



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  
November 7, 2013 4:00 P.M.  
Revised Meeting Minutes

**November 7, 2013 HSMC Regular Meeting**

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

1. [Order](#)

**Ms. Soule** called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. She outlined the purpose and role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission.

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

2. [October 3, 2013 Minutes](#)

Attachment: [October 3, 2013 Minutes.pdf](#)

**Board Action:**

Approval of the October 3, 2013 Meeting Minutes. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Robert Pirro

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Ryan Madson - Aye

Robert Pirro - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

**III. Regular Agenda**

3. [Petition of Patrick Phelps for Hansen Architects, PC | 13-005159-HM | 23 East Charlton Street | Historical Marker](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)

**Mr. Patrick Phelps** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Leah Michalak** gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting to erect one historical marker at SCAD Haymans Hall, 23 East Charlton Street. The theme of the marker commemorates the historical significance of this site, which, since 1853, buildings on the site have been a free school, health center, and an orphanage. The current building was constructed in 1932 and provided health services through the Great Depression of World War II. She said that the proposed location of the marker is on the face of the east knee wall, flanking the main entrance. The proposed marker is a solid bronze plaque, measuring 14" x 24" with raised border and copy will be 3/4" high in SCAD's own custom serif font.

**Ms. Michalak** reported that staff recommends that a comma (,) be added after "Since 1853" and eliminate "and around the world." The funds have been fully secured. Because the marker is on private property, no escrow payment is needed. All public notices and requirements were met.

**Ms. Michalak** stated that staff was just informed by a member of the public that the marker is already installed with the staff's recommendation.

**Mr. Madson** asked why is it being proposed to remove the words "and around the world?"

**Ms. Michalak** explained that buildings on this site reflected local or community happening in Savannah and does not have an international impact.

**Mr. Madson** asked that the marker would be honoring the site's historic and this wording "and around the world" would be pertaining to more than citizens of Savannah?

**Ms. Michalak** answered yes.

**Ms. Soule** said that when she reviewed the material, she thought one marker would be on one side and the other marker would be on the other side. Is this not correct?

**Ms. Michalak** answered that this is the case, but they are only reviewing the marker as stated in the staff's report. The other is considered a building identification sign; it is not a historical marker and, therefore, does not require the Board's approval.

**Mr. Karatassos** wanted to know why the marker was already installed prior to approval.

#### **PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Mr. Phelps** apologized and said he was not aware that the marker was already installed. He said that during the application process SCAD had a grand opening of the building and this is probably when the marker was installed. He said that he personally did not have control over this. If it is an after-the-fact approval or if there are changes that need to be made, he will certainly notify the owner.

**Mr. Phelps** said SCAD feels strongly about the wording of including "around the world." If they read the last sentence, it says "and will continue to enrich the lives of students and citizens in Savannah and around the world." This talks about future contributions that this

building and site will make. SCAD is making the point that they do serve an international community with international students that they have relationships with other campuses in Hong Kong as well as in France. Therefore, it is not just representing the site as in its past, but also looking towards the future. Consequently, SCAD wants to keep the wording "and around the world" with their intent of serving a world community as well as the local community.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Mr. Phelps if the marker that is installed is without the comma and with those last words.

**Mr. Phelps** answered that this is his understanding.

**Ms. Kenner** said the changes have been made as recommended by the staff.

**Mr. Phelps** said he was not aware that the changes were made.

**Mr. Karatassos** said that SCAD felt strongly about the wording, but they went ahead and put up the sign prematurely that was consist with the staff's recommendation.

**Mr. Phelps** apologized and said SCAD must have received the staff's comments and made the changes during the application process period.

**Dr. Pirro** asked, therefore, is the understanding correct that SCAD no longer wants to go back to their original text.

**Mr. Phelps** answered yes; this will be the text.

**Ms. Michalak** said the text on the sign is actually different than what is on the proposal.

**Mr. Karatassos**, upon reviewing the text of the proposal and the text already on the sign, said the original wording was better.

**Dr. Pirro** said the text shown is not what the staff recommended. He believes the Board should request that the marker be removed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Ms. Katherine Kenner of the Juilette Gordon Low Birth Place and Ms. Jamie Brantley of the Girl Scouts Headquarters** were present. Ms. Kenner said they saw the proposal today and were not aware until today that the sign was installed. They like the proposed wording with "around the world" because the Girl Scouts impact the site.

**Ms. Kenner** said this is the site where the first official registration meeting for Girl Scouts was held in 1912 and throughout its history until the building was removed. It is significant in early Girl scout history and Savannah's history. She said that this quadrant is, in fact, significant in Girl Scout history. Ms. Kenner explained that the City installed lights across the street from this location for a basketball court and a training field for the Girl Scouts. A YMCA was also located down the street where the Girl Scouts met. Therefore, the entire area has Girl Scouts historical significance which they believe could

have merited at least the phrase "Girl Scouts," which is significant in world history. But, as an historian and seeing this for the first time, it struck her that the free school, the health center and the orphanage deserves a name. Ms. Kenner said also that the building, the Louisa Porter Home for the Friendless, deserves to be mentioned. This building is a significant part of Savannah's history as they are involved so actively in the charity and good works for young people and for the people who are underprivileged in the community.

**Ms. Kenner** said they commend SCAD for wanting to erect a marker and wanting to promote the history. They are aware that markers are expensive, but they want to see that the marker is more emphatically stated. SCAD has reason to be proud that they are in this location.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that he believes Ms. Kenner is talking about the site, but SCAD is talking about the building.

**Ms. Kenner** said there has been a number of different buildings in the period of time. Since SCAD has chosen to talk about all the other institutions, organizations and movements that were in this location [not just the physical building that she knows as the TransAmerican Building], but they have already chosen to use the history of that location and not the particular history of that brick and mortar.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Ms. Kenner if she has spoken with the Georgia Historical Society.

**Ms. Kenner** answered that she heard about this today. If SCAD wanted to work with the Georgia Historical Society and do a complete historic marker, they would be much happier, but they agree that the original proposed wording is much stronger than the wording that they have on the marker.

**Mr. Harper** said the original wording does not include anything about the Girl Scouts.

**Ms. Kenner** said it does not include anything about the Girl Scouts and this is the reason for their objection. They deserve at least a two word mention as this is a significant location for them in addition to the hospital, free school and orphanage.

**Dr. Pirro** asked Ms. Kenner what is the name of the free school.

**Ms. Kenner** said she does not know the name of the free school nor does she know the name of the health center. She knows that the home was called Louisa Porter Home for the Friendless and it did serve as a home for children and also served young working women who did not have a place to live. It was similar to the YWCA and was opened to girls and women of all branches of society who needed a home. She apologized that she had not done all the research, but as she has said, she did not know about this until today.

**Mr. Gensheimer** said he believed Ms. Kenner has raised a good issue about adding the names.

**Mr. Phelps** informed the Board that he has Ms. Kenner information and he will pass this onto SCAD so that they can start a dialog. He said if it is not this marker, then maybe they can come up with another marker of honoring the building, but certainly with the intent of

informing SCAD of a bigger history. Mr. Phelps said maybe SCAD did not understand or did not research the information.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Mr. Phelps if maybe SCAD would consider removing the marker and work on a more extended marker. He said after reading the text on the marker, he does not believe that it gives justice to what SCAD is trying to do in the first version.

**Mr. Phelps** said these are just quick thoughts and certainly he was not trying to move the Board in a certain direction, but it appears that they are talking about a bigger site issue rather than a building and that it maybe more appropriate to do a Georgia Historical Marker location. He said he will ask SCAD to make the request and encourage them to have the resources available to work with the Georgia Historical Society and the City and maybe erect a marker that honors the Girl Scouts and any other occupants of that site in a bigger way.

**Mr. Karatassos** said he is not sure that the Board could tell SCAD that they cannot put up a marker.

**Mr. Phelps** said he made the statement in lieu of replacing the expense that has already taken place because he does not know that the context of this is certainly not accurate, it is not as broad as it was in the original text. But, if they could encourage SCAD to do something to cover it all.

**Mr. Madson** asked Mr. Phelps if he knew why the text was changed.

**Mr. Phelps** answered he was unaware that the text was changed.

#### **BOARD DISCUSSION**

**Ms. Soule** said it has been brought to her attention that two of the Board members are employees of SCAD and are recusing.

**Mr. Karatassos** said if the members are recusing they should leave the hearing room.

**Mr. Harper** said he does not believe the members need to leave the hearing room. He stated that he has a big problem with SCAD making a marker of their own and putting it up without getting it approved. If he had his way about it, he would tell SCAD to take the marker down as it has not been approved and it is not the one that the Board is reviewing today.

**Mr. Harper** moved that the marker be removed and that the wording be reviewed with the inclusion of the Girl Scouts. The motion died for lack of a second.

**Mr. Karatassos** said he does not believe that anybody at SCAD had some evil intention. He said he believes that in the rush of trying to get something done in time for an opening, people sometimes do things without thinking. But, a mistake was made. Mr. Karatassos said it was not so much to him that the marker is up if the right wording was thereon or what the staff recommended, might be another situation. However, the wording on the marker is unacceptable. He believes if the wording that is on the marker now was

presented to the Board it would not have been approved.

**Mr. Karatassos** said he believes that the existing marker would have to be removed. He believes also that if the Board start making the petitioner put everything about every site and how many buildings were built, they would have a lot of identification going on in Savannah. Therefore, to have some specific to the building there, he does not have a problem with. But, if they are going to get site specifics, then he believes an expanded plaque would be appropriate. However, this is not what they are doing. The identification of the others things that were in that building as were suggested would be a nice thing to do. He advised Mr. Phelps that he might want to consider withdrawing his petition and go back to his client and recommend that the existing plaque be removed and consider doing something probably site specific through the Georgia Historical Society. If they decide that they do not want to do this or the Georgia Historical Society says that they do not want to do this, then maybe he could come back to the Board with the identification of the other three facilities that are not identified, make it building specific. Mr. Karatassos said obviously "around the world" is not serious enough; put a coma and then come back to the Board with another request.

**Dr. Pirro** said the language that staff recommended is still not appropriate because the public came and gave some good input. Therefore, he believes that the text the staff recommended could be changed for the better. Consequently, he concurs with Mr. Harper that the marker should be taken down and that the petitioner reapply with new language that incorporates what they heard today from the public.

**Ms. Soule** said she agrees with Mr. Harper and Dr. Pirro. It has been brought to the Board's attention that this is a significant Girl Scout site. She said even if the language remains the same and something is said about the Girl Scouts being here or rather you specifically name each item that was here such as the Louisa Porter Home for the Friendless, she agrees that the wording can be better.

**Mr. Karatassos** said at some point in time, maybe this will get to City Council. However, he strongly objects to them requiring that any sign on a building be site specific to go back into the entire history of the building. He believes that it is too much to ask of people. If someone wants to honor that a building is there, is great, but to go back to every building that was on the site [it could be multiple buildings] is arbitrary and is unnecessary. Mr. Karatassos said he does not believe that this is reasonable. He will fight this all the way down the line. Therefore, he recommends that the petitioner be allowed to withdraw the petition and the Board ends the discussion because he will never require anyone to make something site specifics on their own marker on a building that they are redoing. He does not care whether it is SCAD or whoever. But, site specific should not be a requirement.

**Mr. Harper** said no one was saying that it is a requirement. He believes that with the inclusion of the other items, the petitioner is getting down to site specific. If the Girl Scouts says that the Louisa Porter Home for the Friendless was here, it should be included because it is a part of the location. Why should it be excluded if it is a part of the history of that particular building?

**Dr. Pirro** said he believes that if the Board lets the petitioner know that this history is there, perhaps it would not be a problem for them to do. He said he does not understand why this is such a big issue. Dr. Pirro said give the petition back to SCAD and let them

rework the language and then they can submit the application again. Upon the resubmittal, the Board will discuss the application again. He does not see how this would be tremendously imposing on SCAD.

**Mr. Phelps** stated that he was withdrawing the application based on the fact that the text was changed after the initial application was made. Therefore, it is not applicable. He said he will take in consideration the comments made by the Board and the community and will convey them to SCAD. Hopefully, with the new application either if they decide to continue with what's on the building as their application or whatever that they intend to expand on will be included.

**Mr. Harper** asked does this include removing the marker.

**Ms. Harris** said she wanted to ask a procedure question. She said at this point relative to enforcement, if something is installed without approval, the petitioner can be given a certain amount of time for removal. This is in the hands of the Board. How long do they have before they need to come back with an application for the same marker, a different marker or remove the marker that was installed without approval?

**Mr. Karatassos** said he was of the belief that Ms. Harris informed him at an earlier time that if something is put up inappropriately that the City has it enforcement processes in place. He believed if something was not a permitted sign, the City will take it down.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the City does. But, what she was asking the Board if they want her to report the marker this afternoon and have the City ask the petitioner to remove it tomorrow.

**Mr. Harper** said his opinion is for staff to contact the City and have the petitioner remove it immediately.

**Mr. Karatassos** said tell the petitioner to take it down and give them a week to do so.

**Board Action:**

Approval that staff notify the City to have SCAD remove the marker immediately before they can return with another proposal. In addition, the Board asks that the applicant work with the Girl Scouts to potentially include their involvement with this site on their marker or potentially an additional marker. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Walt Harper  
Second: Robert Pirro  
Eli Karatassos - Nay  
Thomas Gensheimer - Abstain  
Walt Harper - Aye

Ryan Madson	- Abstain
Robert Pirro	- Aye
Mary Soule	- Aye

#### IV. Other Business

##### 4. [Nominating Committee Report](#)

The Nominating Committee reported that they recommend that the 2013 officers remain for 2014. They are: Ms. Mary Soule, Chair; Mr. Eli Karatassos, Vice Chair and Mr. Walt Harper, Secretary.

##### **Board Action:**

Approval of the Nominating Committee report for the following officers for 2014: Mary Soule, Chair; Eli Karatassos, Vice Chair; and Walt Harper, Secretary. - PASS

##### **Vote Results**

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

##### 5. [Commissioner's Items](#)

##### 6. [Next Meeting- Regular Meeting- January 3, 2014](#)

Ms. Soule announced that the next meeting will be January 3, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

#### V. Adjournment

##### 7. [Adjourned.](#)

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Soule adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ellen I. Harris  
Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

EIH:mem

*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.*