



S A V A N N A H - C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
March 3, 2011 4:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2011 HSMC Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. Order

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2. January 6, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Attachment: [January 6, 2011 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approve January 6, 2011 meeting minutes. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

III. Regular Agenda

3. C-110217 Marine Education Markers on Rousakis Plaza

Attachment: [Civic Design Manual.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Historic Site and Monument Application.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Staff Recommendation.pdf](#)

Upon motion of Mr. Harper, seconded by Ms. Soule and carried, this item was

moved up to number three on the Regular Agenda.

Mr. Christian Sottile of Sottile & Sottile Urban Design was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Ellen Harris gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting a series of six educational bronze plaques to be embedded into the ground at regular intervals in eastern portion of Rousakis Plaza. The theme of the markers is maritime education. Each of the six plaques has a separate, but related theme. The themes are: 1. NOAA Gray's Reef Natural Marine Sanctuary; 2. Reef Natural History; 3. Ocean Stewardship; 4. Ocean Megafuna; 5. Geologic History and 6. Savannah River Watershed.

The HSMC has been given the complete text for all six of the markers. The imagery is being developed. The petitioner has requested that this be allowed to come back to staff for final approval of the imagery. The estimated cost is \$22,800.00. The funding has been fully secured.

Ms. Harris reported that the staff recommends approval of the petition as submitted. The petitioner should coordinate with the City Engineering Department to ensure that no utilities are damaged during installation. City staff will develop an escrow payment.

Ms. Harris stated that she spoke with Mr. Williams earlier today. He is ill and was, therefore, unable to attend the meeting today. Mr. Williams asked Ms. Harris to pass along his comments to the HSMC regarding this proposal. He suggested that the bronze plaques, as they are set into bricks, be detailed in some way to have a frame of bricks or something similar outlining the bronze plaques in order to provide more distinction, decorative element and detail between the existing bricks and the bronze plaques.

Mr. Karatassos stated that Ms. Harris said coordination would have to be done with the City Engineering Department. He asked if the City Engineering Department has already seen this.

Ms. Harris answered that typically the site plan review process is reviewed when a monument is proposed and not with markers. They don't anticipate that there are any utilities as it is a shallow depth, but just in case, they want to be sure and are coordinating this with Engineering.

Mr. Karatassos wanted to know if these markers would be setting a precedent.

Ms. Harris did not believe the markers would be setting a precedence as other markers are along River Street and set into the ground as well as mounted on bases.

Mr. Karatassos asked what do the markers commemorate.

Ms. Harris answered that to the west, there is an inset marker made out of stone in front of the Hyatt Hotel that commemorates the Oglethorpe Landing site. Further to the west of this there are markers associated with the World War II monument.

Mr. Karatassos said he knows that Mr. Meyerhoff is present and believes he was the architect/designer. He wanted to hear Mr. Meyerhoff's opinion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Howard Morrison said as everyone knows, it is the ocean that connects people around the world. Our part of the ocean in Savannah, among other things, is Gray's Reef. This is that one natural marine sanctuary that we have in common. The waterfront connects us to the ocean. If one thinks about the history of Savannah, it was the waterfront where Oglethorpe originally came. The next thing that happened on the river was native Americans bringing pelts down from the fall-line that four years later became Augusta. Therefore, the river is in our DNA and the river fills the ocean along with a few other rivers. Consequently, anything that we can do on the waterfront that is appropriate that connects us to the ocean and the rest of the world is something that has his unqualified support.

Mr. Morrison stated that he likes the way the markers are laid out - a monument here and then three markers on either side of it; he especially thinks that it is important and well done. As a member of the public, he commends to the HSMC that this is a good thing and he is hopeful that the HSMC will approve the marine education markers.

Ms. Melissa Clyde agreed with Mr. Morrison in hopes that the HSMC will approve the markers.

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Clyde what is her connection with Gray's Reef

Ms. Clyde stated that she has worked with Ms. Kathy Rousakis on some ocean related projects. However, she is really speaking on behalf of this on a personal standpoint. Her background is in historic preservation; she has a master's degree from the University of Georgia; her family has been deeply involved with the Port of Savannah for multiple generation; her grandfather was a master pilot for many years and other family members have been a part of the Pilot Association as well as with the Georgia Ports Authority and the Long Shoremen's Association. Therefore, they definitely believe that honoring this part of our maritime history is absolutely critical to the matter of how our city has grown since 1733. From an aesthetic standpoint looking at this with her urban design and historic preservation, she believes this is entirely appropriate and done in a tasteful fashion. This is a good ceremonial way of honoring the navigational highway and thoroughfare which is the Savannah River.

