announced a quorum was present.

4. STATEMENT OF STANDARDS

Chairperson Hill read the following Statement of Standards for the record.

“All decisions made by the Historic Districts Commission follow the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, MCL Section 399.205, and City Code Section 118-164.”

5. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

5A. Minutes of April 12, 2007 Regular Meeting

Chairperson Hill asked for any comments or corrections regarding the April 12, 2007 Regular Meeting Minutes. Upon hearing none, she called for a motion to approve.

MOTION by Thompson, seconded by Miller, that the Minutes of the April 12, 2007 Regular Historic Districts Commission Meeting be approved as presented.

Approved as presented/amended at the _____, 2007 Regular Historic Districts Commission Meeting

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Ayes: All
Nays: None
Absent: Dziurman, Kilpatrick

MOTION CARRIED

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hill stated that the Commissioners had received a copy of the Heritage X “Nurturing Our Heritage” save the date card. She commented the original Heritage conference had been held at Meadowbrook Hall and the Heritage X would be back at Meadowbrook Hall. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend, noting it was a nice program. Chairperson Hill called for any other announcements or communications. No other announcements or communications were presented.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Hill asked if there were any public comments. There were no public comments.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 8A. HDC Open House
- Wrap up of Open House

Chairperson Hill stated the purpose of recapping the Open House was to allow the Commissioners to discuss any input, comments or suggestions they heard from people who attended the event, or to share any thoughts about future events. She noted the survey results were included in the packet materials.

Mr. Miller thought the evening went very well. He stated many of the vendors who participated in the event found the format very useful, helpful and were interested in passing it on to other communities and organizations.

Mr. Delacourt said he spoke to several residents who attended the event, including some who did not realize they were in historic properties and who had spoken to him since the event took place. He felt they were very pleased to be proactively engaged. He noted the attendance at the various presentations was good, which was very positive. He stated he had received a lot of feedback on the tax credits presentation, and suggested an expanded version of that presentation be scheduled. He indicated the presentation should allow more time for questions, because there was so much confusion about those credits.

Dr. Stamps commented he had to miss the open house because he had been out of town, but had heard it was a great event. He asked what the Commission should do next, and suggested there should be some follow-up done.

Mr. Dunphy thought the event went well with a good turnout from the Community, and he had some good conversations with those who attended. He thought the tax credits issue might be one of the most important things the Commission could do from a Community awareness standpoint. He commented the Commission had heard from owners of both designated and potential properties about the burden to them in owning and maintaining those properties. He stated the more information that could be provided to the Community and the property owners about the resources available, particularly from a financial standpoint, would go a long way in helping to mute the criticism about the onerous provisions of the Historic Preservation program in the City. He agreed another tax credits presentation should be held.

Mr. Dunphy stated he saw a comment in one of the survey responses about people saying they were unaware they owned historic properties. He noted they Commission had applicants come before them indicating they only found out they owned a historically designated home when they pulled a permit for some type of work. He stated there was a communication gap that the Commission needed to address.

Mr. Miller commented that only seven surveys had been completed. He pointed out that many families were too busy these days to open mail they considered "junk" mail. He asked if it would be possible to include something in some of the more official City mailings, such as tax bills or water bills, about designated properties qualifying for tax credits on repairs or maintenance, and contact information. He agreed the Commission needed to become proactive in getting that information to the Community.

Mr. Delacourt stated the Commission could send out a letter, although he was not sure something could be included with the tax bills. He stated there would have to be some distinction between contributing and non-contributing resources. He commented a general letter could be sent that notified property owners they lived in a District and if their resource qualified, they might be eligible for tax credits.

Mr. Miller indicated it was his point that people would open their tax bills, but not open other letters from the City that did not appear to affect them.

Chairperson Hill pointed out that a number of homes in the two contiguous Districts did not have City water. She thought if something were mailed in a City of Rochester Hills envelope, people would have a tendency to open it rather than something that looked like junk mail. She agreed it was a good idea to send a follow-up letter that stated even if they could not attend the open house, the Commission wanted to remind them they were a historic property owner, and if they needed information, where to find it. She stated that was one way the Commission could try to stay in touch.

Mr. Delacourt suggested a copy of the survey be included with a note that if they did not have an opportunity to complete it at the open house or could not attend the open house, asking them to fill out and return the survey.

Ms. Cozzolino asked how much information was available on the City's website about resource information. Mr. Delacourt stated more was added based on the information that was compiled, reorganized and distributed at the open house.

Ms. Cozzolino suggested any communication that is sent individually to property owners include the website and other contact information. She commented it would be helpful to have some short articles included in publications such as the *Hills Herald*.

Mr. Thompson commented that the evening went great and that Papa Joe's should be complimented on the refreshments they provided. He was disappointed in the small number of survey results and would like to see more feedback from the property owners. He stated it was hard to determine what direction the Commission should go based on such a small response.

Chairperson Hill thought the suggestion about directing people to the website and how to navigate the website was good. She asked if the survey could be put on-line for residents to be able to respond. Mr. Delacourt stated that would have to be looked into.

Dr. Stamps commented that companies that studied surveys and survey results would consider seven better than average. He liked the suggestion of sending out a letter thanking those who attended and providing an update for those who missed the open house. He agreed the survey could be included to give them an opportunity to tell the Commission what they were interested in. He thought that would portray the Commission as friendly, seeking their input, and that the Commission was trying to reach out to them.

Mr. Dunphy asked if the idea of an on-line survey could be explored. He stated his employer used on-line surveys frequently, and it was a good way to supplement the paper surveys. He thought that could give the Commission an opportunity to reach out to additional people. He commented the survey the Commission had prepared would easily lend itself to an on-line version.

Mr. Delacourt stated Staff would do some more research and perhaps contact the State Historic Preservation Office to see if they had examples of surveys used by other communities.

Chairperson Hill thought everyone who attended was pretty enthusiastic and appreciated the open house. She noted she was asked several times if the Commission put on an open house every year. She stated there appeared to be interest in a tax credits presentation. She asked if there were other ways for the Commission to communicate, such as three to six months from now.

Mr. Delacourt stated that Staff would begin revising the Property Owners Guide, and perhaps when that was completed it could be sent to the homeowners in the districts. He pointed out that the materials generated for the open house lent themselves to a revised Guide.

Chairperson Hill suggested that some of those materials could be mailed in the future as another piece of communication. She pointed out that went along with the revised Property Owners Guide.

Mr. Miller thought in terms of “what’s next” and “follow-up” that the Commission should discuss the workshops people indicated they were interested in. He thought perhaps the Commission could collaborate with the adjacent communities and other historical groups in both invitations to the workshop as well as putting a workshop together. He stated he saw a number of people at the open house from other communities, and felt the Commission should keep the lines of communication open between the various communities.

Mr. Miller referred to the discussion about contributing and non-contributing resources, and asked if there was a way to determine if some of the designated homes were still considered a contributing resource, or whether there were non-contributing resources that might be cleaned up. He felt it was important for the Commission to keep updated on those matters.

Chairperson Hill stated the Historic Districts Study Committee was reviewing several properties that had been recommended by Dr. Busch for delisting. Mr. Thompson stated that the Study Committee had reviewed three Preliminary Reports regarding properties to delist, which were being moved on to the State. He noted the Study Committee was working to clean up those matters, and was pursuing an aggressive agenda. He advised the Commission that the Committee had just spent a considerable amount of time on the Ferry Court and 920 South Boulevard properties.

Mr. Thompson stated that the Study Committee held a Public Hearing on 920 South Boulevard, and based on the information researched, the Committee decided not to ask City Council to designate the property as the property did not meet the National Register Criteria. He noted the Study Committee would finalize the report, send it to City Council, and complete the process.

Mr. Miller expressed his appreciation to the Study Committee for the work they had been doing. He noted the Committee had had several pressing and urgent matters to attend to, and had done a good job.

Mr. Thompson stated that Ms. Schodowski had done a tremendous amount of research for the Committee, and noted that Mr. Dziurman’s expertise has been invaluable to the Committee.

Chairperson Hill thanked Mr. Thompson for the update on the work being done by the Study Committee.

Dr. Stamps stated the Study Committee would be reprioritizing its workload at its next meeting, and asked if there were any properties or resources the Commission felt should be given a high priority.

Mr. Dunphy stated he would like to keep the Certificate Local Government (CLG) as a priority.

Mr. Delacourt explained that Dr. Busch’s survey had provided an extensive amount of updated information about every structure on every district and whether those resources contributed or not to the district. He stated that information had been a huge help to the Study Committee.

Mr. Delacourt referred to the CLG certification, and advised the Commission that the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance was being reviewed to meet the CLG requirements. He explained there was one issue that had been discussed by both the Commission and Study Committee regarding the process and how the Ordinance initiates a study and how SHPO feels a study should be initiated based on the State Act. He stated the Study Committee had asked the City's Consultant, Kristine Kidorf, to work with SHPO regarding that matter. He stated the City's Ordinance allowed any request to come directly to the Study Committee; however, SHPO felt the requests should be made directly to City Council, or prior to initiating a study, the Study Committee should go before Council, present their information and request to start a study. He noted that currently the Study Committee worked from the Potential List and initiated its own studies based on the Potential List, and moved forward with them and brought the results to City Council.

Mr. Delacourt asked if the Commission would be willing to entertain an amendment to the Ordinance to amend the process. He pointed out if the process were changed, City Council would become involved at an earlier stage in the process. He commented that based on the result of the June 13, 2007 City Council meeting, it might be a way of engaging Council sooner in the process.

Chairperson Hill recalled that the last time the Commission had a workshop with Council was just after Dr. Busch completed her survey, and that workshop was held with the prior Council. At that time, the question about who initiated a study was discussed, and it was decided that the City had a Potential List and Council was aware the Study Committee would be studying those properties on the Potential List.

Chairperson Hill noted that the Ordinance currently allowed anyone in the City to ask for something to be designated, which was consistent with the State Act. As far as initiating a study, she was not that opposed to having the Study Committee go to Council to request to start the study to see if the property studied met the criteria. She stated she was not really opposed because it gave Council the opportunity to agree or disagree to the study.

Mr. Dunphy stated he thought there was a perception by Council that the Commission and the Study Committee were "off doing their own thing" and then Council and the property owners are surprised by what had occurred. He felt getting Council's "buy-in" right up front would help minimize the surprise factor seen on recent matters that went before Council.

Mr. Miller thought the CLG certification was important. He believed since the final say and decision on designation is Council's, it was important Council be involved as much as possible in the process. He understood homeowner's might object to studies being done, but he did not see where a study would harm anyone. He stated if the property owner was going to have an issue, or Council was going to have an issue, it would be better to know that before the Study Committee spent a considerable amount of time and effort studying the property.

Chairperson Hill stated that since the workshop when Council more or less gave its blessing to studies being done on properties on the Potential List, and since there was very little funding available to conduct studies with, it was only recently with the assistance of the consultant that some of the studies were moving along. She commented it was possible the newer Council members had not seen the Potential List. She noted the Commission would like to hold another workshop with Council, but commented it might be better to hold the workshop after the November election so the new members of Council could be included.

Mr. Delacourt stated if there were no objections by either the Commission or the Study Committee, he would ask the City Attorney to revise that section of the Ordinance. He stated the CLG Application had been in process over the last several years, and that Ordinance Amendment had been an issue. He recalled at the workshop that Council had indicated they did not want the study requests to come before them. He stated at that time, Council did not want to deal with requests up front, but felt that the Study Committee was fine in dealing with them independently because that was their charge in the Ordinance.

Mr. Dunphy stated he was at the workshop and that was his recollection as well. He stated Council was not wild about the idea of being in the first line of contact on studies.

Dr. Stamps stated that based on the discussion, he would be willing to make a motion to remove the language and remove the roadblock to the CLG certification. He thought there were benefits to having the CLG certification. He agreed that if another workshop was held, it be held after the elections.

Chairperson Hill stated the Clerk's Office should be notified that the Commission was interested in having a workshop being included as part of the orientation of the new members. Mr. Delacourt noted that Council meetings were scheduled by the Council President, but he would notify the Clerk's Office that the Commission would like to hold a workshop with Council at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Delacourt asked if the Commission wanted to review the Ordinance Amendment at a regular meeting, or if they would prefer to review a copy of the Ordinance Amendment transmitted electronically. He noted the Ordinance Amendment would have to be scheduled for a Council Work Session prior to being scheduled for a regular Council meeting.

Mr. Miller thought it was important to engage Council before the fall election, noting some of the current members who will remain on Council raised the subject of the CLG certification. He suggested a joint workshop about the Ordinance Amendment be scheduled.

Chairperson Hill stated that the Ordinance Amendment would be brought to a Council Workshop and that would be a way to engage Council about the issue. Mr. Miller stated the workshop about the Ordinance Amendment would allow some of the Council members to ask questions about the CLG or the process.

Mr. Delacourt stated the Commission had requested a workshop be scheduled with Council, and clarified the Commission preferred to hold the workshop after the November elections. Chairperson Hill stated she had had a conversation with Council President Rosen since that motion was made, and the Council schedule was fairly heavy at this time. She noted the CLG Ordinance Amendment would be coming up.

Mr. Dunphy stated as the motion maker, he did not have a problem with having the workshop wait, and would want to be sensitive to any concern about whether it was an appropriate use of both the Commission's and Council's time to hold a session when some Council Members were term limited. He noted the CLG Ordinance Amendment would go before Council, and thought it was entirely appropriate to delay the work session until a more appropriate time.

Mr. Delacourt stated the Planning Department would receive notice when the workshop was scheduled, and if it came up before the end of the year, Staff would request the workshop be rescheduled as soon as possible after the November election.

Mr. Miller suggested a workshop between the Commission and Council become a regular yearly event. He noted there were many designated and potential properties in the City, and there were other areas that could be explored under the Statute and the Ordinance than just structures. He hoped that a workshop between the Commission and Council became part of the regular process each year to discuss the on-going issues.

Chairperson Hill agreed and stated she thought the Planning Commission should also be included because the reports went to the Planning Commission for input. She thought that would keep the Planning Commission aware of the historic properties.

Chairperson Hill summarized that Mr. Delacourt would work with the City Attorney to have the Ordinance revised. Mr. Delacourt stated he would.

Chairperson Hill stated she did not think the Commission would meet in July or August unless a review was required. She asked the Commissioners if they preferred to have a meeting to discuss the Ordinance Amendment. She asked when the Amendment would be ready. Mr. Delacourt thought it might be scheduled for a late July or early August Council work session. He stated it would be necessary for a couple of the Commissioners to be present at that work session, and noted since it impacted the Study Committee, some of the Study Committee Members should also be present. He commented he would like to ask a SHPO representative who managed the CLG program to attend the meeting to talk about the importance of the CLG certification.

Chairperson Hill stated that someone from the Commission should be at the workshop to present the Ordinance Amendment. She liked the suggestion of asking a SHPO representative to be present because it would be helpful for them to help explain the benefit of the City receiving a CLG certification.

Mr. Dunphy stated he would be happy to assist with the workshop. He indicated he would like to see the Ordinance Amendment by email when it is prepared. Mr. Miller stated he would assist Mr. Dunphy in support of the CLG and Ordinance Amendment.

Chairperson Hill summarized that a follow-up letter from the open house would be prepared and mailed along with a copy of the survey.

Chairperson Hill asked for suggestions on how the Commission could engage other historic district commissions or other communities to see if there might be something that could be collaborated on, such as another workshop or a presentation. She stated she liked the idea of a tax credits presentation, but wondered what other communities would like to do. She asked if the Commission wanted to form a committee or would like to make some initial contacts.

Mr. Delacourt stated he could contact other communities, but asked for clarification on what the contact should be about. He indicated he could contact the State about the charge for a tax credit presentation.

Chairperson Hill stated the contact would be about whether they would be interested in holding a workshop in the Fall, perhaps in October, or whether they would be interested in collaborating in a workshop. She pointed out that window restoration or masonry would be geared toward more of a "hand's on" type demonstration. She stated perhaps Oakland Township would be in need of something like that at their Cranberry Lake Farm, or Lake Orion might have something in their community available for a hand's on demonstration. She was aware the MHPN held those types of demonstrations, but was not sure what the cost would be.

Mr. Delacourt stated Staff could research some of those ideas, and could find out the charge for the tax credits presentation or the MHPN demonstrations. That information could be provided at the next regular meeting.

Mr. Miller thought the summer months might be a good time for hands on demonstrations because that was the time the homeowners would be doing that type of work on their homes. He stated if it was the Commission's intent to engage the homeowners, they should consider what would be useful and plan that for next summer.

Chairperson Hill stated there were students who attended Eastern Michigan University that might be in the area and might be willing to work at one of the workshops.

Dr. Stamps stated he had heard about cities that valued their historic resources in such a manner that the city collected monies for them. He asked whether the City shouldn't propose a millage to collect funds to support historic activities. He noted with the downturn in the economy, there never seemed to be a good time to make that proposal. He indicated there were comments made during the June 13, 2007 City Council meeting about the Study Committee finding the money to support historic preservation; or perhaps the City should purchase those properties; and someone had asked where financial support could be found. He thought the Commission should follow the model of Oakland Township and propose a millage. He felt it would be worth the effort to collect funds that could be used to provide City tax credits

for restoration of resources in the City of Rochester Hills. He stated it would not be money the City would spend, but would be money the City would not receive in taxes. He commented that only a very few structures in the City would be eligible to apply for money from the historic millage for such things as basic maintenance.

Dr. Stamps stated a millage or tax credit would also provide money for a paid consultant. He indicated the money could also be used for education programs. He suggested the Commission look for some successful models, such as Oakland Township, and ask for a small millage for funds to be used for appropriate historic preservation activities. He thought the historical society would offer their support.

Chairperson Hill stated that there was no signage in the Stoney Creek Historic District, even though it had been discussed about having something created at both roundabouts. She indicated that there were non-motorized transportation fund grants available, and it would be an excellent opportunity to have signage in those roundabouts. She noted grants were available for things such as traffic calming devices through the use of brick pavers. She stated the Commission might be able to collaborate with pathways, the museum and the people in the district to see what could be done to help the look of things in that District, and let people know they are entering the District. She stated preservation was a component of the grant possibilities of the non-motorized transportation funds, but grant requests required some work to put them together.

Dr. Stamps stated that on Monday, June 4th, he went to the Auburn Hills City Complex for the unveiling of their historic signage. He explained Auburn Hills had a wonderful campus, which was an old, historic farmstead. He stated they created signs for the stable, icehouse, fur house, and the windmill, and had several historic signs. He stated if the City had funds, those funds could be used for signage for the districts and the designated historic resources.

Mr. Delacourt stated there was some new legislation that allowed for the creation of TIF Districts out of historic districts, similar to brownfields or downtown development districts. He explained an additional percentage could be implemented, or any increased increment over the years could be collected and put back into the districts. He noted that was relatively new legislation, and stated he would look into it and see how it worked.

Chairperson Hill stated that the Commission received a note from Mary Eberline thanking them for the open house. She noted she had also received a thank you note from Lyn Sieffert thanking the Commission for the Earl Borden Preservation Award.

Chairperson Hill reminded the Commission there would not be a meeting in July or August unless a request for review was received. She stated the Commission would also be notified when the Ordinance Amendment for the CLG was scheduled for a Council workshop.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Hill called for any other business. No other business was presented.

Approved as presented/amended at the _____, 2007 Regular Historic Districts Commission Meeting

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10. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made and seconded, Chairperson Hill adjourned the meeting at 8:58 PM.

Melinda Hill, Chairperson
Historic Districts Commission

Judy A. Bialk, Recording Secretary