

NEW BUSINESS

2023-0268 Re-Survey of Winkler Mill Pond Historic District

(Staff report prepared by Kristine Kidorf dated 3-1-23, McLeod memo dated 6-1-23, Winkler Mill Pond Survey Report December 2022, Winkler Mill Map and Inventory 2002, Included and excluded properties survey sheets, research resources, City Council Resolution 2023-0165 and draft HDC minutes 3-9-23 were placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof).

Chairperson Granthen stated that there have been a number of circumstances recently where owners come to get approval for improvements they want to do on houses that are in one of the historic districts, but are not historic homes. She noted that one of the suggestions a number of years ago was that another survey of the historic districts in Rochester Hills should be undertaken and a consideration given to whether the boundaries should be changed. She added that the Historic Districts Study Committee only meets at the direction of City Council, and Council has directed the Committee to look at the Winkler Mill District and commence a study to determine if perhaps the boundaries should be changed. She asked Ms. Kidorf and Mr. McLeod to provide some information for the benefit of the new members.

Ms. Kidorf explained that the initial step in this process is to survey and understand what historic resources the City has, and the recommendation is very similar to the 2002 recommendation and the larger citywide survey done by Jane Busch, which is to reduce the district boundaries. She noted that the survey report outlines the history of the district, the significance of the district, what properties are historic or contributing and describes those. She added that there is more information on the survey cards that accompany that. She explained that the next step is to convert this to a draft study committee report, which she will commit to have done for the Committee to review at its July meeting, or August if there is not enough quorum for July. The Committee will then review the draft report and make any comments. If the Committee accepts the preliminary study committee report at that meeting, it would move on to be distributed to the Planning Commission and to the State Historic Preservation Office for review and comment. A public hearing would then be set for at least 60 days from the date of adopting the preliminary report, or most likely September or October depending on how the 60 day window falls. With those two meetings, everyone in the district would be notified of the Public Hearing at least 10 days ahead of time, and at that meeting public comment would be taken. At that meeting, they could consider a final study committee report or wait a month to see if there is anything that needs to be changed before incorporating it into the final historic district study committee report. Once this body adopts the final study committee report, that recommendation goes back to City Council with a draft ordinance if recommended.

She stated that she was happy to take any comments or corrections on the survey to incorporate into the study committee report. She stated that the process could also be stretched out if needed, as they have one year to do it. She asked if there were any questions or discussion comments.

Mr. McLeod displayed the district and noted that the properties that are in question are southeast of the lake. One property in that area, 1740 Washington, would remain. He explained that they are suggesting removing the properties that are newer in nature or have been modified over time to a point where they are no longer contributing to the overall area. He stated that they want the district to be as pure and whole as possible. He commented that at some point there are allowances for non-contributing homes; but there is probably not really a need for these owners to come before the Historic Districts Commission if they want to modify one of their facades or put in a deck.

Ms. Kidorf added that the entire Mill Pond is included because it is important. Should someone outside of the district want to build something out into the Mill Pond, that would then fall under the Commission's purview. She explained that there will be three non-contributing properties in the district because they cannot gerrymander around properties as it is in violation of the Secretary of Interior standards and the National Register guidelines. Two properties are on the upper side of the Mill Pond and then one is across the street from 1740, as 1740 does contribute to the district.

Vice Chairperson Thompson stated that he thought the report was thorough and did not see anything to add or correct, or further research needed. He stated that he was ready to move forward.

Chairperson Granthen asked if any of the newer members wanted to comment.

Ms. Deel stated that she was very impressed and enjoyed reading the report. She asked if the draft report would be substantially different. She asked whether homeowners knew of the meeting or if they do not get notice until the public hearing.

Ms. Kidorf responded that she would be incorporating this information into a different format for the draft report. She explained that the owners received a letter when the survey was initiated in February of 2020. She commented that these meetings are noticed similar to any regular City meeting; however, owners will be sent notice of the public hearing when it gets to that stage.

Vice Chairperson Thompson asked if it would be easier for Ms. Kidorf to come back in August rather than pushing for July.

Ms. Kidorf responded that based on her workload and need to be out of town toward the end of the month, August would be preferred; however, whatever works for the Committee she will make happen.

Vice Chairperson Thompson noted that they were short a few members today, and questioned whether July or August would be any better. He commented that it might be easier in fall with residents coming to comment in September, October or November.

Chairperson Granthen noted that the July meeting falls near the Fourth of July and that could play havoc with getting a quorum.

Vice Chairperson Thompson commented that there is the possibility of calling a special meeting. He stated that he would like to hopefully have this done by the end of the year.

Ms. Kidorf stated that August meeting is set for the 10th, and if the preliminary report is adopted in August, that would put the Committee on track for an October hearing. She noted that if it was pushed off until September 14th, the 60 days would be after their regularly scheduled November meeting, or into the holidays.

Vice Chairperson Thompson stated it needs to be August.

Mr. McLeod stated that a special meeting could be scheduled for any time. He commented that he did not believe that the City had a policy that these meetings have to occur after business hours, although it might raise a question of why it is scheduled during the day when some people cannot attend. He stated that calendars would have to be coordinated as to when the auditorium was available and when everyone's schedules would allow. He stated that he would check the bylaws to be sure.

Ms. Kidorf stated that a special meeting could be set in addition to the regular meeting. She suggested polling the members for July or August and she would get it done.

Mr. McLeod stated that they could look at potential alternative dates for August. He noted that the bylaws do state that it should be the second Thursday of the month, but then immediately states that the committee can set an alternative date. Special meetings are always an option as well.

He commented that this was discussed at the Planning Commission/City Council joint meeting in January of this year. He stated that this was one of the hotter topics of the night, and he believes there is a lot of need for education and clarity in terms of what this all means. He suggested that something be developed or something standardized be stated that says what the benefits and negatives are of being in or out of the district in a very simplistic way. He mentioned that some Council Members and Planning Commissioners asked what would happen if someone wanted to stay in the district and it was proposed to remove them. He suggested that quick punch lists be created with the benefits and extra steps needed if staying in. Another question raised was how and when people have been notified of the process. He stated that they need to spend some time in terms of determining how the word gets out for public input. He asked if something was needed beyond the public hearing such as an informal Q and A session or open house in addition to the public hearing.

Vice Chairperson Thompson asked how public input would be a part of the record that goes off to the State.

Ms. Kidorf responded that they can include public comment; however, she noted that they send the report at the time of the adoption of the preliminary study committee report prior to the public hearing and generally there is not a lot

of public comment at that point. She suggested the possibility of sending a letter or flyer to all of the homeowners in the district outlining rough dates for a public hearing and describing the process.

Mr. McLeod stated that there was a number of ways to send information, and noted that there was RHConnect which has a significant number of people subscribed to. He mentioned that a large zoning ordinance discussion impacted a number of properties and a specific web page was created for it that had Q and A items on it, and a QR code created to direct people to the website. A public Q and A session could be held at Van Hoosen. A question was raised at Council whether there would be any issues relative to insurance policies if in or out of the district; and another question was relative to home values. He commented that some people like the standardization that someone could not build an albatross or an ugly house next to them. He stated that the administration can strategize about a public process and report back what is appropriate and doable.

Chairperson Granthen asked if the Committee was comfortable accepting the report.

Upon discussion that a motion to accept should not include a specific date for consideration of the appropriate study committee report, it was moved by Thompson, seconded by Deel, to accept the report.

After a voice vote, Chairperson Granthen announced that the motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Thompson, seconded by Deel, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 4 - Deel, Granthen, McGunn and Thompson

Excused 3 - Lemanski, McCracken and Tischer

Resolved, that the Historic Districts Study Committee has reviewed the draft Winkler Mill Pond Historic District Re-survey and accepts the proposed draft as written and further, the Historic District Study Committee requests that the appropriate Study Committee Report be prepared for future consideration at a future meeting as required as a part of the process outlined for potential district modifications.

After the vote, Mr. McGunn asked how many historic districts are in Rochester Hills.

Mr. McLeod noted that there is Winkler Mill Pond District and Stony Creek Historic District, along with non-contiguous properties throughout the city.

Mr. McGunn questioned whether any portion of the Adams Road corridor was a part of a historic district, mentioning in particular the brick walls.

Ms. Kidorf stated that it is not a local historic district, and the only district on Adams Road is the Lorna district which is known as the Lorna Stone House at 3861 South Adams at the corner of Adams and South Boulevard. She stated

that she believed that Meadow Brook Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chairperson Granthen commented that there are certain buildings on campus that are historic, and noted that many people don't realize that with Adams Road, it is State land, and that Adams Road is a County Road and there are different issues at play. She mentioned that the historic stone wall is also on State land.

Mr. McLeod stated that they are required to provide a historic study as a part of the ongoing Adams Road study.