Mr. Eric Meyerhoff said he was associated with Gunn and Meyerhoff, the architectural firm that designed the riverfront in 1973. Mr. Meyerhoff said he was involved with the fountain at the foot of Lincoln Street. He assisted with the African-American monument and recently, he was the designed architect for the World War II monument. Therefore, he is familiar with monuments, plaques and the riverfront. Consequently, Mr. Sottile was kind enough to ask his opinion before this meeting. They discussed the markers' point of view scale and location. Mr. Karatassos asked him to attend the meeting today.

He heard the presentation and from a standpoint of scale, location and other visual standpoint, he has no problem with it. The WWII monument is a bronze plaque and placed in the ground. At the passage through the monument, there are two bronze plaques four times the size of these markers. Mr. Meyerhoff said initially, he was concerned about

people tripping over the plaques, but no one has tripped as of yet. The people who come to view the plaque walks around it. He has no concerns with the planned location on the Rousakis Plaza and putting it in the ground surrounded by bricks is great. The brick work will have to be altered in order to fit the markers tightly and then secure them with the concrete base. From all the standpoints he has mentioned, he had no negative impressions about placing the markers here.

Mr. Harper asked what is the timeframe to erect the markers.

Ms. Harris stated this has to go to City Council.

Ms. Kathy Rousakis, Education Coordinator at NOAA Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, thanked the HSMC and said she is proud that Savannah is going to allow them to have recognition on River Street. The funding is in place and as soon as they work with Ms. Harris to incorporate the images into the six markers with the text that has been given to the HSMC, they work to get the other four developed. Then they will work Mr. Sottile's firm to render them. They have already secured DePue Monument Company on Bonaventure Road to do the rendering. There is an eight week timeframe to get DePue the final design; then DePue will cast and render the design. At this point, they will be working with the City of Savannah to get the markers installed.

Board Action:

Approve the petition as submitted. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

4. [C-100722-36838-2 Revisions to the Master Plan and Guidelines](#)

Attachment: [Staff report and recommendation 03-03-11.pdf](#)

Ms. Harris gave the staff report. She stated that the HSMC has been discussing the revisions to the Master Plan and guidelines for some time. In August, 2010, the HSMC approved the proposed revisions. In consulting with City staff and others, they decided at this point to let City Council complete its budget process before bringing the revisions forward for adoption by City Council. In the meantime, they have implemented the proposed guideline changes as a policy. Subsequent to City Council's adoption of their budget, they moved forward with being placed on City Council's agenda. The revisions have been on Council's agenda for the last two meetings and both times it has been continued. The revisions are scheduled to be on Council's March 10, 2011 agenda.

Ms. Harris stated as staff has been waiting for this to move forward, one other small item has surfaced which is how they define a marker. The current definition includes the word "historical" event, place or person. As they have discussed, by classifying it as historical leaves out a range of potential markers that may come forward that serve a more educational purpose and do not necessarily have to do with a historical event, person or place. Therefore, staff is proposing to remove the word "historical" in order to broaden the definition. She said related to this, they will have a list of themes in the Master Plan and Guidelines that markers and monuments should fall into. Therefore, staff is also proposing to add "educational" to the list of themes.

Ms. Harris reported that staff recommends approval of the revision of the definition of a marker and expand the list of themes to include "educational."

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Board Action:

Approval to revise the definition of a marker and add "educational" to the list of themes. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

IV. Other Business

5. [Discussion of the Toomer Monument in Chatham Square with Jerry Flemming](#)

Attachment: [Toomer Monument Location map.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Toomer Monument Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Smith explained that as they know, the Toomer Monument has been damaged. At recent meetings of the HSMC, as well as with City Council, various individuals have expressed concerns regarding the condition of this monument. Therefore, the HSMC invited Jerry Flemming of the City staff to be present at the HSMC meeting today and join in the discussion of this monument. Staff has prepared a brief overview of this monument.

Ms. Harris reported that the Toomer Monument was erected on October 27, 1964 to commemorate the achievements of Mr. Louis B. Toomer. Mr. Toomer moved to Savannah sometime during the 1920s and in 1927 founded the Georgia Savings and Realty Company

to serve the financial needs of the African-American community in Savannah. This company later became Carver State Bank. Mr. Toomer was involved in both local and national politics and was appointed by President Eisenhower to serve as Register of the U.S. Treasury from 1953-56. Ms. Harris stated that her research revealed that the monument was originally located in Chatham Square at a different location some where in the northwestern quadrant. But it was moved prior to the square's restoration in the 1990s. It is unknown why the monument was moved. The monument is currently located in the north central section of the square at the intersection of two brick sidewalks.

The monument's base is made from granite recycled from a column from the Exchange Bank on Broughton Street which was demolished in the early 1960s. It is inscribed with "In Memory of Louis Burke Toomer Register in the U.S. Treasury 1953-56 Founder and President of the Carver State Bank 1947-1961." The sundial on the top of the base is bronze. The granite base is in fair condition with some bacterial growth and graffiti. The bronze sundial has had the gnomon broken off. There have been previous attempts to remove the sundial in its entirety. Ms. Harris said it is her understanding that gnomon has been broken off many times and replaced. Therefore, the design of the sundial could be an issue.

Ms. Harris explained that the purpose of having the Toomer Monument on today's agenda is to discuss feasible options for how they may come up with a preservation plan for the monument. She has asked Mr. Jerry Flemming of the City of Savannah to share ideas in this discussion. She also believes that members from the public are present and wish to share in the discussion to find different solutions. She was hopeful that their discussion would lead to developing a recommendation to City Council who has also expressed concerns about the Toomer Monument.

Mr. Karatassos said he spoke with Mr. Robert James at Carver State Bank and a representative from the Carver Bank is present in their meeting today. Mr. James told him that the date of 1927 is more appropriate than the 1947 date. Whenever they consider what they will do, if the date is not 1947, then this needs to be corrected to the right date of 1927.

Mr. Smith pointed out that monument is in the front of a house. He has lived in this area approximately 15 years and knows that at least on three occasions people who have too much to drink or whatever reason, have driven cars at high rates of speed through this square. They have damaged benches, lamps and so forth. Mr. Smith said he is concerned that a car will eventually hit the monument. He suggested that the monument be removed to a more protective site. The gnomon needs to be replaced again. During parades or when there are events at the Civic Center, the kids walking through the park vandalize it. He is hopeful that the monument could be moved to another site, but still where the sun would shine on it and make the sundial work. The monument is not protected where it is presently located and he does not believe it is large enough for a fence to be erected around it; but more protection is needed.

Mr. Karatassos said what is written is easily read from a distance of two to three feet and to see the sundial you don't have to be so close to the monument. He asked Mr. Sottile if they could put an iron type picket fence around the monument with points on the top probably no higher than the monument so that it does not interfere with the scale, but would keep people from may be reaching in, pulling off the top or spraying the monument

with paint.

Mr. Sottile stated that he is not as familiar with the monument as he would like to be in order to make a recommendation about ways to protect. However, he appreciates the conversation and the interest of the group. Mr. Sottile said in looking at the photos, it appears to be a monument built of durable materials. Therefore, he believes that if the monument's position and placement is appropriate, additional protection should not be needed. It appears that it is a monument that was designed to be seen in its complete state. But there could be issues with its obscurity or the location of the path of travel. Mr. Sottile said he would be glad to learn more about the monument and possibly make an informal recommendation to the HSMC at a future time.

Mr. Harper believes that a fence around the monument will take away from it. It is an interactive monument and, therefore, encourages people to come up to it and look at it. He believes the placement of the monument would be the key to helping prevent the gnomon from being broken off. He lives two blocks south of this square and walks through the square on a regular basis. The last time the sundial was repaired within two days, the gnomon was removed. Mr. Harper said there has to be something that they can do because now the monument is right in the path where people walk. But, if someone has to walk over to the monument and make a concerted effort, it might deter a little bit or there could be a design difference that could be worked out. He was sure that Mr. Flemming has the answer to this.

Mr. Karatassos said he was not speaking necessarily of a fence, but was just saying what could possibly be done so the public could not easily damage the monument.

Dr. Abigail Jordan stated that she received a call from one of the City's Aldermen who told her that he knew she was never able to do anything with the plaque she had for the African-American Monument. She said the Alderman advised her that maybe she could get the African-American plaque and the Toomer Monument together and come up with something appropriate for the City. The Alderman asked her to come to this meeting today. She believes they need to know the definition of a monument. She believes what is being discussed now is a marker.

Ms. Harris said based on the HSMC's definition, it is a monument.

Dr. Jordan said she did extensive research when she started preparing for the African-American Monument. She did not know that the Toomer Marker was in the Chatham Square. She is aware of Ms. James (Robert James's wife) does not know it is here either. Dr. Jordan said she has checked with numerous Black citizens and, they, too, are unaware of the Toomer Monument. Therefore, she sought to come up with a plan about what to do with the \$10,000 plaque that she had was not given the permission to install. The plan she has does not concern the Toomer Monument. She did not know that she would have to go through so many other things on behalf of the monument. She thought that writing the letter to the City Manager was all she would be required to do.

Dr. Jordan said she was hopeful that when the plans for the plaque that she has comes before the HSMC that they will look favorably upon it.

Mr. Jerry Flemming reported that he has looked at the Toomer Monument. The granite base is a durable base. If a car hit this monument, the car would be damaged, but the monument might be slightly tilted. He did not look at the location, but looked at the placement of it. The sundial on top of the monument is not a custom-made sundial. This particular sundial with the exact same engraving and images can be purchased from multiple locations. Therefore, replacing the sundial will not be a problem. It is not just the gnomon, but the entire sundial. In order to attach the gnomon to the sundial, the sundial has to be removed. The little screws that come up through the sundial barely penetrate the gnomon. Mr. Flemming believes this is why the gnomon breaks off so easily. He believes further that if they put a posy underneath the gnomon as they screw it onto the monument, that it will last much longer than it has in the past. He believes they can purchase a new sundial with a new gnomon, attach it slightly differently and it will hold up better than the existing gnomon. The graffiti on the granite base should be removed tomorrow. Mr. Flemming said he supervises two departments now and one is the Cemeteries Department. The Cemeteries have an advanced conservation crew that are experts with historical stones and masonry. They have the technology and ability to remove the graffiti from the monument and biological growth. They have graffiti problems throughout the Historic District. His philosophy on graffiti and they will be applying this the parks and squares (he has only been on the job three days) is that when graffiti is noticed or reported, it should be removed within 24 hours. They know from history that graffiti attracts graffiti and the quicker it is dealt with, the better. They will reinstitute the war against graffiti.

Mr. Flemming stated that his recommendation is to remove the graffiti, clean the base, replace the bronze on top. He leaves the decision of moving the monument to the discretion of the HSMC. Presently, the mulch blends in with the granite, but from a design aesthetic point of view something to differentiate the monument from the mulch, it may be flowers, bricks or something else, would probably make this monument stand out more. Personally, he does not believe that the location is bad. When the high speed cars come through here they will probably miss the monument because of hitting the shrubberies, benches and trees. They will damage their car more than the monument. They do not have a budget to do this work, but he will try to work it into their budget to where the work can be done. If funding is available that anyone would like to donate to this project would enable the work to be done quicker.

Mr. Karatassos knew the monument is made of bronze, but he wanted to know if there is some other material that could be used that would be harder to break.

Mr. Flemming stated that bronze is a durable material just as was discussed during the Gray's Reef markers petition. However, there are some bronze substitutes (he does not know if they are more durable or rugged) that he guesses the benefit is they don't tarnish like bronze.

Mr. Karatassos said he was only wondering if there is something on the market that would be harder to break. He does not know anything about sundials, but was wondering if a glass dome was placed on the top of the sundial that would still allow the hourglass to operate, might impede someone from breaking the sundial.

Mr. Flemming said bronze is a durable item. He believes the main problem with the sundial is the screws are too small that holds the gnomon in place. If they use additional

adhesive with the screws will probably solve the problem.

Mr. David Douse of Carver State Bank said he saw the monument a couple days ago. He noticed that the date on the monument is incorrect. The bank was actually founded in 1927 and they received FDIC insurance in 1947. This could be where the erroneous date of 1947 originated. The monument is on the walkway and can be seen; this is a good thing, but the height could be enticing for someone to lean on it or from a distance some might believe its an ashtray. Mr. Douse, therefore, believes that if the monument could be raised slightly or put something at the bottom would make the monument stand put more. People would still be able to walk up and see it, but would not be able to climb on top or sit on the monument. He was thinking, too, about putting a glass case on top of the monument, but now he understands that this could not be done because of the sundial. He wanted to know if the monument is raised with a light surrounding it so that people would be able to see it during the night also. Nevertheless, their main concern is that the date be corrected. As everyone knows, Carver State Bank has a new building. They will move into the new building in May, 2011. They will have their grand opening at this time. Mr. Douse wanted to know if the monument done could be a part of their celebration/grand opening.

Mr. Karatassos stated that there is a nominal cost, but may be they can talk to the Carver State Bank about possibly donating to this cost.

Mr. Douse said may be the Bank would consider to do so.

Mr. Karatassos said if the monument is raised, this would solve the mulch problem.

Mr. Daniel Carey of Historic Savannah Foundation said he has a personal interest in this monument because he lives on Chatham Square and has admired it for the two years that he has lived here. He said there was some discussion of replacing the front of the dial and he wonders if this is absolutely necessary or whether it could be modified or retrofitted with using longer screws as Mr. Flemming suggested. This would provide more security. This only a suggestion from a preservation standpoint to preserve as much of the original as possible. Mr. Carey believes if too much is done to the monument, it will become a brand new monument. The message is the most important thing about the monument. Everyone needs to be able to read what is on the monument and if it is too high, there could be ADA issues. For example, it was above the height of someone in a wheelchair. He appreciates the attention being given to this monument and hopefully something will be done to preserve and enhance the monument.

Mr. Harper stated that he lives several blocks from the monument. The monument looks like a trash receptacle from a distance. He does not know if it is because of the height or because of the material it is made out of. Mr. Harper asked if the monument could be raised. He believes raising the monument would make it a little more preminent. This would make it less attractive for someone coming by and grabbing the gnomon. He asked Mr. Flemming if there is a possibility of finding a good, quality sundial. Mr. Harper said he was not sure that the quality of the last sundial was as good as it should have been with the short screws. Could the screws be welded so they would not be easily broken. He said the monument is in a natural walkway; therefore, some one could come by, grab and break it. What is the possibility of moving it? There are plenty other places in this square where the

monument could be relocated. Or is there a reason that the monument is placed where it is? There are a lot of questions and he does not know what the result of their discussion will be.

Mr. Smith said the HSMC will ask Mr. Flemming to study the issue and Ms. Harris to review it and come up with some solid recommendations. He has the history of Chatham Square as he has been a long time resident here. There is no reason it was put in this particular square. It just happened to be an open square.

Mr. Harper clarified he did not mean move it from Chatham Square; he wants it to remain in this square, but find a better location within this same square.

Ms. Soule stated that she lives near this square and comes to it often. She has noticed that most of the traffic in this square is north to south. With the monument be located where it is now is sort of asking for some of younger residents of the City to take the sundial as a souvenir. She likes the idea of raising the monument and perhaps moving it in another area of the square; perhaps east or west walkways.

Mr. Karatassos wanted to be sure that if the rededication of the bank is going to be in May, that they do all they can to at least get the monument cleaned up.

The consensus is that Mr. Flemming will study the issue and Ms. Harris will review it and make a report to the HSMC.

6. [Officer Elections](#)

Attachment: [Nominating Committee Report 03-03-11.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approve the Nominating Committee recommendation for the slate of officers. Chairman, Gordon B. Smith, Vice-Chairwoman, Mary Soule; and Secretary, Walt Harper. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Eli Karatassos
Second: Mary Soule
Walt Harper - Aye
Eli Karatassos - Aye
Gordon B. Smith - Aye
Mary Soule - Aye
Phillip Williams - Not Present

V. Adjournment

7. [Adjourned](#)

There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Cultural Resource and Urban Planning Manager

EH:mem

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.