



S A V A N N A H - C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
January 3, 2013, 4:00 PM
Meeting Minutes Revised

January 3, 2013 HSMC Regular Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. [November 1, 2012](#)

Attachment: [November 1, 2012 Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approve Meeting Minutes of November 1, 2012. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Robert Pirro - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

III. Regular Agenda

2. ~~12-002159-PA Savannah Gardens Public Art Project~~

Attachment: ~~Application.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~City of Savannah RFP.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~Drawings.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~Model Images.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~Similar Completed Works.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~Site Related imagery.pdf~~

Attachment: ~~12-002159-PA Staff Report.pdf~~

Ms. Soule stated that the Savannah Gardens Public Art Project has been moved to the next meeting.

Ms. Harris said the petitioner requested that it be moved to a future meeting.

Mr. Gensheimer asked what was the reason for the petitioner withdrawing the petition from today's agenda.

Ms. Harris explained that she was unsure. There was a concern about the public outreach part of it. Because of the holidays, they were not sure there was sufficient notice.

IV. Other Business

3. [C-111219-605484-2 Fremont Marker Text Change- Staff Decision](#)

Attachment: [Staff Decision- revised text.pdf](#)

Ms. Harris stated that on January 5, 2012 the Commission recommended approval of the petition requesting to install a GHS Marker commemorating John C. Fremont in Yamacraw Art Park off West Bay Street to City Council. City Council approved the marker on January 25, 2012.

Ms. Harris reported that the petitioner requested approval to change the text on the previously approved GHS marker commemorating John C. Fremont. Because the Georgia Historical Society wanted the change prior to Mr. Fremont's birthday, January 21, there was not enough time to have a Special Called Meeting. After consulting with the Chair, Ms. Soule, they determined that the revised requested text did not change the meaning nor intention of the original text and, therefore, could be approved at the staff level. Since the Commission does not have a policy on when the staff may make these kind of decisions, she wanted to bring this to their attention and get some direction.

Ms. Harris explained that the issue above prompted the next item on the agenda, **Policy on Staff Decisions.**

Ms. Soule said she was hopeful that the Commission was in agreement with their decision of approving the revised text. She stated that as Ms. Harris said, they do not have a policy governing this.

The original approved version:

"Born near here on January 21, 1813, to a French emigre, John C. Fremont was an ardent abolitionist and the first Republican candidate for president in 1856. Fremont gained fame as "The Pathfinder of the West" for leading federal explorations west of the Mississippi River in the 1840s. After serving as a major in the U.S. Army during the Mexican American War, Fremont was elected Senator from California in 1850. His popularity and opposition to slavery earned him the nomination for president in 1856; losing to James Buchanan. Appointed Major General and commander of the Western Department during the Civil War, Fremont issued a proclamation on August 30, 1861, freeing all slaves in Missouri owned by Confederates; President Lincoln annulled the proclamation as unauthorized and premature."

Approved revised text:

"One of two native Georgians who served as generals in the U.S. Army during the Civil War, John C. Fremont was born nearby on January 21, 1813. As an army officer, his 1840s explorations of the American West gained him fame as the "Pathfinder." During the Mexican War, Fremont seized California for the U.S. and was elected one of its first Senators in 1850. Opposed to slavery's expansion, he ran unsuccessfully in 1856 as the first R\republican presidential candidate. During the Civil War, Fremont's 1861 proclamation freeing all confederate-owned slaves in Missouri was annulled by President Lincoln. After lackluster performance as a combat commander, Fremont resigned from the U.S. Army in 1864. He later served as governor of the Arizona Territory (1878-1881) and died in New York in 1890."

4. Policy on Staff Decisions

Attachment: [Policy Regarding Staff Decisions 01-03-13.pdf](#)

Ms. Harris explained that over the last several years, there have been opportunities and/or requests for staff to make minor decisions regarding marker, monument or public art changes after a decision has been rendered by the HSMC. Typically, staff has made decisions, after consulting with the Chair, and has informed them at the next meeting of the decision. More recently, the Mural Policy adopted by the HSMC allows for staff to make decisions regarding the design of rotating murals after the location and theme have been approved by the Commission.

Ms. Harris further explained that many boards served by the MPC staff have policies in place which outline the types of approvals staff can make, including the Historic District Board of Review and the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission. The purpose is not to empower staff, but to reduce the burden of public meetings on the petitioner for a minor change which does not warrant a public meeting. She came up with a list of suggestions for the Commission to consider based on the examples she reviewed that is being allowed by the other Boards. She wanted to reiterate that this is in no way trying to take away the Commission's authority.

POLICY: This policy may be incorporated into Chapter 8: Processes and Procedures of the *Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art*.

The MPC staff person to the HSMC may make staff decisions on the following items, provided that they have been reviewed by the HSMC at a public meeting previously.

- Any detail referred by the HSMC to staff at a public meeting;
- The design of a rotating mural after the location and them have been approved by the HSMC;
- Changes to the text of a marker or monument which do not involve any substantive change in meaning or interpretation of the text;
- Updates to the text of a marker or monument such as adding the name of a president of an organization to the list of previous presidents or that organization;

- Changes to the colors used in a mural;
- Minor changes in the location of a marker or monument in order to avoid utilities, trees, or other infrastructure, in coordination with City Staff;
- Minor changes to materials of a monument or public art work which involve no substantive changes to the aesthetics, durability, or structural integrity of the piece; and
- The correction of any text which, after approval by the HSMC, was discovered to be incorrect, such as a date.

The MPC staff person is not required to render a decision on any of the above mentioned items and may, at his or her sole discretion, refer the item to the HSMC for review.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends approval to incorporate a policy regarding staff reviews into Chapter 8: Processes and Procedures of the *Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art*.

Mr. Karatassos said he believes this is way over the top. He believes they are making a lot of unnecessary regulations. The situation they just had was extraordinary, it was the holidays. Ms. Soule is their Chair. He believes this is much to do about nothing.

Mr. Harper stated that he believes this clarifies the situation as there can be some "grey areas" and not everybody is accommodating as Mr. Karatassos.

Mr. Karatassos said he believes this is unnecessary.

Mr. Harper said he disagrees as he believes this clarifies the process. Mr. Karatassos will not be on the HSMC forever, the present Chair will not always be on the Commission and Ms. Harris will not always be the staff person assigned to this Commission. The next staff person may interpret it differently. This gives staff direction.

Mr. Gensheimer said the other boards have a precedent for this. The point is well taken that excessive regulations often make it cumbersome, but the fact is that this seems to be standard for the other boards in helping staff to make their decision.

Mr. Karatassos asked why could they not have teleconferences. But, whatever they decide is fine with him. He has worked prior for the MPC and knows that they have policies for the many different boards and so forth.

Mr. Pirro said they can clarify the language, but there will not be total confidence that it will avoid problems.

Ms. Soule said she was somewhat uncomfortable saying okay because there were no guidelines. She also knows that with guidelines, it can get murky. She believes the Commission has two paths in this issue. Do they feel there is a need for the policy? If the Commission decides that there is a need, then they will adopt a policy.

Mr. Karatassos asked if the policy allows for something to be done by staff without making the Chair aware of this.

Ms. Harris explained that the way it is now, the Chair will not be notified.

Mr. Karatassos said, for clarification, that he believes staff should notify the Chair and explain the issue to her/him and let the person know that it will be on the next agenda. He believes staff should tell somebody on the Commission what they are doing.

Mr. Harper said the decision would have already been made by staff.

Ms. Harris explained that it would be placed on the agenda for information only. The Commission would not vote on the matter.

Mr. Karatassos stated that he was not saying to reverse a decision, but was saying that somebody on the Commission should be advised about what is being done.

Mr. Harper asked staff if the Chair would be told about the decision before it happened or after the fact.

Ms. Harris suggested that the wording be changed to read, "the staff person may make staff decisions in consultation with the Chair."

Mr. Karatassos said he was in agreement with the wording.

Mr. Harper said if the Chair has a concern about an decision, then maybe it needs to be brought to the Commission.

Ms. Soule asked if there were any other changes they wanted to make.

Board Action:

Establish a policy for staff level reviews. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Nay

Robert Pirro - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

Board Action:

Adopt a policy regarding staff review in Chapter 8:

Processes and Procedures of the *Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art* per staff's recommendation with the change that staff consults with the Chair on decisions. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Walt Harper
Second: Thomas Gensheimer
Thomas Gensheimer - Aye
Walt Harper - Aye
Eli Karatassos - Aye
Robert Pirro - Aye
Mary Soule - Aye

5. 2013 Schedule of Meetings

Attachment: [2013 Meeting Schedule.pdf](#)

Ms. Soule said 2013 Schedule of Meetings are:

January 3, 2013
March 7, 2013
May 2, 2013
June 27, 2013 (due to 4th of July Holiday)
September 5, 2013
November 7, 2013

Board Action:

Approval of the 2013 Schedule of Meetings. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Robert Pirro
Second: Walt Harper
Thomas Gensheimer - Aye
Walt Harper - Aye
Eli Karatassos - Aye
Robert Pirro - Aye
Mary Soule - Aye

6. Commissioner's Items

Ms. Soule asked the Commission if there were any items they wanted to discuss.

Ms. Harris updated the Commission on the status of the Mural Policy. She explained that, as the Commission may recall, she attended a workshop with City Council in May, 2012. At the time, Council talked about some changes to the notification process. She reported back to the Commission with Council's suggestions. The Commission went through the items and made recommendations. The recommendations included keeping the existing notification process that they have. This recommendation was forwarded to Council.

Ms. Harris reported that a workshop has been scheduled for next Thursday, January 10, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. in City Hall. At that time, she will make a presentation to Council on the Commission's recommendations. If Council decides that they want to place this on their agenda, it will be two weeks following the workshop; or Council may decide that they want the Commission to look at this more.

She invited the Commission to attend the workshop. The public is invited to attend Council's workshops, but are not typically allowed to make comments.

7. Fence - Greene Monument

Mr. Harper reported that the fence for the Greene monument that came before the Commission did not have to be approved by the Commission because it was not a part of the monument. The fence has been installed and looks great. It is keeping people off of the monument.

Mr. Karatassos asked why a fence around a monument is not a part of this Commission's purview.

Mr. Harper explained that the fence is not a part of the monument, itself. It is more along the sidewalk. It is not close to monument. As everybody knows, the Oglethorpe monument gets a lot of abuse from individuals standing on it, walking on it and so forth. One of the Park & Tree Commissioners actually heard a tour guide tell someone that they could get on the monument. The Commissioner immediately got the tour guide's name. There are four signs around the Oglethorpe monument that says "keep off monument." He believes this is helping as he has not seen anybody on the monument since the signs have been posted.

8. Toomer Monument

Mr. Harper reported that the Toomer monument is still holding up. Park & Tree has cut back all of the azaleas. The view is better now and he believes this, too, has helped.

9. [Rousakis Monument Proposal](#)

Mr. Karatassos stated that for some time he has had a desire to do something in the area on the river side of the Power Plant on the western end of River Street. They have the Waving Girl statue on the east end of River Street. He wants to approach Mr. Kessler about putting up a statue in honor of former Mayor John P. Rousakis on the west end. It will be close to the end of Rousakis Plaza. Mr. Karatassos said he looked on the map and it is not a designated area for monument and obviously so because the Power Plant has been there all the time. He said a lot of people want the statue to be erected. It will be somewhere in the western entrance to River Street near Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Years ago a committee was formed to have a statue done and they were ready to start on it, but at the same time planning started on the Civil Rights Monument which was very controversial.

Mr. Karatassos, said, however, he has talked with many persons about the statue and they still want to pursue this.

V. Adjournment

10. [Next Meeting- March 7, 2013](#)

11. [Adjournment](#)

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Ms. Soule adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, March 7, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Cultural Resource and Urban Planning Manager

EH:mem

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which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.