



## Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 East State Street  
March 5, 2020 4:00 P.M.  
MINUTES

### MARCH 5, 2020 SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Members Present: Dr. Nicholas Henry, Chair  
Kristopher Monroe, Vice-Chairman  
Thomas Gensheimer  
Sean Mannion

Members Absent: Lisa Watson

MPC Staff Present: Leah Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation  
Ryan Jarles, Cultural Resources Planner  
Bri Finau, Administrative Assistant

#### I. Call to Order and Welcome

#### II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

##### [1. Approve January 2, 2020 Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 01.02.20 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

#### **Motion**

Approve January 2, 2020 Historic Site and Monument Meeting Minutes as presented.

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

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Aye

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Not Present

#### III. Regular Agenda

##### [2. Petition of 13 Bricks | 20-000971-PA | 321 Habersham Street | Mural](#)

[📎 Application - 321 Habersham Street 19-003961-PA.pdf](#)

☉ [COA 20-000333 321 Habersham St.pdf](#)

☉ [Letters of Support.pdf](#)

☉ [Sanborn Maps.pdf](#)

☉ [VICINITY MAP 20-000971-PA.pdf](#)

☉ [20-000971-PA Recommendation.pdf](#)

☉ [Letters of Opposition.pdf](#)

☉ [DNA Opposition to Mural at 321 Habersham.pdf](#)

☉ [321 Habersham Submittal Packet..pdf](#)

☉ [Determination from Zoning Administrator.pdf](#)

**Mr. Ryan Jarles** provided the applicant's request for approval of the installation of a mural on the garden wall of 321 Habersham Street. The mural is proposed to be scientific illustrations of various plants and animals in addition to scientific nomenclature.

With the proposed location for the mural being within the Savannah National Historic Landmark District and the Savannah Local Historic District, the color change of the stucco wall first had to be reviewed by the Historic District Board of Review. On February 12, 2020 the Board approved the petition for a color change (mural) on a non-historic courtyard wall at 321 Habersham Street with the condition that the mural receive HSMC approval prior to installation, because otherwise the work is visually compatible and meets the standards.

The theme of the mural is described by the applicant as being "Plants and Animals". The mural is proposed as being plants and animals compiled into a rectangular section of the stucco wall. When reviewing the mural against the historic and socio-cultural context of the neighborhood the location of the property was taken into consideration. The mural is proposed to be installed onto the garden wall of the inner most northwest tything lot to Troup Square. The tything lot historically was the location of a residential home which is still present with the addition of a basement commercial use; the utilization of a basement commercial use is permitted and has been a present condition since at least the 1950s according to Sanborn Map research. Although having been the location of a commercial use since at least the 1950s, Troup Square overall has successfully held a residential visual appearance; staff believes the intent to be respectful to the commercial use of the tything lot is met, however, staff believes the proposed mural would not be respectful to the historic and socio-cultural context of the surrounding neighborhood/community.

The proposed paint type is acrylic. If the petition is approved by the Board, ensure that the proposed paint type is of superior quality and is intended for exterior use. If the mural is approved by the Board, ensure that the mural has a weatherproof or vandalism resistant coating.

There were 29 opposition letters received, and 3 in support. The applicant provided works of similar size and has demonstrated the artist's capabilities.

**Mr. Monroe** asked what was the HDBR's response. Mr. Jarles informed there was a split vote, but the Board determined the mural to be appropriate in the Landmark District. According to Mr. Jarles, the Zoning Administrator stated it was not a sign, just a mural. **Ms. Michalak** stated this has been the first permanent mural the HDBR has approved during her tenure; all the others were temporary.

**Mr. Van Ellison-Seales**, the petitioner, stated he was willing to address the concerns of the neighborhood. He stated it is appropriate, positive and interesting. He stated the property is

leased by Fox & Fig restaurant. He stated he does mostly indoor murals, and has done several outdoor murals, as shown on his website.

**Clay Emke**, co-owner of Fox & Fig, stated he wants to consider the feelings of the area residents. He states he does not view it as an advertisement or local representation, but a global idea.

**Mr. Monroe** stated many of the neighbors stated they were not contacted.

**Mr. Emke** stated the outreach was to the restaurant patrons and residents in the area; he stated he did not go door-to-door or attend the neighborhood meetings. He stated the wall is blank and needs something. He wants to honor historic Savannah and beautify the area.

**Ms. Michalak** stated the public notices were sent, but believes the concern was that the restaurant representatives did not reach out personally.

**Mr. Rob Becker**, area resident, stated he was representing himself and 29 other opposers. No one feels the mural is compatible with the neighborhood. There is overwhelming opposition. Four of the seven design standards were not met for this project, with community support being one of the standards not met. He stated he reached out to the owners of Fox & Fig, with no response. The Troupe Square residents request denial of this petition.

**Mr. Emke** stated he was not aware of any effort to contact him. He stated they've tried to work with the neighbors, with resistance.

**Mr. Bob Rosenwald** presented his perception of the HDBR meeting, resulting in voting only on a color change, leaving the mural decision to the HSMC. He believes the mural is perfect for an area like Starland District. He agrees the white wall is bleak. If this wall were to be approved for a mural, that would open the door for others. It conflicts with the character of the area, and it is not a mixed use-commercial area; it is mixed use-residential. He states by definition, this mural is a sign for the restaurant. He and his colleagues request denial of the petition.

**Mr. Ryan Arvay** of the Historic Savannah Foundation, stated their Architectural Review Committee deemed this project as inappropriate for the Landmark District. It is visually incompatible, regardless of talent. The Landmark District is the highest echelon of historic districts and it needs to be preserved and protected. It does fall into signage. It would be better in a different neighborhood, such as Starland.

**Ms. Michalak** stated the Zoning Administrator stated it is not a sign, based on the Zoning Code. One would have to appeal that legal determination.

**Ms. Susan Atkinson**, area resident, stated the cohesiveness of the neighborhood will be broken with the mural. She recommended the mural could be inside the restaurant and be viewed through the glass windows. She stated the wall could be updated with plants, lending to tranquility. She reiterated the neighborhood support is lacking, and is concerned that one mural will open the door to others.

**Mr. Jerry Lominack**, area resident, stated Fox & Fig has been a good neighbor. He said he doesn't feel the mural would be inappropriate if done correctly. He stated the representation is clipart, not indicative of an actual mural.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION**

**Mr. Monroe** agrees it is clipart presented as an example, as he is very familiar with the artist, but is concerned about the opposition from the neighbors. He asked Mr. Emke if there is another creative solution. He stated it can go a long way if the petitioner reaches out to the neighborhood rather than notices from the MPC, to contribute to being a 'good neighbor'.

**Mr. Gensheimer** stated it's not the duty of the Board to judge the artwork as to whether its clipart or quality, but community opposition makes it hard to provide a supportive vote.

**Mr. Mannion** stated art is subjective. Letting people know your intent is much better than receiving a notice from another entity. The residents have to look at it every day.

**Mr. Emke** apologized for the manner in which they were noticed; he thought the COA was the notice. He said he understood the feelings of the residents, however, he was just allowing the process to have its due.

**Mr. Rosenwald** stated he wanted to make it known that the DNA was aware, they just felt it wasn't appropriate.

**Mr. Ellison-Seales** stated he apologizes also. He stated the diverse community does support public artwork; he does not want to inhibit progress and diversity.

**Ms. Jenny Rutherford**, building owner, stated they have much support for art in the community. Many work during the day and can't be here for the meeting.

**Motion**

Staff recommends denial of the installation of a mural on the garden wall of 321 Habersham Street because the mural proposal does not meet all standards set forth within the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

**Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Aye
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Not Present

**IV. Other Business**

**V. Adjournment**

[3. Next Regular Meeting - Thursday, April 2, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. in the Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 East State Street](#)

***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.***