

DISCUSSION

2025-0204 Discussion of HDC Mission and Goals

(McLeod memo dated 5/1/25 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.

Chairperson Thompson noted that a discussion on the Historic Districts Commission had been started a year ago, and he asked if Staff had anything to add.

Mr. McLeod noted that the discussion originated from a conversation at the museum. He explained that a key focus is evaluating the current role and activities of the Historic District Commission and historic districts in general, and leads to questions of whether there is more that the Commission can be doing, and how the Commission fits into the larger scheme of the city as the city has continued to grow and evolve. He noted that another aim is to identify any specific items the Historic District Commission wants to include in the ongoing Master Plan Revision.

He suggested that the Commission discuss where they want to see this body move toward, and whether it feels like it is doing what it needs to do. He commented that the core question is whether the Commission is fulfilling its intended role effectively, and this prompts a discussion on whether the Commission should adjust its scope or commitment.

Dr. Stamps expressed the importance of the Commission and its role in creating a meaningful and proud community. He suggested holding a meeting at the calf barn, inviting all historic district residents. The event would thank residents for preserving history and start a discussion about the districts' future. Gathering residents' input is critical to determine their vision for the next 20-50 years, with an open forum to address goals, objectives, and concerns. The invitation could include the agenda and a prompt for their concerns. The idea of signage for recognized districts or homes was discussed, seeking resident feedback. Concerns about the alleyway within the Stoney Creek Historic District, including its condition, access, and resident preferences, were raised, with a potential role for the Commission to lobby the City. He noted that the overall objective is to understand residents' issues and vision for the districts' future.

Chairperson Thompson endorsed the idea of organizing an event to gather resident input, noting previous attempts to redraw district boundaries met with resistance, indicating a clear preference to maintain current boundaries. Thompson emphasized the need to understand what residents want and how the Commission can assist within its mission. The suggestion of signage was supported, but concern was raised regarding potential costs, which can be a challenge within city budgets. Despite the financial concern, Thompson stated that exploring a feasible signage proposal is worthwhile.

Dr. Stamps added that in the discussion it can be expressed that residents are

doing a great job in taking care of these buildings, and that the Commission wants to honor them, suggesting that they install a sign. He suggested providing other examples on how other communities have funded the signs and asked for the residents' input.

Mr. McLeod noted that the conversation seems to be very much Stoney Creek-centric and asked if it should be focused on that particular historic district or if all three districts would be invited.

Chairperson Thompson responded that he would say all three should be included, along with individual non-contiguous properties.

Dr. Stamps emphasized the importance of including all districts and specifically mentioned the little schoolhouse at Brewster and Tienken Road, noting the deteriorated roof of its garage. He suggested inviting its representatives to the meeting, along with all others. He also expressed appreciation for the new roof on the Crooks Road barn, recognizing progress being made. Dr. Stamps also pointed out the Lorna Stone house on Adams Road, still surrounded by a fence, and suggested adding an agenda item for updates or feedback on properties where certificates of appropriateness were issued to track progress. He felt this would provide insights into ongoing projects and highlighted that staff might have knowledge of developments unknown to the Commission. He proposed creating a regular agenda item for these updates, potentially with a positive or catchy title to encourage discussion.

Vice Chairperson Granthen suggested that a program to present the Earl Borden award this year could be incorporated. She mentioned a couple of different ways to possibly secure funding for work.

Dr. Stamps recalled that there had been a meeting at the Calf Barn and noted that Mr. McKay had some ideas relative to the alley and boundaries.

Mr. McLeod suggested discussing several items during the resident meeting. He highlighted the ongoing discussion about a pathway or sidewalk along Tienken, specifically in the Stoney Creek area. He commented that this is viewed as a potential safety improvement due to nearby schools, but questions remain about its placement, impact on properties, and overall design. He also mentioned the idea of promoting the historic districts more prominently through the city's online presence and communication channels. Mr. McLeod suggested recognizing completed renovations of historic properties in city communications, such as the Hills Herald or RH Connect, drawing a parallel to how new businesses are promoted with ribbon-cutting ceremonies. He believes this type of recognition would highlight the importance of preserving historic properties.

Dr. Stamps brought up the upcoming 250th anniversary of America in 2026 and proposed several ways the Historic District Commission and the city could celebrate. His ideas included creating a time capsule, participating in the local parade with themed signage, requesting a proclamation from City Council in January to declare it the "year of our 250th birthday," and publishing an article in the January edition of the Hills Herald to announce planned events and highlight

the importance of history. He praised the City for its existing coverage of historical topics in the Hills Herald and suggested building on that. Dr. Stamps also discussed creating a proposed proclamation from the Historic District Commission to send to City Council, aiming to show the Commission's active role in the community and its desire to celebrate. He brainstormed various celebratory elements, such as fireworks and cake, encouraging others to share their ideas as well. He suggested asking the Mayor to incorporate the 250th Birthday into the annual fireworks program, on the last Wednesday in June.

He suggested themed costumes to incorporate into the fireworks program or a parade, such as one of the founding fathers or Betsy Ross. He noted that during the Bicentennial in 1969, people wore period clothing.

Dr. Stamps further discussed celebratory ideas, suggesting participation in the Memorial Day parade in addition to other events. He stated that participants could consider wearing costumes, like portraying George Washington. He mentioned that Oakland County and its historical groups, including the History Coalition, are also planning 250th anniversary celebrations, and mentioned examples of other groups' plans including cemetery walks honoring Revolutionary War soldiers and digitizing historical society information. He proposed the idea of a county-wide float that could be used in various parades, featuring a large birthday cake and adaptable signage to represent different historical societies at each event.

Dr. Stamps also suggested that the Commission compile a list of celebration ideas and distribute it for feedback and further brainstorming. He specifically mentioned that marking historical sites with markers would be a great activity to align with the 250th anniversary.

Discussed