



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
September 4, 2014 4:00 P.M.
Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2014 HSMC Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. [Welcome](#)

Mr. Karatassos called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the purpose and role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission (HSMC).

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2. [Approval of July 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes](#)

Attachment: [July 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approve July 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Ryan Madson - Not Present

Giselle Rahn - Aye

III. Regular Agenda

3. [Petition of Elyse Butler, Georgia Historical Society | 14-003499-HM | 104 West Gaston Street | Historical Marker](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Application - 104 West Gaston Street.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet - 104 West Gaston Street.pdf](#)

Ms. Elyse Butler of the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The GHS is requesting to erect a historical marker at 104 West Gaston Street, Jepson Housing Education Center, commemorating the former private residence's important residents and visitors during the Civil War era. The marker is proposed to be located on private property, in the front yard of 104 West Gaston Street, on the west side of the entry sidewalk visible from the public sidewalk. The marker will be parallel with Gaston Street.

Ms. Harris stated as required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A public notice sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received from the public. The proposed text from the marker is as follows:

Jepson House Education Center

This Italianate mansion was built in 1856 for Savannah grocer and Civil War mayor Thomas Holcombe and later owned by former Confederate officer and Superior Court Judge Robert Falligant and his descendants. The Oglethorpe Light Infantry, commanded by Francis Bartow, received its colors and departed from here for the First Battle of Manassas in 1861. During his last visit to Savannah in 1870, Robert E. Lee was hosted here. In 2011 the building was acquired by the Georgia Historical Society. It is named in honor of local philanthropist and businessman Robert S. Jepson, Jr., and his wife Alice, principal benefactors and leaders of the effort to obtain the building. Jepson House serves as the Georgia Historical Society's educational center, housing the office of the president and the program and administrative staff.

Erected by the Georgia Historical Society

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends approval to erect the historical marker at 104 West Gaston Street with the following conditions:

1. That the petitioner coordinates with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.
2. Add a comma to the text after "In 2011."

Mr. Karatassos asked staff if they have a complete list of the owners of this house.

Ms. Harris answered that she does not have the owners list, but may be the GHS has such list. She believes if research was done, they probably could find a list.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Board Action:

Approval with the following conditions:

1. That the petitioner coordinates with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation. - PASS
2. Add a comma to the text after "In 2011."

Vote Results

Motion: Giselle Rahn

Second: Walt Harper

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Ryan Madson - Not Present

Giselle Rahn - Aye

4. [Petition of Georgia Historical Society | 14-004071-HM | 537 East Henry Street | Historical Marker](#)

Attachment: [14-004071-HM Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Application - 537 East Henry Street.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet - 537 East Henry Street 14-004071-COA.pdf](#)

Ms. Elyse Butler of the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The GHS, in collaboration with Live Oaks Public Libraries, is requesting to erect a historical marker at 537 East Henry Street commemorating the formation of the Colored Library Association of Savannah and the construction of this library for Colored Citizens (Carnegie Library). The marker is proposed to be located on private property, to the east side of the library, in an existing landscaped (grass) area visible from a public sidewalk. The marker will be parallel with East Henry Street.

Ms. Harris stated as required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A public notice sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received from the public. The proposed text from the marker is as follows:

Colored Library Association of Savannah

In 1906, eleven African-American men formed the Colored Library Association of Savannah and established the Library for Colored Citizens. They acquired the original collection from personal libraries and public donations of books and periodicals. In 1913 the Association successfully petitioned the Carnegie Corporation of New York for funds to build a permanent home for the collection. The Carnegie grant program funded

construction of thousands of public libraries worldwide. Dedicated in 1914 and completed in 1915, the library was designed by local architect Julian deBruyn Kops and is one of Savannah's few examples of Prairie School architecture. One of only two Carnegie library projects for African Americans in Georgia, this was the home library to James Alan McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning short story writer and essayist and Clarence Thomas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends approval to erect a historical marker as requested at 537 East Henry Street with the following conditions:

1. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.
2. Add a comma to the proposed text after "In 1913."
3. "African-American(s)" is shown two different ways within the proposed text ("African American" and "African-Americans"); change the text to be consistent one way or the other.

Mr. Karatassos asked staff if they were recommending a space after the dash.

Ms. Harris stated that she does not believe that there would be space after the dash.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Helen Washington of the Victory Park area came forward and stated that is very interesting that they are able to have present with them the granddaughter of one of the founders of the Carnegie Library, Dr. Fannon Belcher. Dr. Belcher's granddaughter is Ms. Urslin Hickney who is now living in Savannah. Ms. Washington stated that they have no objections at all to the erection of this historical marker.

Ms. Hickney was grateful that the historical marker would be erected at the Carnegie Library.

Board Action:

Approval with the following conditions:

1. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.
2. Add a comma to the proposed text after "In 1913". - PASS
3. "African-American(s)" is shown two different ways within the proposed text ("African American"

and “African-Americans”); change the text to be consistent one way or the other.

Vote Results

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer

Second: Walt Harper

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Ryan Madson - Not Present

Giselle Rahn - Aye

5. [Petition of Georgia Historical Society | 14-004076-HM | Madison Square | Historical Marker](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Application - Madison Square.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Submittal Packet - Madison Square.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Square Images and Recommended Marker Location.pdf](#)

Ms. Elyse Butler of the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The Georgia Historical Society, in collaboration with the Georgia Battlefields Association, is requesting to erect a historical marker in Madison Square commemorating 150 Years since the Civil War and General Sherman's March to the Sea, which ended in Savannah's capture in 1864.

Ms. Harris stated that the petitioner has suggested Madison Square (public property) as the location for the marker, with the exact location at the discretion of the HSMC. There are currently four markers in the square: Madison Square marker, Sergeant Jasper marker, the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry marker, and the History of Emancipation: Special Field Orders No. 15 Marker. A marker noting Sherman's Headquarters at the Green Meldrim House is located on private property adjacent to the Green Meldrim House. A marker for the Sorrel-Weed House is located in front of the house at the northwest side of the Bull and West Harris Street. There are also three monuments in the square: Southern Line of Defense, Jasper Monument, and the Colonial Road Cannons.

Ms. Harris explained that the southwest quadrant of the square does not contain any markers. It is still within close proximity to the Green-Meldrim House and is also in reasonable close proximity to the Special Order No. 15 Marker. Staff recommends that the marker be located in the uppermost part of the southwest quadrant of the square, adjacent to the east-west sidewalk, because the northwest quadrant – although closest to the Green-Meldrim House and markers with related content - already contains several markers. The Special Order No. 15 marker content relates to the proposed marker. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.

Ms. Harris stated that as required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received from the public.

Ms. Harris said the proposed text from the marker is as follows:

The March to the Sea

On December 21, 1864, during the Civil War, U.S. forces under Gen. William T. Sherman captured Savannah, completing the March to the Sea, a military campaign devised to destroy the Confederacy's ability to wage war and break the will of its people to resist. After destroying Atlanta's industrial and business (but not residential) districts, Sherman's 62,500 men left that city in mid-November and marched over 250 miles, reaching Savannah by mid-December. Contrary to popular myth, Sherman's troops primarily destroyed only property used for waging war - railroads, train depots, factories, cotton gins, and warehouses. Abandoning their supply base, they lived off the land, destroying food they could not consume. They also liberated thousands of enslaved African Americans. Sherman's "hard hand of war" demoralized Confederates, hastening the reunification of the nation and the end of slavery.

*Erected for the Civil War 150 commemoration by the Georgia Historical Society
and the Georgia Battlefields Association*

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends that that the HSMC recommends approval to City Council for the requested marker to be erected with the following condition:

1. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.

Mr. Harper stated that staff is correct as to the amount of markers and monuments that are in this square. He said that when the HSMC approved the last marker, the Special Order #15, he asked the Historical Society if there was any other place where they could put the marker. He believes there was one other place where this marker could be placed, but it was placed in Madison Square. At that time, he said he made a comment that this square was getting too many markers and monuments placed there. Mr. Harper said there are other squares in town that do not have anything in them.

Mr. Harper said that he is not opposed to the marker, but opposed to the location. He wished there was some other place where the Georgia Historical Society could place this marker.

