



## Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room  
August 3, 2017  
Meeting Minutes

### AUGUST 3, 2017 SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

Members Present: Eli Karatassos, Chair  
Thomas Gensheimer, Vice-Chair  
Alicia Blakely  
Dolores Engle  
Dr. Nicholas Henry  
Kristopher Monroe

MPC Staff Present: Ellen Harris, Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation  
Sara Farr-Newman, Historic Preservation Planner  
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

#### I. Call to Order and Welcome

##### 1. Order And Welcome

**Mr. Karatassos** called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission

#### II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

##### 2. Approval of July 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes

[July 6, 2017 Minutes.pdf](#)

##### **Motion**

The Savannah Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby approval the meeting minutes of July 6, 2017.

##### **Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer

Second: Dolores Engle

Dolores Engle	- Aye
Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Aye
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye

### III. Regular Agenda

#### [3. Petition of Paul Susznsku | 17-003005-PA | 611 Habersham Street | Mural](#)

- 📎 [Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Submittal Package.pdf](#)
- 📎 [AERIAL MAP.pdf](#)
- 📎 [HSF Comments.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Public comment- Hill.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Public comment- Friedman.pdf](#)
- 📎 [COA - 611 Habersham Street 17-003004-COA.pdf](#)

**Mr. Paul Susznsku** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Sara Farr-Newman** gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for an after-the-fact mural at 611 Habersham Street. The mural is painted onto a piece of wood and attached to the side façade of the building along the lane. The mural has a portrait of Nina Simone with a quote. It is part of a larger project called Walls of Hope. Several of the project's murals were approved after the fact by the HSMC on October 6, 2016 (16-003895-PA). Because this mural is located within the Savannah Historic District, Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) approval was also required. The HDBR approved the mural at 611 Habersham Street on July 12, 2017 (17-003004-COA). Walls of Hope's mission is to spread positive messages across the city of Savannah using artwork created by local artists, in this case Panhandle Slim. The overall theme is honoring people important to the community. The owner paid for installation and will maintain the mural until it is removed.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** stated that the staff has received public comments for and against the mural. Several of the comments are attached to the agenda.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** reported that staff recommends approval of the after the fact mural because it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that this organization has had after-the-fact murals approved by the HSMC. During that time, the HSMC informed the organization that they will need to get prior approval before installing any other murals. He asked staff if additional murals [excluding this mural] have been installed by the organization.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** answered yes.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if the murals were brought to the staff for approval.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** answered no.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if the spokesperson for Walls of Hope was present. No one came forward. Mr. Karatassos said the HSMC will hear from the petitioner, but he wanted it to be understood that when something is done outside of the direction of the HSMC whether the petitioner meets standards or not, they are not to be recommended for approval until some remedy or something has been done to remediate the problem that is obvious with this organization. They are not to go all over town as they wish putting up murals. The murals must be approved by the staff or HSMC prior to installation. Walls of Hope was given a minimum process to follow and they are not doing it. When this group initially appeared before the HSMC, they said they did not know the process. At that time, the HSMC outlined the process to them for possible installation of a mural. Now, that they have been through the process, they are still not following it. This has to stop.

#### **PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Mr. Susznsku** said he understood what was said about prior approval, but he wanted to explain that when this mural was installed, he was not told anything about the Walls of Hope. He understands that there is an annoyance and that this should have gone through proper channels. But, unfortunately, at this point the HSMC would not just be punishing the group or the artist, but the people who now really come to enjoy the mural. Mr. Susznsku said on a daily basis many people come, knock on his door and take a picture in front of the mural. Tour buses stop also. Nina Simone sang a song days after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Different age groups and races have told him how much they enjoy the artwork. Mr. Susznsku said a lot of his friends in the African community and surrounding neighborhoods have told him how much they enjoy the artwork and how much pride it shows to have a person of color with historical Savannah significances story attached to it being on display. He would hate for this to go away because they want to punish a group.

**Mr. Karatassos** explained to Mr. Susznsku that it is not to punish anyone. If they did not have some form of regulation, what is on the side of his building could easily be something completely different that no one likes. There has to be some means of regulations to keep things in proper order.

**Mr. Susznsku** said the Historic District Board of Review has approved the mural. It appears that this Board's judgment would be respected and the mural would be allowed to remain. He bought the house in 1999 and it was a boring beige wall for 17 years. But, now there is colorful artwork on the wall that tells a story that gives the community pride. However, whatever the HSMC decides, he will respect it.

**Mr. Scott Stanton** stated that he has made a prior appearance before the HSMC.

**Mr. Karatassos** informed Mr. Stanton that he appeared before the HSMC and at that time made a convincing appeal that he was not aware that he was breaking any rules and regulations as he believed he was doing the right thing. The HSMC informed him of the process that he needs to take prior to installing a mural. Mr. Karatassos asked Mr. Stanton if he was aware that this mural request was not brought before the staff for approval.

**Mr. Stanton** answered yes. This is why he came before the HSMC. He said during that time, he tried to ask questions, but was told by Mr. Karatassos to stop talking and that he could not ask questions any longer. This is the third time that he has appeared before the HSMC. They were told wherever they wanted to put up a mural, they could do so.

**Ms. Engle** stated that Mr. Stanton informed the HSMC at that time that the next time they wanted to install a mural, they would come to the HSMC.

**Mr. Stanton** said he left the meeting confused and did not know what was going on. He understood that all they had to do was complete some paperwork and submit it to them whenever a painting goes up. It seemed to be this simple and that's what they did.

**Dr. Henry** asked staff if this is what happened.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** explained that staff sent the paperwork to the persons they believed were involved in the painting, but the paperwork was never returned to staff.

**Mr. Stanton** said the mural being discussed today has nothing to do with the Walls of Hope. He did not paint the mural directly on the building. It can come down quickly and he has no problem in taking it down. He does not consider this a mural, but a sign.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Mr. Larry Tippins** said he moved downtown in 1975 on Charlton and Abercorn Streets. Presently, he does not live in Savannah, but he still owns the property. He rehabilitated a building on Huntingdon and Price Streets in 1990. Mr. Tippins said he does not like the mural. It has been said that a lot of people like this mural, but he wanted to say that a lot of people do not like it. It is a distraction.

**Mr. Tim McCoy** said he has lived in the Historic District since 1974 and has lived at 315 East Huntingdon Street since 1991. Ten years ago his wife and he built a carriage house next door to the building that is

being discussed today. When they finished the construction they got a stern letter from the Historic District Board of Review informing them that they were in violation. The offense was that they did not put the little iron latches that hold the shutters open. They were told to put the iron latches back on the shutters or they would have to remove them. So, they put the iron latches back. He stated he was at the Review Board meeting and the staff recommended denial, but there was a tie vote. The four people who voted in favor of the mural basically kicked the can down the road as they did not want to make a decision, but wanted the HSMC to make the decision. The mural is an intrusion in the historic neighborhood. His objection has nothing to do with whether Nina Simone is a good singer and song writer nor whether Dr. King was a great American, but it has to do with the traditions. If this is such an important and inspired piece of art, then move it where people can see it. The mural is not a welcome addition in their neighborhood.

**Ms. Erica Hardnett** resides at 21 Cobblestone Ct. She is a cofounder of a church in the First District and is an advocate within the community. She is a huge supporter of the Walls of Hope. She was present at the first meeting and it was her understanding [she could be mistaken] that if there was a painting that was hung, then they would take a picture and send the information to staff. This painting is not by Walls of Hope. A resident asked for the painting. This painting is something between the homeowner and the artist.

**Mr. Karatassos** informed Ms. Hardnett that her recollection of that meeting is 100% incorrect. The staff was to approve the artwork. This organization has continued to put up murals without getting staff approval. At the last meeting, the HSMC said they would forgive Walls of Hope for putting up the prior murals, but from that meeting day forward, the mural request must go to staff first, but this was ignored. The matter they are discussing today has some of the similarities that happened with the Walls of Hope. Consequently, the HSMC is dealing with two issues. One issue is with this petition and the other concerns what to do with the lack of compliance with the Walls of Hope.

**Ms. Blakely** said she was reared on Price and Duffy Streets. She appreciates the mural as she never saw anything like this in the neighborhood when she was growing up. Her vote will be for the mural to remain. She was not on the HSMC when the other decisions were made, but now that she is a member of this Commission, if something like this comes up again without going to the proper channels, she would have an issue with it. But, she believes the mural is nice, the owner believes it is nice, some members in the community believe it is nice. If the mural is taken down now, the petitioner has to go back through the proper channels; and put it back up.

**Ms. Engle** said she likes the mural too, but that is not the issue. The mural was not installed legally.

**Ms. Christine Kirkland** said she lives near this area and passes by it almost everyday. The mural is very inspirational. There are many things in Savannah that separates places and people. But, the mural is one thing that brings them together. She supports the mural. There is a need for change in this community.

**Mr. Karatassos** said the Historic Savannah Foundation (HSF) was not able to attend today's meeting, but sent a written notice that they do not support the after-the-fact mural.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION**

**Ms. Engle** said what Mr. Susznsku said might be true about people liking the mural, but this has nothing to do with what is being said now. This is the National Landmark District and there are rules that are not terribly strict. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. The HSMC has gone through this before with Panhandle Slim. This is not racial and the mural will not bring this city together. It does not matter if the mural was a Christian, Buddhist, or political symbol, the message does not have anything to do with what they are talking about today. The fact is the mural was installed before permission was asked to do so.

**Ms. Blakely** stated she was not a member of the HSMC when the mural being discussed was installed, but for the record that Mr. Stanton be told the process now so that he could not come back to them and say that he did not know the process.

**Mr. Karatassos** explained that the petitioner requested after-the-fact approval of the mural from the Historic District Board of Review as his home is in the Historic District. When a request is for a mural in

the Historic Landmark District, the HDBR and the HSMC will review the petition. If it is outside the Historic Landmark District, then the HSMC only reviews it. He said that there is not an artist in Savannah that does not know that prior approval needs to be granted before a mural is installed in the Historic Landmark District.

**Dr. Henry** stated that he likes the mural, but wanted to divulge that he lives in this area, but he does not have a conflict of interest.

**Mr. Monroe** said he wanted to offer a compromise. A requirement be that when someone puts up public art that weather treatment is put on it. This will enable the public art not to fade, etc. He lives around the corner and sees the mural being discussed today all the time. Kroger Grocery store is in this area and a huge bus is here too. He realizes that this is not in their purview, but if they are going to talk about the community, the huge bus has flowers, peace symbols, etc. painted on it. The painted bus is in one block from 611 Habersham Street. Mr. Monroe said the point he is making is that you can see this and it is not aesthetically pleasing. Maybe the HSMC could inform the petitioner to weather treat the mural and then they would approve it as it is only there for a certain amount of time.

**Mr. Karatassos** said he was trying to get the HSMC to the point where they approve or disapprove the mural. He did not want them to make motions after motions for approval or disapproval.

**Dr. Henry** stated that he did not believe the HSMC could talk about a compromise. This has to be voted up or down. The artist has had his one time of not knowing the rules. The HSMC needs to go on record asking the City Council to start enforcing their own rules.

**Mr. Karatassos** said this is something that the HSMC can look into. They can direct the staff to make this inquiry to City Council. But, today he is asking for an up or down vote. He believes it is the HSMC's responsibility based on what has been given to them is to follow the rule.

**Mr. Karatassos** entertained a motion.

**NOTE:** Mr. Karatassos, after the votes were cast, asked staff to make an inquiry to City Council asking for some instructions on what the HSMC could do if a petitioner repeatedly install murals without going through the proper process.

#### **Motion**

The Savannah Historic Site and Monument Commission moved to approve the mural.

#### **Vote Results ( Rejected )**

Motion: Alicia Blakely

Second: Kristopher Monroe

Dolores Engle - Nay

Thomas Gensheimer - Nay

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Nay

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Alicia Blakely - Aye

#### **Motion**

The Savannah Historic Site and Monument Commission moved to deny the mural.

#### **Vote Results ( Rejected )**

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer	
Second: Dolores Engle	
Dolores Engle	- Aye
Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Nay
Eli Karatassos	- Nay
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Nay

[4. Petition of Audrey Wagner for Carlstedts LLC | 17-004222-PA | 515 Barnard Street | Murals](#)

- [☞ Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
- [☞ Mural Design.pdf](#)
- [☞ Artist Example.pdf](#)
- [☞ AERIAL MAP.pdf](#)
- [☞ Building Image.pdf](#)
- [☞ HSF Comments.pdf](#)
- [☞ COA - 515 Barnard Street 17-002813-COA Approved Conditions.pdf](#)

**Ms. Audrey Wagner** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Sara Farr-Newman** gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for murals at 515 Barnard Street. The murals will replace bright green panels that currently exist on the Barnard Street façade of the building. The murals will be stylized flower designs with a grey/black background. The murals were approved by the Historic Board of Review on July 12, 2017 (17-002813-COA). The artist is Kyle Millsap. He graduated from SCAD and has painted large scale murals for SCAD, Facebook, Parker’s Market, Byrd Cookie Company, and is working with the new West Elm Hotel. The business is paying for the installation and maintenance of the mural, which is located on private property. 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. Farr-Newman** reported that staff recommends approval of the mural because it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

**PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Ms. Wagner** explained that local flowers will be painted on the mural that are not sold in the cut market.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that he lives in this area. and drives by this building often. He went by the building on yesterday and personally, he believes the mural will look great here.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Mr. Edward J. Cording** resides at 119 West Huntingdon Street. Mr. Cording said Carlstedt's is a good neighbor. From their porches they can see Carlstedt's. Mr. Cording said the neighbors have mixed feelings about the project because presently the panels are basically a bright neon avocado color. He has one concern as he believes the panels will be ten foot square panels and will be a continuous picture. They will see the flowers rather than having the seasons in the backdrop. It also appears that essentially there will be five large billboards that will be advertising for Carlstedt's.

**Mr. Karatassos** explained that if these were billboards, they would not be permitted. It has been determined that these are not billboards. They are not selling anything that will be depicted and this is not advertisement.

Mr. Karatassos stated he believed he heard Mr. Cording say that presently neon boards are here.

**Mr. Cording** stated that perhaps the color did not turn out as all the people wanted, but he does not find it unacceptable in their neighborhood. However, a simple background would be better instead of advertising the flowers.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that this is private property and the petitioner is not doing anything that would be unacceptable according to the rules and regulations governing murals.

**Ms. Blakely** asked if Carlstedt's is a flower shop.

**Ms. Wagner** explained that Carlstedt's sell cut flowers to the public and to the trade, but they do not sell the flowers and foliage that is depicted in the mural because they are landscaping plants. Therefore, it is different. This is not a historic building. They are not painting on the brick.

**Ms. Rexanna Lester** stated that she owns 514-516 Tattall Street. Carlstedt's is in her backyard and she loves it.

#### **Motion**

The Savannah Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby approve the mural because it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

#### **Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Dolores Engle	- Aye
Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Aye
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Aye

#### **IV. Other Business**

##### [5. Update on Walls of Hope](#)

[📎 Walls of Hope Update.pdf](#)

**Mr. Karatassos** said Walls of Hope continues putting up murals in the city without getting approval. The meetings are held at the MPC office and is staffed with members of the MPC staff who work on issues and make a report to the HSMC, but the HSMC is not an MPC board.

**Mr. Gensheimer** asked if Walls of Hope has put up any other murals without prior approval.

**Ms. Farr-Newman** explained that a few murals were installed that the HSMC did not approve and a few went up without staff approval, all of which have been removed. Staff sent letters to Wall of Hope informing them of same.

**Mr. Karatassos** explained that this is a part of the enforcement inquiry to City Council. The City needs to inform the HSMC how they are to deal with this.

##### [6. Commissioner Items](#)

[7. Next Meeting - Thursday, September 7, 2017 at 4:00 pm in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E State Street](#)

## V. Adjournment

### 8. Adjourned

There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Mr. Karatassos adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen I. Harris  
Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

EIH:mem

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