



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
July 7, 2010 - 2:00 P.M.
Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2010 CCHPC Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Goode-Walker at 2:10 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. May 5, 2010 Minutes

Attachment: May 5, 2010 Minutes.pdf

Board Action:

Upon motion of Mr. Lindell, seconded by Mr. Cohen and carried, the minutes of May 5, 2010 were approved. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Stephen T. Lindell
Second: George Cohen
George Cohen - Aye
Jane A. Feiler - Not Present
Vaughnette Goode-Walker - Aye
Stephen T. Lindell - Aye
Pamela Lossing - Aye
Dr. E. G. Daves Rossell - Aye
Lisa L. White - Aye

III. Posting

IV. Consent Agenda

V. Regular Agenda

3. Update on UZO- Charlotte Moore and Ellen Harris

Attachment: UZO Presentation 070710.pdf

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Charlotte Moore, Director of Special Projects who heads up the Unified Zoning Ordinance process. Ms. Moore explained that the Unified Zoning Ordinance process started in August 2007. They anticipated that the ordinance would be completed by now, but it has been much more challenging than expected as they are doing a full overhaul of the ordinance. The ordinance will include sections that are not presently in the zoning ordinances. The ordinance is unifying the city and county. They have to work with both the city and county staffs to try to do the best possible job in unifying what they can. So far, it appears they are on board with the procedures. There may be some differences, but for the most part, the city and county are in agreement with what has been proposed.

Ms. Moore explained that they started the Unified Zoning Ordinance process with a technical committee in 2007. This committee helped to draft the ordinance. During the early part of this year, they had an advisory committee that looked at the draft of the ordinance. This draft ordinance process was completed in June. Some sections were not reviewed by the Advisory Committee because more research was needed. They will meet again with the Advisory Committee in August. Presently, they are going through the editing process.

Ms. Moore reported that with regards to the Historic Preservation Commission, there will be substantial changes that will really benefit the community. The Commission will have more work to do which will include procedures for adopting the historic districts, historic properties, and how to manage a contributing resource map. This will also include the ability for the Commission to be able to vary certain standards within local Historic Districts.

She explained that the next steps once they get the draft completed which will possibly be September or October, is to take the ordinance to the public for their review. They want to ensure that the draft is as complete as possible; that they have gone to the various focus groups and resolved any issues they might have so that once it gets to the public the process of getting the ordinance adopted will be smoother. The public process will take about three months. However, it depends on the reactions they get on the ordinance. This ordinance will also include the zoning maps and the overlay districts. Ms. Moore stated that they want to be sure that they are meeting with the various neighborhood groups and stakeholders to be certain that they are content with the ordinance. They are aware that there might be some aspects of the ordinance that people do not like; but, they will do what they can to get the issues resolved. The Metropolitan Planning Commission will review the ordinance and make a recommendation to both governing bodies (city and county).

Ms. Moore reported that upon completion of the sections pertaining to the Preservation Commission, they will be given to them for their review and feedback.

Ms. Harris explained the composition of the Preservation Commission, the processes involved and then explained the specific districts.

Section 2.5

- They are proposing to have a joint City-County Historic Preservation Commission. This will be separate from the Savannah Historic District Board of Review which deals primarily with the Landmark District which was created by State Legislature. Therefore, it will remain its own separate Board. The City of Savannah does not have a historic preservation commission to review things in its other historic districts such as the Victorian, Mid-City or Cuyler-Brownsville. Essentially, the County's Commission will become a joint city-county board to review the other districts. They are proposing that the Commission be made up of ten (10) members with appointments equally from the city and county. The terms of office is proposed at three years staggered terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- Ms. Harris explained that there will be certain things that the Commission will make recommendations on and others they will make decisions on. Review authority would be for the local historic district and historic property designations or removals and amendments to the contributing resources maps.
- Certificate of Appropriateness will be the authority of the new Commission. The Commission's decision could be appealed to the City or County.
- This new Commission will have the authority to grant certain variances. Presently, if something is in need of a variance, it goes before the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- They want to ensure that the members are qualified to serve on this new Commission, and therefore, they have adopted similar language as they have for the Preservation Commission that all members should have special interest in historic preservation and that the majority (six members) demonstrate professional interest in other areas.

Section 3

- The Local Historic District Designation is an existing process in the county, but is a new process for the city. When a neighborhood wants to become a historic district, for example, Ardsley Park, the city does not have a formalized process in place to allow for this. Therefore, this will be established. It will mirror the process that is presently in place in the county. Most noteworthy is that it is community initiated and more than 50 percent of the people within the community need to support it. The criteria is the same as the National Register criteria and will come to the new Commission for a recommendation and then will be submitted to the appropriate governing body for approval.
- A new section is Interim Protection. While they are working with the community to create design standards before an ordinance is in place, this section will provide some interim protection to avoid a rush for demolition.
- Removing Designations: This is a process which could occur if the district no longer meets the criteria because the quality that it was originally designated for has been lost. For example - if a hurricane came through and completely destroyed a building would be cause for its removal as a historic property. The only other situation where removal of designation could occur is if new evidence surfaces that proves it does not meet the criteria. For example - if they were working on information that a house was built in 1875 and then they found that it is actually a replica built in 1975, this would be new evidence and would be cause for its removal.

Updating Contributing Resources Map

- The Contributing Resources Map could be updated if new properties acquire historic significance over time or were overlooked in the past. They found in the downtown area a lot of facades essentially have been covered up. Once this is removed, they are able to see that the historic fabric behind it is still intact.
- They might also want to remove properties due to tragic situations.

Ms. Harris reported that the county has only one historic district which is Pin Point. The city has four local historic districts with Eastside pending. The Landmark Historic District would remain its own separate historic district under the authority and review of the Historic District Board of Review. The remaining three would come under the purview of the joint historic preservation commission.

Ms. Harris explained that the local property designation would be a new process in the city. The county has this process in place and has two properties listed. Basically, it follows the same format as the district. It is initiated by the property owner and then comes before the Commission for a recommendation to the governing body.

Process for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)

This section applies to all the local historic districts and the local historic properties, except the Downtown District which has its own section. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required before a building permit is issued in these areas - new construction, fences, etc. Some things that are not reviewed are color, interior changes or regular maintenance and repairs.

Ms. Harris explained that one major change from the way this Commission currently operates and the way they are proposing in the Unified Zoning Ordinance is that there will be no more staff reviews in any local historic district or historic properties. They have consulted with several different attorneys, including the attorney that the State Historic Preservation office uses. They have concluded that the Georgia Historic Preservation Act, which is the enabling legislation for this ordinance, does not allow for staff reviews. They recognize that other communities within Georgia have staff reviews. It has never been challenged, but after consulting with several different attorneys, all have concluded that it is actually not allowed and could be challenged in court. They are concerned that this could create a burden on applicants who may be making minor changes and may also discourage communities from becoming historic districts if every small change has to go through a board. Ms. Harris said their compromise solution is that minor changes that normally would be reviewed by staff such as a sign or fence would be on the consent agenda and the applicant would not need to attend the meeting. Also, depending on the volume of applications received, they may meet twice monthly to speed up the process so that an applicant does not have to wait 30 days to get approval.

Ms. Harris explained that a preapplication conference would be required with staff and a site development review would be required for larger projects. Site development review is a process that the city goes through in order for the city staff to look at utilities and stormwater runoff. They will have a similar process for the city as well as for the county. This will ensure that these kinds of issues are worked out before the application comes to the Commission. This process is presently in place in the Landmark

District and works very well.

The Historic Preservation Commission would also be given the authority to grant variances from the design standards that are specifically in the ordinance. The Commission would not be given the authority to grant variances for issues such as parking.

A new section called Prevention of Demolition by Neglect is proposed. This applies to all the historic districts. Basically, this defines the conditions that are called "demolitions by neglect." It is considered a change in appearance without a certificate of appropriateness. This would be the same as if someone built a porch without a certificate of appropriateness; made a change in appearance. This allows for better enforcement. When this begins to happen and the conditions are identified, the building inspection department would let the person know that a change was made without getting the required certificate of appropriateness. Hopefully, this enforcement will catch this before it leads to demolition by neglect, where demolition is the only option.

Ms. Harris explained the different districts and properties as follows.

Historic Property Overlay District - Rather than having a separate section for each historic property such as one section for Maridon, one section for New Ogeechee, and new properties, they are compiled into one because the design standards are similar. Where there are differences, they will note the differences. Potentially, this could change as they get more properties listed. If this becomes too confusing, they may have to separate them.

Victorian Historic Overlay District - The current boundaries follow the National Register, but they are recommending expansion of these boundaries to the west to provide a buffer area. This is fairly common with local historic districts to protect the contexts of the districts.

- Currently, there is no historic preservation commission that reviews this. Essentially, it is just staff that reviews COAs and in some cases, it might go to the MPC. The district currently has no standards for rehabilitation. The only standards that exist are for new construction. Therefore, they are creating new standards for rehabilitation and strengthening the new construction standards.
- There is also currently little protection from demolition- a 12 month waiting period. This will be removed.

Cuyler-Brownsville District - They are proposing to change the name to **Cuyler-Brownsville** as this is the official name of the National Register district as substantiated by more historical evidence. This seems to be the most common name used.

They are proposing that the boundaries in this district be expanded slightly to better match the National Register and include some small buffer areas.

Ms. Harris noted that each district has a slightly different process and slightly different things that are wrong with the standards. Everything is reviewed by the MPC staff, which is not consistent with the Georgia Preservation Act. The design standards are not adequate to protect the historic properties. Therefore, they are proposing that this be strengthened.

Streetcar Historic Overlay District - refers to the National Register District known as the Thomas Square Streetcar District. Currently, the local historic district is known as Mid-City. This district was named as such because the residents did not want it to be Thomas Square because this refers to a neighborhood district and they want it to be more inclusive. Therefore, they came up with the name Mid-City. This allows for all the neighborhoods to be included. However, it appears too generic. The people do not know where this is and gets it confused with other neighborhoods such as Mid-Town. Because of these reasons, they are proposing that it simply be called the **Streetcar District** to eliminate the confusion with the neighborhood. They are also recommending that the boundaries be expanded slightly to match the National Register boundaries.

This district has a different process. There is a design administrator and new construction goes to the City Manager. But, in the future, everything will come to the new Commission.

Pin-Point Historic Overlay District - This district was designated in 2009 with the Unified Zoning Ordinance in mind. Basically, the only thing that is needed to be done is a little reformatting, but there is no significant changes.

Ms. Harris stated that they have not met with the neighborhood associations, but they will do so as the process moves forward. All of these are preliminary recommendations.

Ms. Goode-Walker asked that in the expanded boundaries if anything has happened in these areas already.

Ms. Harris answered that they have found some demolition and inappropriate alterations.

Ms. Goode-Walker asked if expanding the areas would help or hurt the situation. If places are already gone, why would they plan to include it?

Ms. Harris stated that all of the places are not gone. Only some of the properties have been lost and they just want to prevent losing more. Historic resources are certainly intact.

Ms. Goode-Walker stated that she was looking specifically at Cuyler-Brownville, the area where she was reared, and there are a lot of missing things here. Infill housing has surfaced in the last few years, but if the boundaries are expanded, would this help or hurt?

Ms. Harris explained that the philosophy behind why the boundaries go slightly beyond the National Register District, which mostly focuses on where the highest concentration of historic resources, helps to protect the character. This is still a part of the community; although there is not a high concentration of historic resources. However, if suddenly high rises were built here, it could do substantial damage to the rest of the district. Therefore, they want to provide a buffer even if there is not a high concentration of resources in the area.

Ms. Goode-Walker asked if the historic district boundaries include the other side of Victory Drive, which is Cann Park.

Ms. Harris answered no.

Ms. Goode-Walker stated that on the other side of Victory Drive the houses are still historic.

Ms. Harris stated that the process in place is community initiated and when the boundaries were originally drawn, the area south of Victory Drive was not interested.

Dr. Rossell asked what is happening on the east boundary of the National Register.

Ms. Harris explained that this area is Montgomery Street and is shown in red. There was an error on the part of the State Historic Preservation office. They have the National Register boundaries for the Streetcar District going all the way to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd rather than ending at Montgomery Street. Therefore, there is an overlap between the Streetcar and Cuyler-Brownville. She said the staff has asked the State Historic Preservation office to correct this. Staff feels that what was intended and what would be the most appropriate boundary between the two would be Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. However, the gap that is seen in Cuyler-Brownville is not that it is unprotected, it just is that it is becoming a part of the Streetcar Historic District overlay.

Dr. Rossell stated that he was curious about the relationship of the Downtown Board and the new Commission. He asked how would this Board and the new Commission communicate with each other and would they be under the same rules.

Ms. Harris explained that they are separate and do not share any areas. They are treated separately in the zoning ordinance and they are under different rules. The Downtown Board was created before the State Preservation act. Therefore, they are exempt from a lot of the requirements that the new Commission would have. They have a lot of things grandfathered in because of when they were created, including their current boundaries, all created in 1973. Ms. Harris believes, however, that it would be important for the two to communicate, but there is not a formal process in place for this since there is no shared areas or shared boundaries. However, the potential for this could be in a more informal way such as having shared board retreats.

Dr. Rossell said Ms. Harris mentioned the lack of staff reviews. He asked what are the recourses to revisit this issue later on. How contentious is this?

Ms. Harris answered that unless the state law is amended, it probably will not be revisited. This is probably something that they can push for, but she believes that because this state law has never been amended since 1980 that preservationists might be afraid that if they start tinkering with things that it might be abolished completely.

Mr. Cohen asked what is the time period this Commission could expect draft copies.

Ms. Harris answered that the Commission could expect to receive it next month. She explained that she has given the Commission a quick overview to make sure that they are aware of the main issues, but at some point they will schedule a workshop as this gets closer to implementation so they can go over everything.

Mr. Lindell asked how does this Commission fit in as members of this new Commission. He understood that the present Commission would be dissolved. Can members of this Commission be members of the new Commission with a new starting date?

Ms. Harris explained that the ordinance would replace the existing Preservation Ordinance. The existing Commission could become new members on the new Commission if appointed by the governing body. She informed the Commission that when they get to this point, inform their City Aldermen or County Commission and let them know they are interested to be on the new Commission.

Dr. Rossell wanted to know what is the expected approval date of the Unified Zoning Ordinance by the city and county.

Ms. Moore answered that it will not be sooner than January 2011. However, it depends on the public process.

Dr. Rossell stated that this is a tall order and will change their workload considerably. MPC meets every three weeks, but now it is suggested that they meet every two weeks. They have talked about doing more in the past, but this potentially will change things. He is aware that it is a challenge for the staff to put all of this together.

Ms. White stated that she believes it is exciting.

Ms. Goode-Walker stated that early on she remembers hearing at the beginning of the conversation on the Unified Zoning Ordinance that as they approach the 300 anniversary, everything in the city would reflect the Oglethorpe plan from the bay to the back side to the south side. She sees now what is involving and if she is still a part of it, she welcomes the workload. They have had opportunities to hear from speakers and city staff as well as in their various districts in the county. She, too, would love to see the final points of the ordinance to see how it impacts them.

Dr. Rossell was pleased to hear about interim protection and the area of prevention of demolition by neglect.

Ms. White was hopeful that if this process runs smoothly would encourage other historic districts that are sitting on the fence.

VI. Request for Extensions

VII. Staff Reviews

VIII. Other Business

New Business

4. Introduction of Adrienne Birge, Historic Preservation Department Intern

Ms. Harris introduced Adrienne Birge. Ms. Birge is a preservation graduate student at

SCAD and is interning with Ms. Harris for the summer quarter.

Ms. Birge gave the following update on the two main historic preservation projects she is working on this summer. She explained that she is writing the Environmental Justice section for the I-16 study.

Ms. Birge reported that the existing areas of data are accessible. She has searched different fields such as voting districts and school districts. But what has applied the best was the Census Tracts. Ms. Birge stated that she will gather data from all the tracts and then weigh the average to give her a better picture. She has given thought to doing it by population and density as well to possibly get a more accurate figure. She will also compare some contrast with Savannah urbanized area, Georgia and U.S. figures.

Ms. Birge explained that to access environmental justice from a quantitative standpoint versus qualitative, she believes it is important to use hard facts and data. She stated that if she wanted to integrate healthy ecology model, which she believes is important in urban planning in general, she would need to look at the general area of health, transportation, community cohesion, access to goods and services and economy.

Ms. Birge stated that this is only a draft. She will complete the data interpretation later.

Ms. Birge explained that Pennworth is across the Eugene Talmadge bridge on Hwy 17 just before you pass the South Carolina line. It is a small island on the left. She will survey this island and will prepare a National Register as well as local historic district nomination for the island.

5. Introduction of Corinne Poole, Presidential Management Fellow

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Corinne Poole, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Presidential Management Fellow.

Ms. Poole stated that her office is based in New Orleans. She is working at the MPC for four months. She chose MPC in order to learn more about planning and zoning. Ms. Poole has worked with Ms. Moore on the UZO project, primarily assisting with the advisory meetings. Ms. Poole explained that HUD has recently come up with some new sustainable initiative grants and she will assist MPC in applying for these grants. One grant is the Community Challenge/Title II which is a grant between HUD and the Department of Transportation. She has worked with the city to get this effort coordinated. She is also working on the Regional Planning grant which MPC will apply for which allows the opportunity to start combining the transportation plans with workforce development plans, housing efforts and start integrating a lot of the planning efforts.

IX. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

6. Notices

Ms. Goode-Walker reported that Mr. Williams Haynes who is a member of Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission is not present today due to illness. Mr. Haynes is in the Riverview Nursing Home, but will possibly be going home some time soon. Ms. Goode-Walker will go and see Mr. Haynes and take him a get well card from the Commission and staff.

X. Adjournment

7. Adjourned

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Ms. Goode-Walker adjourned the meeting at 3:10 pm.

The next Commission meeeting will be on October 6, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.