

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC)
MINUTES
February 24, 2020

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting on February 24, 2020, 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, Jim Hoobler, Lynn Maddox, Chakita Patterson, E. Thomas Wood and Linda Wynn, **were present**. Michelle Hall, Dr. Bill McKee, Gerry Searcy, and County Historian Dr. Carole Bucy **did not attend**.

Staff Members Present: Sean Alexander, Melissa Baldock, Caroline Eller, Susie Pallas, Jessica Reeves, Tim Walker, Fred Zahn, and Robin Zeigler were present.

Guest Present: Chris Cobb

Chair Dr. Clay Bailey called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. after verifying that a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *Dr. Clay Bailey*

Chair Bailey presented the January minutes for approval. Bob Allen made a motion to approve the minutes, Jim Hoobler provided a second, and the January minutes were unanimously approved. Clay introduced guest, Chris Cobb, who is the owner of Exit/In and has proposed a historical marker for The Rock Block.

HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves and Caroline Eller*

Caroline announced four markers would be presented for approval. She presented several vintage photos for the first marker, which is a privately funded marker for The Rock Block, located near 2208 Elliston Place (Exit/In). Caroline presented the marker text for comments and questions. Don Cusic asked if Liz Thiels was in the initial ownership group and Chris Cobb responded that she became involved in the first couple of years after the opening of Exit/In. Bob mentioned that he is in contact with Brugh Reynolds on a regular basis and Caroline said he may be a helpful resource as they work on the National Register of Historic Places nomination. Christopher Cotton made a motion to approve the marker, Lynn Maddox provided a second and it was approved. After expressing his excitement about the marker's approval, Chris Cobb spoke in support of the marker and discussed the importance of preserving and highlighting the history of The Rock Block, the segment of Elliston from 21st Avenue to Louise Ave. Last fall, he and his wife started a Save the Rock Block campaign because a hotel developer was looking to tear down the affordable Louise Douglas Apartments near Exit/In and build a Holiday Inn Express. Clay expressed the Commission's appreciation for them standing up to development to preserve the character of The Rock Block. Caroline moved on to the second marker text for School Desegregation in Nashville,

“Nashville Plan” Schools. She explained that we will be having six school markers in this group and this text will be on side one for all six markers, with separate side two texts for each school presented individually over the next few months. This text was created through a collaborative effort between Jessica, Caroline and the MNPS committee with which they worked for these markers. Menié made a motion to approve the side one text, Linda Wynn seconded it and the text was approved. Next, Jessica presented the Fehr School marker, which is one of the six Nashville Plan school markers. This is the only school that already has a marker, which was funded by the Salemtown neighborhood association. However, it will be replaced to give more information about Fehr School, specifically, instead of including information about Hattie Cotton School. Jim Hoobler made a motion to approve the marker, John Bridges seconded it and the marker was approved. The next marker up for discussion was the Hattie Cotton Elementary School marker which focuses on the bombing that took place there and the school’s role in the desegregation story. The exact placement of the Nashville Plan school markers has not been finalized but will ensure high visibility to the public and to those who use the schools. Don Cusic made a motion to approve the Hattie Cotton Elementary School marker, Christopher Cotton seconded it and the marker was approved. There will be a marker dedication on Saturday, March 7th at 10:00 a.m. at Turner School and one for the Betty Nixon marker on Monday, April 6th at 11:00 a.m. Both are open to the public and all are welcome to attend.

Clay welcomed CM Tonya Hancock from District 9 who was in attendance.

MHC BUDGET UPDATE – *Tim Walker*

Tim was pleased to announce that the Mayor’s Capital Spending Plan includes \$4.8 million to Metro Parks to pay for the Sunnyside repairs, reconstruction of the connection between the two buildings, repairs for the early part of the house, outbuildings and parking and driveway further down Kirkwood. Tim thanked the Commissioners for their efforts and Monique Odom, Metro Park’s Director, for making these repairs their priority. Tim expects this to go to Council in March and for the repair work to take approximately 18 months. In addition, the Mayor proposed a 4% improvement plan to Metro Council which includes \$50,000 for this office which can be spent on Historical Markers (\$40,000) and general office equipment (\$10,000). We plan to purchase a sole internet line, a printer for MHZC and office chairs. Tim provided clarification of the budget terms—operating budget, 4% and capital spending plan. Tim updated the Commission about the upcoming budget meeting which will be a working session with members of the Mayor’s staff, members of the Finance Department and others where we will discuss department needs, investment requests and performance metrics. Tim, Susie, Clay and Menié will attend from MHC/MHZC. Clay stated that there will be a more detailed discussion of the operating budget at the March 28th retreat.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT – *Tim Walker*

Tim reported about the Preservation Awards because Scarlett was out. There are two possibilities for the May 12th ceremony— either at the Nashville Public Library at 4:30 p.m. with a reception to follow at a nearby location, or both the ceremony and reception at Union Station at 5:30 p.m. We are waiting to hear back from the Mayor about his schedule before we finalize the time and location. The Special Events and Nominations committee will be meeting to discuss the awards on March 4th at 3:00 p.m. Nominations for the architectural

awards are due Friday, March 13th and will be voted on at the March 16th Commission meeting. The attire for the ceremony is business casual. Fort Negley is having a Community Day this Saturday from 10:00-2:00 and we will have a table set up. Sean reported that rain is delaying the archaeology work at Fort Negley. Tim thanked Dr. West from MTSU for helping us apply for \$150,000 in grant money from the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area to help accomplish work toward the master plan which is expected to cost about \$500,000. Caroline reported that Phase 2 of the Economic Impact Study is very close to a final draft and we should have a copy in early March and are planning the release of the report in May. Jessica and the Nashville Sites team are working on new walking tours and the logistics of driving tours. Jessica and others will be traveling to Atlanta in March for the National Council on Public History (NCPH) conference to present on university partnerships and the augmented reality component of Nashville Sites. We have at least 100 users on the Nashville Sites website every day, and there was a big spike last Sunday after the *Tennessean* article came out.

HISTORIC ZONING REPORT –Robin Zeigler

In approximately 3-4 weeks, we are going to have an interactive map on the website where people can see all of the locations where there is an application or permit. We will wrap up the Design Guideline Consolidation Project in March.

Menié discussed the demolition denial at 1501 Fatherland. Tim elaborated further that Pierre Howell, former Metro Codes building inspector, was hired by the MHC Foundation and the Lockeland Springs neighborhood association to provide a counterpoint to the information that the Commission had received from the applicant regarding what could be done to remedy any issues. Tim and Menié emphasized the importance of these independent reports to provide information for staff and Commissioners. Staff does map the sites that will come up before the Commission each month, so Commissioners are welcome to drive by any location to help with their evaluations. However, according to Robin, official Commissioner interior site visits are limited to economic hardship demolition cases.

STAFF REPORTS

Metro Nashville has just posted a video of the African American History and Culture conference and Caroline will post the link on Facebook. Jessica thanked all of the Commissioners who attended the conference and reported registrations of 291 and approximately 265 attendees.

OTHER BUSINESS

Jim Hoobler reported that the Tennessee State Museum is opening the woman's suffrage exhibit on March 27th and it will be up for a year. In August, the National Archives is sending the ratification document to the museum on temporary loan. Linda remarked how pleased she was with the attendance, speakers and energy of this year's conference. Many people called to tell her that they felt it was the best one yet. Lynn started a round of applause for Linda and her work on the conference. Menié appreciated how the speakers connected back to TSU and made the stories so real for the listeners. Christopher Cotton invited all to attend the Fort Negley Community Day with food trucks, fossils and reenactors. CM Hancock announced the 100th anniversary celebration of the Negro Baseball Leagues at Rose Park at noon on Saturday, February 29th.

Lynn mentioned looking at changing the Commission meeting day to avoid conflicts with holidays and Clay remarked that the meeting day and time is stated in the bylaws, but it is not difficult to change. This can be discussed further at the March retreat. Bob Allen thanked Jessica for attending the Bellevue History & Genealogy Group meeting. Clay elaborated on the **MHC: What We Do** document and said we will discuss it further at the March retreat, so we can speak with authority on the work of the MHC/MHZC staffs. Clay also recommended J.R. Lind's column, "Walk a Mile," in the *Nashville Scene* about the WeHo neighborhood which highlighted Tom Wilson Park as a significant site for the Negro National League. Clay encouraged Commissioners to share articles with each other because the more informed we are about our historical community, the better we are equipped to advocate. Clay thanked CM Hancock for coming to the meeting and asked her to encourage other Council members to attend. CM Hancock thanked us for our work and pledged her support for MHC in budget matters.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, February 24, 2020.

Susie Pallas