

SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
112 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

October 4, 2007

4:00 P.M.

MINUTES

HSMC Members Present:

**Walter Wright, Chairman
Gordon Smith, Vice-Chairman
Ryan Madson
Phillip Williams
Frank Lang, Ex-Officio**

HSMC Members Not Present:

LaVerne Ricks-Brown, Secretary

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. Petition of the Savannah Regional Central Labor Council

**Jordan Fiore
File No.: C-070906-41572-2
Site Evaluation- East side of Emmett Park
Worker's Memorial**

Mr. Wright stated that the petition was withdrawn at the request of the petitioner after meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee earlier the same day.

III. Petition of the Haitian American Historical Society

**Daniel Fils-Aime
File No.: C-020812-32091-2
Part II - Amendment
Haitian Monument**

Present for the petition was Ms. Rosemary Mulcahy.

Ms. Harris gave the Staff report.

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The petitioner is requesting approval for the amended design of the Haitian Monument to include a wrought iron fence and engraved brick pavers surrounding the monument.

FINDINGS:

The design of the monument was approved by the Site and Monument Commission on April 8, 2005, and amended on February 23, 2007. The petitioner is proposing that the granite base of the monument be encircled by five rows of inscribed brick pavers, surrounded by a planting bed, enclosed by an octagonal fence. The metal fence will be set back 3' 6" from the monument and will be approximately 3' tall. There will be one gate for maintenance which will 3' wide and will match the design of the fence panels. The City's Engineering Department has recommended the installation of a fence for additional protection of the monument, and is facilitating its design. The brick pavers will be standard 4" by 8" pavers.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the amendment earlier in the day and voted unanimously to recommend approval.

Mr. Lang asked if the bricks would be memorialized.

Ms. Harris stated that the bricks would have engraving.

Mr. Lang asked how you would be able to see them with a surrounding fence.

Ms. Harris stated that you could see through the fence.

Mr. Smith asked what would make the post stable. He said that he is concerned about the safety.

Ms. Harris recommended that the representative of the City's Engineering Department answer the question.

Mr. Williams asked if they wanted the fence for safety reasons.

Ms. Harris stated that the monument base is six feet tall. There have been concerns throughout the review process about the possibility of people climbing on top of the monument and damaging the statues or people falling off and being a liability to the City. For safety and liability issues it would put a barrier between the public and the monument while allowing people to appreciate it at a three-foot distance. Many monuments have fencing or barriers around them, and the safety aspect is something the Board should take into consideration every time a monument comes forward. Whether it is a fence or done some other way.

Mr. Williams stated that it is more of a distraction to the monument rather than adding aesthetic value. He said it takes away from the whole environment and prevents people from touching and reading the bricks.

Ms. Harris stated that they had worked closely with the Engineering Department to pick out a design that would complement the monument, be simple enough, and blend in appropriately.

Mr. Lang asked if the City of Savannah recommended the fence.

Ms. Harris answered yes.

Mr. Williams asked if the City is paying for it.

Ms. Harris answered yes.

Mr. Lang stated that he objects to that.

Mr. Williams stated that it would be more of a hazard because determined people would climb up on the monument, fall, and be impaled on it, where before they would just hit the ground. He feels it is more of a hazard, especially with the closeness of the fence to the monument.

PETITIONER'S COMMENTS:

Ms. Rosemary Mulcahy stated that the fence would be set in the standard two feet of concrete. She said there are benches on one side of the park and barriers on the other side of the park, with four planters to protect the middle section of the park. Many people are in the square that could potentially cause problems which is why the City wants to place a fence around it.

Mr. Williams stated that if a person was standing on the monument and fell off, they would injure themselves worse than if they fell on the ground.

Ms. Mulcahy stated that with the fence there's not a lot of room to climb because it would be too far away to put a foot on to step up, and too close to be hoisted up.

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Madson made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission approve the petition as presented. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. Mr. Smith, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Lang were opposed. The motion failed 2 to 3.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Update on Battlefield Park Memorial

Ms. Harris stated that at the July meeting, there was some discussion about the text on the triangular granite plaque. She said the item was approved with several amendments and the Coastal Heritage Society has decided to completely rewrite the text. It will be brought to the Commission to review in the future.

Regarding the flagpole dedication plaque, they had discussed reducing the size to be the same width of the flagpole base. It was determined that the two feet by three feet plaque was fine. When Coastal Heritage Society ordered the plaque and had it delivered to the site, they felt it was huge and ordered a new one to be the same width as the flagpole base. She approved it at a staff level because she did not want to hold them up on the installation.

She said that the World War II Veterans would be meeting with her tomorrow. They had been in discussion with the developers of the River Street Extension area because there are four squares proposed for that area, regarding possibly placing the monument in a square at that location. She will keep them informed.

Mr. Madson stated that it is currently private property and when it is built out and the squares and streets partitioned out, they would be deeded to the City as public space. He said it is out of their purview now, and asked if it would be something the Commission could incorporate within their limits to have some say over the landscaping and monuments to be installed.

Ms. Harris stated that the City has a vested interest on what goes into the squares, particularly since they would be responsible for future maintenance and upkeep. Legally speaking she did not think there was anything the City could do, but she and David White both felt it would be in the developer's best interest to work with the City and Commission in advance. She did not foresee any problem, but a formal relationship has not been worked out.

B. Adoption of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics for Commissioners and Staff

Ms. Harris stated that at the last meeting there was discussion about the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics being incorporated into the By-Laws, and she suggested rewriting the code to be more suitable to the Commission. She suggested amending the By-Laws to incorporate it by referencing it in its existing form. She stated that they would discuss it at the next meeting and would make sure that everyone receives a copy. It would be an opportunity to amend the By-Laws if there were any other amendments that the Commission wanted to make.

Mr. Madson stated that while he was reading the application from the Savannah Regional of Central Labor Council for the proposal in Emmet Park, that he was wondering about the criteria for a petitioner to select a site that is off limits and not recognized on the map. He said it seems that the 17 criteria are entry-level when the proposal is for a site that is already identified, and asked if the 17 criteria are for any site whether it is on or off limits.

Ms. Harris stated that the criteria was what she used when she did a survey of all public sites in the city to evaluate what appeared to be available or non-available. She said that a new site such as properties deeded over to the City, could be reevaluated using those criteria. If it is an available site, the theory is that it has been preliminarily determined as available, but it was based on the knowledge and information she had at the time. There could be other considerations like water or sewer lines running through that may make the site unavailable. Just because it is available on the map, it may still be ruled out in the future.

Mr. Madson stated that it seemed that some sites have been deemed unavailable for specific reasons. He said Emmet Park is one of the last parks with open space on the east end of Bay Street.

Mr. Wright agreed and asked why it was not available according to the Master Plan.

Ms. Harris stated that that particular stretch is already overcrowded with monuments. She also felt that having some dedicated greenspace is a positive thing and not every strip of grass within the city needed to have a monument on it.

Mr. Madson stated that the Commission is also about historic sites, and the bluff itself is a historic site that could be considered sacred, holy, and off limits to some kinds of monuments like the Vietnam monument. He added that there are festivals held there.

Ms. Harris stated that was brought up by Ms. Eileen Baker of Cultural Affairs that the greenspace is used for Tara Feis. She said it was another reason for the Technical Advisory Committee to deny the petition. One of the questions raised this morning was why was the petition being reviewed if it is not an available site. She set up the Master Plan that way because she felt there might be a site that she had missed or that had become available

subsequent to its adoption. It could possibly be considered available upon reconsideration, like the Washington Fire Company site that had been considered an unavailable site. For that particular purpose the Commission had decided in that particular instance, a monument would be appropriate there. She thought it would be the prerogative of the Board to be hard and fast in stone about it.

Mr. Madson stated that as long as he is on the Board he would continue to outright reject anything proposed for that site.

V. MEETING MINUTES - July 5, 2007

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

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 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp