

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

**REGULAR MEETING
110 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA CONFERENCE ROOM

SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

2:00 P.M.

MINUTES

CCHPC Members Present:

**Daves Rossell, Chairman
Alexander Luten, Vice-Chairman
George Cohen
Vaughnette Goode-Walker
Stephen T. Lindell
Lisa L. White
Pamela G. Lossing**

CCHPC Members Not Present:

**Christian Sottile
Williams Haynes**

CCHP/MPC Staff Members Present:

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant
Dewayne Stephens, Historic Preservation Intern**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. WELCOME

Mr. Rossell welcomed everyone and asked the Board and Staff members to introduce themselves.

III. INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Harris introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Mark Finlay, Professor of History, Armstrong Atlantic State University. He is the foremost expert on the Savannah Ogeechee Canal. She said Dr. Finlay would be presenting a similar presentation on the canal to the World's Canal Conference in Pennsylvania later this month.

Dr. Mark Finlay thanked everyone for inviting him, and stated he wanted to focus on the current issues that were of most interest to the Commission. Transporting goods was particularly difficult in the south, and Savannah was desperate for methods of improving its transportation network. Canal fever came to the region, especially in the year 1824, the same year that the Erie Canal opened. He said there were several proposals to connect Georgia to the Tennessee River system, the Ohio, and New Orleans. Other proposals were to cut across the middle of the state and to connect to the Gulf of Mexico. In this area, the biggest proposal was to connect to the Altamaha, then the second most important river in the state. We did not make it to the Altamaha; we made it to the Ogeechee, a little less significant river.

The canal company was created in 1826, and they spelled the words Ogeechee and Altamaha differently in the original logo. With the corporation, the canal fever got going in town, stocks sold easily, promoters promised that the climate would be modified, the swamps would be drained, the forest cleared, and the country more open to sea breezes. They brought down engineers from New York, and the Governor's son, Dewitt Clinton, Jr., was the head engineer on the local canal for a few years. He employed Irish immigrants and African-American slaves as the early work force. At one point, the Irish immigrants were near starving, and the Catholic priests in the Hibernian Society stepped in. After that, there was a transition to exclusive use of African-American slaves as the builders of the canal. Essentially, the slave owners got paid \$1.00 per day for leasing out their slaves as part of the construction project.

The working conditions were not easy in the heat, humidity, and disease environment of the Georgia Low Country. They ran into various difficulties such as the engineers left, stockholders quit paying their timeshare of their stock investments, and the City of Savannah itself defaulted on its payments. The Chairman of the Board, Alexander Telfair, resigned twice, the second time for good. Leaks appeared at the Savannah River lock, which was beneath the Talmadge Bridge. Efforts to get money from Congress died on Capital Hill, crushed by a Darien senator who opposed construction in this area. Nevertheless, in December 1830, five years after digging had begun, the workers connected the Savannah to the Ogeechee.

There are six locks, the two at the tidal end and the Ogeechee River end are affected by the tides and adjust the boats in relation to the tidal flow. Two locks on one side raise boats to the highpoint of Chatham County, about ten feet above sea level. Two locks on the other side lower it back down to sea level again. The dam in the middle at Halfmoon Lake is the highpoint of the canal, and the supply of water as the locks drain. The typical raft was 17 feet by 85 feet and carried about 60 tons. The canal opened in 1830 and 1831 with all kinds of celebrations. Soon, various complications took place including leaks in the locks and breaks in the embankments. The canal sold in 1836 at a Sheriff's auction, and by this time the Central of Georgia railway was under construction, but the railway did not kill the canal. The canal was rebuilt, new locks put in, deeper basins at the Savannah River end, timber facilities built along the way, improvements in the wharf, and the canal became a part of the industrial infrastructure in the 1840's and 1850's. One of the largest sawmills in the United States was built along the canal in 1854. Other products like guano, rice, cotton, strawberries, and peaches traveled by canal. By the late 1850's, the main product was timber. Cotton and rice did not travel by the canal very much, instead, more bulky and heavier objects like sand, timber, and machinery. Then came the Civil War, and the canal continued to operate for the first couple of years of the Civil War. There was actually a new boom through some of the confederate industrial products like new textile and sawmills. The canal was the site of various skirmishes, and some remains of the tent mounds and bunkers are still visible in various places. The war led to destruction of some embankments and leakage of locks, and ships were stolen. The canal was rebuilt again in 1866. With an emphasis on the timber trade, lumber, and sawmills along the way.

