

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
110 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

September 3, 2008

2:00 P.M.

MINUTES

CCHPC Members Present:

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

CCHPC Members Not Present:

Jane A. Feiler

CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner
Janine Person, Administrative Assistant**

I. WELCOME

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

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Rossell asked Board and Staff members to introduce themselves.

**III. GUEST SPEAKER: EBONY WHITE, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS,
REGION 12 REPRESENTATIVE, "OVERVIEW OF DCA"**

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Ebony White with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Ms. Ebony White stated that after graduating from SCAD she went to Atlanta and interned with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, then worked with the Middle Plant Regional Development Center in Americus, Georgia, as a Historic Preservation Planner. She had an excellent job opportunity with SDRA and moved back to Savannah, and is now the Regional Representative for the Southeast Region which is better-known as the Coastal Georgia Region. There are ten counties in the region.

She said that the DCA does historic preservation through downtown development. Their mission statement is to partner with communities to help create a climate of success for Georgia's families and businesses through planning; historic preservation; and downtown, economic, and community development. The purpose of the agency is to make sure that the local governments, communities, businesses, families, and individuals grow and prosper.

Commissioner Mike Beatty came to DCA and created a playbook for the local governments that lists each program and department that DCA has with contacts into one book. Commissioner Beatty wanted to dispel the myth that Atlanta runs the state of Georgia and came up with the Team Georgia Concept which brings the services to the local public within the region. One of their mantra's is faster, friendly, easier; the Governor wanted to make sure that DCA focused on their customer. The team delivers community assistance to the local governments and partner agencies. They work with economic development partners, the Chambers of Commerce, and the development authorities to make sure that communities are successful.

DCA has over 400 employees that do a wide variety of things. DCA works with safe and affordable housing through Section-8 programs, community development, volunteerism and community service, a leadership development program for the state, planning and quality growth for comprehensive plans and future growth of the cities and counties, and an environmental management sector. There is the homeless and special needs' housing, the Georgia Dream housing program, housing opportunities for people with AIDS, and domestic violence housing.

DCA supports the Salvation Army houses homeless people, have exceeded their space, recently received a grant, and have a plan to expand. The DCA also supports the Inner-City Night Shelter who also received a grant and wants to open another shelter for women and children because many places don't except both. The Park Place Outreach houses teenagers and younger children who are homeless because there are many children out on the streets and they want to make sure that these children have a place to go. The house and the van are anonymous because they do not want the children to be picked on for living in a shelter. They support Union Mission and the Citizens Against Violence in Statesboro. The PEN Program which stands for protectors, enforcers, nurses, and includes military personnel is a down payment assistance program for those who serve the country and its citizens.

DCA administers the Section-8 rental assistance program and each year they provide 100 million dollars to house 16,000 very low-income individuals. Savannah is a metropolitan city and they have a Housing Authority that runs their own programs, but for the smaller and rural counties there is an office in Waycross, Georgia, where the programs are run for them. They have another program to find houses that are Section-8 renter friendly, and a GeorgiaHousingSearch.org program through the rental assistance program that allows property owners to place their houses on the website for renters to find affordable housing.

The Community Development and Finance Department administers the grants, loans, and technical assistance to the communities for projects that need to be addressed. It helps with infrastructure, downtown redevelopment, or multijurisdictional projects through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) fund which is a HUD program but the State of Georgia administers it. With Savannah being a larger city they receive their funds directly but the smaller cities have to go through DCA and it

is a competitive process. There are curb and gutter projects, help with paved roads, infill and demolition housing, and homeownership opportunities.

In the Department of Economic Development there is the Employee Incentive Program (EIP) where they recruit industries and job creations for the State of Georgia. The Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund program is similar to SDRA's façade loan program created to stir economic development and revitalization in the downtowns.

There is the One Georgia Fund that was started a few years ago to help with job creation and economic development in the community. The SAM Shortline is the first One Georgia project received from a grant. Up to \$500,000 can be given to make sure that a project brings jobs and stirs the economic development in the community. It is a train that starts in Cordele and ends in Plains, Georgia, which is where President Carter is from. In Andersonville there is a state park, and the city was strategic in stating that if the state park is built across from their city, the exit had to be placed across from the entrance to the city's gates. It helped to open the Drummer Boy Museum and hopefully it will be a catalyst to get other businesses to open up there as well. She said that the City of Savannah has a tax allocation district in the extension of River Street and the DCA administers the tax credit and the low-income housing tax credit programs.

She asked the Commission what downtown means to them.

Mr. Cohen stated that it is vibrant life and activity.

Mr. Sottile stated that it is the center of any urban place.

Mr. Lindell stated that with the expansion to the suburbs the core is left without a sufficient tax base and without businesses flourishing, it decays, and leaves a generation trying to counteract it. The downtown usually brings it back to what it was like in its hey day.

Ms. Ebony White asked what it was it in hey day.

Mr. Lindell stated that Broughton Street was vibrant because it was the boulevard mall of its time. He asked how you replicate it without turning it into a tourist trap. He said you turn it into a vibrant community where people live and raise families.

Ms. Ebony White stated that they would eat, work, shop, pay bills, and make loans there. She said the whole purpose of downtown is to live and do business there. The office of Downtown Development administers the downtown program for the state of Georgia, and specifically, the National Main Street program and the Better Hometown program. The Main Street program follows a four-point approach, similar to what SDRA does. The goal of the Main Street program is the economic revitalization of the downtown core/commercial area in the context of historic preservation. It is needed and a piece of the economic pie when it comes to economic development and more people should realize that. In the four-point approach there is organization (how the program is organized), promotion (how the program and downtown is promoted), design (how you make sure that proper infill development and rehabilitation happens), and economic restructuring (how do they grow and retain businesses and create jobs). It helps stir economic development and bring back the quality of life that downtowns once had.

The office of Downtown Development offers different levels of service to the communities, including general assistance, consultants, general reference information, partnering on workshops, and services to ODD affiliates. They help to create programs for a new town and to help maintain, improve, and retain the better Main Street status.

Leadership Development is a strong program which partners with the UGA Fanny Institute. The Leadership Savannah program probably was started by UGA and has expanded. In smaller communities there is Leadership Bryan, Camden, and McIntosh which are county programs. There is the Georgia Academy for Economic Development that is a program where the local leaders are grown or those who are already leaders are shown how economic development affects the state, region, counties, and even local government.

There is a Planning and Quality Growth Department where the comprehensive plans come in. The MPC recently finished their Tri-Centennial Plan which is the Savannah-Chatham County Comprehensive Plan. It is reviewed by their office and they provide advisory clinics at workshops as well as a planner. There is a new preservation model code that is more of a code than an ordinance. They have quality growth assessments where smaller groups assess what is being done to grow the community. There are resource teams that do the same thing except they give you a packet at the end and they have tool kits for smaller communities who may not know how to write an ordinance. There are special topic workshops, environmental management, Keep Georgia Beautiful, Keep Savannah Beautiful, Solid Waste Planning, Water First Program, and technical assistance.

She said that regional services, which is what she does, essentially identifies opportunities for DCA to assist local governments and partners. She is the local point of contact to connect them to resources that might not even be with DCA, and to lead people in the right direction and get the leadership and guidance that is needed. DCA maintains partnerships with local, regional, state, and federal organizations, and they also facilitate community issue identifications. They partner with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Entrepreneurial Friendly Designation. Signature Communities is an award program that awards communities for following their Comprehensive Plan, with \$50,000 to carry out a project. It is also a competitive program. Every other year they fund five local governments throughout the state with the designation.

Mr. Lindell stated that historic preservation is not trying to create a boundary-to-boundary museum, but to rejuvenate a healthy, productive, and functioning community. Homelessness seemed to be the least productive element of a decaying community. He asked what has been done to help make these people productive and counteract the development of crime and drugs so that they eventually move out of the shelter, get a roof over their head, and not make them dependent but self-supporting.

Ms. Ebony White stated that they don't get involved in the day-to-day operations but make sure that the tools and resources are available to local governments. She said they are charged with the homeless count and they offer a lot of grants and many programs to help with homelessness. It is a state issue, but they cannot go into the communities and fix the problem. Instead they support the local governments with the homelessness.

Ms. Lisa White asked if DCA is 100 percent state funded or if they receive federal funding.

Ms. Ebony White stated that it is a state agency and the federal funds they receive are for HUD and some of the housing projects.

Ms. Lisa White asked if they are under the current six percent across the board cuts.

Ms. Ebony White answered yes. She said that specifically in their department they have been limited to travel in their region. They are able to go to conferences and show support for local governments that may be in special programs, however, it has been limited to important programs and to her addressing the needs in the region.

Dr. Rossell thanked Ms. Ebony White for speaking and said that it is inspiring to see all the work that she has done.

IV. UPDATES

A. Revisions to the Chatham County Historic Preservation Ordinance

Ms. Harris stated that when they applied for the Certified Local Government (CLG) status that they found out they may not be in compliance with the State Historic Preservation Act. She said that she asked the administrators of the CLG program to hold off on the application to see if the existing ordinance could be revised to bring it into compliance. She gave the Commission a copy of some of the proposed revisions and met with the County Attorney to go over the revisions. The County Attorney felt that it isn't necessary to revise the ordinance, that they are in compliance with the State Historic Preservation Act, and they are going to do more research and get an official opinion from the State Attorney General's office. While it is ongoing, they are going to hold off in bringing it forward as a recommendation until it gets sorted out. She may bring it back to the Commission to make a formal recommendation on it or it may resolve itself.

Ms. Lossing asked about the time frame.

Ms. Harris stated that she was not given a time frame but that she does not expect it to be so complicated that it would take a long time. She said by the next meeting she should have a definitive answer one way or the other.

B. Pin Point Historic District Status

Ms. Harris stated that she met with the neighborhood and they voted to rezone certain parcels from RMH (Residential Mobile Home) to R-1. Everyone but one person was in favor of it. She said the process now for the rezoning is that the MPC as a commission will direct Staff to prepare a report on the designation, the MPC will review it, make a recommendation to the County Commissioners, and the County Commissioners have the final say. Then the Pin Point Historic District Ordinance can go forward once it is complete.

V. GEORGIA ALLIANCE FOR PRESERVATION COMMISSIONS – FALL TRAINING October 10-11, 2008, Milledgeville, Georgia

Ms. Harris stated that the GAPC fall training will be held in October in Milledgeville and that they have the funding to send one Commission member.

Ms. Goode-Walker expressed an interest.

Ms. Harris stated that she would go over the details with Ms. Goode-Walker after the meeting.

VI. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS

Dr. Rossell asked for an update on any special contacts made by Commission members with the parties in the unincorporated areas of Chatham County that might be interested in designation.

Mr. Haynes stated that he contacted Mr. Sid Nutting and someone from St. Bartholomew's about the church in Burroughs. He said that Mr. Nutting is recuperating quadruple bypass. His main interests are in places like Pin Point, Sandfly, and Montgomery. The Beaulie group has reserved Turner Hodge Young for a meeting on October 5th. Mr. Nutting mentioned that there is a 99-year-old resident in the Montgomery area interested in talking about McKay and the old railroad tracks that went from Beaulieu to Sandfly. He also mentioned that there was a street car line going from Montgomery, across the river, then to the White Bluff area.

He said that regarding St. Bartholomew's there were some differences of opinion and things stopped when they changed the rector, but the new minister Reverend Harris is interested. They would have to go to the Diocese. The contact would be Ms. Jackie Belcher.

Dr. Rossell stated that it is a good lead to follow up on. He said that with Ms. Goode-Walker going to the meeting in the Hodges in October it would be great to get Montgomery involved. He has sent out letters and said that once the Commission sees the list that they might have possible contacts each member could make. The Commission needs to help Ms. Harris to get the word out.

VII. MEETING MINUTES: August 6, 2008

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

VIII. 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