

CHATHAM COUNTY- SAVANNAH HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
110 EAST STATE STREET**

JERRY SURRENCY CONFERENCE ROOM

June 1, 2006

4:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Members Present:

**Mr. Walter Wright, Chairman
Ms. Laverne Ricks-Brown
Mr. Gordon Smith
Mr. Frank Lang (Ex-Officio)**

HSMC/MPC Staff Present:

**Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. BY-LAWS – DISCUSSION/APPROVAL

Mr. Smith stated he read the By-Laws and had some comments. He stated that Article 3 regarding the duties and purpose of the Savannah-Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission “Is to ensure that public spaces continue to enhance the lives of the residents of Chatham County and the City of Savannah.” He said he was not aware of the fact that the jurisdiction extended into Chatham County outside of the City of Savannah. If this was the Commission’s duty and purpose, he felt it was all encompassing.

Mr. Lang stated it was a rhetorical flourish that did not have much meaning. He stated that the Commission was not about spaces but they were about sites and monuments.

Mr. Smith stated he had been getting calls and letters from people who were concerned with what was taking place in Colonial Cemetery. They felt the Historic Site and Monument Commission should do something about it and asked if he was involved with historic sites, and was not Colonial Cemetery a historic site. The public was asking if that was the Commission’s purpose. He said he looked at the purpose in Article 3 and it says, “...to ensure that the public spaces continue to enhance the lives of the residents of Chatham County, Georgia”.

Mr. Wright asked about the origin of the Article 3.

Ms. Harris stated it came directly from the enabling legislation, which was passed in 1949. It probably applies to every enabling ordinance every time a new board was created. She did not know if there was anything that could be done except to just make comments on it.

Mr. Wright said it greatly expanded the charter and asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to delete the statement. He said he felt it was harmless.

Mr. Smith agreed that it was harmless as it was, however, it did not give the Commission any parameters as to why they exist. He said they need to adopt the By-Laws, but as a Commission, they need to understand what they are really about. He would like to see the Commission have more leadership in some direction, but he felt it was not the time and place to do that.

Mr. Wright stated the preceding paragraphs captured the duties and purposes, and on Page 1 it states, "...to ensure that existing monuments, markers, works of art are restored and/or repaired to ensure that new monuments and markers are appropriate", that is what the Commission is about. He agreed, however, that it was an unnecessary flourish, but it comes from the 1949 enabling legislation and so it can remain.

Mr. Wright said he thought the By-Laws would state something under the composition of Article 4, Paragraph 1, "...that it is hoped that members or individuals who are interested in Historic Preservation, etc." He asked if there was a discussion concerning this.

Ms. Harris stated there was a discussion and she intended for it to be incorporated and apologized for her error. The changes were listed in the minutes from the previous meeting.

Ms. Harris stated everyone received the minutes, and everyone needed to be aware of the comments that were made at the last meeting. If any needed to be discussed again they could discuss them again. Otherwise, the Commission could make a motion to approve incorporating the comments from the last meeting.

Mr. Wright stated that on the agenda they were currently adopting the By-Laws, and they had leaped forward to Item Number 4, the approval of the meeting minutes.

Ms. Harris stated Mr. Wright was correct. The Commission had to approve the minutes and then approve the By-Laws incorporating the comments from the minutes.

Mr. Wright asked if they wanted to approve the minutes.

HSMC ACTION: **Mr. Smith made a motion that the Historic Site and Monument Commission approve the minutes of August 24, 2005, December 15, 2005, and April 11, 2006, as submitted. Ms. Ricks-Brown seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Mr. Wright asked if the Commission had a chance to peruse the By-Laws and asked for a motion that they be adopted as amended.

HSMC ACTION: **Ms. Ricks-Brown made a motion that the Historic Site and Monument Commission adopt the By-Laws as amended to include the comments from the minutes of the April 11, 2006, meeting. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS - VICE CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY

Mr. Wright stated there were two positions and two people who were active members regarding the election of officers.

Mr. Wright stated that in regard to the Secretary, there would be no traditional secretary taking the minutes because it would be done by Staff. He stated it was strictly a figurehead title. However, since Ms. Ricks-Brown had seniority over Mr. Smith, if she wanted the Vice-Chairman position to speak out. He asked Ms. Ricks-Brown where she stood in her tenure with the Commission, and if she had just been reappointed.

Ms. Ricks-Brown answered yes. She thought it was four more years.

Ms. Harris stated she thought it was four years, but she was not exactly sure and would check on it. She stated the terms were scattered and Ms. Ricks-Brown may be one year behind Mr. Wright.

Mr. Wright stated Ms. Ricks-Brown could go for the Vice-Chairman position.

Ms. Ricks-Brown stated she would go for the Secretary position.

Mr. Wright stated it would make Mr. Gordon the Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Wright asked for a motion that Mr. Smith be elected to Vice-Chairman and Ms. Ricks-Brown be elected Secretary of the Historic Site and Monument Commission.

HSMC ACTION: **Mr. Wright made a motion that the Historic Site and Monument Commission appoint Mr. Gordon Smith as the Vice-Chairman and Ms. Ricks-Brown as the Secretary for the Commission. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

IV. RE: OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Wright suggested the Commission read the letter regarding the World War II monument. He asked Mr. Lang if he was a member of the Veterans Council.

Mr. Lang answered he was.

Mr. Wright stated they had plenty of good liaisons' for the Veterans Council, and he thought the letter Ms. Harris had sent out was a caution signal to the Veterans Council to remember the Historic Site and Monument Commission. He said Mr. Lang could communicate it to Mr. Joe Markwalter, that if they were going to have a big gala affair of unveiling, to avoid embarrassment they should come to the Commission and the Technical Advisory Committee to make sure they are on track. He assumed Mr. Quinlan and Mr. Markwalter had received the letter. He asked Mr. Lang to see if the Veterans Council received Ms. Harris' letter. He thought the Commission should ask for a meeting between now and August to review the design.

Mr. Smith asked if Mr. Lang was appearing in any official capacity of the Veterans Council, and if he was in any capacity to go to Mr. Markwalter and talk to him.

Mr. Lang stated it was more friendly with Mr. William Quinan.

Mr. Smith asked if Mr. Lang was at the last Veterans Council meeting. He stated it was his perception there was a conceptual misunderstanding. He said if you read the minutes from earlier meetings, statements and representations had been made regarding there being nothing in the square. He said if you go and look there was a monument already in the square. In the northeast quadrant, there was a Moravian monument. The monument was dedicated by the Wachovia Association, not the bank because it had nothing to do with the bank. It was the specific design and orientation of a pulpit. He said that it was a religious pulpit as though it were in a church. He stated that it was dedicated to the memory of a religious group and he was not taking a religious stand on it. He said they had many fine qualities and he was sure they came during the Colonial era, but their primary motivation was not to bear arms. When the war broke out, they refused to bear arms against the Spanish because it was immoral and it was against their religious precepts. He said when there was a levied tax to assist in raising money toward the war effort, they refused. He stated they were not kicked out of the colony because they were pacifist, but morally they were forced to leave because they were not welcome. It was a monument to a pacifist organization. He stated he was not a pacifist or a warmonger but he was just making the observation. It dominates the square, it had already been dedicated, and it had been accepted by the Government in the northeast quadrant. He said the minutes and all of the discussions between the Veterans Council, this organization, and perhaps City Council, lead him to believe the Veterans Council did not have a clue the monument was there, or, what it implied.

Mr. Lang said he agreed.

Mr. Smith stated he did a historical study of the square, and there were many things in the square in addition to the monument. In 1880, they laid a 15-inch drane running north and south in the middle of the square, south to Perry Street Lane, and north to Broughton Lane where there was a large drainage basin. In the next square down, Lafayette Square, when one of the organizations in Savannah decided to put a fountain in, they did not do a survey of the square. He stated they started putting footings in and the whole thing collapsed down into the giant cistern beneath the square. He said there were other things and he walked the square and could see from just looking at it there were water, sewer, and electrical lines in addition to the sprinkler system. He knew trolley cars ran through the square but that did not have any bearings on the Veterans Council proposal. However, Manfred Thoms was hired while he was affiliated with this Commission. They retained him for a little over \$3,000 to come up with a preliminary plan after they had made a cursory-type design and asked Mr. Thoms to take it from there. At the last Veterans Council meeting, he presented the Council with a set of dog tags from an English aviator used, he said, in the dog fights over Great Britain in 1940. Mr. Thoms wanted to put the dog tags in one of the monuments that were going to built in the square. Mr. Markwalter announced the intention was basically to make it a learning center for World War II to conduct seminars so the school children, for example, could come and learn by all phases, and all insignia be included. The Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines would be included, and what apparently was being articulated, was a multiplicity of monuments for each quadrant, as well as the center. Does the square dominate the surrounding neighborhood or does the neighborhood dominate the square? He thought someone from the Veterans Council with some authority needed to come and talk with the Commission and vice versa. He said he tried to talk with the Veterans Council but everyone was red in the face and excited about getting the motion

passed to dedicate \$30,000 to do a sub-soil survey. He did not think the Veterans Council understood the financial parameters they had adopted. He said he knew they did not understand the fact that they were apparently going to put a war monument adjacent to and surrounding a pacifist monument. He said he would do what he thought should be done for the taxpayers and citizens of the community. He stated Manfred Thoms had been paid and was in charge of that project for months, and there should be some concept he can come to the Commission with. It had to be all inclusive, on the other hand, maybe they were talking about something larger than just one square.

Mr. Wright stated if they were contemplating a monument in every quadrant and talking about a learning center, were they talking about an amphitheater? He said the Commission was looking for a single monument.

Mr. Smith stated the Veterans Council members were very angry and said their motto was, "We are dying like flies". He said they need to understand, however the Commission was sympathetic.

Mr. Lang asked about the Haitian monument. He asked if they had any problems.

Ms. Harris said the group was very anxious to get started and they had not raised all of the funding yet.

Ms. Harris stated the Haitian Committee would like to go ahead and do a partial monument to raise the funds. They had talked with the City about it and had kept Ms. Harris informed of the discussions. She did not think they wanted to end up with a partial monument. There was talk of putting up a fence, and they requested permission to do that, but she told them if they wanted to put up a fence they needed to come back before the Commission. Any significant change to the design needed to come back to the Commission. They had not submitted anything, and they were still talking about what options they had. She said she would keep the Commission informed.

Ms. Harris stated one suggestion that Staff had for them was if they were having problems raising the funds, perhaps they could put the partial monument in the Savannah History Museum, to raise funds that way. Visitors could come and see it and be inspired to donate more money, which is what they want, in the Savannah History Museum and not in the square. She did not know how it was perceived because it was just a suggestion. It was not hard facts, she was just giving the Commission an update on all of the discussions but there was nothing determined.

Mr. Lang stated a letter had been sent to the Veterans Council and they should respond.

Mr. Wright stated the letter was only two days old and the Commission should give the Veterans Council a decent period to respond and see what they say.

Mr. Smith stated it was not adversarial, they just needed to be sure they were talking about the same thing.

Mr. Wright asked if Mr. Lang would talk to either Mr. Quinan or Mr. Markwalter, or both, and ask them if they received the letter, and the Commission was hoping to hear something back from them soon. He said he should not have to weigh-in and tell them about the discussions here.

Mr. Lang asked whom should they contact, and if they had a phone number.

Mr. Smith stated in the letter they should get back to Ellen Harris. She wrote the letter.

V. RE: Update on Monument Master Plan Status

Ms. Harris stated she wanted to give the Commission an update on the status of the Master Plan. She did not know how many of the members were aware that they were still under the six-month moratorium that City Council enacted in February. The City had a draft of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to do a Master Plan. She said they had only just received it, and that was where they were in the process. They are likely going to have to extend the six-month moratorium another six months. She said it was the process of going through the City and not the Metropolitan Planning Commission and they did not have a lot of control over that.

Mr. Smith asked what would the Master Plan tell the Commission in the design.

Ms. Harris stated the RFP had outlined exactly what the consultant would do. She said that was to document, to locate, and pinpoint document with GIS numbers, all existing monuments located within the City limits. The chosen consultant would have access to all of their information. The consultant would locate all existing monuments, locate all potential locations, identify and define all monument types. For all the potential sites, the consultant would identify all appropriate monument types for that site. The consultant would identify appropriate themes for the different sites. She said that would address exactly what Mr. Smith brought up regarding a Moravian monument in one square, and it may not be an appropriate site for another war-oriented monument.

Mr. Thomas Thomson arrived at approximately 4:40 p.m. and introduced himself.

VI. RE: Update on vacancies to Site and Monument Commission and Technical Advisory Committee

Mr. Wright stated the Commission had five members; three that were filled and two were vacant. He said the City was advertising the vacancies and qualified applicants had received their paperwork to Dyanne Reese, but no action had been taken. He said they had either deferred appointing people to fill the two vacancies or they may have denied the applications. They had taken no action for reasons unknown to him. He stated he ran into Allen Cook and Mr. Cook will check into it and find out the status. City Council would be meeting on Thursday in an Executive Work Session and he hoped they had tabled it. He said the Commission needed three people for a quorum, and if you only have three people on the whole Commission, if someone was sick, they would not be able to vote on anything or do any business. He said they needed the full expertise of the full Commission. He said they had a Technical Advisory Committee to the Commission of about 10 or 12 people made up of historians, sculptors, artists, and people from academia.

Ms. Harris stated she felt Mr. Wright had told the Commission everything that she knew. As far as the Technical Advisory Committee, there is only one vacancy and that was the appointment from SCAD, and they are waiting for an appointment and it was just a matter of time. In addition, in the By-Laws where the Technical Advisory Committee was defined, there was an addition of the Director of the City Department of Cultural Affairs, and it was a new appointment.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Savannah-Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp