

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
110 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

February 6, 2008

2:00 P.M.

MINUTES

CCHPC Members Present:

**Daves Rossell, Chairman
George Cohen, Vice-Chairman
Jane A. Feiler
William Haynes
Stephen T. Lindell
Pamela G. Lossing
Lisa L. White**

CCHPC Members Not Present:

**Vaughnette Goode-Walker
Christian Sottile**

CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:

**Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner
Bethany Jewell, Water Resources Planner
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

I. WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Rossell asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Ms. Feiler stated that she was taking a class and apologized for leaving the meetings early.

Ms. Harris introduced Mr. Pete Nichols, Public Information Officer for Chatham County, and stated that she has been working with Mr. Nichols on developing a program for the Channel 16 Government channel regarding the Commission and the work being done in the County. She introduced Ms. Mary Beth Bass, the new Preservation Planner for the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center (CGRDC). Ms. Bass has been with the RDC since June 2007 as a Planner and was recently transferred to the Preservation Planning Department replacing Patricia Barefoot.

III. GUEST SPEAKER - Mary Beth Bass, Preservation Planner, Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center

Ms. Mary Beth Bass said that the RDC is an organization that serves 10 counties and 35 municipalities including 6 coastal counties, and 4 inland counties (Screven, Effingham, Bulloch, and Long Counties). They are a quasi-governmental body created by the State to serve local governments, and do not have authority with regulatory powers because they are primarily for assistance. They are

funded by local dues that come from each municipality and county which is based on per capita and is generally 90 cents per capita. They provide administrative, aging, planning, and government services. She works as a Historic Preservation Planner and a Planner I and provides assistance with writing comprehensive plans for smaller communities. The GIS and IT's are in-house and work with the local governments and assist with Historic Preservation. They help coordinate transportation services funded through the Georgia Department of Human Resources and are currently working on a van pool study to coordinate transportation to and from work, medical care, etc. They do regional planning, the Coastal Comprehensive Plan, and local comprehensive plans, but mostly work with smaller governments that may not have a full staff. They have done special plans and studies like working with Fort Stewart regarding the Joint Land Use Study, completed Economic Diversification studies, and housing inventories for different communities. They write zoning ordinances and receive a lot of data collection and analysis. They have a new GIS manager who is interested in becoming the repository for the region.

Ms. Bass stated that she serves as a point-of-contact for local governments or individuals throughout the region who need help with coordinating and receiving funding or grants. The RDC is contracted with the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and they receive a \$17,000 annual contract that is matched with local funds. This gives them \$34,000 to deliver the services that fall under historic preservation; however, it is not much to serve ten counties. They assist with National Register nominations for individual properties and districts, and help communities that might have an ordinance but don't have an active commission. They generally promote preservation throughout the region. She serves as staff to the Historic Preservation Advisory Council (HPAC) and coordinates preservation projects related to the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The HPAC is a 38-member council and is representative of the region. All counties and cities have the opportunity to be represented though there are several vacancies. They feel it is very important to especially have the smaller communities represented. They meet quarterly throughout the region so that everyone may visit different parts of the region to see what resources are available. She said that next week's meeting would be at Jekyll Island and Mr. Joe Childers from Downtown Development will come to speak on the Georgia Main Street program. They will tour the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and the landmark district. They try to make the meetings interesting by doing tours, seeing the communities, and having an educational component.

This past September, they created a Technical Advisory Committee to provide more public outreach and assistance to smaller communities. Several projects have been identified to pursue this year such as the town of Register in Bulloch County which has several properties and wants to do a National Register District Nomination. The town of Portal in Bulloch County has Dr. Stewart's house that is unique and also a pharmacy in pristine condition that has remained like it was when he walked out the door in the 1950's. The Technical Advisory Committee will be visiting Liberty County to view the properties to determine how they can help.

In 2007, they received a grant to host Mr. Donovan Rypkema, Preservation Economist, who is nationally renowned and he did a two-day series in Richmond Hill and Brunswick. The RDC held the Diversity of Coastal Georgia Archaeology Symposium in Midway on October 18, and it was funded with efforts from the Georgia Humanities Council. The City of Woodbine just adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance, and they are working with the City of Pembroke to start an active commission.

Ms. Bass is currently working on the Historic Effingham-Ebenezer Scenic Byway with a nine-member committee that has been very successful. Communication has begun with DOT and they are working on a Corridor Management Plan. Section 106 reviews are vitally import with DOT projects and the

RDC is the point-of-contact to let DOT know if there might be a historic view shed or other resource that might be impacted.

Ms. Bass said that the Coastal Comprehensive Plan is an important initiative on the coast. Governor Sonny Perdue's initiative in 2005 to look at the coast. Governor Perdue and others saw how quickly the coast was growing, wanted to protect the resources, make it a nice place to live, and control some of the growth. He appointed a 34-member committee of local elected officials, private industry, and conservationists and preservationists led by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) who worked with Lott + Barber Architects and Reynolds, Smith & Hills as consultants. The plan focuses on the six coastal counties to guide growth and development while looking at land use, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, etc. The plan has not been officially adopted but has the Governor's seal of approval for \$575,000 of the State's budget toward implementing the plan. The money would have to be matched locally.

There are 15 strategies for protection such as identifying and establishing greenspace and other protected areas that have a high density of cultural and historic resources, encouraging development practices and sitings that would be cognizant of cultural and historic resources, maintaining view sheds, and designating management areas for potential acquisition and protection. These are important when considering historic resources. The comprehensive plan outlines what they want it to look like in 20 years and what kind of a coast they want it to be. She said everyone has a role to play.

Ms. White asked about the website.

Ms. Bass stated that it is www.georgiaplanning.com/coastal. She said there are several links to good resources.

Ms. White asked if Ms. Harris is the representative for the City of Savannah.

Ms. Harris stated that she is Chatham County's representative.

Ms. Feiler left at 2:30

IV. REPORT ON NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION COMMITTEE - Bethany Jewell, MPC Water Resources Planner

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Bethany Jewell, Water Resources Planner, to give an update on the Natural Resources Protection Committee.

Ms. Bethany Jewell said that the historic and cultural resources are very important to Chatham County. There have been initiatives in the past to identify and protect sensitive areas such as the Open Space Bikeway Plan, and the Community Greenspace program. The Committee has tried to build upon these two initiatives. The Greenspace program was a statewide initiative, and with the changing of Governorship, it fell through because the funding mechanism to help provide greenspace dollars for counties was discontinued. It fell apart in Chatham County when the funding went away. When the Greenspace program was active, it had decentralized funding which meant that Garden City might receive \$60,000 instead of one million, which did not go very far to protect land. There was no real identification of areas with historic significance or sensitive natural resources and the land preserved tended to be ball parks and open space.

The Committee began looking at this in 2004 when a sensitive area was to be developed. A very diverse mix of people in the community from a real estate development community, scientists, representatives from universities, land trust representatives, and governments came together to save the resource. Protection, conservation, and rehabilitation area all a part of the mission statement, and 38 sensitive areas have been identified in unincorporated Chatham County. Vernonburg is the only one left to be added to the process. She said that it is exciting to assist Vernonburg in identifying their historic resources because they are unaware of what is out there and need to be protected. After the Committee identified the areas, they wanted to protect them and came up with tools to formalize a program that could protect. As a result, partnerships developed with Fort Stewart and military installations, several different land trusts, Georgia Forestry Council, and Chatham County to protect the sensitive area along the Ogeechee River.

She said that the partnerships continue growing as they formalize a protection mechanism. They have some exciting possibilities with Trust for Public Land and the Nature Conservancy who are assisting with finding a funding mechanism for them. They will assist with polling to find out what price points people would be willing to pay to protect areas. On February 22 the ordinance the Committee drafted to formally establish the Committee will go before the County Commission, and they hope it will be adopted on March 7.

Some of the key things of the ordinance will be working with municipalities so that there is full enclosure and balanced representation. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) would allow public input that is critical and she thought that some of the Commission Board members might be interested in serving on the TAC. She said that Ms. Harris is on the MPC Resource Protection Committee and has helped identify significant historic resources. A campaign committee would be formed, separate from the Resource Protection Committee, to look toward an on-going funding mechanism. The whole process is to formalize what has taken place in the past. It is a great opportunity with greenspace and historic preservation for Chatham County to shine as an example for other counties along the coast.

Mr. Cohen asked how the program worked with the City of Savannah.

Ms. Jewell stated that the City is a part of the Committee and the process in identifying areas. She said that government staff has represented the City of Savannah and would be serviced through the model ordinance. She stated that if any Commission members want to look at the model ordinance she would like feedback. The City would be a representative on the Commission, same as the other municipalities.

Mr. Lindell asked if there is a connection with the intercoastal waterway. He said that the federal government has not had the money to dredge it out.

Ms. Jewell stated that she has provided comments but it is not something they feel hopeful about.

Mr. Cohen asked about the opinion on the deepening of the harbor, and if there had been communication with the State in regards to it.

Ms. Jewell stated that they did give comments and their stance is that they are very worried about the impact the deepening would have on the aquifer.

V. CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPORT

Ms. Harris stated that the ordinance allows the Commission to make recommendations to the County on preservation-related items. She said that the Certified Local Government Program (CLG) is a federal program that is operated by each States Historic Preservation Office to encourage local governments to adopt historic preservation ordinances. Once the ordinance is adopted they can qualify for the Certified Local Government program and grants. Chatham County has adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance and is qualified to become a CLG. Staff recommends that the CCHPC recommend that Chatham County become a CLG.

Ms. White stated that she appreciated Ms. Harris bringing it forward. She said that she had looked at the website and that there aren't many counties participating.

CCHPC ACTION: **Ms. White made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission approve the Certified Local Government Report recommending that Chatham County become a CLG. Mr. Haynes seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Contact with Communities/Individuals Interested in District or Property Nominations

Ms. Harris stated that Pin Point submitted an application to become a Historic District and that there was a neighborhood meeting on January 27. She said it went well and that there were lots of questions and some concerns that were worked through. She has been drafting design guidelines and would present it at the next neighborhood association meeting on February 24. It will be a working session with the residents on the design guidelines.

She said that she met with Mr. Herbert Kemp, the president of the Sandfly Betterment Association and their consultant Ms. Patricia Deveau, who has been working on their National Register Nomination. Ms. Deveau has been asked to work on the local nomination and that she will be working with them to complete the paperwork. There will be a meeting with the Sandfly Betterment Association on February 21 to provide information and then they will begin drafting design guidelines.

B. Update on Chatham County Neighborhood Associations

Ms. Harris stated that the resolution regarding the establishment of neighborhood associations will be going before the County Commission on Friday, February 8, and it has been discussed that a representative from the CCHPC be sent. She said she included it on the agenda for discussion, and it has been mentioned that it might not be relevant to the Commission's mission. She does not think the Commission should restrict itself to working only with neighborhood associations, because it could limit their interaction with unincorporated Chatham County. There are a lot of areas that don't currently have neighborhood associations, and she does not want them excluded from the process.

C. Education Outreach

Ms. Harris stated that at December's meeting there was some discussion on how to reach out to different communities, and the Commission had great ideas of how to do it. One idea was to have a program on the local government channel. She is working with Mr. Pete Nichols and Channel 16 to develop a program. They will be filming different communities, talking to the residents, filming the Commission meetings, and conducting interviews with the Chairman about historic preservation. It will

be several months before everything is cut, edited, and filmed. She will let the Commission know when it goes “on-air”.

She said that another idea was to create a brochure. She created one called, “The Advantages and Disadvantages of Historic Designation.” She has taken it to neighborhood meetings and it has been well-received.

Follow-up with letters to eligible communities were also mentioned. She sent letters to all National Register-listed properties and other eligible resources in the county to let them know about the Commission and that they were eligible for inclusion back in the fall of 2006. She has drafted follow-up letters that give an update on where the Commission is, and they are ready for the Chairman’s signature.

D. Georgia Alliance for Preservation Commissions - Spring Training Session - April 25 - 26, Douglas, GA

Ms. Harris stated that the spring training was coming up on April 25 and 26 in Douglas, Georgia, and that the MPC could send one person. Mr. Haynes had expressed an interest in attending and she asked that they mark their calendars and would discuss it further at the next meeting.

VII. COMMISSIONERS’ ITEMS

Ms. Harris stated that she added a “Commissioners Items” on their agenda for issues, questions, or general announcements that did not make it onto the regular agenda.

VIII. MEETING MINUTES - DECEMBER 5, 2007

CCHPC ACTION: Mr. Lindell made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Cohen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris,
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp