

**CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING  
110 EAST STATE STREET**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**March 5, 2008**

**2:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**CCHPC Members Present:**

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

**CCHPC Members Not Present:**

**William Haynes**

**CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:**

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner  
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.

**III. GUEST SPEAKER**

**Ms. Harris** introduced the guest speaker, Mr. Christopher McCabe from the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography.

**Mr. Christopher McCabe** stated that he is the Deputy State Archaeologist with the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). He said that he is a party of one in Savannah because the home office is in Atlanta where he is a part of the archaeological service unit. At the Skidaway Institute of the Georgia Coastal Underwater Archaeological field station, he works in the Clark Alexander Lab and the Georgia Southern Lab. They manage, survey, and protect shoreline and underwater archaeological sites on navigable and offshore waterways that extend out three nautical miles. He works as a partner with the Georgia Southern, DNR, and the Skidaway Institute so they have lots of resources at their disposal.

He said that archaeologists study the past by looking at remains left behind by previous civilization. Underwater archaeologists do the same thing by applying the same scientific principles to sites found in or near bodies of water. There are lots of environments for them to work within like shipwrecks,

commercial wharfs, shipyards, abandoned vessels, prehistoric sites, inundated settlements, and anything that has to do in or around the maritime marine environment. Underwater archaeology is not commercial salvage or treasure hunting, and they try to look at it from an academic and preservation point-of-view.

The official code of Georgia mandates that the DNR conduct a supervised protection preservation and survey of submerged cultural resources. Submerged cultural resources are defined as any cultural resources that are 50 years and older that lie below the high tide line on navigable waterways. They oversee rules and regulations to endeavor the preservation, the survey, and the permitting process through individual consultants. Archaeological consultants get involved in the process through docks, new construction development, and they try to help as best they can to protect the resource.

Even though they are the coastal field station the field station's jurisdiction covers and entire state of Georgia. There are 100 miles of coastline and the environment is dynamic with sounds, barrier islands, back barrier islands, rivers, hundreds of miles of shoreline and coastal waters, and 8,000 miles of river banks all with potential cultural resources along them.

They are tasked with management interpretation, publication, and outreach of known resources, and they know about the resources through the archaeological site file, independent publications, archaeological reports, etc. He mentioned a few of the resources as the C.S.S. Georgia and Fig Island and said that there are hundreds more. The National Archaeological and Historical Resources is a database that is web based with geographic information where they can look at a particular site and find out what work has been done before. It is a very important part of what they do.

They receive many telephone calls about things people find like the discovery of an arrowhead or a construction site that had several Native American projectile points that go back to the Late Archaic Period (2000 – 3000 B.C.). They try to educate the people and preserve the sites the best as they can. They don't have jurisdiction over private land but they still try to help the landowner and the interested parties. He displayed photographs of a hammock with a Late Archaic Period shell mound that was covered with trash, and some individuals from The Landings organized a clean-up crew. They found artifacts like an arrowhead and several pieces of pottery and were able to preserve these items. He said they get calls about graves eroding out of river banks that are not necessarily underwater but could soon be underwater.

He said that a few years ago they received a grant from the National Park Service to survey the Ogeechee River in association with Fort McAllister and consultants to find and survey the C.S.S. Nashville. It is still ongoing and he is working with Mr. Danny Brown and Fort McAllister on some of the artifacts and the interpretation.

They took a series of modern and historic maps, overlaid them, geo-referenced them, and transformed the data so that everything matched up to identify some of the historic locations. It helped to pinpoint where they wanted to look. They did remote sensing and used a sonar device that takes an acoustic picture of the river bottom, and a magnetometer that is similar to an underwater metal detector. He showed some images of the C.S.S. Nashville that depicted the boilers, remains of the hull, some deck planking, and hatches. They found many items that weren't Civil War items like crab pots, beer cans, car parts, and other things, but they also found a number of things associated with the battles of Fort McAllister. They are being conserved and some are on display.

Phase I of an ongoing archaeological erosion study has been done and they are hoping to start Phase II after approval of a Coastal Incentive grant. It is a joint project between Georgia Coastal Underwater Archaeologically Field Station and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. They are looking for rates of erosion on some of the barrier islands and how they impact sites targeted from the NAHRGIS program. They use a high-resolution GPS unit and map the shore line, then compare it to previous data with aerial photographs, historic maps, or other data. It can show how much the bank has eroded after a certain period of time. He compared the shoreline from 1933 to 2005 where artifacts have eroded out of the banks from different periods such as Native American, Colonial, Antebellum, and Modern. They want to target the most endangered sites. They have looked at Tybee, Ossabaw, and other barrier islands with reports posted online at [www.gashpo.org](http://www.gashpo.org).

**Ms. Feiler** left at approximately 2:30 p.m.

**Ms. White** asked if the NAHRGIS website was accessible to the public.

**Mr. McCabe** stated that the historical portion is, but the archaeological portion is not. He said it is password protected because there are too many sites that would be subject to looting and potential problems.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that on Shipyard Road there was supposed to be an inlet where ships were made at one time.

**Mr. McCabe** stated that is true. He said there is a historical marker and he had looked on the NAHRGIS site and to try to find a report to see if any work had been done.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that she has some information on it. She asked about the 1866 article on the Water Witch.

**Mr. McCabe** stated that originally there was a series of newspaper accounts about potential salvage. There were private firms that wanted to go out after the war was over. He said that resources were very scarce at that time and that there were reports about people and firms going out to salvage the vessel for its metal or wood. There was never a follow-up and there is no evidence to suggest it.

**Mr. Cohen** asked that since they work on projects that affected the navigable waters, was there any work that done at Bonaventure when they rebuilt the bank. He said that they have been working on it for the past year and one-half.

**Mr. McCabe** stated that it fell slightly out of their jurisdiction. He said they would only be a consultant if asked, and he was not brought in on that particular project.

**Mr. Cohen** stated that the government has proposed a clean-up of the navigable waters and asked if they are working with Mr. McCabe's office.

**Mr. McCabe** stated that it was mentioned in a few meetings and that it is subject to available funds. He said they have talked about it but is not sure what role they would play but they are curious about it.

**IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Contact with Communities/Individuals Interested in District or Property Nominations**

**Ms. Harris** stated that she is still working with Pin Point as well as Sandfly and that there is nothing new to report. She had a neighborhood association meeting with Pin Point that went well and they are continuing to work on the design standards.

She said that she was contacted by a representative of Fort Jackson who said that they would bring the proposal to the Board with the possibility of being listed on the County Register. This is the only new contact person she has been in touch with.

**B. GA Alliance for Preservation Commissions - Spring Training Session - April 25-26, Douglas, GA**

**Ms. Harris** stated that the Spring training would be April 25 and 26 and that it is approximately three hours away. She said that Mr. Haynes is interested in going and would be the representative.

**C. Update on Natural Resources Protection Committee**

**Ms. Harris** stated that the Natural Resources Protection Committee was to bring an ordinance before the County Commissioners' about formally creating the Committee. She said the date, originally Friday, March 7, has been pushed back, and that she would send out an email with the new date. She thought it was pushed back to allow time for legal review of the ordinance.

**V. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS**

There were none.

**VI. MEETING MINUTES - February 6, 2008**

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

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris,  
Preservation Planner

**EH/jnp**