

**CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING  
110 EAST STATE STREET**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**December 5, 2007**

**2:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**CCHPC Members Present:**

**Daves Rossell, Chairman  
George Cohen, Vice-Chairman  
Jane A. Feiler  
Vaughnette Goode-Walker  
William Haynes  
Stephen T. Lindell  
Pamela G. Lossing  
Lisa L. White**

**CCHPC Members Not Present:**

**Christian Sottile**

**CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:**

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner  
Noel Perkins, SAGIS Director  
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

**I. WELCOME**

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

**Dr. Rossell** asked everyone to introduce themselves and thanked Mr. Cohen for his assistance during his absence.

**III. GUEST SPEAKER – Noel Perkins, Director of SAGIS  
Overview of SAGIS**

**Ms. Harris** introduced Mr. Noel Perkins, Director of SAGIS (Savannah Area Geographical Information System). She said the concept of SAGIS has been around for approximately 15 years and was established as a department of the MPC in 2006. Mr. Perkins joined the MPC in May coming from International Paper in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Mr. Noel Perkins** stated that he started his undergraduate degree in history, with a minor in geography. He changed his major to geography and received a minor in world history. He spent six years in the Army traveling the world visiting as many ancient places as he could. He loves history but loves mapping more.

He said that SAGIS provides access to geospatial data by standardizing the data to do analysis. Their goal is to provide a one-stop access to geospatial data for everything instead of having to shop around at different places. If they do not have it, they can help get it, package it, and deliver it. They work with everybody, especially students, and he frequently challenges students to name something they do not think can be mapped. The students are very creative, but the SAGIS team has not been stumped yet.

He said there is a Technical Advisory Committee that meets once a month at 2:00 p.m. and they want everyone to participate because some of their projects will involve everyone in the community. There are four voting members; Russ Abolt, the County Manager; Vice-Chairman Michael Brown, the City Manager; Chairman Frost, the Director of the Georgia Technical College; and a revolving seat held by a private enterprise member of the community, which currently is Mr. Craig Barrs the Vice-President of Georgia Power and the Coastal Region. They can appoint up to three associate Board members and are working on defining the process to get people from the public. They are staffed by MPC with a director, himself; Jason Lee, a Senior Analyst; and David Petrillo, the Senior Programmer. There are plans to hire two more staff persons in 2008, along with the possibility of two more in 2009, based on the need.

Everyone's first introduction to SAGIS is typically through the SAGIS.org web portal. He displayed the web portal that is linked offsite to property cards maintained by the Board of Assessors office. They are currently working to improve the site to make it more user-friendly. It will have other options beyond just viewing parcels.

Much analysis is done with SAGIS using metadata, which is data about the data. That goes back to their standards. Some may ask where the data comes from, how accurate is it, who is the author, and what validity the data has. When running an analysis, you might not know how it was processed and, therefore, you may have skewed results in the analysis. The more data they have about their data, the better. He said that he is a firm believer that all data needs to have data standards, and they are in the process of creating standards with different committees. They are making sure they coincide with federal and state standards. They are working with the Geographic Information Systems Coordinating Committee, which is a group of volunteers that comes together from the GIS community in Georgia. They are also working with the Natural Resource Spatial Analysis Lab (NARSAL) and Information Technology Service (ITOS) from the University of Georgia in the Carl Vinson Center, who are also currently working on data standards. The standards can be developed quicker in house because of the smaller community as opposed to an entire state, and they talk with NARSAL and ITOS to make sure that the standards do not conflict. It also allows some influence to be put on the state regarding some of their standards so that when the state begins to do their standards, the in house standards will be ready and need very little tweaking. If the standards are adjusted, then any new data coming in would have to be adjusted to match. Their goal is to make sure they have standards in place, especially for information about their centerlines and addressing because both of these feed the 911 and emergency response teams. They have cadastral standards that are being worked on with the Board of Assessors. The updated imagery will be flown this winter. He said what can be seen on SAGIS.org currently is one-foot imagery and they are hoping to get six-inch imagery.

They do GIS training and will be teaching standardized classes for users and have on-site training for specific groups as well as working with individuals. Part of the reason for GIS Day was to start a program in DeRenne Middle School. They will be working with the school board administrators and the teachers at DeRenne to start a good GIS education system. They hope to use GIS Day as a catalyst to help fund and expand it to other schools throughout Chatham

County and further into the region. Approximately 200 students participated in GIS Day and about 100 adults, and they raised approximately \$6500, along with the donation of software. Originally, they were going to take the proceeds and buy the software but they came out ahead and will use some of the leftover money to sponsor some awards for science fairs and various events.

He presented a demonstration of a mapping project as an example of what can be done with GIS linked images about history. So much information can be made available via the web, which gives access to all sorts of people.

He displayed some Historic District data that is on file, including aerial photography of all four sides of a building.

**Mr. Cohen** asked if it is available now.

**Mr. Perkins** stated that it is currently available internally. He said they had received the components from Pictometry and are working on the application to deliver it externally. He said that the pictometry is flown every other year and that last year the pictometry was flown in the winter of 2007. They will fly another imagery in the winter of 2008 and said that there will always be a set of imagery that is one year old and one that is current.

**Dr. Rossell** asked if they save the historic imagery.

**Mr. Perkins** answered yes, and said that they do not throw anything away. He showed an area of Tybee Island from 1938 compared to a shot from 2004. They are working on providing similar tools via the internet. He said if they can get other imagery and enough known points around Chatham County, then they could take the old photography and maps, rectify them, and place them in with the same system where the differences and changes could be seen.

**Ms. Feiler** asked if he is working on traffic analysis.

**Mr. Perkins** answered no. He said that is handled by Transportation and they provide the GIS support that is needed.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** asked about the disclaimer on the SAGIS website and wondered if it is for legal purposes.

**Mr. Perkins** stated that people do not know where the most data came from and cannot say how accurate it is. He said are certain inaccuracies built into the data because of the human element which goes into the creation of data. The Board of Assessors data and parcels have areas that do not match at all, and there are other parts where the parcels match well. He said the data in SAGIS available to the public will have the private and confidential information removed so that there will not be issues on the public side.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** asked how many data layers they use.

**Mr. Perkins** stated they have internal access to over 200 layers in SAGIS, some of which are restricted and will never be seen by the public, and some are stripped information that can be seen by the public. They hope to extend many more layers to the public.

**Dr. Rossell** asked how GIS is related to GPS, and if GPS that is used for directions is a way of presenting GIS information.

**Mr. Perkins** stated that GPS is a Global Positioning System and is used to capture data that goes into GIS. He said the road data is obtained by high school and college students who drive around and get road information, which is why there are some inaccuracies.

**Dr. Rossell** asked if a historical institution like the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) who might have a lot of information could have their information added to the GIS data.

**Mr. Perkins** answered yes. He showed current information regarding the historic markers around town linked on GIS so that when it is clicked, a photo of the marker comes up. It is simple technology that can be extended over the web, which is one of the items they are looking at. If there was historic information that needs to be presented to tourists, they could click on it, zoom in, and get all of the information.

**Ms. Lossing** asked if the topography is LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology under the SAGIS Department. She said she is not sure how accurate it is compared to a surveyor going out and shooting elevations.

**Mr. Perkins** stated that the LIDAR was last done in 1999, and he had not seen any of the raw points, but when it was flown in 1999, it was accurate. He said there have been huge improvements in the technology and next year they will be working with USGS, NOAA, and DCA to get a coastal effort going to recapture all of the LIDAR for the area. A vendor will tell you that it is as accurate as surveying, but until he sees the points and say yes, it will probably not be accurate.

**Mr. Cohen** asked when the expected date that pictometry would be available to the public.

**Mr. Perkins** stated that there is not a hard and fast date because they had just recently received the components, there are other site improvements they want to do, and Staff is still learning the program.

#### **IV. UPDATES: CONTACT WITH COMMUNITIES/INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN DISTRICT OR PROPERTY NOMINATIONS**

**Ms. Harris** briefly discussed the Isle of Hope newspaper article and asked if anyone had questions about it. She said if the application is not supported by more than 50 percent of the property owners, that it is considered an incomplete application.

**Mr. Cohen** asked if there was something the Commission could have done differently. He said the Commission could learn from experience because of the misinformation by people signing up and then getting inaccurate information from a group that promoted fear and loss.

**Ms. Harris** stated that it is the first district that has come forward. She said one thing that will be done differently in the future is that as soon as there is word someone wants to fill out an application and gather signatures, they will send out a letter to all property owners notifying them of the effort before it comes to fruition and have a neighborhood meeting to discuss it.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that if neighborhood designation is now clearly understood by the Isle of Hope residents, or could they send a letter thanking them for their interest, apologizing for it not coming to fruition, and make it clear that the Commission is interested in making it work.

**Ms. Harris** stated that there was one public meeting after the support was withdrawn and a letter was sent to every property owner in advance. It stated that there was not the 50 percent required neighborhood support, described the process, and asked them to come to the meeting for more information. Additional information was included with the letter.

**Mr. Cohen** asked if many people showed up at that meeting.

**Ms. Harris** stated that approximately 30 people showed up. She felt that at that point the people had already made up their minds.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** said that she attended the meeting and agreed that the people's minds were made up. She said they concluded that they would form a neighborhood association and it is possible that the Commission could reeducate them. She thought it would be a good idea to address the leadership of the neighborhood association once it is organized.

**Mr. Cohen** asked if they have an existing association.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that it was called the Isle of Hope Club a long time ago and that Mr. Mr. Charlie Milmine talked about it.

**Ms. White** stated that it seemed there was a poor understanding of the Commission and the enabling ordinance. She said there were constant comments that no Commission members lived at the Isle of Hope and the Commission will tell them that they cannot change their front door, etc. She suggested Dr. Rossell write a guest column in the newspaper.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she stressed that Board members are appointed based on their qualifications and not where they live.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that at the public meeting Ms. Harris invited residents of Isle of Hope to apply for the Board.

**Ms. Harris** stated that there is a countywide effort to establish neighborhood associations. She said the City has a neighborhood coordinator, a staff person, and a well-organized mechanism for neighborhoods to form neighborhood associations that are recognized by the city. The County does not have a formal process in place and over the years it has been done by the communities in an ad-hoc way. She said there is a resolution for the County Commissioners to review and pass that states they are in favor of creating neighborhood associations. It will be on the County Commission agenda soon and she asked the Commission to show support for the effort and spread the word.

**Ms. White** asked if there were individual property owners that would like to have their property listed on the Chatham County Register as an example.

**Ms. Harris** stated that no one had come forward.

**Dr. Rossell** agreed with Ms. White that education is the key. He said the brochure and the website are nice but he wondered if there are other ways to continue getting the word out.

**Mr. Cohen** stated that public access Channels 8 and 16 could promote the CCHPC. He said that if the bar for establishing neighborhood associations is set too high, it would discourage neighborhoods from formally organizing.

**Ms. Feiler** asked if it would be helpful if the Commission made a recommendation to the County Commissioners to adopt the program officially by passing whatever needed to be passed as the ordinance required. She said it could be for new subdivisions as well as old.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she thought it would be a good idea. It would need to come before the Commission and be reviewed formally, and then a recommendation be made. She said she did not have details about it now and the Commission should see the resolution to make a recommendation. There might not be adequate time before going to the County Commission. She could let everyone know when the meeting will be and individual support could be shown by Commission members attending the County Commission meeting.

**Mr. Feiler** asked if it would be appropriate for Dr. Rossell to write a letter to reinforce the Commission's positive encouragement for the resolution.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that he was in favor of supporting neighborhood associations but does not necessarily agree that the Commission should only work with neighborhood associations. He agreed with Mr. Cohen that too high a bar would discourage many neighborhood associations.

**Ms. White** asked if the Commission addresses neighborhood associations in its procedures.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the ordinance states that an area can become a Historic District if an organization representing the majority of property owners within the given area applies for listing. She said it was intentionally not specific as to whether it has to be a neighborhood association, historical society, a homeowners association, or some other association. The Isle of Hope is a great example because they have a historical society but do not have a neighborhood association. In this case, the historical society did not want to submit the application and a group formed in order to do it, taking the place of an organization.

**Ms. Lossing** stated that she thinks the Isle of Hope situation is typical of what it will be with any other groups. She said that about ten years ago Tybee Island attempted to have a district there and the misinformation that got out first caused everyone to think they would lose their property rights. They should think of ways to educate the public and get the information out initially to make it smoother later when people apply.

**Ms. Feiler** asked if Ms. Harris has a list of resources by neighborhood in the county.

**Ms. Harris** answered yes. She said all of the eligible resources in the County are identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Letters were sent out to all of the neighborhood association presidents or neighborhood activists to let them know they were qualified. Most of them did not respond but it was the first phase of the effort. She said that as Commission members they could help spread the word among their contacts.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that the conversation came up recently at the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) meeting and the Community Coordinator and Executive Director said that they were willing to help. She said HSF came out to the Isle of Hope meeting equipped with flyers that talked about preservation and the mission of the organization.

**Ms. White** asked if the Commission could get a copy of the county resolution concerning neighborhoods.

**Ms. Harris** answered yes, and said she would email it to everyone.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that he is hearing many good ideas but they are insiders. They have the knowledge, education, and know what they are doing is right. He suggested they send out a yearly update of the successes of the Commission, and attempt to reeducate. They could have a monthly preservation column in the Savannah Morning Newspaper to show what preservation does and what it could do. He thought Mr. Mark McDonald might be willing to write it because he is a voice of preservation. He did not want to become proactive in his role as Chairman because he wanted to be seen as the objective judge of things. He suggested inviting a member of the Georgia Land Trust, an organization that preserves large tracts of land sometimes with historic resources, to make a presentation to the Commission about their progress in Chatham County and across the state. He said another idea would be to invite Mr. Robin Williams, the Chair of Architectural History who created the Virtual Historic Savannah project, a digital map of the Historic District.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the MPC recently started a quarterly newsletter, but there has only been one issue. She thought that would be an appropriate place to put a summary of the CCHPC's yearly accomplishments. Last year a report was done for the County Commissioners which also went to the MPC Commissioners and they could consolidate it into more of a newsletter article for the MPC newsletter via email.

**Ms. Feiler** asked who gets the MPC newsletter.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she did not know who was on the list but knew there is a list of over 500 people.

**Ms. Feiler** suggested it be sent to the neighborhoods.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the goal was to have an article from each department with the first issue coming out approximately six weeks ago. She said she did an article on Maridon and she received some positive feedback on it.

**Mr. Cohen** stated he saw Chatham County's newsletter and asked if that was their own.

**Ms. Harris** stated that Chatham County has its own and a similar article was in that newsletter. She said for the next upcoming MPC newsletter article she wrote on the difference between National Register and the local historic district.

**Ms. Harris** stated that Pinpoint submitted an application to become a Historic District. She is processing the application and had completed a survey and map. She checked the signature list and asked the applicant to gather more signatures because many of the signatures on the original submittal were not the signatures of the property owners. She did not think it would be a problem to get additional signatures. She said that once more progress is made, she intends on having an informational session with the neighborhood.

## **V. MEETING MINUTES – November 7, 2007**

**CCHPC ACTION:** Mr. Lindell made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Feiler seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**VI. NEXT MEETING – January 2, 2008**

**Dr. Rossell** stated that the next meeting is scheduled for January 2, 2008, which is the day after a holiday. He made a recommendation to cancel the January meeting. The next meeting will, therefore, be February 6, 2008.

**CCHPC ACTION:** Dr. Rossell made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission cancel the January 2, 2008, meeting. Mr. Lindell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**VII. OFFICER ELECTIONS**

**Dr. Rossell** stated that the Nominating Committee recommended that he remain as Chairman and that Mr. George Cohen remain as Vice-Chairman. He asked if there were any nominations from the floor.

**CCHPC ACTION:** Mr. Lindell made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission close the nominations. Ms. Feiler seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**CCHPC ACTION:** Ms. Lossing made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission accept the Nominating Committee's Report. Mr. Lindell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Ms. White** stated that the Historic Preservation automobile license plates have sold the required 1,000 plates and they will be mailed out soon.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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**