



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  
June 7, 2012 4:00 PM  
Meeting Minutes

**June 7, 2012 Regular Board Meeting**

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

1. [March 1, 2012 Meeting Minutes](#)

Attachment: [March 1, 2012 Minutes.pdf](#)

**Board Action:**

Approval of the meeting minutes of March 1, 2012. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Mary Soule

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

**III. Regular Agenda**

2. [C-120515-36271-2 Relocation of the Church of the Ascension Marker](#)

Attachment: [Letters of Support.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Site Photographs.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Site plan.pdf](#)

Attachment: [C-120515-36271-2 Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [revise location image.pdf](#)

**Mr. Mark V. Smith** was present on behalf of the petitioner.

**Ms. Ellen Harris** gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting to relocate the existing historical marker describing the history of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension from its present location in Wright Square to a location across the street in front of the church. The marker was originally installed in 1960 when the historical marker program was administered by the State of Georgia. The Georgia Historical Society currently

administers the historical marker program. The petitioner has provided letters of support from both entities for the relocation.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the theme of the marker will not change. The proposed location is in front of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension which is on the northeast Trust Lot of Wright Square. The proposed location is closer in proximity to the subject. The proposed site is the south tree well in the sidewalk. The petitioner has permission from the Park and Tree Department to remove the existing magnolia and grate, replace with the marker and re-brick the sidewalk. Both the current and proposed sites are City property. The design will not change. The text will not change. The petitioner has the necessary funding and will assume all costs for moving the marker.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approval to relocate the historical marker as requested by the petitioner.

**Board Action:**

Approval to relocate the church of the Ascension Marker. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

3. [C-120522-37939-2 Temporary Mural 1711 Price Street](#)

Attachment: [C-120522-37939-2 Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Location and photographs.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Mural Proposal.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Letter of support.pdf](#)

**Mr. Matt Hebermehl** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Ellen Harris** gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting approval to erect a temporary mural at 1711 Price Street, at the corner of Habersham and 34th Streets. This location was approved as a site for rotating murals on November 3, 2011. The Katherine Sandoz mural was approved by staff on January 5, 2012.

**Ms. Harris** said due to the level of interest murals have received lately, staff referred this item to the Board so that a public hearing could be held. All property owners within 200 feet of the project site were notified and a sign was posted on the property ten days in

advance of the meeting. A notice was also sent to the neighborhood association president, the City Manager, and City Council. The theme of the rotating mural wall was approved by the HSMC on November 3, 2011. The mural will be located on the west facade of 1711 Price Street, facing Habersham Street. This location was approved by the HSMC on November 3, 2011.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the proposed image is a series of 50 portraits of community members, life-size heads and smaller, in a "crowd" format rendered as a field of flowers spanning the lower third of the existing mural. The existing mural, an abstract of a landscape on Turtle Island by Katherine Sandoz, will remain in place. It is anticipated that the mural will be painted in mid June, and will stay up for approximately 3-4 months. The mural is on private property and funds have been fully secured.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approval of the mural because it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

**Board Action:**

Approval for temporary mural at 1711 Price Street. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Mary Soule	- Aye
Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Walt Harper	- Nay

4. [C-120524-87320-2 Yamacraw Public Art Park Restoration](#)

Attachment: [Missing plaques.pdf](#)

Attachment: [C-120524-87320-2 Staff report.pdf](#)

**Mr. Jerome Meadows** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Ellen Harris** gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting approval to replace the existing (and missing) 16 plaques at the Yamacraw Square Art Park with new solid bronze plaques. The original plaques and art were approved by the HSMC on March 16, 1995. The ribbon cutting for the project occurred on May 13, 2006. The proposal is part of a larger project to restore the square, including upgrading the landscaping, lighting, benches, trash receptacles, etc. The petitioner is working closely with the Park and Tree Department and other City Departments on these upgrades.

**Ms. Harris** said the theme of the panels is related to the history of the site including Native American and African American histories. This was approved by the HSMC on

March 16, 1995. The proposed location is on the walls in the previously approved locations. The design is proposed to be solid bronze, 3/16" thick, 15" x 18" (matching the original size), design and configuration of the originals, only with a different material. Reviewing the previous approval, it is unclear whether the HSMC intended to approve the alternative material that was ultimately utilized. The project narrative and the drawings refer to the panels as "bronze panels" but does not indicate that they are solid bronze, as is currently proposed. The proposed text will match the previously approved text. Ms. Harris said that the funding for this project is estimated at \$100,000 (which includes the complete park restoration). The petitioner is working with the City, Housing Authority, and others to raise the necessary funds.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approval of the petition to replace the existing (and missing) 16 plaques at the Yamacraw Square Art Park with new solid bronze plaques as requested by the petitioner, on the condition that funding is fully secured.

**Board Action:**

Approval on the condition that funding is fully secured. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Mary Soule - Aye

**IV. Other Business**

5. [Follow up to C-120214-53557-2 and C-120214-543-1-2 Candy Chang's "Before I Die..." Mural 109 MLK Blvd. and 1100 East 31st Street](#)

Attachment: [Decision Mural 1100 East 31st St.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Decision 109 MLK Mural.pdf](#)

**Mr. Hebermehl** made a report of the entries that were put on the walls at 109 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 1100 East 31st Street. He reported that people wrote things that were not so great on both walls and they took care of this as quickly as possible. He believes the overwhelming theme was that people just wanted to express their love for their families and wanted to have a better life in the future.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said that when a neighbor spoke at Council's workshop, one of the criticisms was that people felt that this was an abomination of what Candy Chang's intent was with these projects.

**Mr. Karatassos** wanted to know who said this was an abomination.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said that Ms. Inez Jenkins was quoted as saying this. Ms. Jenkins has been quoted in the Savannah Morning News. He said he has no personal problems with anyone in the Live Oak Neighborhood and has respect for everyone who participated in this endeavor.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said that Candy Chang, in her desire to put together a book and compile all the different walls in the world, they were fortunate enough to have the walls completed before the deadline. They have received written acknowledgment from the firm that the walls in Savannah are amazing and they are thrilled that the response to them has been positive. They are looking forward to receiving the photos. He believes the goals for this project were met as far as giving a voice to people of the community. Overwhelmingly, Mr. Hebermehl believes it was positive and put Savannah in a global discussion concerning public art.

**Mr. Hebermehl** showed on the monitor the official website of "Before I Die." It has links to all the different walls around the world. The links give credit to Savannah. The link is connected to the See-Saw website. The link is a social website where you can have your own website that will let you connect to other sites so the public will be able to follow what you are doing.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said throughout the entire time, they were tweeting about it, posting pictures on facebook and using instant gram. Countless times Candy Chang tweeted and was involved in the conversation about what was going on in Savannah. For thirty days, Savannah was put in a global conversation with public art. Good things were being posted.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said they just completed their time lapse of Katherine's mural at 34th and Habersham Streets. He showed a video of this mural that illustrated how they are trying to capture the experiences.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Mr. Hebermehl if he has talked with the Public Information Director, Bret Bell, regarding putting some of the information from his powerpoint and some of the things that were written on the Government Channel.

**Mr. Hebermehl** answered no.

**Mr. Karatassos** said that he believes it would be good to put the information on the Government Channel. He has been accused of being a "change merchant" all his life. He is happy that he was able to vote for these kinds of artistic expressions. He believes that it is important that they should never be afraid to hear what people are thinking. They need to try to encourage people to think out loud sometimes so that we can appreciate their ideas and know what is important to them. Many things impact all of our lives. He apologized for some of the things Mr. Hebermehl went through, although a lot of it was because of a technical error that was made at the beginning. But, he believes the negative voices heard were completely washed out by the positive responses of the people. Mr. Karatassos feels these types of murals are great and they should keep doing them.

**Mr. Hebermehl** said this event is not about See-Saw, James, or him; but about the entire community. Everything about this event was trying to uplift everyone present at today's meeting and the community. The intent, as reflected in the video and the responses on the

walls, is to show the reason why we choose to live in Savannah. He believes that Savannah is a special place. He hopes that the voices of the people and their actions have been amplified. He thanked the HMSC for their time and support by allowing them to do this.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**None.**

#### 6. [C-110811-32318-2 Revisions to the Master Plan: Mural Policy](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report 06-07-12.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Masterplan 6-7-12.pdf](#)

**Ms. Ellen Harris** made the report. Over the past years, there have been several occasions in which unauthorized murals have been painted on various buildings which challenged our current review and enforcement process. This demonstrated that Savannah needs a definitive policy that distinguishes murals, signs, and graffiti and a process for public review. Murals are considered public art and, as such, fall under the jurisdiction of the Historic Site and Monument Commission (HSMC). However, there are no specific guidelines in the HSMC's *Master Plan and Guidelines for Monuments, Markers and Public Art* by which to evaluate murals.

**Ms. Harris** reported that the MPC staff worked closely with City staff, the HSMC, and the public to create a mural policy which defines murals, graffiti and outlines the review criteria and the review process. There have been three public hearings on the proposed mural policy: September 1, October 13 and November 3, 2011. The HSMC recommended approval of the policy at the November 3, 2011 meeting.

**Ms. Harris** said the proposed changes were presented to City Council at a workshop held on May 17, 2012. The City Manager and City Council members recommended several changes to the proposed policy based on the response to the recently approved temporary mural at 1100 East 31st Street (approved on March 1, 2012).

The recommended changes to the policy are summarized below. It is important to note that no vote was taken on the policy, nor did Council come to a consensus on their recommendations:

- Change the review process so that all murals, regardless of whether they are on public or private property, come to City Council for final approval.
- Change the review process to ensure that neighborhood associations are notified in advance of mural proposals.
- Change the review process to ensure that the City Manager and City Council are notified in advance of mural proposals.
- Change the review process to ensure that business owners in the vicinity are notified in advance of mural proposals.
- Add additional language to the definition of a mural to expand to other application types beside "paint."

**Mr. Karatassos** asked staff if the HSMC is being asked to revise their recommendation and make changes to the guidelines. City Council has given their expectations of

recommended changes.

**Ms. Harris** answered yes. City Council has made some recommendations on things that they would like to see included in the policy.

**Mr. Karatassos**, for clarity, stated that City Council's recommendations were not necessarily in a majority form, but suggestions they would like to see included in the policy.

**Ms. Harris** said she views the mural proposals that have been approved thus far as "pilot projects." She does not believe that they should consider these policy documents static and can never change. Previously, they did not have a mural policy, but now they have one in place and several murals have been approved. They can learn from the public response how to better improve the policy.

**Ms. Harris** reviewed the mural policy and informed the HSMC that what was shown in red are the changes that the HSMC proposed to City Council. They have not been adopted by City Council yet. The text shown in blue is staff's recommendation on further additions.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approval of revising the Master Plan and Guidelines to include a notification process for the neighborhood association, property owners within 200 feet of the proposal, and the City Council and the City Manager. Additionally, staff recommends revising the definition of a mural to read, "A singular, flat work of art painted applied (with property owner and HSMC) approval on a building, structure, fence, or other object within public view..."

**Ms. Harris** explained that currently the notification process is that a sign is posted on the property for ten days letting the public know about the mural. We follow the same notification process as is done in local historic districts for things like new construction: a sign is posted on the property, and the media is notified. The City Council and staff are notified when a proposal has been approved, but not necessarily in advance, although depending on the situation, it may call for that. This proposal formalizes a stricter policy to include a direct mail notification to all property owners as well as City Council and City Manager.

**Ms. Harris** reported that she utilized the proposed notification process for the mural that was approved today for 1711 Price Street. Approximately, seventy letters were mailed to property owners. She received one email response. The sign was posted and the neighborhood association was notified, as well as City Council and City Manager. She said she tried the new notification process to see if there was a difference in the level of responses received. We have a lot of different application types that come to MPC that are legally required to do different notices. This is a somewhat hybrid process as we don't have a legal requirement to do this, but is similar to a rezoning when a mailed notice is sent to property owners within two hundred feet. That process requires an additional advertisement in the paper, etc., but she did not feel that murals rose to that level of notification.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked what is the process for the Historic Review Board.

**Ms. Harris** reported that a notification sign is posted on the property for at least fifteen days prior to hearing.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if a letter is sent to the abutting property owners and the businesses.

**Ms. Harris** answered no.

**Mr. Karatassos** said they are talking now about zoning changes and alterations that are permanent. But, these murals were up for thirty days.

**Mr. Harper** asked staff if they know why City Council was very concerned about the notification.

**Ms. Harris** explained that the neighborhood members felt that the posting on the property was not sufficient. They did not know what it was and not read it. The writing on the sign is fairly large, but driving by in a car you cannot necessarily read it. You can see the bold letters "Certificate of Appropriateness" (COA), but the date and time of the hearing may be a little difficult to read from an automobile. Therefore, Council felt that they would prefer to have an additional direct notice.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked when they initially made their recommendation for City Council to review. Was it in November 2011?

**Ms. Harris** answered yes.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked staff if when she made the presentation to City Council within the last couple of weeks, if this was the first time it was heard by Council.

**Ms. Harris** answered yes.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that he believes there was no urgency for six months until a technical error was made regarding the location and there is no question that was unintended. He believes if this was not done, none of this would be going on.

**Ms. Harris** said this was not discussed at the workshop.

**Mr. Karatassos** said the HSMC has been reviewing this for the last few years. He believes the mailed notices to the property owners is way over the top. This is an expense that he does not believe is deserving of a thirty day mural. Mr. Karatassos said he has noticed these signs when they go up. He is not sure he would use initials, but believes it would be better to spell the words out - "Certificate of Appropriateness." When you see a zoning sign it is clear what is happening.

**Mr. Karatassos** said, therefore, he believes they ought to first look at what they are doing now and see what they can do to improve the notification and make it very clear to the people in the neighborhood of what is happening. They can do this and see if they will get a better reaction. If they do, then maybe this is something that they can include in their recommendation. However, at this point he does not believe that there has been a lot of interest in taking up their recommendation. Therefore, he would rather see them put this



off until they can test some better signage, etc. in the neighborhood. Notifying the neighborhood associations is a good idea.

**Ms. Harris** responded to the suggestion of the trial of different signs by explaining that the signs are ordered in advance. She is happy that Ms. Melony West, MPC Financial Director, is present. To change the signage on a regular basis to test it would be a significant financial burden for MPC. The signs are expensive.

**Mr. Harper** said he agrees with Mr. Karatassos. He believes that the notification to the neighborhood association is warranted. Mr. Harper said he believes also that the sign is more than enough for the notification. It is good enough for Certificates of Appropriateness in historic areas and he does not see why it should not be appropriate for murals.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

**Ms. Virginia Mobley** said after the last presentation about notifications, she was quite reluctant about coming forward. Nevertheless, she wanted to tell the HSMC that what goes on in a neighborhood is very important to the people who live there. This may seem like a small item to some, and appreciation of art should be something that everyone accepts, but she was not directing this just to murals. Ms. Mobley said they recently should have been notified of a change of something that had already been approved five years ago. One neighborhood did not receive notification because the information that was given to the person making the notification was incorrect. This has caused the development to be postponed for at least eight months; not because of the objections regarding the project, but because the neighborhood was not notified. Therefore, notification of what goes on in one's neighborhood is very important and they cannot rely on the system of neighborhood associations contact because they constantly change.

**Ms. Mobley** said she received calls about the murals on Waters Avenue and she lives on Abercorn Street. She received "information calls." The callers were not wild about the mural, but were more upset over the fact that they had no input into the process. They accepted it, but it went back to not being included in what was going on in their neighborhood. This was one of her reservations about the initial process. The notification process was very broad and did not reach the individual who lives on the street, who is not savvy to what goes on in the city government, and is really intimidated about inquiring into these kinds of things.

**Mr. Karatassos** stated that he agrees that what Ms. Mobley said was an important issue, but when compared to a brand new building or demolishing a building, there are no notifications. When they are looking at murals compared to something more permanent, it is .....

**Ms. Mobley** injected that notification is given when something is going to be demolished.

**Mr. Karatassos** agreed and stated that he should not have said demolished.

**Ms. Mobley** said when the gas company or utilities come into a neighborhood and work is being done, the companies give individual notifications of what is going on and their work only lasts for hours. But, with the murals, they are talking about something that will last

thirty (30) days or six (6) months. This has an impact on the individuals who live here.

### **BOARD DISCUSSION**

**Mr. Gensheimer** asked staff what is the expense of sending out a mailing every month to the people.

**Ms. Harris** answered that she has not done the calculation, but for this proposal, there was the sign posting. She estimates that the sign costs approximately \$5.00. We mailed about 70 notifications which would be approximately \$30.00 for the postage and the printing of the letter was done in color. She guesses the cost of doing this on a regular basis would cost about \$75.00 to \$100.00. We don't have an application fee for these types of applications. Therefore, the MPC ends up having to absorb the cost.

**Ms. Harris** explained that the Board might want to consider making a recommendation to City Council about having a fee structure in place to help cover these costs.

**Mr. Gensheimer** asked if the cost stated by Ms. Harris included any staff time.

**Ms. Harris** answered no; it does not include any staff time for the review.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked staff if the City increased or decreased their allocation to the Planning Commission this year.

**Ms. Harris** deferred this question to the Financial Director.

**Ms. West** said the funding this year remained the same.

**Ms. Soule** stated that she is in favor of notifying the neighborhood associations, City Council, City Manager and possibly putting a notice in the newspaper. As they all know, legal notices are always in the newspaper and it is at the discretion of individuals to find these things whether it is lost persons, bankruptcy and so forth. But to notify every individual that might possibly be concerned about this seems excessive, especially with the expensive that is incurred.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked that if the HSMC acts on a recommendation, is the expected plan to go to City Council? He said personally, he thinks that not enough time has ensued since the last mural. He would like to have some more time to really think through this. He believes that notification is really the issue and not whether every member of City Council wants to have all of these come before them.

### **Board Action:**

Revisions to the Master Plan: Mural Policy  
be continued to the meeting of September 6, 2012. - PASS

### **Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Thomas Gensheimer	
Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Walt Harper	- Aye
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Mary Soule	- Aye

## V. Adjournment

### 7. [Adjourned](#)

**Ms. Soule** said if any applications come in, the HSMC could have a special called meeting on Thursday, August 2, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Ms. Soule adjourned the meeting at 5:37 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled quarterly meeting is **Thursday, September 6, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing.**

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.*