



# Rochester Hills Minutes

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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*

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Thursday, March 13, 2008

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

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**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 5:30 PM.

### 2. ROLL CALL

**Present** 7 - Richard Stamps, John Dziurman, Jason Thompson, LaVere Webster, Peggy Schodowski, 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### 4A. 2008-0094 January 10, 2008 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Thompson asked for any comments or corrections regarding the January 10, 2008 Regular Meeting Minutes. Upon hearing no comments or corrections, Chairperson Thompson called for a motion to approve.

**A motion was made by Webster, seconded by Schodowski, that this matter be Approved as Presented. The motion CARRIED by the following vote:**

**Aye** 7 - Stamps, Dziurman, Thompson, Webster, Schodowski, Kibby and Mueller

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the January 10, 2008 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)

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

## 7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 7A. 2007-0391 56187 Dequindre Road
- SHPO Review Comments
  - Schedule Public Hearing
  - Transmittal to Planning Commission

The Committee noted the Preliminary Report had been completed for this property; the Public Hearing had been held, and the matter was ready to present to City Council. It was noted it was a fairly straightforward matter, and the Committee did not think there would much objection to delisting a resource.

The Committee noted that a representative from the Study Committee should be present at the Council Meeting to assist with the presentation. No PowerPoint presentation would be prepared for this property; rather an explanation of the reasons why the property no longer qualified for designation would be presented. The Committee agreed the matter appeared to be self-explanatory.

The Committee will be notified when the matter is scheduled for a City Council meeting, and will be provided with copies of the documentation submitted to Council.

The Committee noted the other two properties proposed for delisting (1207 N. Livernois and 1470 W. Tienken) would be held pending a meeting with a representative from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

### **This matter was Discussed**

- 7B. 2005-0537 3976 S. Livernois Road (Stiles School)
- SHPO Review Comments
  - Schedule Public Hearing
  - Transmittal to Planning Commission

The Committee reviewed the January 29, 2008 response from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). It was noted that SHPO reviewed the Preliminary Report and felt the building did not individually qualify for inclusion in the National Register due to the loss of its original windows. SHPO felt the original windows were a significant design feature for the building. SHPO also commented the resource had lost its historic setting and feeling due to insensitive additions. SHPO referred to National Register Bulletin 15, which states "A district is not

eligible if it contains so many alterations or new intrusions that it no longer conveys the sense of a historic environment.”

The Committee noted the Preliminary Report had also been presented to the State Historic Preservation Review Board, and the Review Board did not concur with SHPO that the school was ineligible for listing. The Review Board noted the majority of the building’s historic material was still in place, and while the windows had been altered, the openings themselves were still in tact. The Review Board also felt the massing of the original school building had not been lost when the inappropriate additions were constructed. The Review Board noted the historic building can still be discerned and is distinct from the additions. The Review Board believed the school building itself would be eligible as long as the report indicates the additions are non-contributing resources.

It was noted that windows were considered a big issue, i.e., if they are changed and are not the original. It has always been that way.

The Committee noted the State Review Board did not agree with the SHPO response regarding the proposed designation of the resource. Since the Review Board is the Board SHPO works for, this adds some confusion to the matter. The Committee commented that there does not appear to be any consistency in the manner in which the standards are applied by SHPO, based on the responses received to date on the last several Preliminary Reports submitted for review.

The Committee felt a meeting should be arranged with a representative from SHPO to discuss the recent Preliminary Reports submitted for review. Perhaps the SHPO representative could advise the Committee on where the Committee is missing the mark. SHPO would require reimbursement for mileage and a per diem to attend a meeting with the Committee.

The Committee discussed the next step in the process, which is to schedule a Public Hearing. It was agreed the Committee should proceed with the Public Hearing to obtain any feedback from the property owners regarding the proposed designation.

The Committee questioned whether there were other historical factors that should be considered with respect to the school, if it is determined the school does not qualify for architectural significance. Only one area of significance is required to designate, and the property should be judged against the National Register criteria. Additional research could be done to determine the impact of the school on the community. Any additional information discovered can be incorporated in the report. If the Committee determined there was enough information to establish another area of significance, the report could always be resubmitted to SHPO for review, although it does not have to be resubmitted.

The Committee discussed the statement made by a representative of SHPO, that if the City went ahead and designated a property that SHPO did not feel qualified, that property would then not qualify for tax credits. Typically, tax credits are an incentive for a property owner to agree to designation.

The Committee discussed the fact that windows were an extremely important design feature of a structure. Prior photographs from the 1930s depict the existing school building; however, prior to 1929, a two-room schoolhouse existed behind the current structure. The 1930s photograph also depicted a fence and roses in front of the building. If a copy of that photograph can be obtained, it can be included with the report. A 1939 class picture existed that was taken in front of the mural tiles inside the school.

The original windows were most likely wood, and had been replaced with metal. That is a feature that could be reversed.

Since no comments have been received from the Steiner School, the Committee is unable to ascertain how the current owners of the building feel about the proposed designation.

The public hearing will be scheduled and properly noticed. The majority of the Committee would be available on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at 6:00 PM. As a matter of practicality, both the Stiles School and the Frank Farm will be scheduled for the same Public Hearing.

The Committee will conduct additional research to see if sufficient information can be found to establish different National Register criteria, other than the architectural criteria.

Ms. Schodowski stated she had been contacted by someone from Massachusetts whose family owned one of the parcels, and may be able to fill in some of the blanks on the genealogy of the property. She noted that an author named Samuel Durant was associated with the property and wrote about the history of Oakland County. She had some conflicting information and would continue researching the matter to see if there was a connection to the school.

The Committee discussed Samuel Durant, and whether he used the money he received from the publication of his book to purchase the land. Mr. Webster noted there was some affiliation between his property and a Samuel Durant, as Mr. Durant's daughter, Rena Belle Maitrott, reportedly lost the property to back taxes.

There was discussion about the fact there could be two Samuel Durants that resided in the area. Mr. Webster stated his property was known as the Bristol Farm,

and one of the owners of the farm leased the property to the school, until it was finally deeded to the school district.

The Committee discussed whether it would be possible to persuade the SHPO to change its opinion based on different criteria. Any information discovered would have to relate to the school itself, not just the property the structure sat on. Information regarding Bristol Farm would relate more to the farmstead, not the school. Mr. Webster's property is already designated, and it did not include the school or the school property at the time of designation. The question was raised of whether Mr. Webster's property was designated because it met the agricultural criteria or the architectural criteria. Mr. Webster thought it could have been designated based on both.

The Committee agreed that if additional information relevant to the school is discovered, it could be added to the report.

The Committee discussed the fact the National Register Standards were starting to be referred to as guidelines, and are being interpreted differently, such that no two people would agree on what they meant.

Chairperson Thompson summarized that this matter would be scheduled for a Public Hearing, and if additional research provided further information, the information would be reviewed by the Committee at the next meeting.

#### **This matter was Discussed**

- 7C.     2006-0425     Frank Farm
- SHPO Review Comments
  - Schedule Public Hearing
  - Transmittal to Planning Commission

The Committee reviewed the SHPO Comments, which simply stated that the Preliminary Report was an excellent report that met the requirements set forth in Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended. No comments from the State Historic Preservation Review Board were provided.

Mr. Delacourt asked if the Committee had any comments, questions or changes to the Preliminary Report. If not, the matter would be scheduled for a Public Hearing to be held on the same date as the Stiles School Public Hearing. He noted the owner of the rental property had not contacted him. The Franks still reside on the property, and the blue house appears to be owned by an absentee landlord.

Dr. Busch's recent fieldwork indicated that one more parcel should be included in the proposed district (1290 E. Auburn Road, PIN 15-36-126-004). The proposed district would consist of three parcels, with numerous contributing and non-contributing structures on them.

The integrity of the proposed district is very high, although if designated, some of the structures would be in danger of demolition by neglect. The Committee noted that tax credits might be of some benefit to the property owners.

The site meets the National Register criteria; however, the final decision will be made by City Council. Mr. Frank supports the designation and wanted to see the protection of the open farm space.

Mr. Delacourt reported that some of Mr. Frank's family members had contacted him and asked questions about the proposed designation. He advised them that they were also welcome to attend a Study Committee meeting or meet with him if they had any additional questions or concerns.

The Committee discussed whether the proposed district could still be designated if the parcel owned by the absentee landlord was not included. It was felt the site would still meet the criteria, and the matter could be evaluated prior to being presented to City Council.

Chairperson Thompson summarized that the Public Hearing would be scheduled for April 30, 2008.

**This matter was Discussed**

**7D. 2007-0887 Meeting with State Historic Preservation Office**

Mr. Delacourt stated that the SHPO had recently moved their offices, which had delayed making arrangements for a meeting. Since the last meeting, it was determined that any meeting with a representative from SHPO should be arranged so that the entire Committee and the City's consultants could attend. It would be beneficial for the Committee Members to gain an understanding of how the SHPO conducts its reviews and makes its recommendations.

Chairperson Thompson summarized the Committee would be advised when the meeting could be arranged.

**This matter was Discussed**

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairperson Thompson called for any other business.

Mr. Delacourt stated that the Historic Districts Commission (HDC) had requested a joint meeting be scheduled between the HDC and City Council. He asked if the Study Committee wanted to participate as a whole, or whether the Study Committee

representatives sitting on the HDC would be sufficient.

The Committee agreed they would like to participate in any joint meeting as a whole, because it helped establish that the Committee was a separate entity from the HDC, with its own charge set by Ordinance. The joint meeting would also provide an opportunity for the three boards to meet and become acquainted.

Mr. Delacourt stated he would suggest to the Mayor that the Chairs of all three boards schedule a brief meeting to arrange a mutually agreeable meeting date and time.

2040 S. Livernois:

Mr. Delacourt stated that this property was on the City's Potential List and would be impacted by the intersection improvements scheduled for Hamlin and Livernois Roads. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been entered into between the City, the State Historic Preservation Office and Oakland County regarding what impact the road improvements will have on the home. An Environmental Impact Statement was included with the road project, and the MOA details the mitigation method.

A National Register Application is required for the project, and it is hoped that a Preliminary Report can be prepared from the extensive information gathered for the National Register Application. The City's consultant information was provided to Oakland County, and Oakland County will determine if the City's consultant meets their requirements. The National Register Application will take about two or three months to complete.

The Committee noted the condition of the home, and the fact it needed to be taken care of. A "for sale" sign was recently posted on the property. It was not known if someone currently resided in the home or whether it was vacant.

Mr. Delacourt noted he frequently receives inquiries about the property regarding its zoning and development possibilities, particularly since the adjacent corner parcel is vacant.

Chairperson Thompson called for any other business. No other business was presented. Chairperson Thompson noted that the next regular meeting was scheduled for April 10, 2008.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made and seconded, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the meeting at 6:21 PM.

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

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Judy A. Bialk, Recording Secretary