



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
June 6, 2019
Meeting Minutes

JUNE 6, 2019 SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Members Present: Kristopher Monroe, Vice-Chairman
Alicia Blakely
Thomas Gensheimer
Eli Karatassos
Sean Mannion

Member Absent: Dr. Nicholas Henry, Chair

MPC Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Pamela Everett, Esq., Assistant Executive Director
Leah Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation
Ryan Jarles, Cultural Resources Planner
Alyson Smith, Historic Preservation Planner
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

I. Call to Order and Welcome

[1. Call to order and Welcome](#)

Mr. Monroe called the meeting to order at 4:10 and welcomed everyone in attendance. He outlined the role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

[2. Approve May 2, 2019 Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 May 2, 2019 Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

The Savannah-Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby approve May 2, 2019 Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer

- Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Not Present
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Not Present
Sean Mannion	- Aye

III. Regular Agenda

[3. Sean Mannion | 19-002884-HM | 1401 East 58th Street | Naming](#)

📎 [19-002884-HM.pdf](#)

📎 [Application Petition Request - 1401 East 58th Street 19-002884-HM.pdf](#)

📎 [Submittal Packet - 1401 East 58th Street 19-002884-HM.pdf](#)

NOTE: Mr. Sean Mannion recused himself from participating in this petition. He is petitioner of this application.

Mr. Joe Shearouse, Jr. was present on behalf of the petition.

Mr. Ryan Jarles gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting to name an unnamed park, located east of Cedar Street between East 58th Street and Delesseps Avenue within the City of Savannah's 3rd District to "Edgemere-Sackville Neighborhood Park." Originally, the lots that the park is located on were designed for American small houses that were popular in the mid-century. The buildings were since demolished, and the lots have been vacant for several years since the construction of the Harry S. Truman Parkway which now runs adjacent to the site. The vacant lots were privately owned until they were purchased by the city with funding sourced from the "Savannah Shines" program.

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

Mr. Jarles reported that staff recommends approval of the request to name the park "Edgemere-Sackville Neighborhood Park" because the application meets all the standards.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Shearouse thanked the Commission for hearing the petition. He entertained questions from the HSMC.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Motion

The Savannah-Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends to City Council approval of the request to name the park "Edgemere-Sackville Neighborhood Park" because the application meets all the standards.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Alicia Blakely

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Not Present
Eli Karatassos	- Not Present
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Alicia Blakely	- Aye
Sean Mannion	- Abstain

IV. Other Business

4. Discussion with City of Savannah Code Compliance Department

Mr. Todd Desautels was present on behalf of the City of Savannah Code Compliance Department.

Mr. Desautels came forward and introduced himself. He entertained questions from the Commission.

Mr. Mannion asked that with the recent change of Property Maintenance to Code Enforcement regarding murals, blight, graffiti, etc., what is the citing process for the code compliance enforcers?

Mr. Desautels stated that the process has not changed. He explained that basically if there is an infraction on the property, the tenant and/or the property owner is given a notice of recondition form or a housing code form. Either way the individual is given notification that a problem is present and is given a number of days to get the problem rectified. Depending on what occurs and what is the problem, extensions may be granted. For example, if a roof is falling in, siding falling off, broken windows, or grass overgrown, when the inspector goes back in 31 days and the grass is cut, the individual has started on the permanent roof, putting the siding on, etc., the individual will be given an extension. However, if nothing has been done to the property, the individual will be given a subpoena. Once the case goes to court, it could drag on for years.

Mr. Mannion asked how often does Code Compliance cite individuals for overgrown debris.

Mr. Desautels answered daily.

Mr. Mannion asked how often are citizens cited for property violations.

Mr. Desautels answered that the citizens are cited daily for property violations. Individuals call 3-1-1. An officer could come to work any given day and find that he/she has six or eight cases for that day. Code Compliance has 20+ officers working on violations daily.

Mr. Mannion said he lives in an area where this is not the case as stated by Mr. Desautels. He explained that he is looking at this from a perspective of murals which sparked this entire discussion.

Mr. Desautels explained that the MPC's definition for murals does not meet Webster's Dictionary definition. Therefore, the HSMC's definition for a mural clouds the definition of a sign that is enforced by Code Compliance. He said there is no city ordinance to enforce murals. There is an MPC permit for murals which is given by the HSMC. Some could be classified as murals by HSMC's definition, but could be classified as signs by the city. However, the discussions he is having with his boss is how do they enforce what he perceives to be a sign because it is on a fence as opposed to being a mural because the HSMC allows it to be placed on a house. A mural is something that is painted directly onto something. If he has a blank wall in front of him and it is painted thereon, that's a mural. But, if he takes a 4 x 4 piece of plywood and paints on it and puts it on a house, that's not a mural, but a sign. There is some terminology that makes enforcement difficult; one particularly is paintings.

Mr. Karatassos stated that MPC is a commission that works with the city and county and conducts hearings and meetings. Based on the laws of the city[he has worked for the MPC and the city years ago], MPC does not have laws, but enforces the laws of the city [in this case] and not their own laws. Therefore as in the HSMC's case [he is a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals], they do not have MPC rules that they uphold, but rules of the City of Savannah that they uphold. Therefore, the

definition of the HSMC has a certain definition, it is the City of Savannah's definition whether or not Code Compliance knows it or not; or whether they approve of it or not. It is not a definition of HSMC as they only hear the petition and turn it over to the City of Savannah to enforce it.

Mr. Desautels said if he searches municode and types in murals, no definition appears. When he gets an application from the MPC, it defines what the murals are.

Mr. Karatassos stated that this is not MPC's definition.

Mr. Monroe said he understood the definition between murals and signs; and he believes it is legitimate. He was wondering if it would be helpful if the HSMC's application was revised to make it more in compliance with the language that the City is using?

Mr. Desautels said they have several applications for several things.

Mr. Mannion asked Mr. Desautels what does he believe would be a better process to help him better define in his realm and the HSMC to be more specific in their language?

Mr. Desautels answered that a mural is something that is painted directly on a structure's building wall.

Mr. Monroe used the following scenario: Artist X comes to the HSMC and wants to paint a mural on a wall, but it is not painted directly on a building, therefore, it is not a mural, but a painting that is on public ground? Does it make a difference whether it is painted directly on the wall or actually placed on the wall?

Mr. Desautels answered that if he followed Mr. Monroe's question, this would be a sign and would need a sign permit. They would ask the owner to take it down because it is temporary or because of the way it is affixed to a certain location. There are many variables.

Mr. Karatassos said he agrees with Mr. Desautels, Everything was being applied to the building. It has only been about one and one-half years ago that the things started being painted on wood or some surface. He agrees that this should not be considered a mural, but a question then is raised when is it a mural and when is it not a mural? He said he does not like a lot of these temporary signs which are put up without any scrutiny until it is finally brought before the HSMC. He said Mr. Desautels raised a fundamental question. The City has to either adopt what the HSMC is doing or the HSMC has to adopt what the City is doing. They can not keep going on in two different ways.

Mr. Desautels said he has spoken with his supervisor about there has to be a clear line for the definition of a mural and a sign. There needs to be amendments made to one if not both so they can have a regular enforcement toward the signs. On one corner something could be approved as a mural and around the corner something has been approved by HSMC in the same fashion that really does not meet and is in violation of the sign ordinance.

Mr. Gensheimer told Mr. Desautels that they need to definitely establish what a sign is. He assumes that a sign is something of a commercial nature.

Mr. Desautels said there is more than one definition for a sign. There are temporary signs, advertisement signs, business signs, and religious signs. He said if you go to municode, you can pull up the definition.

Ms. Blakely said she read something different than what Mr. Desautels is saying. She understood that a person could have whatever they want in their yard, but it cannot be over a certain square footage. She said the City cannot make someone remove something that was put on their private property.

Mr. Desautels said a political sign is a temporary sign as the election does not last

Ms. Blakely injected that a political sign can remain on private property as long as the person wants it. She said this is Georgia law.

Mr. Desautels explained that presently the political signs are enforced as temporary signs.

Mr. Karatassos said the HSMC is an agency through the City. The HSMC works for the city and, therefore, they need to comply with what the city is enforcing. If the city enforcement is that it has to be on the structure or on the fence and not on a separate piece of something and attached to it.

Ms. Michalak said this is the first time that she has heard this. She believes the issue is Code Compliance has an entirely new staff and they are not on the same page. The mural policy was developed with Property Maintenance and adopted by City Council. This means that they all should be on the same page. She did not know that there was a lack of the mural definition.

Mr. Mannion said at the May 2, 2019 meeting, the HSMC was informed that there are 43 approved murals in the City of Savannah. Of this amount, there are 21 murals that were penned by PanHandle Slim. But, it was said that only one mural was seen belonging to PanHandle Slim.

Mr. Desautels said he typed the dictionary's definition for a mural when doing the report, which means that something is actually painted on a wall.

Mr. Karatassos said this is the only mural that is painted in the Historic District. The remaining ones are signs.

Mr. Desautels said when he received the email from staff, he only saw one painting that was a mural. Subsequently, it changed when he was provided the paperwork from MPC. At the top of the page, a mural's definition is stated.

Mr. Mannion said he was reading the HSMC's staff report and there is no mural definition stated on this report. It just shows that the HSMC asked the staff for a list of all approved murals. There is no mention in this memo about the definition of a mural, etc. Mr. Mannion said to him, there is an approved City definition of what a mural is and then there is a dictionary meaning for murals. Mr. Mannion said the gray areas needs to be fixed.

Ms. Michalak said in the Master Plan and Guidelines that was adopted by the City of Savannah in 2013 to include the Mural Policy, there is a definition for a mural. This definition was adopted by the City of Savannah. Should this be the definition that Code Compliance follows? She read the approved definition.

Mr. Monroe said there are murals and there are signs. He asked Mr. Desautels what he suggests be done to solve this matter to be more in compliance with what the City is doing?

Mr. Desautels said this is something that he and his supervisor have spoken about. They plan to get with Ms. Michalak and her staff and talk about this. They have a couple of other things that they want to address.

Mr. Monroe told Mr. Desautels that this dialogue was helpful.

Mr. Desautels said they definitely want things to work together. He said the smoother things are for the HSMC means the smoother it will be for Code Compliance.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, MPC Executive Director, said Webster Dictionary can not be used for everything. This is why the MPC has a staff that works as a team. She believed that when this new unit was created by the City that persons were not properly trained. People have different definitions based on whatever their mission is. The definition that was read by staff and approved by the City is the definition that Code Compliance should be using. There are some other definitions that were approved by the City of Savannah's City Council.

Ms. Wilson said it is her goal to work with Code Compliance to ensure that they have the current definition for a mural that they need to be enforcing. They have run into this with a few other departments. There are a number of documents they need to go over together so they know clearly what the definitions are. If the sign ordinance is being enforced, some one has to be out there measuring the size of the sign. She said that Mr. Karatassos is correct. They need to look at the policies and once they are approved this is what is enforced.

Ms. Blakely asked Mr. Desautels when will Code Compliance get with the MPC staff on signs. Are they going to have a meeting on all signs and present it to City Council or are they going to get other people involved?

Mr. Desautels said he has spoken with his supervisor and he is working with Ms. Michalak. They have identified some areas around the City where signs/murals are up. There is no reason for them to present this to City Council as this does not pertain to traffic. Therefore, he will meet with Ms. Michalak and her staff and look at what they have. They will go over the definitions, etc. Since November, 2018, they have had eight ordinance changes/implementations.

Mr. Monroe thanked Mr. Desautels for coming to the HSMC's meeting.

[5. Commissioner's Items](#)

[6. Staff Items](#)

[7. Next Regular Meeting - Thursday, July 11, 2019 \(NOTE CHANGE OF DATE\) at 4:00 p.m. - Location to be Determined](#)

[8. Alternative Meeting Schedule - Location to be Determined](#)

[9. Resolution of Appreciation](#)

Ms. Michalak explained that today is Mr. Karatasso's last meeting. His effective term date from the Commission is July 1, 2019. As Mr. Karatassos left the meeting early, his resolution will be mailed to him.

V. Adjournment

[10. Adjourned](#)

There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Mr. Monroe adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah Michalak
Director of Historic Preservation

LGM: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.