

SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
112 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

June 7, 2007

4:00 P.M.

MINUTES

HSMC Members Present:

**Walter Wright, Chairman
Gordon Smith, Vice-Chairman
Phillip Williams, Commission Member**

HSMC Members Not Present:

**LaVerne Ricks-Brown, Secretary
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 3:55 p.m.

Present for the petition was Mr. Ted Haviland.

Ms. Harris gave the Staff report.

**II. Petition of Theodore Haviland and Julian McKenzie
File No.: C-070404-33992-2
Part I: Theme and Location, Part II: Design and Funding
Washington Fire Company Monument**

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The petitioner is requesting Part I: Theme and Location and Part II: Design and Funding approval for a minor monument to be located on the slate patio of Washington Square.

FINDINGS:

THEME: The theme of the proposed monument relates to local history and commemorates the Washington Fire Company No. 9, a volunteer fire company organized in 1847. The fire station was located in Washington Square from 1848 until 1875. The cistern which stored water for the fire company is located beneath Washington Square, the cover for which is still visible. In 1878, the City of Savannah built Fire Station No. 1 on Broughton Street which replaced the Washington Fire Company. This was the first city-owned fire station in Savannah. The No. 1 Fire Station moved from Broughton Street in 1959 and the building was demolished in 1962.

The proposed theme has direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County at a level high enough to warrant a public presence. While there are two other monuments related to firefighters generally (the Chatham County Firefighters Memorial and the Big Duke Fire Alarm Bell, both in the median of Oglethorpe Avenue between Abercorn and Drayton Streets), the proposed theme commemorates a specific fire company, not commemorated elsewhere.

LOCATION: The proposed location is the slate patio portion of Washington Square, adjacent to the hedge. This was the approximate location of the original fire station. This site, while not listed as “available” in the Master Plan and Guidelines, was determined in a very specific and limited capacity, to be available at the Historic Site and Monument Commission’s May 3, 2007, meeting. The proposed monument will not cause overcrowding, disturb existing vegetation, impede special events, or cause detriment to the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed site is easily accessible to pedestrians and is relatively easy to maintain. The proposed monument has a direct historical connection to the proposed site.

DESIGN: The proposed monument will be two feet wide by two feet deep by three feet tall. It will be constructed of a Savannah gray brick base supporting the original cornerstone of the Fire Station No. 1, located at 522 East Broughton Street from 1878 to 1962. The cornerstone was placed at Fire Station No. 1 to commemorate its predecessor, the Washington Fire Company. The brick base will have a slanted granite cap with a bronze plaque affixed to it. The materials will be durable, low maintenance, and consistent with other monuments. Current materials in Washington Square consist of slate (patio), bricks (flowerbed borders), and modern “tabby” (benches). The overall design is simple and unobtrusive, appropriate to both the theme and location of the monument.

TEXT: The proposed text is attached.

FUNDING: The monument is estimated to cost \$3,100.00. All funding is in the form of donated services or private contributions. All funding has been secured. The petitioner has requested that the Escrow Payment be waived or reduced to a minimum.

Ms. Harris stated in her original Staff report that she mentioned the Volunteer Fire Company was located at this site, and it implies that the Washington Fire Company was located in the square itself, but she was not sure. She said this morning the Technical Advisory Committee received an 1871 bird’s eye view map showing a building in Washington Square, and there is no question of its location. There was a tradition of erecting other fire stations in the squares, but a policy was made in 1852 to not place them in the squares any more, and eventually, they were taken down. She read a quote from Mr. Thomas Gamble’s history of city government where there is a review for an engine house to be located in Chippewa Square.

“These houses were ugly excrescences spoiling the much admired picturesqueness of the squares which should be abated.”

Ms. Harris stated regarding the text suggestions she made, that the Technical Advisory Committee had reviewed the petition this morning, and she gave Board members a copy of the proposed text. This text is what the TAC recommended for approval:

“Located at this site, the volunteer Washington Fire Company No. 9 provided fire protection to Washington and adjacent wards for 28 years. The top of the cistern visible 20 feet north served as a water reservoir for the fire apparatus. The men of Washington Fire Company were memorialized by the placement of this cornerstone at Fire Station No. 1, which was built at 522 East Broughton Street in 1878. This was Savannah’s first municipal fire station, which was demolished in 1962. Dedicated to the brave firemen of Fire Station No. 1, who also served as mentors and role models for the youth of the old fort section of Savannah.

August 19, 2007”

Ms. Harris stated the word “role” has been spelled correctly, the “th” has been taken out of the date, and the last sentence was broken up into two sentences to read clearer. She said the estimated cost of funding was \$3,100, which has been secured in the form of cash donations or services in kind, and the petitioner requested the escrow be waived. Staff recommends approval of Parts I and II with the revised text, and the petitioner does not need to provide the exact text layout as long as the layout and the wording remains as the Technical Advisory Committee recommended. They need to provide construction drawings and coordinate with the Park and Tree Department and the Department of Inspections to ensure there will be adequate footing. Staff also recommends that the escrow payment be waived.

PETITIONER’S COMMENTS:

Mr. Williams asked for more details regarding the joints.

Mr. Haviland stated the mortar joints would be white, and in between the courses of brick it would be scored.

Mr. Williams asked if individual names of the firemen would be placed on the plaque.

Mr. Haviland said there would not be any names on the plaque. He said the cornerstone was hollow and they may place a plastic container on the inside with the names of the firemen that served at Fire Station No. 1.

Mr. Wright asked what is located on the site now.

Mr. Haviland stated that in 1959, Fire Station No. 1 moved to Paulsen Street, and the original station was sold to Southern Motors where it became an auto storage facility and a flower and craft shop. There is an auto dealership there now.

Mr. Wright asked if Staff is recommending waiving the escrow payment because it would be maintenance-free.

Ms. Harris answered it would be relatively maintenance-free, and because it is being funded by a private individual.

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Smith made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend that City Council approve the petition because it is consistent with the Master Plan and Guidelines, with the stipulation that construction drawings are provided to the Park and Tree Department and the Department of Inspections to ensure an adequate footing. The motion also included the recommendation that City Council waive the Escrow Payment. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

III. MEETING MINUTES

- A. April 5, 2007
- B. May 3, 2007

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Williams made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Committee does hereby approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Update on World War III Monument

Ms. Harris stated she received a call from Mr. Jim Vejar and that he had requested a copy of the minutes to make sure all of the issues were addressed. She said they have been working with the water and sewer departments, and have come up with an alternative scheme for the monument. She has not seen any new drawings and they have not submitted anything.

- B. Update on Julie Backus Smith Statue

Mr. Wright stated he knew the matter had been discussed in the last meeting that he was unable to attend, but feels the matter should be dropped. He does not feel it is necessary to send another letter in response.

- C. MPC Preservation Board Retreat - June 15, 2007

Ms. Harris stated that the MPC Historic Preservation Department is hosting a Board retreat for all preservation-related boards that will be on Friday from 9:00 to 4:00 p.m. She said lunch would be served and that an interesting day is planned with Mr. Russ Abolt, the County Manager; Mr. Michael Brown, the City Manager; and Mr. Tom Thomson, the MPC Executive Director addressing the Boards. There is a session planned on preservation law with Professor Robert Allen from Savannah College of Art and Design, and Charlotte Moore the Director of Special Projects who will be discussing the Unified Zoning Ordinance; an MPC project that is part of the Comprehensive Plan. There will be a session on best practices, and Brett Bell from the Public Information Office of the City will be speaking on Open Meeting Laws, along with a question and answer session.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Smith both stated they would be unable to attend the Board retreat.

Mr. Williams said he might be able to attend the retreat.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp