

**SAVANNAH - CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION  
AND  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING  
112 EAST STATE STREET**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**December 3, 2009**

**4:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**HSMC Members Present:**

**Gordon Smith, Chairman  
Phillip Williams, Vice-Chairman  
Walt Harper  
Eli Karatassos  
Adrienn Mendonca  
Mary Soule**

**TAC Members Present:**

**Eileen Baker  
Daniel Carey  
Stan Deaton  
Ella Howard  
Pete Liakakis  
Beth Reiter  
David White**

**TAC Members Absent:**

**Dr. Peggy Blood  
Richard Bjornseth  
Harry DeLorme**

**HSMC/MPC Staff Present:**

**Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner  
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

The May 6, 2009 meeting minutes of the TAC were approved upon motion of Mr. Liakakis, seconded by Ms. Baker and carried.

The November 5, 2009 meeting minutes of the HSMC were approved upon motion of Mr. Harper, seconded by Mr. Williams and carried.

## II. REVISIONS TO MASTER PLAN AND GUIDELINES – TAC RESTRUCTURING

**Mr. Smith** stated that the purpose of the joint meeting was to review the Proposed Revisions to the Master Plan and Guidelines for the TAC Restructuring. There will not be a vote on this item today; they will only have a discussion.

**Ms. Harris** presented an overview of the background of the Commission, Master Plan and Guidelines. She explained that they are currently in the process of revising the Master Plan and Guidelines and are looking at all the different elements, including guidelines regarding the design and funding. The Site and Monument Commission in their last several meetings have talked about the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) composition. They felt it would be very helpful to invite the TAC to this meeting in order to get their input and feedback on this item.

**Ms. Harris** outlined TAC purpose, process and issues. TAC's purpose is to provide technical expertise and advice to HSMC to assist in review. The process is that there be formal meetings with formal recommendations same day of the HSMC meeting. The committee consists of ten representatives from various institutions. Some of the issues that have been identified are the review process has been cumbersome to the applicant, board and staff; duplication of expertise in some areas; no expertise in other areas; expertise and qualifications determined by institution; awkward for HSMC to request replacements; and erratic attendance.

The existing process review is the petitioner submits application to MPC; TAC reviews formally and makes recommendation to HSMC; HSMC reviews formally and makes recommendation to City Council; City Council makes final decision. Some of the issues that have been identified are if TAC or HSMC suggests revisions, the applicant does not have enough time during the same day to make changes; two formal public hearings on the same day is cumbersome to petitioner and staff without direct benefit; no formal process to involve relevant City departments (such as Engineering).

**Ms. Harris** explained that the proposed changes to the review process are the petitioner submits Monument Site Plan Review (SPR) application to MPC; City departments are notified and provide comments within two weeks; petitioner revises proposal as appropriate; TAC reviews proposal and provides comments to HSMC; petitioner revises proposal as appropriate; HSMC reviews and makes recommendation to City Council; City Council makes final decision. This process allows the petitioner time to revise based on TAC suggestions; relevant City departments would be involved at outset and identify issues early; informal TAC review provides more opportunities for dialog; TAC provides comments to HSMC rather than formal recommendation.

She has talked with many of the HSMC and TAC members and received many great ideas. The staff has put together five options and she briefly covered the options. **Option 1** – Improve Existing TAC: maintain current TAC structure; request specific expertise from institution and/or impose term limits. The pros would be that the institutions maintain representation. The cons would be the expertise needed doesn't match qualifications desired by HSMC; awkward for HSMC to reject appointee based on qualifications; may need additional expertise for some projects. **Option 2** – Experts appointed by City Council. The pros would be TAC appointments in control of elected body while the cons would be appointments that may be political rather than based on expertise; difficulty in getting timely appointments to boards. **Option 3** – Prequalified advisors rather than a formal committee, have list of

