

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC)  
MINUTES  
September 16, 2019

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting on September 16, 2019, in the conference room of the Metro Historical Commission office at 3000 Granny White Pike, with Commission Chair Clay Bailey presiding.

**Commissioners Present:** Dr. Clay Bailey, Chair; Davis Acker, Bob Allen, Menié Bell, John Bridges, Christopher Cotton, Dr. Don Cusic, Michelle Hall, Jim Hoobler, Lynn Maddox, Dr. Bill McKee, Chakita Patterson, Gerry Searcy, E. Thomas Wood, **were present**. Linda Wynn and County Historian Dr. Carole Bucy **did not attend**.

**Guests Present:** Phil Thomason, Thomason & Associates

**Staff Members Present:** Tim Walker, Sean Alexander, Scarlett Miles, Susie Pallas, Jessica Reeves and Robin Zeigler were present.

Chair Dr. Clay Bailey called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. after verifying that a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Dr. Clay Bailey**

Dr. Clay Bailey welcomed the new Commissioners and Phil Thomason, commented on the good turnout and asked for approval of the August minutes. Bob Allen made a motion to approve, Menié Bell provided a second, and the August minutes were unanimously approved.

**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION PRESENTATION –Phil Thomason**

Phil Thomason gave a presentation about a Multiple Property Documentation Form and the National Register Nomination of the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building. These are a part of the Section 106 mitigation for the Envision Cayce public housing redevelopment. He gave us historical context by discussing federal policy and the specific public housing projects in Nashville from 1938 to 1965, including Andrew Jackson Courts, Cheatham Place, Cayce Place, Napier Place, Edgehill Apartments, Sudekum Apartments, Edgefield Manor and Gernert Studio Apartments. These properties are the most significant public housing projects remaining in Nashville and meet National Register criteria in the areas of Architecture, Community Planning and Development, Ethnic Heritage, Politics/Government and Social History. In addition to sharing details about the architecture of the housing projects, Phil also showed us photographs and floor and site plans. The presentation then moved to the James A. Cayce Administration Service Building, now known as the Gerald F. Nicely Building. This building retains the original terrazzo floors, floor plan and design. It will be locally landmarked and is being nominated to place it in the National Register of Historic Places. MDHA plans to raze all these public housing projects, except for the James A. Cayce building. Discussion followed about what a Commission vote will mean for these buildings. Scarlett and Phil stated that voting to make these buildings historically eligible allows us to mitigate the loss of these buildings, create an archive and lay a foundation for other buildings. Chris Cotton moved to endorse Phil Thomason's nomination, John Bridges seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. In addition, Phil said that they are submitting to the National Park Service a National Historic Landmark nomination for the Hermitage Hotel because of the significance of its role in the woman's suffrage movement. It is already in the National Register, but they are hoping to have it designated a National Historic Landmark, which means it has national significance. It is a long review process, but they are hoping it will be listed by August of next year which marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Phil was asked if the Hermitage Hotel is locally landmarked. It is not, but Historic Nashville has an easement on it.

**HISTORICAL MARKERS – Jessica Reeves**

Jessica presented four historical markers for review. The first one is for the Loveless Café, located at 8400 Highway 100 in District 35, which was chosen by Councilman Dave Rosenberg. This marker focuses on the history of the café, the motel and Highway 100. For now, it is the last marker from the District Marker Project.

The councilmembers from two districts did not respond, so MHC will contact the newly elected councilmembers from those districts to see if they have suggestions for markers. Commissioner E. Thomas Wood pointed out a grammatical correction and asked for a change of “added” to “adding” in the wording for this marker. Christopher Cotton made a motion to approve with this change, Dr. Don Cusic seconded, and the marker was unanimously approved. The next marker is for Betty Chiles Nixon and will be placed at the home at 1607 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. This marker has been privately funded by Ms. Nixon’s daughters. The home at this address is a 1925 Colonial Revival house, which was purchased by Betty Nixon and her husband, U.S. District Court Judge John T. Nixon in 1971 and served as the headquarters for her first campaign. The home is not in the Nixon family any longer, but there is an HNI easement on the property which states no changes can be made to the exterior of the home. The current owners have not been contacted yet about placement of the marker. Jim Hoobler moved to approve this marker, Michelle Hall seconded, and the marker was unanimously approved. The next marker is the Clark Memorial United Methodist Church at 1014 14<sup>th</sup> N and is privately funded. They wanted to have less of a focus on the history of the church and more on the civil rights significance. Civil rights activist, James M. Lawson, taught classes on non-violent protests in 1959 in this church and it is a part of the Civil Rights Trail. The marker will be placed in honor of Matthew Walker, Jr. Dr. Bill McKee made a motion to approve this marker, Commissioner Cusic seconded, and it was unanimously approved. The last marker is for the Myhr House, (“Maple Row”) at Bradford Green and Myhr Green in Bellevue and is privately funded. This was the first house in Bellevue to have indoor running water, electricity and central air and now serves as the clubhouse for the Ashley Green neighborhood. Jim Hoobler made a motion to approve this marker, Lynn Maddox seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

#### **MHC BUDGET UPDATE – Tim Walker**

Tim began his budget update by distributing a financial overview page to all in attendance. It detailed the operating, revised and capital improvements budgets, capital spending plan and 4% funds. Tim reviewed the financial situation, and this sparked a discussion about the support of the new mayor, who will be handling city finances going forward and how the Commission can best reinforce our efforts. Dr. McKee commented that it is important to advocate to both the mayor and Metro Council and Chair Bailey recommended saying that this office can be even more effective with more funding. Lynn Maddox pointed out that the City Cemetery repairs make up almost half of the remaining operating budget. Davis Acker asked how this budget compares to prior years. Tim stated that it is higher because of money allocated for COLA increases and salary raises for staff.