Ms. White noted they dropped the Altamaha name at some point.

Dr. Finlay said that was right. They had two or three expeditions to get to the Altamaha. There was a story of how they were stranded out in Liberty County, and the canal company would not give them food. They had to live off the land. They eventually gave up. They needed roughly three times the cost of what it cost to get to the Ogeechee and they did not have that kind of money.

The next thing he wanted to demonstrate was a bit of the neighborhood sense of what the west side of Savannah was like along the canal. There were many small industries and artisans along what is now Yamacraw Village, as well as shops, saloons, and grocery stores suggesting that it was a bustling industrial neighborhood in the 1870's and 1880's. The canal was part of people's daily life on the west side of Savannah. People swam, washed, and bathed in the canal. There was drinking, fighting, and card games along the canal. Baptisms were very common; sometimes mass baptisms performed by visiting evangelists. Chain gangs operated along the canal keeping up with the drainage projects. Cases of rape, suicide, and drowning, fatal explosions and fistfights, accidents and homicides were all part of the social history of the canal as well. Further out in the county people made a living farming, fishing, and collecting treasure from low water points. 1876 was a turning point when the canal company sponsored weekly fishing and tourist trips from Savannah to the Ogeechee for a 50-cent fare. The captain would provide string music, fishing tackle, and refreshments served to order. The festivities ended in the summer of 1876 because of 15 inches of rain in one week of June in that year. The wet conditions may have contributed to the most severe yellow fever epidemic in Savannah's history, in which 1,066 people died. In the aftermath, the canal became a public health issue as well as an economic development issue. Public officials blamed the stagnant waters, the overflowing banks, and the inadequate drainage to pestilence. They demanded that various methods be brought in to clean it up once and for all. Throughout this period, the canal became increasingly intertwined with the Central Georgia railway. In 1888, the railways bought controlling stock, not as an isolated waterway, but as a link in their chain of railroad terminals, wharf space, and ocean steamship lines on the west side of Savannah that would be part of a broader economic strategy. It was in 1888, not in 1833 (55 years later), that the canal finally lost the battle to the railroad.

In 1909, Savannah's congressional representative Charles Edwards lobbied repeatedly for widening of the canal to make it part of a system that would connect Savannah with Louisville on the Ogeechee River. In 1915, the railroad sold its interest in the canal to the City of Savannah in exchange for some wharf side real estate downtown. In 1918, petitioners came to City Hall with a request to turn the toll path into a roadway that would be the 16-mile loop out across west Chatham County to connect the Savannah/Ogeechee. In the 1920's there was a strategy to build a public swimming facility along the canal, where there would be refreshments and bathhouses in Yamacraw. In the 1930's the WPA, a new deal program, came in with various drainage projects involving the canal, and the County made proposals to make Half Moon Lake into a bird and botanic sanctuary. To supply the City with enough water for industry, there was a proposal to use the second half of the canal up to the Ogeechee so that there would be gravity flow of water from the Ogeechee. Gravity flow would bring water from the Ogeechee to industry on Savannah's west side. Each of the schemes from the 20th Century fell a little short, and now there are current efforts to preserve and restore it. The Savannah Ogeechee Canal Society was formed in 1991. The Chatham County Board of Commissioners resolved to establish the canal as part of a multi-purpose scenic trail. In 1992, City Council granted a recreational easement to the County for this purpose. Now the County is technically in charge of the property that belongs to the City. Some local businessmen donated 184 acres out near locks five and six that allowed for some development of the facilities out there. In 1997, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The canal still attracts a fair number of visitors. The site was well known among birding groups. A local wilderness outfitter holds programs on medicinal plants, reptiles, and other aspects of the local ecology. A local home for the elderly uses the canal as part of its recreational programs. It has potential as an educational facility for both natural and industrial history. Armstrong Atlantic State University students go there partly to learn science, and there is a

graduate level course for teaching Environmental Science for in-service teachers. There was recently a significant archeological discovery where they seemed to have found the lock keeper's house.

Ms. Good-Walker asked if they had a date yet on the house.

Dr. Finlay stated the pottery found on the site was 1830's pottery. It was likely to be the lock keeper's house though. There was still no proof.

Mr. Hutton asked how the pumps were powered for the locks to raise and lower the water level.

Dr. Finlay stated they did not need pumps. He said they dammed up Caplan Lake, which ten feet above sea level, and then release the water as needed to keep it in the canal. It was gravity and it was not pumped. The final adjustment was at the tide, and the lock to level it out.

Ms. Goode-Walker asked if the local rice plantations fed off the canal in its early history.

Dr. Finlay said he did not know if they were allowed to tap into it for water purposes, but they certainly were in the neighborhood. He said there were sketches of the culverts that were part of the rice plantations, and rice was shipped on the canal from Chatham County.

Ms. White stated she read an article recently about the Augusta Canal, and how they were welcoming development along that canal which would be shops for tourists, condominiums, and things like that. She just wondered with the canal being owned by the City and the County together, if it was protected from development of that nature alongside the canal.

Dr. Finlay stated that protections would be limited to being listed on the National Register.

Ms. White stated that protection would only be provided if it was a federally owned property or a federal project comes through and they would have to do a Section 106, Cultural Resources Survey.

Mr. Luten stated Dr. Finlay mentioned earlier about prisoners along the canal and asked where their facility was built.

Dr. Finlay stated the chain gang system was a complex saga. He was not sure where they were kept, but the County would lease out prisoners and put them to work on drainage projects. The local newspapers would complain that Augusta and Atlanta had more prisoners than Savannah, and they would get more work done. He said it was the post Civil War penal system. He could not answer the question as to where they were kept.

Mr. Luten stated he asked because where Mayfair is now, there was a prison camp for the County. He just wondered if it was the same facility. He said it was located in the area off Sallie Mood Drive.

Dr. Finlay stated he was not sure about that, but from time-to-time the chain gang events would be media attractions and they would say they were rounding up a new group of prisoners; and that would be an attraction for spectators.

Mr. Cohen asked how wide the canal was, or, how wide was the easement that the City granted the County.

Dr. Finlay stated that 40 feet came to mind, and he was not sure if that was 40 feet on each side or 40 feet from the middle.

Ms. Harris stated the City owns the canal property, and they own as she recalled 60 feet on each side from the center. It is 120 feet width down the whole canal.

Mr. Cohen stated he was not suggesting that there needed to be development along the canal like Augusta was doing, but he was curious what the comparison was to the width in Augusta in their development versus what we have here. He asked if in Augusta, it was the private property owners that were being encouraged to develop along the canal.

Ms. White stated it was private developers.

Mr. Cohen stated that if it was handled the right way, it could be beneficial to all.

Ms. White stated that Augusta's canal was in more of a developed area than our canal.

Dr. Finlay stated its purpose from the start was to serve industry.

Ms. Good-Walker stated Dr. Finlay mentioned that the slaves were used in the early building of the canal, and asked if there was documentation of who the owners were.

Dr. Finlay answered there was to some degree. He said that for some of the slave owners you could see that the account books day-by-day listed how many slaves were leased out. The general fee was a dollar a day, and for some of the plantation owners they were making \$1200 to \$1500 a year leasing out their slaves. That was good money for the slave owners.

Mr. Rossell thanked the guest speaker and announced there was another guest speaker.

Ms. Harris stated she wanted to let the Commissioners know how the canal fits in the context of what they were doing. She said the canal is owned by the City, and it is listed as a historic resource on the County Resources Survey. There was no reason why it could not be listed on the Chatham County Historic Registry, although, politically speaking she did not think that was going to happen.

Mr. Lindell asked if they had any jurisdiction over that area at all.

Ms. Harris answered no.

Ms. Harris introduced the second speaker, Courtland Hyser, a Land Use Planner at the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), who has been working on the Comprehensive Plan for three years. She said it was a project that was started by the MPC in approximately 2002.

Mr. Courtland Hyser said the department has been working for a long time on the Comprehensive Plan, also referred to as the Tricentennial Plan. Today he was just going to give the Commission an overview of the whole Tricentennial planning process, what the department has been doing, and what they have accomplished.

The Tricentennial Plan is the Comprehensive Plan for Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County. The Metropolitan Planning Commission has jurisdiction only within Savannah and

unincorporated Chatham County. The other municipalities in the County do not participate. The planning process for the Tricentennial Plan began in 2002.

The plan looks forward to the year 2033, which is why it is called the Tricentennial Plan. That is the 300th Anniversary of the founding of the City of Savannah and the Georgia Colony by James Oglethorpe in 1733. It is called the Tricentennial Plan as a marketing tool because it sticks in peoples heads better than Comprehensive Plan. It is actually a two-phase process: the second phase is the zoning ordinance update. He said he would give the Commission details about both phases during the presentation. He stated he would start with Phase I, the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is an advisory long-range planning document; it is the official vision for how your community is going to grow and wants to grow. However, in Georgia, you are not obligated to follow your Comprehensive Plan. It is used by local governments to guide their future growth and to make policy decisions, which is its principal purpose, and it is long-range in nature. It covers a variety of topics related to growth and development, such as transportation, demographics, in addition to land use. One of the key things that gets glossed over sometimes is community vision. The community vision is a very important part of the planning process, and a lot of stakeholder input and public involvement goes into crafting a vision statement. Comprehensive Plans also have a strategic plan, which is a collection of goals, objectives, and strategies intended to help you implement your vision. Lastly, and most importantly is the Future Development Map, also referred to as a Future Land Use Map. It is a map that shows the entire area and has different land use codes to show what type of development is desired in that area, whether it be Residential, Commercial, or any variety of land use category.

Mr. Hyser then asked, now that we know what a Comprehensive Plan is, why do we need one. The easiest answer is that it is required, we have to do it, and we do not have a choice. In the state of Georgia, every county and every incorporated municipality is required to produce a Comprehensive Plan. If they do not, they risk losing their qualified local government status, which is granted to communities that perform their due diligence in creating planning documents. If you lapse in something like a storm water plan or a Comprehensive Plan, or other plans that are required by the state, they will revoke your Qualified Local Government (QLG) status, and then you will no longer be eligible for various types of state funding. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for future growth and development. Public officials can look at it if they are debating a policy decision, they can refer the Comprehensive Plan, and use it in their deliberations. We also included a framework for developing a unified zoning ordinance. Our zoning ordinance in Savannah dates back to 1960, and has never been comprehensively updated since it was adopted in that year. It has evolved quite a bit, and is constantly evolving as a result of text amendments or map changes. One of the reasons that it is important to update our Comprehensive Plan is because planning theory in the 1960's was very different from what it is today. Another reason that we need it is because our old Comprehensive Plan had simply outlived its usefulness. It did not work in a way that a Comprehensive Plan is supposed to in terms of providing day-to-day guidance and being a living document. Finally, a Comprehensive Plan is a marketing tool for the community as a whole. If someone is trying to decide if they want to propose a development or buy a piece of property, one of the first things they do is take a look at the Comprehensive Plan. It will tell them something about the community, and it will tell them what that piece of land is slated for in terms of development.

Within the Comprehensive Plan there are three individual documents. There is the Community Assessment Report, Participation Program, and the Agenda Report. The Community

Assessment Report is basically all of the background information. What are the trends, how many people live here, is the population growing or declining, at what rate, etc. is found in the community assessment. It is broken down into chapters for each of the different topics. Demographics, land use, economic development, housing, etc. with everything referencing the 300-year history of Savannah.

The community participation program outlines the strategy used for getting the public involved in the planning process including a public opinion survey, an advisory committee almost 100 people, a handout that was distributed last summer, 5,000 copies of a big foldout poster, a ten minute video on public access television, 50 plus public meetings and neighborhood association meetings, and they put everything on the MPC website throughout the process so that it was easily accessible.

The Community Agenda outlines the blueprint for the future. It provides policy guidance for the public officials. It is where to find the community vision, the top issues and opportunities as chosen by the public are identified, the strategic plan, and the short-term work program. It is the only component that is actually adopted by local government. The other two, the assessment and the public involvement documents, are both required by the state, because they want to make sure that there was an adequate process.

The summarized community vision is:

“A community where future growth has a rational foundation in land use planning, where economic growth occurs in a balanced and environmentally sensitive way, thereby meeting diverse housing needs, preserving historically and culturally significant resources, providing an efficient multi-modal transportation system, and creating a safe, vibrant community for all citizens to live, work, play, and raise their families.”

Also, part of the vision is the Future Development Map. This is the vision in its most defined form, because it shows every parcel within our planning area, and identifies land uses for those parcels. There are quite a few categories that would be common to any plan: Civic/Institutional, Parks/Recreation, and Industry. There are a lot of categories to reflect the uniqueness of each community. Just identifying things as Residential, Commercial, and so on, did not really capture the situation in Savannah and Chatham County because there are a lot of mixed-use areas that vary in their character and qualities. Traditional land use codes do not account for mixed-use. Some of the other types of land uses step down in intensity. Traditional-Commercial applies to the commercial corridor in the Thomas Square Neighborhood; which is Bull Street around the library where the buildings are built up to the street with residential uses above storefronts. A Traditional-Neighborhood is mostly residential with some corner stores. In terms of the County, most of the land that is going to be developed in the future is out in West Chatham. Most of it is designated Planned Unit Development, PUD, Master Plan Community. This area is to be planned, and with a wide-range of possibilities. The idea is to be flexible and focus on getting quality development, as opposed to one specific kind of development. Also, rather than legislating the creation of more cookie cutter subdivisions, it encourages developers and gives them freedom and flexibility to plan in some commercial.

Mr. Hyser reviewed the top ten list of issues and opportunities identified in the plan, as defined in a public meeting. They felt the Downtown and other historic neighborhoods needed to be preserved. There needs to be a way to permit mixed-use development that works for everyone and does not create land use conflicts, and maintains a high quality of life. There needs to be a multi-modal transportation network that is not built just around cars. Sometimes when you

mention multi-modal transportation people think trains and buses, but there is also walking. We need to create communities where people can walk places. Savannah is a great model.

In Phase II, which is going to begin following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, is the Zoning Ordinance update. It is an opportunity to correct some persistent problems that have emerged with the Zoning Ordinance over the past 40 plus years. First of all, the Zoning Ordinance is overly complex. Because of that, a lot of people have an impression that it is a bad zoning ordinance. It is not a bad zoning ordinance, it is just complicated and very difficult to understand. It has outdated development standards, and there are inconsistencies mainly between the Zoning Map and the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map is very detailed and goes parcel by parcel, providing the opportunity to make the zoning fully consistent with the Land Use Plan. This can take some of the redundancy out of the process. It is also an opportunity to implement good neighbor standards or Performance Standards. That would be something like in a mixed-use area saying that the businesses need to close by ten. Or, that they can only receive deliveries during normal business hours so that there are not big delivery trucks pulling up at two o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Cohen stated he would like to see that downtown because he sees semi trucks trying to negotiate the squares in the middle of the day.

Mr. Hyser stated the Kroger actually works well, and is a good example because they have so many delivery trucks that go to that store everyday. He said he lives in the neighborhood right next to the Kroger and it is not an inconvenience because of the Development Standards, and the Good Neighbor Standards that went along with Kroger getting their zoning. He showed an example pulled from a page of the Mid-City Zoning Ordinance, which was adopted in early 2005. Rather than using the thousand words, it shows a picture that illustrates the concepts being used, and makes it so that you can almost not be able to read at all and still understand the type of development that is wanted in the Mid-City area.

In summary, the Tricentennial Plan is a City-County joint plan. A lot of communities do not have that level of cooperation. He said we have been working on it for four years, but are at the end of the process now. There was a lot of community involvement and it goes until 2033, so it is approximately a 30-year-plan, and it contains a detailed vision for how we want to grow. The Comprehensive Plan is only the beginning because the Unified Zoning Code is coming up shortly after adoption, and we need to implement the plan through the short-term work program. The Comprehensive Plan and the zoning rewrite are not going to solve their problems. People are still going to ask for rezonings, and have a need for variances from the standards. We are looking at having a probable five-year update schedule for the plan.

The Community Assessment Report and the Community Participation were approved in December of last year. Just this summer the Community Agenda was approved by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which opened the door for local adoption, which City Council did last month. The County Commission will likely adopt it this month or early next month. Then, we are looking at a deadline of fall of next year to have a working draft of the Unified Zoning Ordinance to present to the public. It will go through a public review process, with the goal of adoption by the end of next year.

Mr. Cohen asked if there was anything in the proposed plan to limit deliveries in the Historic District.

Mr. Hyser stated that was more of a zoning issue. Something that would be addressed with the Good Neighbor Standards in the zoning rewrite.

Mr. Cohen said he noticed that the one thing that the planners in the City totally forgot is that they interrupted the entire streetscape on Bolton Street by Kroger. The sidewalk does not continue and you have to go to the other side of the street. He said in fact, when the Tricentennial Plan was first put together, the City brought in a consultant, and he mentioned that also. He noticed that it was very unusual and asked if Mr. Hyser noticed it since he lives in that neighborhood.

Mr. Hyser stated it was a necessary evil in the site planning process because to get the big semi trucks into that little loading area is an exercise in acrobatic driving. They have to pull in usually facing Bolton Street, and maneuver back in through there, so it is to preserve enough room for them to be able to negotiate that space. An analogy is that the squares with the ward pattern, the sidewalks do not continue on the inside edge where the streets meet the square. That is proposed to change with the new square on the site of the old City Market garage. The sidewalks will continue so that you do not need to cross the street or cross into the square to negotiate it.

Ms. Goode-Walker stated she had questions about the County. She noticed on the map with the colors that she could not quite make out the light purple that talked about land use. Had they included some mechanism to prevent inappropriate infills in the Historic Districts?

Mr. Hyser stated that was a challenge reserved for the zoning phase. He said the Land Use Plan just describes the type of development that belongs somewhere. An analogy would be when you are going to write a book or a research paper, you write an outline first, and then you fill in all of the paragraphs and everything. This is more of the outline, and the zoning is going to get into the specifics as to say what exact types of land uses are appropriate for this particular zoning district.

Ms. Goode-Walker asked what the big purple area near Vernonburg was.

Mr. Hyser stated it was Hunter Army Airfield.

Mr. Cohen asked what was the loop that was in the middle of Hunter.

Mr. Hyser stated it was the accident potential zones and noise zones associated with the flight patterns at Hunter. He said they made a decision to put it on the map because they wanted to make sure that any development pressure due west of Hunter would be fully aware that there is an active Army airfield right there and that might not be the best place to put a house; right where the planes are most likely to crash. It is kind of a placeholder at this point, but when they get into zoning, there are going to be extra restrictions proposed on development within the area, so that they do not have the kind of problem that they have to the east of the airfield, which is some of the most intense suburban development in Savannah. If this happens to the other side of the airfield, there is a much-increased chance that this would no longer be a desirable place for them to operate an airfield. Then we would lose all of the billions of dollars of investment into the regional economy as a result of having a facility like this.

Mr. Rossell asked if the white areas were in Effingham County.

Mr. Hyser stated all of it is Chatham County. He stated the white areas are the other Chatham County municipalities that do not participate in the MPC's planning process. We show them as white just to show that they are there and we do not have any control over what they do.

Mr. Rossell asked if the map was online.

Mr. Hyser answered yes, all three documents are online. He said the map is blown up into eight pieces so there is a Northwest Chatham, a Downtown Map, etc.

Mr. Rossell thanked Mr. Hyser for his presentation.

Ms. Harris asked the Commission how they felt about running the meeting in this way when they do not have a lot of official business to go over. She had discussed it with the Chairman to have two speakers; someone from the outside to give a historical perspective on a relative issue in the County, and then someone from inside either the MPC or from the County government to give the Commission tools they could use so that when they do start getting applications, they would be better prepared for them. Did they find it useful?

Ms. White stated they were both very good but she was worried about time constraints and maybe one would be enough.

Mr. Cohen stated that the Ogeechee Canal brings up a very interesting point. He said it is a major historical asset, and he was curious as to what the City's plan is. If they do not have a plan, it seems like a great item for the Commission to investigate getting involved.

Ms. Harris stated she would be happy to do a little more investigation and find out if the City does have any plans and who to contact, and report back to the Commission.

Mr. Lindell stated the City may be just as happy to relieve themselves of the oversight of it, and it could fall into County jurisdiction.

CCHPC ACTION: **Mr. Rossell made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission explore the importance of the Savannah Ogeechee Canal to the County as a historic resource and an important component of their mission. All were in favor and none were opposed.**

Mr. Cohen stated the City had lost several parts to private developers.

Ms. Harris said she knew that different parcels along it were being developed, but she did not know if the City had lost parcels. She would do some research into it and see what she comes up with.

IV. Updates

a. Contact with communities/individuals interested in District or Property Nominations

Ms. Harris stated she had sent out packages to 12 people representing different neighborhood associations. The 12 packages targeted eight different communities and she has gotten some positive feedback. On September 25, the Pinpoint Neighborhood Association has invited her to

come and speak to their neighborhood at their regular meeting. She was contacted by the Bloomingdale Historical Society. While Bloomingdale is technically not within their jurisdiction, the historical society is interested in properties in the nearby vicinity of Bloomingdale, but not within the City limits. She said she believed she was going to be speaking to them on September 21, although she was awaiting confirmation. She understood that Sandfly was continuing with their progress and they hope to have the application in by October. Other communities have contacted her requesting more information, or have just expressed an interest and want to continue to be on the mailing list, but she had not received a formal invitation. She intends to keep following up with them.

Mr. Rossell asked how much inter-incorporated municipality communication was there. He said he was a little struck with the map and all of the white space, and he wondered if there is much interaction. He knew in Thunderbolt, for example, there has been some new development very close to the edge of Savannah's district.

Ms. Harris stated that occasionally, the incorporated areas will ask the MPC to comment on a plan or a subdivision in an advisory capacity. They want a second opinion, which we are always happy to provide, but there is no official or formal relationship with those areas. She said it was spotty, at best, with the communication.

b. Vernacular Architecture Forum

Mr. Rossell stated he was the director of a large conference coming to Savannah in late March 2007. It is a group called the Vernacular Architecture Forum that has about 900 members across the country and in Canada and England. It is made up of professional architectural historians and historic preservationists. About 350 to 400 will come to Savannah between March 28 and March 31. There will be a Savannah Day with about 100 buildings that will be open across Savannah in neighborhoods from the Beach Institute to the railroad repair yard, down to St. Phillip A.M.E. Church, and up to the Savannah River. The next day is a day of tours going out into the countryside. There will be two buses going north into South Carolina to Fife Plantation, then to Bluffton, Beaufort, St. Helena Island, and back to Daufuskie Island. There is a west tour that Dr. Mark Finlay is actually helping them to go to parts of Port Wentworth, the Atlantic Wood Company, and then to Effingham County to Ebenezer, Springfield, Guyton, and down to Melbourne. Then a tour south along Highway 17 to various sites like the Lebanon Plantation and the R.H. Gould Homestead, Chica Arndt's home who works at the canal museum. Then on down to Midway, Midway Congregational, Dorchester Academy, Seabrook Village, Springfield Plantation, Darien, and end up at Shellman Bluff. Then two greater Savannah tours; one being led by Ellen Harris a staff member, and one being led by a friend of ours from the Historic Savannah Foundation, Melissa Jest. These tours will go to neighborhoods like Vaughnette Goode-Walker's neighborhood of Montgomery, as well as Sandfly and Pinpoint. He also thought that Dr. Finlay might also visit some more industrial sites on the tour. One of the speakers for the keynote address is going to be Vaughnette Goode-Walker who will read a poem at the opening.

He said if anyone knew of great places that they would like to have spotlighted let him know and he would try to work them in. If there was any interest in volunteering in any way, they would love to have docents or researchers, or anything.

Ms. White asked if there was information about it on the web.

Mr. Rossell stated there was and he would send the Commissioners an email with the information.

Mr. Cohen asked if it was strictly historic properties or were they looking at new construction also.

Mr. Rossell stated he looked at some new construction. He said he was not against newer buildings and does not discriminate against newer buildings. It depends.

c. Earth Day Fair

Ms. Harris stated she was hoping to have more to update the Commission on because there was a planning meeting that morning. It was really just a planning meeting and there was nothing new to report. The Earth Day Fair will be held on November 18, 2006, and the Commission would have some sort of table or booth that Ms. Harris would be manning, and if anyone would like to help they are more than welcome.

V. Announcements

a. Historic Preservation Commission Training in Rome, GA October 6-7

Ms. Harris stated hoped the Commissioners had received the Historic Preservation Commission training brochure. If they could attend she strongly encouraged them to do so. She said she went to the one this past spring, and they have them twice a year in different cities. There is so much practical information on what the Commission should be doing, as a Commission member what you should be doing, etc. She was happy to announce that the MPC's Historic Preservation Department has the funding to send someone from this Commission. It is coming up soon, so there is a little pressure that they go ahead and get it arranged. The MPC will pay for the lodging, the registration fee, a stipend for food, reimbursement for gas and mileage.

Mr. Rossell asked the Commission to let Ms. Harris know if they were interested because it would be a great opportunity. He thought it would be great if more than one of them went, as it was not too expensive, and it would be a really good educational opportunity.

Ms. Harris asked if there was anyone already planning on going.

Ms. Goode-Walker and Mr. Cohen both stated that they were planning on attending.

Mr. Cohen stated Ms. Goode-Walker could receive the MPC funding.

VI. Other Business

Ms. White stated that the Georgia General Assembly has authorized a Historic Preservation license plate, and the proceeds for the license plate will be administered by the Historic Preservation Commission of the Georgia DNR through their grant program, which funds Historic Preservation all across Georgia. The budget has been cut so much over the years, and the demand is so high, they hope that the proceeds from the license plate will be a way of generating revenue for that project. She said she would send the Commissioners the website and there is a form you can print, fill it out, send it to Chatham County with \$25. Do not wait until your tag renewal comes up. Go ahead now because they have to presale 1,000 license

plates before they can be manufactured. If 1,000 are not sold they will refund the \$25. The interesting thing is a Chatham County historic building is on the tag. It won a contest of half a dozen or so submissions, and it was voted the most popular. It is one of the old Central of Georgia buildings that is now being utilized by SCAD on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Ms. Lossing asked if Ms. White knew how many they had sold yet. She said she had sent an email to ask because she heard about them a long time ago.

Ms. White stated the last time she heard it was around 150, so it has been very slow. They are advertising in magazines like the Georgia Trend. She thought they have a couple of more months to get that number up, and they look really nice.

Mr. Rossell thanked her for the suggestion.

VII. Approval of Meeting Minutes - July 5, 2006, Meeting

CCHPC ACTION: Mr. Luten made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission does hereby approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Lindell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Rossell announced that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2006, at 2:00 P.M. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room.

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Historic Preservation commission the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Harris,
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp