



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
May 3, 2018 4:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

MAY 3, 2018 SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

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

MPC Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director of Chatham County-Savannah MPC
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

Dr. Henry called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission,

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Melanie Wilson, the new executive director of the MPC.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2. Approve April 5, 2018 Meeting Minutes

[April 5, 2018 Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

The Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission does hereby approve April 5, 2018 Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Abstain

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Aye
Ron Melander	- Aye

III. Regular Agenda

[3. Petition of City of Savannah | 18-001750-MON | 2005 Waters Avenue | History Kiosk](#)

- 📎 [Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Panel Design.pdf](#)
- 📎 [AERIAL MAP.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Submittal package.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Suggested Edits.pdf](#)

Mr. Dan Fisher of MC Engineering and **Mr. Doug Patten** were present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Sara Farr-Newman gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for an information kiosk on the right of way adjacent to 2005 Waters Avenue. The kiosk is proposed to be metal with a decorative awning over the panels. The panels are proposed to include historic information and images related to Waters Avenue as well as a map of important locations. She explained that a few minor grammatical corrections need to be made to the text, but overall the text is accurate. She stated that Ms. Luciana Spracher, Research Librarian, was a part of the initial review, but not the final review. Letters were mailed to the abutting property owners within 200 feet of the subject property. A public hearing letter was mailed to the neighborhood associations and the property was posted with the public notice hearing sign. Staff did not receive any public comments.

Ms. Farr-Newman reported that staff recommends approval of the proposed monument in the right of way at 2005 Waters Avenue with the conditions the requested text changes are made and the company making the kiosk is specified, because otherwise the standards are met.

Mr. Karatassos asked if metal material is on the kiosk.

Ms. Farr-Newman explained that materials on the kiosk are metal and fiberglass.

Mr. Monroe wanted the Research Librarian to review the final text and correct the grammatical errors.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Fisher said the park on Waters Avenue has been built. The frames for the sign will be built soon. The sign will look like the sign at the Roundhouse Museum on the corner of West Liberty Street. Also, at Laurel Grove Cemetery a tabletop designed kiosk is there.

Mr. Patten stated that this is a part of the Waters Avenue Revitalization Project. The park is next to the City owned shopping center at 37th Street and Waters Avenue. They are working hard to highlight the Waters Avenue corridor.

Mr. Monroe asked the petitioner if the neighborhood was notified.

Mr. Fisher answered that questionnaires were sent to the neighborhood, but not much interest was shown from the neighborhood. They spoke with the former mayor, Dr. Otis S. Johnson, as he was raised in this area. They talked with several people when they were designing the project. They held two public meetings.

Ms. Harris explained that the Waters Avenue project has been ongoing for approximately the last ten years. There has been extensive public outreach as a part of this project. What they are reviewing today is a small piece of the entire Waters Avenue Corridor project.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. McIver came forward and stated that she lives in the 1100 Block across the street from the shopping center and she did not know about the project until recently. She received the public hearing notice about the meeting, but she asked others in the area if they were coming to the meeting but was told that they were not coming. She does not know if they received the notice or if they were not interested.

Ms. Farr-Newman explained that the public notices were sent to the property owners.

HSMC Discussion

The Commission discussion centered around whether any historians reviewed this petition. It was explained that Ms. Spracher, the City's historian, reviewed the text, but she did not review the final text. The Commission asked that Ms. Spracher review the final text. They also discussed the public notification procedure.

Ms. Harris explained that she believes the public is saying that they would like to hear about the project early on so that they may provide input earlier in the process. She believes this would be the petitioner's responsibility to reach out and engage the neighborhood associations. Maybe this is something that the Commission could suggest to City Council that there be more neighborhood outreach.

Motion

The Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission does hereby recommend approval to City Council to approve the proposed monument in the right of way at 2005 Waters Avenue with the following conditions:

- 1.The requested text changes are made;
- 2.The company making the kiosk is specified;
- 3.The City Director of the Research Library and Municipal Archives reviews the final text;

because otherwise the standards are met.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Ron Melander

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Abstain
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Aye
Ron Melander	- Aye

📎 [AERIAL MAP.pdf](#)

📎 [Submittal Package.pdf](#)

Mr. Christian Sottile was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Farr-Newman gave the staff report. The applicant is requesting approval for a new monument at 400 West River Street. The monument will honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and will be located in the park that is part of the new Plant Riverside Development.

Ms. Farr-Newman reported that staff recommends approval of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. monument at 400 West River Street with the following conditions to be provided for staff approval prior to installation:

1. A coating or other protective measure is put in place for the granite;
2. The size and location of the artist's signature is specified;
3. Additional information on the sources and copyright information is provided for the text;
4. The requested text changes are made;

Because otherwise the work meets the standards.

Dr. Henry stated that Dr. King always reminded him of a soldier and military monuments always point in the direction of the enemy. What is the reasoning for the statue pointing towards Washington, DC?

Ms. Farr-Newman explained that this was discussed with the committee. The committee believed that with Dr. King looking towards the river would bring people into the park as well as placing towards Washington, DC was an appropriate choice for the monument.

Mr. Gensheimer asked who is funding the monument.

Ms. Farr-Newman answered that the monument is being funded by the Kessler Corporation.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Sottile said it was an honor for him to have the opportunity to support and coordinate this very important addition to Savannah's public space. He introduced Mr. Richard Kessler, the sponsor for the monument, and the former mayor of Savannah, Mrs. Edna Jackson, who assembled a working group to enhance the development of this project. They have worked on the project many months. He thanked the Georgia Historical Society for their research on the project. Mr. Sottile also thanked the MPC staff for their comments and thorough review of the application. They concur with all of staff's recommendations.

Mr. Kessler thanked the HSMC for hearing their petition. The monument is special to them at the Plant Riverside Development. As the HSMC is aware, they have gone before City Council on several occasions. During one of the occasions, they laid out their plan for a park on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. In the park, he thought it would be highly important to have a bronze statute of Dr. King here. City Council was very enthusiastic about the idea; therefore, they sought to finalize their plan. The artist who is doing the work is a friend who he met in Florida. As with most projects, the price increases and before the park is completed, they will have several hundreds of thousands dollars invested in it. However, he believes this is worth it; and it is very important that they erect the statute of Dr. King. He believes the park is the perfect location for it. There are many people who come to River Street. They are excited about this.

Mr. Kessler said he asked the former mayor, Mayor Jackson, to head up a task force to help them with this task. Mrs. Jackson has formed her task force who has worked very diligently, thinking through this project. They realize that Dr. King's family has to approve this. Their plans are to open the park in March 2019. He thanked the HSMC for their consideration.

Mr. Karatassos said it strikes him that people coming up Martin Luther Jr. King Boulevard should see the front and not the back. He believes the committee gave a lot of consideration to this, but people are coming to the statue from MLK Jr. Boulevard and the plaza and not coming from the water. Therefore, to see Dr. King's face is the most compelling part of the entire statue. Mr. Karatassos said his other

reasoning for saying this is because a hedge will surround the southern side of the statue, which would act as a deterrent. They have had to create buffers for other monuments. He believes that somehow a way needs to be found to keep people from walking directly up to the monument.

Ms. Blakely asked if there was something that would prohibit the committee from turning the monument around so that the public would see Dr. King's face instead of his back when approaching the statue.

Mr. Kessler reminded the HSMC that most people will most likely approach the monument from the river. The park is in Dr. King's honor and, therefore, he would hate to have his back to the park. Consequently, he feels strongly that Dr. King should face his park. As he has said, the people will be coming from the River Walk.

Mr. Sottile said they were careful to create a safe place for the monument that is well contained. Dr. King's eyes are to the river and the park in his honor. In terms of accessibility, safety concerns and keeping it out of a place where vandalism could occur, it is in a visible location. But, it is also fully accessible. They looked at the ADA passage to the monument from the river.

Ms. Blakely asked Mrs. Jackson if she and the committee were comfortable with the monument being placed as is.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Jackson came forward and said she is very excited about this project. The committee gave consideration as to whether the front of the monument should be turned to the front or to the back. As they looked at the plans, it is very important that the people see the face as this will be a park where concerts and many other activities will be held.

Mrs. Jackson introduced the committee members who worked on this project. They were: Mrs. Juanita Adams, a retired public relations director of Savannah State University, Dr. Freddie Gilyard, a retired principal of Savannah-Chatham Public School system; and Mrs. Shirley James, a retired administrator of Savannah State University. She thanked Mr. Kessler for bringing the project to them. Under her administration as mayor, they worked diligently with Mr. Kessler to get the approval on the state and local level. It has been a joy for them to do so.

Mrs. Jackson respectfully asked the HSMC to approve the monument. The text has been critiqued. As Mr. Kessler has said, the grand opening will be in March 2019. This is no greater time as the first sit-in movement started in Savannah March 25, 1960. Consequently, this truly will be an eye opener. They have already met with MPC and now the work will be done.

Motion

The Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission does hereby approve the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. monument at 400 West River Street with the following conditions to be provided for staff approval prior to installation:

- 1.A coating or other protective measure is put in place for the granite;
- 2.The size and location of the artist's signature is specified;
- 3.Additional information on the sources and copyright information is provided for the text;
- 4.The requested text changes are made;

Because otherwise the work meets the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Alicia Blakely

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Abstain
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Aye
Ron Melander	- Aye

IV. Other Business

[5. Commissioner Items](#)

[6. Next Meeting - Thursday, June 7, 2018 at 4:00 pm in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E State Street](#)

V. Adjournment

[7. Adjourned](#)

Mr. Monroe stated that when it comes to historically related items, etc., maybe a part of the approval needs to be an outreach to the community. As Ms. McIver said she was not aware of the kiosk until she got notice about the HSMC hearing.

Ms. Harris said to the HSMC that she believes it would be helpful for the HSMC to look at the master plan guidelines and add something there that the petitioners conduct additional neighborhood outreach. She believes that as a Board, the HSMC will not go out soliciting proposals or developing the projects. This type of interaction should occur as the project develops, which is being done by the petitioner.

Ms. Wilson explained that she has looked at the type of outreach that is being done. There is a form that they can use as a part of the application packet that shows the applicant has committed to having neighborhood meetings. This form comes back with the application. Ms. Wilson said she already has some language regarding this. The staff will bring the information to the HSMC to get their feedback. She is also looking at the 200 feet distance requirement as this is not really much distance when you are talking about something that will impact the entire community. Ms. Wilson knows that other areas distance requirement is 500 feet. They want to ensure that the neighborhood gets the opportunity to provide some input.

There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Dr. Henry adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

EIH:mem

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