prequalified experts from which to draw; experts advise staff. The pros – expertise obtained and the cons would be public meetings not held. **Option 4** – Experts appointed by HSMC. HSMC appoint TAC based on expertise (City representatives plus architect, historian, historic preservationist, sculptor, etc.); may appoint temporary or floating members with specific expertise needed on particular projects. The pros - expertise obtained; allows for flexibility to pull in new members as necessary; current TAC members could still serve; HSMC could replace members (for non-attendance). The cons - institutions would not be represented. **Option 5** – Community Counsel (to be combined with other options). Rename current TAC as Community Counsel; institutions receive packets, no meetings. The pros – institutions notified (could still comment at meetings); could add additional institutions such as Civil Rights Museum. The cons – would be no formal recommendation from Counsel as a body. Ms. Harris informed HSMC and TAC that these are not the only options that would be available. They make like parts of one option and parts of another that could be combined. There are a lot of different ways to work with this, but she has tried to combine all of the suggestions she received from the committee members into a couple of different options for discussion. What she has provided is only a summary to aid the members in their discussion.

### III. BOARD DISCUSSION

**Mr. Daniel Carey** wanted to know if the staff, from their involvement, had a recommendation or preferred option.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she has been hesitant to make a formal recommendation. However, if the decision was in her hands, she would choose a combination of **Option 4 and Option 5** – have the experts appointed by the HSMC, but still have the institutions notified and they could still attend and make comments. She believes that the institutions comments would always be well received and are valuable to the HSMC.

**Mr. Liakakis** stated that the Technical Advisory Committee was setup to give the institutions and the community some input into this. He read a list of who would be designated for the particular institution. A concern has been that sometimes some of the members are not coming to the meetings. Mr. Liakakis believes that MPC should have contacted these agencies and explained how important it is for their representatives to attend the meetings. If the representative constantly does not attend, then another designee should be assigned. He has been looking at possibly having an architect, historian, sculptor, and preservationist. He believed that some of these positions should be added to the Technical Advisory Committee and request that if the institutions have personnel on staff as such that they appoint them to serve on the committee. Mr. Liakakis did not believe that the HSMC should appoint these representatives. This is why the composition of the Committee shows ten representatives from the various institutions so that they can be represented. He has talked with several persons and they believe, too, that the organizations should continue to have input.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that it would be helpful to him to know the other organizations that are a part of the Commission. He did not know which agencies were represented today.

Represented at today's meeting were **David White, Park & Tree (City); Daniel Carey, President/CEO Historic Savannah Foundation; Stan Deaton of the Georgia Historical Society; Eileen Baker, Cultural Affairs (City); Beth Reiter, Preservation Director, MPC; Pete Liakakis of**

**King-Tisdell Cottage Foundation; Ella Howard, Armstrong Atlantic University.** Ms. Harris informed the members that **Dr. Peggy Blood** represents Savannah State University on the TAC, but she is ill today and **Richard Bjornseth** represents SCAD, but is also unwell.

**Mr. Deaton** asked if the TAC was fulfilling its mission as laid out in 1993. If not, he believed that there is a reason to reconstitute it in some way. The Georgia Historical Society sees itself as a resource to be called upon as needed. They are happy to do so whether it is sitting formally on a body or called in as needed on a particular case. They will be happy to continue doing so.

**Mr. Carey** stated that staff has suggested that Option 4 and 5 be somehow blended. He agrees that the need for expertise is clear. They have a number of experts in this community, some of whom are connected with institutions and some are not; but they should not short change the process by being only married to institutions that may or may not have the expertise. Mr. Carey believed that other experts should be appointed and there should be term limits. No one needs to be appointed for life and obviously attendance needs to be enforced. This could simply be done by removal if a member is not attending without excused absences. As far as the institutions, he appreciates what Mr. Liakakis said and he represents one of the institutions, but there may be a way for the institutions to have input without necessarily being there by virtue of office. The institutions are important and bring a lot to the table, but the question would be where the list stops.

**Mr. Smith** stated that a statistical review was done and they found that some members of TAC were not attending the meetings. This Commission values and needs the input from TAC. They feel more secure in their decisions once a request has gone through TAC's process. They don't want to put a lot of obstacles on the applicants or anyone, but they do need TAC's input. For example, when they were doing the World War II monument, they did not have one or more members of TAC that could have addressed issues that arose such as the engineering problems. Consequently, they are struggling and don't want to destroy their relationship, but wants to strengthen it. This is why they are having input today.

**Mr. Karatassos** believes that it would be a mistake to exclude organizations that particularly don't have necessarily technical expertise, but certainly have a stake in sites and monuments that are either erected or maintained within their area of influence or concern. Frankly, he does not believe that the list that Mr. Liakakis read is inclusive enough. He believes also that when they are afraid to have too many people, then it limits the public process. Option 5 is basically what he mentioned to Ms. Harris. However, a part of his difficulty with all of this is the appointing of people who do have expertise, such as an architect, an historian, and a sculptor. Each project is different and yes there are standing offices that need to be included, primarily City offices. Mr. Karatassos believes further that maybe they don't need a technical committee, but an advisory committee. This advisory committee would have the people from the City basically who would give input. There is no reason for the Georgia Historical Society to be represented at a meeting for something that is totally outside of their area of interest or influence. All the other organizations are actually resources. He believes that it is the institutions and organizations responsibility to do something about their members. He does want the MPC to worry about calling every institution. If an institution appoints him to a committee and he does not attend the meetings, they need to write him a letter advising of same and send someone else in his place. They are making this too complicated and it does not need to be. He does not know if the word "technical" is pertinent. Do they really expect the King-Tisdell Foundation to give them technical input into the design and infrastructure

of a site? Or do they really want them to say how they want to interact with the community? If a brass sculpture is being proposed, the staff needs to be able to find a brass sculptor and ask for their specific help. All they are looking for is good competent advice.

**Mr. Williams** stated that an advisory committee is a good idea. He thought the role of the HSMC is that they are an advisory to the City and that the “technical” is truly technical. The problem he has always had with technical advisory committee is that there is certain liability linked to the technical advice given. If the technical advice is incorrect, a lot of maintenance things could happen. Mr. Williams knows that each project is different and that technical could be obscured in many different ways depending upon the project.

**Ms. Harris** stated that Mr. Karatassos and Mr. Williams comments are similar. One of the steps in the review process that is being proposed that they don’t currently have now is the site plan review process. This will pull in all the technical City folks to provide comments. But, to address Mr. Williams comment about liability, all monuments have to receive a permit. Therefore, they need structural drawings that are stamped by structural engineers. This is where the liability comes in. They are reviewed by the Engineering department within the City to ensure that it meets all codes. Ultimately, the responsibility does not lie with the technical advisory committee as a citizen group, but goes back to the City and/or the designee, fabricator, etc.

**Mr. Williams** stated that he realizes what Ms. Harris was saying, but they would still be looking at someone going through a process based on a recommendation that was made by an expert in something and then they spend money in that direction to go through the permitting process only to find out that it will not work. Therefore, he was saying should they be looking at the TAC strictly as technical. They want to represent institutions and may be this is a different board or council. He thought TAC was going to advise HSMC on how they felt it was going to work on the site, the feasibility of it.

**Ms. Reiter** believes that the new proposed step is to have the applicant go through the site plan review process very early. This is the real technical process because this would be the water and sewer, drainage and electricians. These positions would identify the problems that have to be overcome in the design. This information is brought to the advisory group; then the cultural and design sides would be brought in. Ms. Reiter felt this could be a way for them to resolve some of the problems they have had in the past.

**Mr. Liakakis** said it is important that the African-American community have input into this. They have the Civil Rights monument on Riverwalk. There was a lot of conversation with this monument. This monument went through a lot of processes not only the foundation, but the sculpture. Also, they have the Haitian monument. Some people did not want this monument as they failed to understand that several hundred Haitians came here to fight for our freedom and many died in Savannah. The Haitian monument is important. What is there now is a fine sculpture depicting the Haitian soldiers who came here to fight for our liberty. He is still saying that these organizations should have input. If someone is not coming to the meetings, it is the responsibility of whoever the MPC has assigned to call and let the organization know that their representative has missed three consecutive meetings. He believes it is the responsibility of the organization, such as the one he represents, to make the decision as opposed to him telling them certain aspects of this. A lot of thought went into setting up the technical advisory committee. He has attended many meetings where the technical advisory gave good information and he

passed it to the HSMC. Mr. Liakakis believes that before he tells his organization that they should not be involved, it is left to the discretion of the organization that is in charge and their board to make that decision.

**Mr. Harper** stated that he did not believe that anyone present today would dispute the fact that the King-Tisdell Foundation is not a valuable resource to this Commission. He believes that where they are getting bogged down is the name. Truly, the technical side of this will be Park and Tree, Engineering, Water & Sewer, and Stormwater. This is the true side of it. Call it community counsel or whatever you want, but it should include all the different organizations such as the King-Tisdell Foundation and Historic Savannah Foundation so they can be able to call upon them and get their input regarding a monument that will be going into a specific area.

**Mr. Karatassos** said why not drop the word “technical” and just have an advisory council. They are going through a technical review through the site plan analysis that will go to the advisory council. This will be the same people who are already on the advisory council; maybe they will add some more people to this council.

**Ms. Soule** asked if the members of TAC are contacted about the HSMC meetings that are coming up.

**Ms. Harris** answered that they are contacted if they have their own meetings. Usually, the TAC meets separately from the HSMC. Today is an unusual situation and they are having a joint meeting. For example, TAC does not review markers. Therefore, if the HSMC is reviewing a marker, TAC is not necessarily informed of this meeting as they don’t make a recommendation or give input on markers. The normal process is that the TAC has a separate meeting the same day as the HSMC and they follow the same notification process. TAC, just as HSMC, gets their packets a week in advance and are reminded the day before the meeting.

**Ms. Soule** wanted to know if TAC has been having their meetings.

**Ms. Harris** confirmed that TAC has been having their meetings, but they have not met since May 2009 because they have not reviewed any monuments since that time. The TAC meetings are held on an as-needed basis when an application comes in. The attendance is better now than it has been in the past. An analysis was done that went back to 1993 which revealed that it was in the 1990s and early 2000s that they found it was difficult to have a quorum or that members had not attended a meeting in more than a year.

**Mr. Carey** wanted to know if the site plan review is strictly for staff.

**Ms. Harris** responded yes.

**Mr. Carey** asked if the staff has found in this process that it could benefit from outside expertise. He asked further if the staff was ever sort of entangled in something that they could not resolve with staff alone in the process or sometimes feels they need outside expertise.

**Ms. Reiter** stated that this has been the problem as far as HSMC’s concern. There has not been a formalized process. The site plan has come to them before going to the City and this is wrong. It should

go to the City as they know what they are looking for. Consequently, they get all tangled up in the square when they could have saved a lot of time if they had a formal process.

**Mr. Karatassos** said if he was a developer and wanted to do something, they would have the site plan review. This is something that is done during the natural course of work.

**Mr. White** questioned if the process is still going to involve the multi-submittals, concept and final design.

**Ms. Harris** said she talked with Pete Shonka about this and was told that they can revise the existing site plan review application to better reflect what would be required.

**Mr. White** stated that he somewhat agrees with the idea of not calling them a technical advisory committee. He wanted to know if TAC will be able to make comments on aesthetic considerations.

**Mr. Williams** said the only other technical part is maintenance and they address a lot of this because they have people that have some experience on HSMC. However, he always thought that they were backed up by TAC on maintenance issues and whether it would be easy to maintain. Is it feasible to build? They need somebody with a technical mindset, either architect or engineer, to know if the monument will hold up with weather and abuse.

**Mr. Liakakis** stated every organization that attends, plus the Commission, is very important. If they just have a couple of people and when something important comes up about a monument and they just have an architect or engineer who feel it is not needed, is wrong. This is for the people of the community and that is why it was set up originally. Some 40 plus years ago, people wanted to erect a monument anywhere. He knew that a number of monuments were requested to be erected on Bay Street, but the technical advisory committee said Bay Street was not the place to put the monument. Also a request was made to erect a monument on 56<sup>th</sup> and Bull Street where a large park is located, but very seldom is anyone is seen in this park. Therefore, this was not a good spot. They also talked with the City about a small monument on Augusta Ave. This is his personal opinion and everybody has their opinion, but he just wanted to let them know that everybody that is on TAC is important; it is important to the citizens. If the WWII monument had been erected as originally requested, it would not have been approved. They wanted to have a large round sphere along with seven life-like military statues in the park. However, because of it going to the Commission and then to the City, the WWII monument is located in a good spot where it is not only seen by the citizens, but tourists as well.

**Ms. Harris** said after listening to everyone's comments regarding TAC and their role and purpose, it appears that they are getting caught up with the word "technical." She believes that the HSMC is looking for three levels of advice. The first level is technical. Is the square going to cave-in beneath it? Will there be other issues? This level of technical advice will be handled at the site plan review process. The other type of advice that the HSMC may need and has traditionally looked for in the past from TAC has been advice on aesthetic and historical considerations, evaluating the theme, evaluating the design, is it an appropriate work of art, and is it made from materials that will be appropriate for the City? The 3<sup>rd</sup> level is the community's input which is what the institutions are representing. She believes that all three are important, but from listening to the comments today, she believes that these are the three types of advice and expertise that they are looking for and are probably needed. They may want to think about

how they can accommodate this and if none of the options are a combination, then they need to think about how these three levels can be included. The options are different and require different methods for how the institutions get pulled in.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Ms. Harris to give additional information on options 2 and 3.

**Ms. Harris** explained that options 2 and 3 may be interrelated, but for example when the WWII monument was proposed for the square, they had some professors from various institutions come and speak about the history of the Moravian monument. This takes a specialized type of knowledge that may or may not be represented by an institution, but a historian with a deeper knowledge of it would know the history. Consequently, the community council may have this knowledge, but there is a possibility they may not while a historian would know the past history. This would be an area of specialized knowledge. Also, the aesthetics are important.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked that when the staff's recommendations are compiled, would they not seek the advice of these resources. He believes the staff needs to have the flexibility of bringing in the right resources to give them this type of advice which should be a part of the staff's recommendation. He did not know if a body needs to do this as the body would change with every project.

**Ms. Harris** believes that option 3 would do this.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that what Ms. Harris was saying is correct, but he believed that this could be accomplished by having an advisory council.

**Ms. Harris** stated that she believes there are a lot of different ways to accommodate this. If it is at the staff's level of pulling in experts, it is not what has been done in the past because this is what the technical advice committee is for.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that this would maintain the integrity of what Mr. Liakakis and some of the other representatives of various institutions are talking about. This would give the City's staff review process of something that needs to be there.

**Mr. Williams** wanted to know what is the expectation today of HSMC and TAC since they will not be voting on the options today.

**Mr. Smith** answered that the expectation is to get input and they have heard a lot of different perspectives today. The staff will put this together and make a formal presentation in January 2010 at the next meeting. If the staff cannot do so by January, then they will present a plan at the February 2010 meeting that will be voted on. The changes they feel they need must be addressed. The entire process needs to be easier for the public to understand, the applicant go through, the advisory committee to help them with and for the HSMC to make these decisions.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Commission and the Technical Advisory Committee, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris  
Preservation Planner

**EH:mem**