

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
110 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

November 7, 2007

2:00 P.M.

MINUTES

CCHPC Members Present:

**George Cohen, Vice-Chairman
Jane A. Feiler
Vaughnette Goode-Walker
William Haynes
Pamela G. Lossing
Christian Sottile
Lisa L. White**

CCHPC Members Not Present:

**Daves Rossell, Chairman
Stephen T. Lindell**

CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner
Charlotte Moore, Special Projects Director
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

I. WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Cohen stated that in the absence of Dr. Rossell, he would be the acting Chairman.

**III. Update on the Historic Preservation Component of the Unified Zoning Ordinance
Charlotte Moore, Director of Special Projects**

Ms. Harris stated that today's speaker is Charlotte Moore and she will be giving an update on the Unified Zoning Ordinance and how it relates to Historic Preservation. She said that Sections 3.20 and 3.21 referring to the Local Historic District Designation and the Local Historic Property Designation would be discussed.

Ms. Charlotte Moore stated that they are working on the administrative portion of the Unified Zoning Ordinance which is component two of the update of the ordinance, and includes identifying various Boards and Administrators, including the Historic Preservation Commission. She said the section would identify the authority and that they are developing the District Designation, the Property Designation, and the Certificate of Appropriateness processes for all local historic districts. She said the Technical Committee will be meeting on November 30 and the group is composed of both private and government professionals who have experience in

the development field. The drafts are taken to the Committee to get feedback. On December 11 there will be a meeting with the Planning Commission to go over the second component and to get feedback.

Component Two is very extensive and identifies every type of process and procedure from zoning to site plan reviews and variances. It identifies the procedure and includes a public notice section as well as neighborhood meeting requirements for certain types of reviews. She asked the Commission members if they wanted to go through the sections.

Mr. Sottile stated that he was curious about the section called the Interim Protection Measure in 3.28 because the intent is to keep alterations or demolitions from happening while an application is being reviewed. He asked if the application was incomplete would the application process be used as a stalling mechanism to keep a property from being able to be developed or altered. He said that it was noted that it would be discussed with the attorneys that will be reviewing it.

Ms. Harris stated she had researched what other commissions do to prevent a rush on demolitions. She said they are typically in the form of demolition moratoriums that the City Council or County Commission could declare one at the time of receipt of an application. This section would formalize the process and put an automatic protection in place. There was discussion about having a demolition moratorium or controlling demolitions, but they felt that if someone wanted to demolish a non-historic building an outright moratorium would prevent that. This is an effort to create more fairness by referring to the Secretary of Interior Standards, and deal with it in a Staff review. If someone wanted to tear down a non-historic garage, they still could and it would not hold up those types of projects. When they took the drafts to the Technical Committee, an attorney raised the question about how it would be implemented and suggested a time limit be put in place. It is an interim protection with a specific beginning and end time for a period of one year to allow for application reviewing, determination, completion, conducting a survey, writing the guidelines, neighborhood meetings, etc. It is not intended to force the hand of City Council or County Commission into making decision, but puts a reasonable deadline in place. This would replace the concept of a demolition moratorium. It will still have to go through more attorney reviews.

Ms. Moore stated they would be completing the other sections and as soon as they were available, they could be emailed to the Commission. Comments could be emailed to Ms. Harris. The process is on track and they anticipate having the full draft of the ordinance completed by the end of next year; including all of the zoning districts, the uses, and the other standards that go with reviewing development. She said that it is an extensive process. Once they start getting into districts and mapping them, they probably would have a lot of public input and opportunities for the public to express concern. They have identified some potential historic districts as well and will be working on creating standards for those districts.

IV. Nominating Committee Report

Ms. White read the Nominating Committee Report which recommended Dr. Rossell as Chairman and George Cohen as Vice-Chairman. She said the Committee consisted of George Cohen, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, and herself.

Mr. Cohen asked if there were any other nominations from the floor for Chair or Vice-Chair. [There were none.] He said that, as stated in the By-Laws, they would vote on the nominations at the December meeting.

V. Meeting Minutes: October 3, 2007

Mr. Cohen stated that he had a correction for the day to be changed from Thursday to Wednesday for the next meeting at the end of the report.

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

VII. Updates: Contact with Communities/Individuals Interested in District or Property Nominations

Ms. Harris stated that she placed a copy of Mr. Barton's Savannah Morning Newspaper article at the Commissioner's seats, and there was an email response from Mr. Tom Thomson. She wanted to give the Commission an update and make sure they were informed and aware of what is going on because there is a chance that the public would contact the Commission.

Ms. Feiler said when she served on the MPC that the members were not allowed to talk to the press but the Chairman was, and asked if it is the same for the Commission.

Ms. White stated that the issue has not arisen before and that is why it had not been considered.

Mr. Cohen stated that it was an excellent suggestion. He said Mr. Barton's editorial was not negative but that he was incorrect on a few points.

Ms. Harris stated that the process to become a Local Historic District has to start with the community. She said the Isle of Hope invited her in April 2007 to their neighborhood association meeting and she informed them of the process, what it meant, how to fill out the application, and what would happen next. A group of residents headed by Mr. Lee Meyer decided they wanted to pursue it, and the application requires that a majority of property owners in the district consent and support the designation. The group collected signatures on a petition and distributed a letter from Mr. Meyer stating what it meant, along with a fact sheet. They collected signatures from 65 percent of the property owners and an application was submitted. There was another public meeting on October 8 in Sandfly and they formed a Design Guidelines Committee. She asked for volunteers who owned property within the district to serve on the Committee to come up with standards for the character specific to that area. This Committee included Ms. Beth Reiter the MPC Director of Historic Preservation, Ms. Cassie Dolecki from Historic Savannah Foundation, and Ms. Connie Pinkerton the Co-Chair of the Historic Preservation Department at SCAD. They had met a number of times to develop the standards that are going to be presented in a workshop with a wider neighborhood community of the Isle of Hope on November 15. She said that the application would have a public hearing when it comes before the Commission, every property owner will receive written notification, it will be published in the newspaper three times, and all of the notice requirements will be met. The Commission will make a recommendation to the County Commissioners and they will hold two public hearings. It is a long way off and she was not anticipating when it would be on the agenda because there is a lot of work to do with the community.

In the meantime, a group formed that called the "Save the Isle of Hope Committee" and they circulated a flyer concerning property rights. She said they called a meeting of people who were

concerned about their property rights which she and Helen Stone attended. She said she stressed her role is to process the application, and provide the information. The decision to become a Historic District still rests with the citizens of the district. There was a lot of concern regarding people being asked to sign a petition when they did not realize what they were signing because the standards had not been drafted at that point. Because it was part of the initial application, they did not realize what they were getting into and felt that the petition with all of the signatures should be thrown out.

Mr. Cohen thanked Ms. Harris for the work that she has done. He said that he is looking forward to getting the idea across that the Commission is not trying to take something away but preserve what they have.

Ms. Lossing asked if they are not to answer citizens' questions or direct them to the Chairman.

Ms. Harris stated that if citizens have specific questions, they could always refer citizens to her. Press questions should be referred to the Chairman.

Mr. Cohen stated that the Commission is new and different and some will perceive it as restrictive. The process is slow and methodical and they would need to communicate to the people that are stakeholders.

Ms. Harris stated that with any process like this and with 170 parcels on the Isle of Hope, somebody is not going to be happy about it.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris,
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp