

SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

**REGULAR MEETING
112 EAST STATE STREET**

ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM

November 1, 2007

4:00 P.M.

MINUTES

HSMC Members Present:

**Gordon Smith, Vice-Chairman
LaVerne Ricks-Brown, Secretary
Ryan Madson
Phillip Williams**

HSMC Members Not Present:

**Walter Wright, Chairman
Frank Lang, Ex-Officio**

HSMC/MPC Staff Present:

**Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Smith stated that he's changing the order of the agenda because Ms. Christy Crisp is not present to address the petitions for the Georgia Historical Society.

II. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Adoption of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics for Commissioners and Staff

Ms. Harris stated that the National Alliance for Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics was brought up at the Historic Preservation Department retreat, and Staff recommended that all of the Historic Preservation-related boards incorporate the code of ethics into the By-Laws. She said the Commission received copies of their By-Laws with an underlined portion that stated, "the Commission should further abide by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics for Commissioners and Staff, the provisions of which are hereby incorporated by reference." It required an amendment to the By-Laws and she asked if the Board had other amendments to the By-Laws.

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Madson made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission adopt the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Code of Ethics by amending the By-Laws to incorporate them. Ms. Ricks-Brown seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

III. MEETING MINUTES - October 4, 2007

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Madson made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission adopt the Minutes as presented. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**IV. Petition of the Georgia Historical Society
Christy Crisp
File No.: C-071012-40394-2
Marker Application
St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church**

Present for the petition was Ms. Christy Crisp.

Ms. Harris gave the Staff report.

NATURE OF REQUEST: The petitioner is requesting a Georgia Historical Marker to be located in the tree lawn in front of St. Benedict's, facing East Broad Street.

FINDINGS:

Theme: The theme of the marker falls under the Arts and Humanities, Religious History, and Cultural and Ethnic Heritage categories. The proposed marker commemorates the parish of St. Benedict the Moor, which is considered the oldest African-American Catholic parish in Savannah. The accompanying school served the black community for over half a century during the era of segregation, staffed by Franciscan sisters.

Location: The marker is to be erected in the tree lawn in front of the sanctuary building. The property is maintained by the church and there is some uncertainty as to ownership. Typically, tree lawns are considered public property.

Design: The proposed design is the standard GHS marker design. See attached text.

Funding: The estimated cost for the marker is \$3,000.00. The funds have been fully secured. As GHS, which administers the Georgia Historical Marker Program, assumes responsibility for the repair and replacement of all markers, the petitioner has requested the Escrow Payment be waived.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval as submitted. It is recommended that the Commission consider the location as public property for the purpose of processing and approving the application. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.

Mr. Madson asked about the language, text, and dates going on the marker that reads, "The society of African missions staffed the parish from 1907 to 1968, and the school served the community from 1907 to 1969." He said that in reading some of the supplemental materials the parish desegregated in 1969 and is worthy of including.

Ms. Crisp stated that the school disbanded because of integration. She said it was a question of what could be put in or left out of marker text, and that they had consulted with St. Benedict's. Both of the markers are part of an initiative in Savannah where the funding was received from Wal-Mart, as a result of the Sandfly Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart decided to find a project to recognize

African-American history in and around Savannah, and they chose to do it by contacting GHS and provide funding for several markers. They set up an advisory committee spearheaded by Dr. Charles Elmore who came up with project ideas, and these are the first two in the series. They chose the subjects and worked on the text with St. Benedict's. She thought the statement about the school being closed because of integration was put in at one point and if the Commission feels strongly about it, they could take something else out.

Ms. Ricks-Brown agreed with Mr. Madson and said that it is highly important and it should be included.

Mr. Smith suggested including initials "U.S" before Supreme Court. He said he did not like comma faults and felt a comma was not needed after "May 1874" or after "In 1889".

Ms. Crisp stated that it had been through a couple of editors and came back different but they could change it.

Mr. Williams stated that he realizes Sam's Club and Wal-Mart are funding it but that he feels uncomfortable with the advertising and asked if there are other markers with advertising.

Mr. Smith stated that the Georgia Historical Society is paying half of the cost and the concept is that whoever donates the other half has their name on the marker.

Ms. Crisp stated that they are usually non-profit organizations and local historical societies. She said this is different because Wal-Mart gave the money and they had to put their name on it.

Ms. Ricks-Brown stated that it takes away from the significance and importance of a historical marker. She said it looks like a commercial for eternity and she resents it.

Ms. Crisp stated that this was how they survive as a 501C3. She said they have to get money from companies to keep going, and in this case, this is what the money was designated for.

Mr. Williams stated that Sam Walton might have had another entity that they use to make donations, not just under Sam's Club or Wal-Mart.

Ms. Crisp stated there is something called the Wal-Mart Foundation. She said that there is a third party called the Jackson-Heath Group in Atlanta who is acting as GHS's liaison with Wal-Mart. She said the Jackson-Heath Group were the ones who contacted GHS and provided the exact wording for the donor inscription.

Ms. Ricks-Brown asked if there are other historical markers in the city with for-profit organizations names on them.

Ms. Crisp stated that she did not know.

Ms. Ricks-Brown stated she has a problem with starting a precedent.

Ms. Harris stated that in the Master Plan, the markers section does not discuss donors but the monument section does and it provides guidelines for donor names. It states that donors' names may be incorporated but should be incorporated discretely, such as on donor inscribed bricks. She thought the reason there are no for-profit names on the markers is because it has

never come up before, as they typically do not sponsor markers. She was not sure why a non-profit would be treated differently than a for-profit in this particular situation, aside from personal feelings toward the particular organization. She said they were not requesting additional space, huge letters, a logo, or anything else. To deny the petition based purely on the fact that this is a for-profit company may be seen as discriminating.

Mr. Smith stated that there is a legal side to this. He cautioned the Commission that they do not want to discriminate against a for-profit organization because they are donating the money. He asked if Georgia Historical Society has already vetted this.

Ms. Crisp answered yes.

Ms. Ricks-Brown asked if it could be tabled and looked into legally regarding the concerns of a for-profit organization being named on a historical marker.

Ms. Crisp stated that in her experience they have not had a for-profit organization on a marker in the 130 or so markers that the Georgia Historical Society has erected in the last ten years. She said that she could not say what happened to the marker program before 1998.

Ms. Harris said they could send a request for an opinion from the City Attorney.

Mr. Smith asked if it makes a difference to the Georgia Historical Society whether they are 501C3 or otherwise tax exempt.

Ms. Crisp stated they look for an organization with a Board of Directors. She said that if something happens to the marker 15 years from now, there would be someone to go back to. Their primary motive is to make sure that individuals do not sponsor markers so the responsibility of a historical marker does not live or die with one person.

Mr. Smith asked about a political party.

Ms. Crisp stated that it would be fine because a city government is ok. She said the City of Savannah has sponsored several historical markers.

Mr. Smith asked about a political action committee of a labor union or an organization like it.

Ms. Crisp stated that their guidelines say as long as there is a governing body or governing board that it would be fine.

HSMC ACTION: **Ms. Ricks-Brown** made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission continue the petition to allow the City Attorney to address the question of for-profit companies names on historical markers through the Georgia Historical Society marker program. **Mr. Williams** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

V. Petition of the Georgia Historical Society
Christy Crisp
File No.: C-071012-41708-2
Marker Application
Savannah's African-American Medical Pioneers

Present for the petition was Ms. Christy Crisp.

Ms. Harris gave the Staff report.

NATURE OF REQUEST: The petitioner is requesting a Georgia Historical Marker to be located along the north sidewalk at the corner of West Liberty and Montgomery Street.

FINDINGS:

Theme: The theme of the marker falls under the Science and Engineering, Civic and Institutional, Local History, and Cultural and Ethnic Heritage categories. The proposed marker commemorates Drs. Cornelius and Alice Woodby McKane who provided medical care, as well as civic leadership to Savannah's African-American community during their residence here at the end of the nineteenth century. They were responsible for the establishment of the McKane Training School for Nurses as well as the McKane Hospital for women and children (later named Charity Hospital). The McKane's were also instrumental in the development of healthcare facilities and programs in Monrovia, Liberia, Cornelius McKane's ancestral home.

Location: The proposed site is on public property in the north tree lawn at the corner of West Liberty and Montgomery Streets. The McKane Training School for Nurses was at the northwest corner of Liberty and Montgomery Streets, though Liberty Street has subsequently been altered. The exact location has been left to the discretion of the City.

Design: The proposed design is the standard GHS marker design. See attached text.

Funding: The estimated cost for the marker is \$3,000.00. The funds have been fully secured. As GHS, which administers the Georgia Historical Marker Program, assumes responsibility for the repair and replacement of all markers, the petitioner has requested the Escrow Payment be waived.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval as submitted. It is recommended that the marker be placed in the tree lawn as close as possible to the corner at Montgomery. There are currently a number of traffic signs trees to consider. The petitioner should coordinate with Traffic Engineering to maintain traffic sign visibility, and City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.

Mr. Williams stated that if they are placing a post in the ground and calling it a marker that maybe another idea would be to add a brick pad. He said the ones in the square have an invitation to come and read them. If they are posted in the grass, it is easy to pass by them. He did not know if it is suggested in the Master Plan as part of a beautification plan to create a link from the sidewalk to the marker; it could be made a part of the whole environment.

Ms. Harris stated that the Master Plan says that markers should be in a standard GHS marker style, which includes the shape of the marker itself as well as being located on a pole. She said that she would be very hesitant about placing additional paving unnecessarily without additional purpose. She thought the greenspace should be preserved to the maximum extent and that it is one of the great things about the Georgia Historical Marker program. People instantly recognize the size and shape, and are called by the recognition of what it is with minimal impact on the greenspace or the surrounding landscaping and vegetation.

Mr. Smith stated that the proposed site is on the down ramp from the interstate and people come down at a high-rate of speed. He said several of the signs and streetlights in there are hit

from time-to-time. The location of where the building is happened to be the scene of one of the worse murders in the history of Savannah in 1909. The ghost tours like to point these things out and he does not want anything negative about the sign. If they are were going to honor the McKane's, he thought since the Charity Hospital building is still standing, that it is the principal legacy to the community and he would like to see the building honored.

Ms. Crisp stated they have a marker at that location. She said they had several options to place the marker at three addresses associated to the McKane's, including Charity Hospital. One other location is where Alice McKane lived, which is underneath the overpass as the interstate comes down at MLK. The other place is Cornelius McKane's office that was at Broughton and Montgomery Streets. It would be a marker in the sidewalk just south of Franklin Square on the northeastern corner of Montgomery and Broughton Streets. The proposed location seemed to be the best option as far as addresses associated with the couple.

Mr. Madson asked if there are currently any markers embedded in sidewalks or paving materials.

Ms. Crisp stated that previous Site and Monument Commissions' had been opposed to the idea.

HSMC ACTION: Mr. Madson made a motion that the Savannah – Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission table the petition and refer it to the City Attorney's office for review. Ms. Ricks-Brown seconded the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Crisp asked about comments regarding the text.

Mr. Smith stated that he did not want to appear too picky but asked that they look at the comma faults.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Preservation Planner

EH/jnp