

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
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METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES June 17, 2024

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center on June 17, 2024, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners: Dr. Clay Bailey, Menié Bell, John Bridges, Jim Hoobler, Dr. Bill McKee, Dr. Jane Landers, Sandra Parham, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Laura Rost, Tom Wood, Larry Woods, and Linda Wynn were **present**.

Dr. Celso Castilho, Dr. Don Cusic, and Dr. Erica Hayden were **not present**.

Staff Members: Tim Walker, Bryan Gilley, Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Russell LeStourgeon, Scarlett Miles, Jessica Reeves, Dustin Summers, and Robin Zeigler were **present**. Ann Mikkelsen (Metro Legal) was **present**.

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was **not present**.

Guest Speakers: Dr. Daniel Schafer & Dr. Joseph Watson, Christ Church Cathedral

- I. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present after a roll call of attendance. One commissioner arrived after Roll Call.
- II. **REVIEW OF MAY MEETING MINUTES – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Wynn presented the May 2024 meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Woods made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Hoobler

provided a second. The commission unanimously approved the May 2024 meeting minutes.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. No members of the public in attendance requested time to address the commission.

IV. GUEST SPEAKERS:

Commissioner John Bridges introduced Dr. Daniel Schafer and Dr. Joseph Watson, faculty members at Belmont University (departments of History and Architecture, respectively) and members of The Isaac Project committee for Christ Church Cathedral [900 Broadway]. The Isaac Project formed in earnest in January 2021, prompted by the civil unrest during the summer of 2020 instigated by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tamir Rice, and others. The project is named for Isaac the Carpenter: On September 1, 1842, Mr. T. Washington presented a man named “Isaac” for baptism at Christ Church. No birthdate is recorded. No last name is recorded. Written in the comment section of our Baptismal Register is simply “a slave belonging to Mr. T. Washington.” The project is currently in Phase II of the five-phase project.

Dr. Schafer provided brief background history of the Christ Church congregation, which formed in 1829 and built its present sanctuary at 9th and Broadway in 1894. The project began with the intention of researching the complicity of the church and members in slavery, racism, segregation, and structural inequality and seeks to form a theological response. Through historical research, the project seeks to uncover the role of the church as an institution (including clergy and lay leadership) and as individuals, and how it has defended and promoted racist systems, benefitted from these systems, and criticized/fought against (*or for*) them.

Mrs. Fletch Coke established the church’s archive in 1977, and a large portion of the church’s records have been digitized. The team has combed through parish registers, vestry minutes, photographs, financial reports, and receipts, as well as scrapbooks and the church’s Centennial history, for this information. The committee has provided numerous presentations to the congregation and outside groups and has posted several articles to its website. Dr. Schafer shared some of the committee’s findings, including data about slaveholders in the church and history about Isaac. Dr. Watson then shared information about the use of enslaved labor in the construction of the church’s previous edifice at 6th and Church, as well as racism embedded within the church’s present edifice, including segregated seating within the interiors of both buildings, labor practices, and memorial windows (depicting or honoring slave-holding parishioners). [Learn more about the project: <https://www.christcathedral.org/the-isaac-project>]

Questions: Commissioner McKee inquired about percentage of African American members. Drs. Schafer and Watson explained that was a difficult number to

ascertain because of the definition of “member” and how members appeared in the historic record. When asked about the role of Christ Church in the founding of African American Episcopal churches, they said this is something they are still researching, but trends are for segregated or separate parishes. In 1907, the diocese designated Holy Trinity as the “colored” parish. Commissioner Richmond asked about the role of the congregation in the Civil Rights Movement. The committee has posted two articles about this topic to the website, including the tension between Rector Farris, who was pro-integration, and the vestry, who was majority against, and the liberation school at St. Anselm’s Chapel in North Nashville.

V. HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

- Neuhoff House – Sponsored by the Germantown Neighborhood Association, this marker focuses on the history of the home of Henry Neuhoff. The developer of the Neuhoff plant site plans to sponsor a marker focusing on the history of the plant. Commissioner McKee made a motion to approve the marker. Commissioner Bell provided a second. The commission voted unanimously to approve the Neuhoff House marker as presented.
- John Wesley Frierson – The commission voted to table this historical marker last month to allow time to clarify some language about the Frierson Foundation’s role in founding churches. This wording has been removed. The marker will be placed at the Frierson Building on Jefferson Street where the NAACP is housed. This marker is being funded through a participatory budget allocation. Commissioner Bridges made a motion to approve the marker. Commissioner Richmond provided a second. The commission voted unanimously to approve the John Wesley Frierson marker as presented.
- Ms. Reeves thanked Commissioners Bridges, Richmond, Hoobler, and Rost for attending and participating in the Warehouse 28 dedication on Friday, June 14. The dedication for the Sir Cecil Creape historical marker will take place on Saturday, July 13. Look for more information in the coming weeks.

VI. DIRECTOR’S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

Director Walker thanked commissioners for attending the MHCF fundraiser at Sunnyside on Thursday, June 6. He reminded commissioners about the official ribbon cutting and open house on Saturday, June 29. The ceremony starts at 10:00 am, with the office open to tour until 1:00 pm. Speakers will include Mayor O’Connell and the two council members for the neighborhood, CMs Vo and Cash. Metro Parks Director Monique Odom will speak as will Director Walker and Chair Wynn. Friends of Sevier Park and 12 South Neighborhood Association will provide refreshments at the Carriage House. Additionally, most of the presenters from the June 6 event are returning to offer an encore of their presentations. We will have designated parking for commissioners near the house.

Commissioner Rost asked about the Calhoun Cemetery on Nolensville Road referenced in the Director's Report and if survey information is being conveyed to other parties/departments. Director Walker reported that the cemeteries are noted, but this information is sometimes ignored or overlooked by developers and/or other departments. It is complicated, but we are doing all we can to prevent damage and loss of cemeteries.

Director Walker recognized staff members of the MHC and MHZC. We've been out of the office for about 17 months, and everyone has contributed to the effort over the past few weeks to move back into the building. Dir. Walker gave a special acknowledgement to Dustin Summers and Russell LeSturgeon for their hard work and attention to detail with the project. Chair Wynn expressed her concurrence with appreciation for the staff. She commented that the event last week was great and offered her congratulations. Commissioner Bridges asked if the new addition has an elevator; it does not.

VII. HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – *Robin Zeigler*

Historic Zoning Administrator Robin Zeigler thanked Director Walker for his guidance and oversight with the Sunnyside project as well as advocacy for acquiring additional resources to meet new office needs. Admin. Zeigler mentioned that the Preservation Society of Nashville will host a social hour for the Citizens Historic Preservation Academy members during the fall session to help promote networking among the group. Details are forthcoming.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

None presented.

IX. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Rost mentioned that Commissioner Landers was featured prominently in some of the videos shown during Commencement at Vanderbilt University. Chair Wynn acknowledged the recent passing of Rev. James Lawson and reflected on his contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. Chair Wynn also mentioned the passing of Walter Fisher, Sr, member of the Pearl High School championship winning basketball team.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Rost moved to adjourn; Commissioner Hoobler seconded. The meeting ended at approximately 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, July 15, 2024.
Scarlett C. Miles