#### **DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Tim Walker**

Tim stated that we are in the soft launch of Nashville Sites and complimented Jessica’s efforts as “amazing” and talked about her countless hours devoted to the project. He reminded staff and the commissioners to take tours and complete the surveys to help catch issues before the public launch. Tours are available with walking and virtual options. The official launch of Nashville Sites will be on November 14<sup>th</sup>, in connection with the MHC Foundation fundraiser at Clementine Hall. Tim has been meeting with a DAR chapter that is looking to establish a friends’ group for Fort Nashborough. They want to help support the fort, so the site can open for school group tours again. Clay asked Tim to talk about the Federal Reserve Bank Building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N. It is in the Historic Subdistrict of the Downtown Code (DTC), where heights on corner buildings are limited to ten stories and interior block buildings are limited to six stories. This building has been purchased and the new owner proposes adding height to the building beyond what the DTC allows. We have been assured by the Planning Commission staff that they will enforce the height restrictions. Discussion continued about the extra height blocking the windows of the Stahlman Building and about how to ensure the Planning Commission follows the standards that have been set in that subdistrict. Commissioner Maddox had asked for a detailed list of NCC needs at the last Commission meeting. Tim said he and Fred are finalizing that list and will present it at the October meeting.

#### **HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – Robin Zeigler**

Robin Zeigler’s first update was about the violation at Ole Red on Broadway. Because this case may be coming back to the Metro Historic Zoning Commission (MHZC), Commissioner Bell left the room during the discussion. Zeigler explained that the business had a permit for white building illumination but installed red lighting. In court, the judge upheld the permit and required the lighting be switched to white. Zeigler also provided an update on the approved demolition request for 126 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. South. Although the building is historic, demolition was ultimately approved because the Commission took no action. In order to restore the building, for any use, all four walls would have to be removed but they cannot be reconstructed using existing brick

because of the condition of the brick from multiple eras. The Commission vote was tied, so no action was taken by them, which means the request is ultimately approved. Chris Cotton pointed out the negative comments on social media about this case and that prompted a discussion about what our role is in responding to social media comments and in helping to educate the public on these decisions. Zeigler and Commissioner Hoobler noted that an increase in funding would allow us to get independent engineers' reports for these types of requests. Walker explained that the MHC has repeatedly requested monies for these reports, but it has never been funded. Next, Zeigler reported about the MHZC project that is consolidating the design guidelines for 23 neighborhood conservation zoning overlays. This will be discussed at a public hearing on September 18<sup>th</sup>, but the Commission's decision will be delayed until November. Commissioner Maddox mentioned how difficult it is to find information on the website and staff member, Reeves, informed the commissioners that ITS is starting a complete overhaul of the Nashville.gov site to help make it easier to navigate and search.

#### STAFF REPORTS

Caroline will be sending out a brief survey to staff and commissioners about the economic impact study and would appreciate participation. Jessica passed out Nashville Sites stickers and reminded everyone to take a walking tour. She also mentioned that three or four markers will be received this week and we will be having the marker dedication ceremonies soon. This Saturday, We Remember Nashville has a meeting at 10:00 am, and there is a soil collection ceremony at the site of one of the lynchings at 5<sup>th</sup> and Monroe in Germantown at noon. Sean discussed his role at Archaeology Day at Bells Bend Park last Saturday. There were 600 visitors participating in digs, making tools, bow and arrow and conversations about Nashville historic sites and parks. Scarlett commented that we don't have a PIO on staff to handle the website, newsletter, etc. Robin added that we are offering a four-credit hour realtor course on October 4<sup>th</sup> to educate real estate professionals on historic properties, zoning guidelines, etc.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Don Cusic mentioned the start of the Ken Burns documentary series, *Country Music*. Chris Cotton announced that the Friends of Fort Negley annual fundraiser—Taste of Wedgewood-Houston—will be held at Jackalope Brewery on September 24<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-9:00 pm. There will be many participating bars and restaurants and tickets cost \$25 and \$30. Menié Bell asked our new commissioners to tell us about their professions. Chakita Patterson is the owner of United Street Tours, which gives African American history tours in Nashville. John Bridges was a journalist at *The Tennessean* and *Nashville Scene* and has written books about men's manners. Commissioner Bell also commented on the importance of inviting councilmembers to our monthly meetings. Scarlett mentioned that we are preparing letters to send to each councilmember, which will include personal notes and then, follow-up phone calls from Tim. Commissioner Allen showed us a copy of the new community newspaper in Bellevue—*The Vue*. Chair Bailey announced that Jim Hoobler will be speaking at Belle Meade Plantation on Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>, as a part of their Carriage House Conversations program. His talk is on the life and times of Carl and Otto Giers, prominent Nashville photographers of the nineteenth century

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, September 25, 2019.

*Susie Pallas*