Mr. Karatassos said he believes that Mr. Harper raises a good point. He does not know whether the proximity is that crucial if it is not sites specific. If you are erecting a marker about the building, it would be placed in front of the building.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Christy Crisp, Director of Programs for the Georgia Historical Society, came forward and stated that they put much thought into this realizing the concern about the many markers and monuments are in this square. She said the reason that they were requesting this space is because of the other parts of the story that are already told here. Everybody who comes to Savannah as heard about the March to the Sea, but there is no marker here that tells the story. This is where there are other parts of the March to the Sea, whether it is the headquarters of Sherman, the Green-Meldrim House or the Field Order 15 action that

took place in the house. This is another part of the story; therefore, placing it a long side the other chapters made sense to them. It is not that they are opposed to putting the marker some place else, but a better location was not immediately apparent.

Ms. Crisp said they talked about how did the army come into town. They came by Augusta Road, but putting it out there is probably not the best place if they are thinking about placing it where people are going to see it. As she has said, this was the best location that they could come up with as far as both physical accessibility and accessibility to the story that those markers tell.

Mr. Karatassos said the answer is this maker could be placed almost anywhere.

Ms. Crisp said in theory, she guesses it could be placed almost anywhere in Savannah. This is not a site specific story. But the site is associated with that story as far as Sherman is concerned in a way that a lot of other places are not. The Green-Meldrim House is associated with Sherman in Savannah in a way that a lot of the other places are not.

Mr. Karatassos asked Ms. Crisp what would she think if the HSMC asked her to find another site.

Ms. Crisp said they would talk about trying to find another site. As she stated, they have already given some thought to the many makers in this square.

Mr. Karatassos said they have more markers in this square than they have in Forsyth Park. The gentle suggestion is for the Historical Society to think about it and come back with a better location.

Ms. Crisp asked the HSMC what are their thoughts for a better location.

Mr. Karatassos told Ms. Crisp that the HSMC could approve the marker subject to the Georgia Historical Society working with staff to come up with a different location. In doing it this way the Georgia Historical Society would not be stalled in doing what they want to do.

Mr. Gensheimer said he believes the proposed location is an appropriate site. But, just to say that they cannot put it here because it is overcrowded, he cannot go along with. The proposed location is where the story is told. Now, on River Street is a different story.

Ms. Rahn stated that if there is another piece of property here that would tell of Sherman's March to the Sea would be fine. She sees citizens and tourists going from markers to markers. However, she thinks if they are going to be telling the story about the March to the Sea, the marker should be next to Special Order #15 and the Meldrim-Green House.

Ms. Crisp said their request is for Madison Square because of its proximity to the other pieces of the story, not necessarily to any particular place in the square. However, they are open to any location that works in Madison Square. The western side makes no sense because of the proximity to the other markers. However, north or south does not matter. If there is a way that makes it more amenable, they will be happy to do so.

Mr. Harper stated he guesses what he is saying, how many more chapters of the story can be told. There could be numerous chapters. Are you going to continue putting markers in this square. He thinks it becomes a part where this square is saturated. Presently, it has nine markers and monuments around this square, in addition with this marker, which would make ten. To him, this is an overload; there has to be another location that is just as appropriate. On the other side of the Green-Meldrim House and Pulaski Square, nothing is here; and this is still in proximity of the Green-Meldrim House. Mr. Harper said he believes the Madison Square is getting too busy and has too many markers and monuments in it.

Mr. Karatassos asked the Georgia Historical Society not to come back for any more markers or monuments to be erected in Madison Square because it is over crowded.

Board Action:

The Historic Sites and Monument Commission recommends approval to City Council for the erection of a historical marker in Madison Square as requested with the following condition:

- PASS

1. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.
2. Work with staff on the exact location to erect the marker in Madison Square.

Vote Results

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer

Second: Giselle Rahn

Thomas Gensheimer

- Aye

Walt Harper

- Nay

Eli Karatassos

- Aye

Ryan Madson

- Not Present

Giselle Rahn

- Aye

IV. Other Business

6. [Discuss Waving Girl Statue Proposal](#)

Ms. Harris reported that recently she met with Mr. Brennan who had also met with the Park and Tree Commission. Mr. Harper suggested that she meet with them to discuss the viability of a proposal involving the Waving Girl.

Ms. Harris explained that the Waving Girl Statue at its current location is less visible than it once was to ships passing by on their way into the port. The River Walk has been extended and will provide a little more distance between the Waving Girl Statue and the ships on the river. Crepe myrtles and other vegetation have been planted, grown up and make it harder to see from the water. Mr. Brennan proposed the idea of raising the Waving Girl Statue on a pedestal to make it a little more visible. He has looked at other ideas such as moving the Waving Girl Statue towards the river to possibly be more visible. Because of the soil condition on the River Walk, they do not believe the foundation will support this.

Ms. Harris said that Mr. Brennan had some imagery drawn showing what it would look like. She showed the HSMC several different examples. He does not want to invest a lot of expense in developing this idea if it is a "no go" from the start. She said, consequently, Mr. Brennan asked if she would present this general concept to the HSMC to get their feedback as to whether they feel this idea is worth pursuing.

Ms. Harris said one suggestion she had was with the potential new redevelopment on the east end of River Street, may be there might be a public space further down as a potential possibility.

Mr. Harper explained that Mr. Brennan came to the Park & Tree Commission meeting this passed month discussing what he wants to do. He approached Park & Tree initially because the Waving Girl Statue is in a park. The Park & Tree Department maintains the monuments and the trees around the parks. Mr. Brennan informed the Park & Tree Commission that the cargo ships that pass cannot see the monument until they have passed it. Mr. Harper said if you are out in the river and that far up, you will not see it even if it is raised up. It will still be just as small, but just higher. The crepe myrtles that are planted here might not have been the most operable vegetation and landscaping that could have been put here, but they are here now. The Park & Tree Department approved a site plan by an eagle scout to clear out some of the underbrush and remove some of the crepe myrtles that are on the inside of this area to possibly give it more visibility. Mr. Harper said the site is more visible now then it was in the past. The site was cleared also because of safety concerns as people were actually living in the bushes.

Mr. Harper said he believes the reason the picture that the HSMC is looking was given to them as it gives the impression that the Waving Girl Statue is hard to see. But, the statue is not hard to see. The picture is deceiving. All nine of the Park & Tree Commissioners are in favor of doing something, but presently they are unsure of what to do. The consensus of putting the statue on a pedestal was null and void because of the its weight and the commission is unsure if the soil will support it. Mr. Brennan wanted the Park and Tree Commission to do the site plan for him, but they told him that this is not the way that it is done. Mr. Harper stated just as Ms. Harris reported, Mr. Brennan does not want to invest a lot of money into this situation if it is not going anywhere. He said that Mr. Brennan asked him about the HSMC given an opinion on this idea and he told him that since he has been on this commission, no one had asked them for their opinion on something.

Mr. Harper said if you go to the site now, you will be able to see the statue as the underbrush and some of the crepe myrtles have been removed, but as they know the crepe myrtles will continue to grow. He said from where the pilots can see the Waving Girl it is so far away. If it is raised up on a pedestal it will still look small. Therefore, putting the statue on a pedestal will not make it any larger. As he has said, the Park and Tree Commission is in favor of doing something, but what they do not know.

Mr. Karatassos said he realizes that things change overtime. May be moving the statue closer to the water might be a good idea.

Mr. Harris said she asked Mr. Brennan about moving the Waving Girl closer to the water, but he informed her that this was not a possibility because the soil was not stable enough to handle the weight of the monument base.

Mr. Karatassos said he believes that an engineer would need to study the soil before a conclusion was reached regarding the stability and whether a pedestal would be able to support the statue.

Mr. Harper said he believes Mr. Brennan wanted the City to take on the task of coming up with a plan for the relocation of the Waving Girl statue. But, the Park and Tree Commission informed him that he would have to take the responsibility of getting the specifications on this.

Mr. Karatassos said may be something else could be done to the vegetation to make it easier to see or possibly move it within that location or to another location. He said that Hutchinson Island may be a possible location. He realizes that the Waving Girl statue is important for the ships, but they don't want to put it were the citizens and tourists cannot see it. Is the statue lit at night?

Ms. Harris said she does not know if the statue is lit at night.

Mr. Harper said the statue has not been removed from its present location since it has been installed. He said he was in a boat and they were able to pull almost right up to the statue. But, this was before the River Walk was put there.

Mr. Karatassos said he believes this is a Park and Tree Commission issue more than the Historic Site and Monument Commission issue. If they wanted to relocate the statue to another location, than obviously they would be involved.

7. [Commissioner's Items](#)

8. [Next Meeting - Thursday, November 6, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E. State St.](#)

V. Adjournment

9. [Adjourned](#)

There being no further business to come before the Historic Site and Monument Commission, Mr. Karatassos adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen 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.