



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  
September 1, 2011 4:00 PM  
Meeting Minutes

**September 1, 2011 Regular Meeting**

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

1. [Called to Order](#)

**Ms. Soule, Vice-Chair**, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. She welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting.

**Mr. Eli Karatassos** stated oftentimes, they hear remarks and comments about public boards regarding the decisions they make. Some persons like the decisions, while some do not, and then there are others who do not understand what the boards do. Mr. Karatassos said, therefore, based on this observation, he was asking that at their next meeting they invite the public to come. The HSMC could have a short session where the staff talk about the guidelines and then give the public an opportunity to make suggestions as to what they would like to see the HSMC do to either streamline the meetings or run the meetings better. This does not say that the public will like the HSMC's decisions better. But, he believes it would be useful to have this discussion. The public and the elected officials want to know more about how the HSMC operates and how they make their decisions. Mr. Karatassos said he talked with staff about this matter before and now he is asking the HSMC that at their next meeting they set aside a time slot on the agenda to have public input. This informational segment could cover the guidelines and how they can be accessed by the public.

**Ms. Soule** said she believes this is a good idea and they can cover this more under New Business on today's agenda.

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

2. [July 7, 2011 Meeting Minutes](#)

Attachment: [July 7, 2011 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

**Board Action:**

Approval.

- PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Walt Harper

- Aye

Eli Karatassos

- Aye

Adrienn Mendonca

- Aye

Gordon B. Smith

- Not Present

Mary Soule

- Aye

Phillip Williams

- Not Present

**III. Regular Agenda**

3. [C-110217-40409-2 Marine Education Markers on Rousakis Plaza- AMENDED](#)

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

Attachment: [Application for Amended Text 08-11-2011.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Staff Recommendation 9-1-11.pdf](#)

**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 amendments to the text of the previously approved Marine Educational Markers, a series of six educational bronze plaques embedded into the ground at regular intervals in Rousakis Plaza. The purpose of the change is to make the language more concise and accessible to the general public.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approval of the amendments to the text.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if is the same material they received two weeks ago.

**Ms. Harris** confirmed that this is the same materials that were provided to the Commission in their submittal packages. The only thing different is the petitioner is requesting to amend the text that was approved by the Commission at the March 3, 2011 meeting. The purpose of the markers have not changed.

**PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Mr. Sottile** entertained questions from the HSMC.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if there would be more changes.

**Mr. Sottile** did not believe there would be more changes. They are hopeful of moving forward with the project. They believe that the revised text is more concise and more accessible. In fact, this will allow the text to be larger on the plaque which they believe will be an improvement on all three fronts.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**Board Action:**

Approval to accept the proposed amendment changes to the Marine Educational Markers. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Eli Karatassos

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Adrienn Mendonca - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Not Present

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

4. [C-110610-34181-2 Ardsley Park Chatham Crescent Markers- AMENDED](#)

Attachment: [Staff report- AMENDED.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Revised context photos and map.pdf](#)

**Mr. Randy Moffet, President of the Ardsley Park Crescent Neighborhood Association,** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Harris** gave the staff report. She said that the report to the HSMC stated that the bottom of plaques be no greater than 30 inches from the ground. This was incorrect. The minutes verify that the bottom of the plaques from the ground be no greater than 48 inches. The current petition changes the sizes of the plaques from the previously approved 24" x 24" to 12" x 24". Additionally, the seal for the Ardsley Park Neighborhood is no longer proposed to be on the plaque. The text on the plaques will read "**Ardsley Park Chatham Crescent Established 1910.**" The petitioner has proposed specific installation heights with his revised submittal. Sign placement on pillars, from the bottom of the plaques, will be as follows: **Washington Avenue and Bull Street: 4 feet from ground, 6 inches from sides. Washington and Waters Avenues: 4 feet from ground, 6 inches from sides. Abercorn Street and Victory Drive: 3 feet 9 inches from ground, 5 inches from sides.**

In the revised version, the seal, and subsequently the repetition of verbiage has been eliminated. The plaques will cost approximately \$2,500 and the funds have been fully secured. The installation plan was approved by the HSMC on July 7th and is not proposed to change.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends approved of the amended petition because it meets the Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Works of Art. A copy of the proposed mark-up was given to the HSMC so they could see exactly how the proposed markers would look.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if this is the proposed placement.

**Ms. Harris** answered that it is the placement as proposed.

**PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Mr. Moffet** entertained questions from the HSMC.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked why was the word "neighborhood" eliminated.

**Mr. Moffet** answered that the point was never about the neighborhood association. It was to delineate the boundaries of the neighborhood. In rethinking this, they wanted something that might look as if the developer put it up 100 years ago.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**Board Action:**

Approval to accept the staff's recommendation for the new amendments for the Ardsley Park Chatham Crescent Markers. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Walt Harper

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Adrienn Mendonca - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Not Present

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

5. [C-110812-55531-2 Johnny Mercer Marker](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Supplemental information.pdf](#)

**Ms. Dianne S. Thurman, Chair of the Johnny Mercer Centennial Committee** was present on behalf of the petition.

**Ms. Ellen Harris** gave the staff report. The petitioner is requesting approval to install a solid bronze plaque and additional pavers adjacent to the Johnny Mercer Statue in Ellis Square. The Johnny Mercer statue was approved by the HSMC in March 2009 and the statue was installed shortly thereafter. The adjacent businesses and the Visitors Center have reported that visitors to Ellis Square frequently inquire about the identify of the statue.

Currently, the statue is surrounded by hexagonal pavers, one of which is inscribed "Johnny Mercer 1909-1976" but is not differentiated from the other inscribed pavers. In response, Mayor Johnson has formed a committee to facilitate the installation of a marker at the site.

**Ms. Harris** stated that the estimated cost of the plaque, pavers and installation is \$4,000. Funding has been secured from the hotels and merchants around Ellis Square. The petitioner has done additional research at Library of Congress and found that Capital Records Company shown in the second paragraph should actually be Capital Records, Inc. Therefore, it is requested that a change be done in accordance with the Library of Congress archives. Ms. Harris reported that the staff recommends approval. The proposed marker meets standards set forth in the Master Plan and Guidelines. The petitioner should coordinate with City Engineering to ensure no utilities are damaged during installation.

**Ms. Mendonca** was curious about the writing on the pavers as shown on page 6. She wanted to know if these were the names of the sponsors; or they somewhat like what is seen at the monument on River Street where the people are buying pavers in order to support the monument.

**Ms. Harris** responded that one paver at Mr. Mercer's toe has his name and date thereon. The other pavers are donor names. These pavers were sold when the statue was originally installed. It is not proposed for any of the new pavers to be sold or be inscribed in any way. They all would be blank.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked if the pavers would extend to the borders or would it remain dirt. She asked Ms. Harris if this is the space she was talking about for the commemorative.

**Ms. Harris** answered no; this is not the space for the commemorative. She pointed out that it would be set back further. She has talked with the Park & Tree Director and her understanding is that other options are being explored besides the current gravel because of maintenance issues. Ms. Harris does not know at this point what has been determined. However, they are aware of the expansion of the pavers and feel that it would be compatible with whatever design that would be settled on.

**Ms. Mendonca** said she was only curious as to whether the sponsoring organizations would continue to sell pavers and expand them out or if it will become grass.

**Ms. Harris** explained that her understanding is that they have not proposed to have additional pavers.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked for a point of information that where the name is near the foot, if this is what will be replaced.

**Ms. Harris** answered no. All the existing pavers will remain intact and these will be added to what is already there.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked Ms. Harris if she felt this would be repetitive since a marker will not be on the left.

**Ms. Harris** stated that currently the inscription on several of the pavers reference Johnny Mercer. For example, Friends of Johnny Mercer Society has an inscribed paver.

Therefore, there is already a certain level of repetition here, but she does not believe that it detracts from the monument.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked why the pavers are not going all the way to the curb. It looks as if this was added as opposed to being here in the beginning. He believes this detracts.

**PETITIONER COMMENTS**

**Ms. Thurman** clarified that the pavers that are currently inscribed were only the major donors of \$5,000 to \$25,000 donations.

**Mr. Karatassos** wanted to know who designed the layout.

**Ms. Harris** explained that the City Engineering Department provided the layout.

**Ms. Thurman** stated she believes the HSMC concern is at the front on either side, the gray area.

**Mr. Karatassos** said he would feel much better about it if the pavers went all the way to the sidewalk as the existing pavers.

**Ms. Soule** stated she believes what Mr. Karatassos is saying is that the pavers should come to the bricks on the left side.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**Board Action:**

Approve the request as submitted with the addendum that pavers will meet the brick on the plaque side, and the curbing currently between the pavers and brick be eliminated. - PASS

**Vote Results**

Motion: Eli Karatassos

Second: Adrienn Mendonca

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Adrienn Mendonca - Aye

Gordon B. Smith - Not Present

Mary Soule - Aye

Phillip Williams - Not Present

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

Attachment: [Case Studies.pdf](#)

Attachment: [O.C.G.A. § 36-60-3 and O.C.G.A. § 16-12-80.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Mural Policy and Guidelines 9-1-11.pdf](#)

**Ms. Harris** distributed to the HSMC the comments she received last week from the Technical Advisory Committee concerning the proposed mural policy. Ms. Harris introduced Julie Yost, a graduate student in the Historic Preservation Department at SCAD. Ms. Yost is a summer intern at MPC. Ms. Yost has been helpful in doing the background research on mural policies throughout the United States.

**Ms. Yost** gave a brief overview of the research for the master plan, mural policy and guidelines. The community mural movement inspired the development of mural programs across the country. The most famous of these were the the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program which was created in 1984 as a partnership between the city and a nonprofit organization. The program was developed as a method of combating graffiti and blight in the urban neighborhoods of the city. At-risk youths were employed to assist in painting the murals which were given themes related to the history of the city and its inhabitants. This program has grown tremendously and has helped to revitalize Philadelphia. The city now has more murals than any other city in the world and they are tourist attractions as well as a source of community pride. Through programs such as the Mural Arts Program and other public arts initiatives, murals have proven their significance. They make art accessible to everyone by bringing it into the public sphere. They serve to enhance and beautify other rights in attractive buildings. In doing so, they contribute to the character of the neighborhood. Perhaps, more importantly they are able to provide a median to portray the history, beliefs and culture of the community.

**Ms. Yost** explained that the main goal of the research was to determine a method to distinguish between mural, signs and graffiti. Murals differ from signs as signs use text graphics and logos to specifically promote a business, product, service or political party or candidate. Murals are singular works of art that utilize similar awnings to portray an artistic idea. Murals can contain both graphics and text, but they must further the artist concept. There is one major difference between murals and graffiti. Murals are sanctioned by property owners and appropriate governing bodies. They are considered public art. Graffiti is unsanctioned, meaning that it is applied to a building site or object without permission of either the property owner or the appropriate governing body. Murals have proven their effectiveness in the hopefulness to eradicate graffiti. A common solution for property owners or city officials is to paint a mural on a building or structure that is repeatedly vandalized. According to Keep America Beautiful, murals are rarely defaced by graffiti artists, a source of pride among those who live nearby.

In Savannah, there are two distinct types of signage that set a precedent for murals. The first ghost signs which are large fixed facade signs that were used as advertisement in the past. These signs contribute to the character of the historic district. The other types of signs are the traditional hand painted signs of Savannah. These signs are found mainly in the Victorian and Thomas Square Streetcar Districts. The quality and character of these signs are unique to Savannah. Traditionally, hand painted signs are generally associated with the business or with an adjacent institution. They often feature both graphics and text.

The signs are professionally painted and the distinct style of each artist is evident. Although they are transitory in nature, the tradition of these signs go back to generations. The quality and style of Savannah hand painted signs blur the lines between art work and advertising. These signs have gained notoriety; have been featured on Georgia Public Broadcasting, TEDx talk and on multiple websites. An archive at Georgia Southern University was created for the purpose of documenting and preserving this important tradition. There are currently murals in existence in Savannah in and around the Historic District. Ms. Yost showed murals at the following locations: 515 Price Street, Drayton and 31st Streets; Humane Society on Sallie Mood Drive; at the Water Treatment Center as a graffiti preventive; DeRenne Avenue, Wheaton Avenue and Brighter Day on East Park Avenue.

**Ms. Yost** stated that during their research, they analyzed mural policies from multiple cities around the country. They found that while many cities have recent mural policies in place, other cities are facing problems because they do not have a policy. In cities where there are no policies, murals are either cited as noncompliance signage or as graffiti. In both cases, this causes issues with the property owners, artist and the public. As is the case in Savannah, many places across the country are developing policies to better handle this popular and widely acceptable art form. All cities listed have mural policies in place and they took features of each of these policies to shape Savannah's mural policy.

**Ms. Yost** stated that she would review Charleston's policy with the HSMC as this city is most similar to Savannah. The City of Charleston requires that any permanent installation visible to the public must go through Charleston's Design Review Committee (DRC). This committee reviews benches, building fixtures and murals. Charleston allows murals in all districts with approval from the DRC. A mural is defined as "any sanctioned work painted or otherwise posted within public view. Graffiti is defined as any unsanctioned material posted on public or private property." The Design Review Committee requires the written consent of the property owner, a rendering of the artwork, a plan for who will be maintaining the mural and if the mural is in a highly visible area, a letter of support from the community is encouraged. Murals are permitted on all types of buildings, including historic buildings. These murals are on either side of the City Market shed in the Historic District and were approved as part of the recent City Market renovation in 2010. The DRC review criteria includes the appropriateness to the surrounding neighborhood and the quality of the art work. Murals are expected to contribute to the character of an area rather than overpower it. The Board also looks at the timeliness of the design to ensure that it will not appear outdated in subsequent years. Both spray and brush painted murals are allowed in Charleston provided they meet the criteria. Charleston also is host to a city approved nonprofit community mural program called the Chart Outdoor Initiative. Chart focuses on installing murals in the Avondale Neighborhood and has been doing so since 2009. Each mural is approved by the city and privately funded. The murals help to beautify the neighborhood and to attract interest. According to their website, the Charleston's art initiative is dedicated to establishing a cooperative relationship with the City of Charleston to provide outdoor public space for artists to paint. To date, they have created more than ten murals with city approval.

**Mr. Harper** asked that of the existing murals in Savannah, how many were approved by MPC.



**Ms. Harris** answered none were approved by MPC because we do not currently have a policy regarding murals.

**Ms. Soule** asked who approved the murals.

**Ms. Harris** said the murals are always approved on a case-by-case-basis. This is one of the things that they wanted to highlight of the need to have a policy. There has been very inconsistent enforcement. Some times they are enforced and some times a determination is made that they are signage that does not have a permit and accordingly are taken to court. Other times they are determined to be graffiti and some times they are cited while other times they are simply painted over. Then there are other times, particularly if there is a personal feeling and someone happens to like them, they simply are not reviewed by anyone at all. They are simply allowed to be. Therefore, this is one of the purposes that a policy is needed to ensure that they approach this in a responsible manner.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked who would have approved them.

**Ms. Harris** answered that currently the Site and Monument Commission has the authority to review public art. We just do not have the standards to evaluate it. This could have come before the Site and Monument Commission.

**Ms. Soule** questioned if Charleston has commissions the same as Savannah.

**Ms. Yost** answered yes. Charleston has a board of Architectural Review that is specific in the Historic District. But, the Design Review Committee murals are considered a permanent fixture. This is why they go through the Design Review Committee.

**Ms. Soule** said the mural program was cited as being successful in Philadelphia, but this was not one of the cases studied.

**Ms. Yost** stated that they did look at Philadelphia, but she did not include this in the case study because the city funds this program. She tried to look at case studies where cities did not fund all the murals.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked Ms. Yost that when they were doing their research, did they find any guidelines for complaint resolution.

**Ms. Yost** answered that they found quite a few guidelines for noncompliance resolutions.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked what happens if a public complaint surfaces.

**Ms. Yost** stated that most of the things she found were for noncompliance or murals were erected without permission, most cities would require that it be covered until it can go before the Board for approval. With regards to complaints, murals are required to give public notice before they are erected so that the public would have time to comment. Therefore, there was not much in the policy regarding whether there were many complaints.

**Ms. Harris** said Ms. Yost spoke about the history of murals in Savannah and the tradition of hand painted signage and ghost signs. There is certainly a lot of aesthetic and

philosophical overlap between the two concepts. But from a regulatory standpoint, they try to make a very clear distinction between what is a sign which falls under the Zoning Ordinance and has a total separate process, and a mural which would come before the HSMC. Therefore, this type of creativity and expression sets a precedent in Savannah for murals. But, from a regulatory standpoint, a distinction needs to be made between the two.

**Ms. Harris** stated that over the past year, unauthorized murals have been painted on various buildings in Savannah. The murals were either cited as graffiti and painted over, or considered signs without a permit and cited accordingly. Staff was approached by the City at the beginning of the year and asked to come up with some recommendations on how to deal with this. Because murals are considered public art, they fall under the jurisdiction of the Site and Monument Commission. However, there are no specific guidelines in the HSMC's Master Plan and Guidelines by which to evaluate murals. These incidents have demonstrated that Savannah needs a definitive policy that distinguishes murals, signs and graffiti.

**Ms. Harris** said as Ms. Yost mentioned, one of the most important things that they have tried to do with the policy is to make a distinction in the definitions between what constitutes graffiti, what constitutes a mural and when it becomes a sign. Essentially, graffiti is unsanctioned either by the property owner or by the Site and Monument Commission whereas a mural is a work of art that has been approved by both the property owner and the HSMC. A new definition was not developed for a sign. This is a part of the Zoning Ordinance and not a part of the HSMC's jurisdiction. But, in order to distinguish a mural from a sign, the definition of a mural should not specific advertise a business, product, service or promote a specific political candidate or party. If it does, it would not follow the approval process of a sign.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked that if he owned a house, was running for an office and wanted to paint a sign on the side of his house, he could not do so because it would be considered a sign.

**Ms. Harris** explained that there are certain political freedom of expression protections that are specifically for political candidates. She does not know how all of these are involved, but it would not come before the HSMC. Staff has developed different review criteria for murals and how the applications should be evaluated. They try to be consistent as possible with the way they are currently evaluating other public art such as sculptures and monuments. The theme, location, design and funding are looked at of the proposed mural. The specific content is protected under Freedom of Speech Laws; however, the murals must be respectful of the greater context of the community. Of course, it still must comply with all state regulations regarding obscenity, nudity and so forth. For example, a billboard or sign still has to follow those state laws; therefore, so would a mural.

**Ms. Harris** explained that the standards for location address the placement of the mural both within the architectural feature of the building as well as within the greater neighborhood context. The standards states that murals would be limited to one building per blockface. If it is located on a primary facade, it should not take up more than 25% of the facade. It should not detract from the architectural features of the building. It would

not be appropriate for murals to be painted on any kind of unpainted historic masonry surface. For example, if there is an unpainted brick historic building, it would not be appropriate to put new paint on the historic fabric.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if this includes stucco.

**Ms. Harris** answered that it would be any unpainted historic materials. Generally speaking, murals are better suited in a commercial and mixed-use areas. If a mural is proposed in an exclusively residential area, the neighborhood support would be required. In other areas, neighborhood support is certainly encouraged and taken under consideration by the HSMC, but it would not be 100% required. The evaluation of the design should include the discreet placement of artist and sponsor names and types of materials that are proposed to be used. The scale and overall design of the murals should be appropriate to the structure as well as the greater neighborhood context. The proposed materials should be of excellent quality, and if intended to be permanent, the mural should have a weatherproof and vandalism proof coating. If it is not the intention for the mural to be permanent, it is perfectly acceptable; but there needs to be a plan for either replacement or removal. The artist qualifications are the same that is used to evaluate other works of public art. The funding criteria is the same as for other public monuments as they are not City funded.

**Ms. Harris** reported that the review process would be the same process as they are currently using for public art with a few additional requirements. Posted notification on the building or structure on which the mural is proposed, is required ten days in advance of the HSMC meeting. Also when the mural is painted, presuming that it has approval, the artist should incorporate somewhere within the design, at the discretion of the artist, "approved by the HSMC with a date and the application number." On private property, the maintenance is always the responsibility of the property owner. There is an additional process for a rotating mural. A rotating mural is defined as being proposed to change more than twice a year. The rotating mural would follow the same process in terms of coming before the HSMC for approval of the location and theme. The process for individual submission could be submitted to staff for approval. As such, it would still be subject to the posting requirements. Therefore, every time the mural changes, notice has to be posted for ten days on the property notifying the public that the mural will be changed. Any member of the public may come and see what is being proposed and they can request a public hearing. At this point, it comes to the HSMC. But, it must be done within the ten days period.

**Ms. Harris** additionally reported that staff received comments from several members of the Technical Advisory Committee concerning the proposed rotating mural:

**Dr. Peggy Blood, Chairwoman, Savannah State University** - Proposal is clear, but title is vague without cartoon "public art is created with the purpose of instilling a sense of pride and civic unity." No sample cartoon of the mural is provided. Just as sculptor must present a Marquette the same for a painter should be required. I do not see a cartoon. If no cartoon, as is, I do not approve.

**Undine V. Truedell, Cultural Affairs** - "I would approve the rotating mural application being submitted by the applicants. The applications art background is extensive and they have experience completing murals in the community.

However, I am concerned about their group Savannah Art Wall (SAW) and their process of soliciting and selecting rotating artist for the mural. It's a lot of hands in the pot, but since the review process will continue to apply to every rotation it should be okay."

**Harry Delorme, Telfair Museum** - "I think the proposed mural wall on Habersham is a good idea with an excellent location and the artists involved have done high quality projects in the past."

**Sarah Ward, MPC** - "The proposed site is good for this mural as it does not affect a contributing historic structure, provides a surface treatment that has demonstrated the ability to reduce the amount of vandalism and graffiti that currently gets installed on the wall, and provides the opportunity to enhance the mixed-use corridor by providing artwork to the residents and commuters adding interest to the facade and the district."

(Ms. Ward's letter was provided to the HSMC prior to this meeting).

No responses were received from **Richard Bjornseth, Savannah College of Art and Design; Daniel Carey, Historic Savannah Foundation; Stan Deaton, Georgia Historical Society; Ella Howard, Armstrong Atlantic University; Pete Liakakis, King-Tisdell Cottage Foundation ; and Jerry Flemming, Park and Tree Department.**

**Ms. Harris** stated that regarding Ms. Mendonca's concern about enforcement, if a mural is approved by the HSMC and is erected and there is a complaint, staff would verify that it is in compliance with all the guidelines. As they know, there will always be someone who is unhappy, but if the request has had public hearing and the HSMC has approved it, then it will be erected.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Ms. Harris to state in a couple of sentences what they are going to do.

**Ms. Harris** reported that staff recommends that the HSMC adopt the policy as an appendix to the Master Plan.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if he wanted to erect a mural, what process would he have to follow.

**Ms. Harris** explained that an application would have to be submitted showing that the guidelines and criteria have been met. Submit a resume, sample of previous work and images of what is being proposed; meet with the neighborhood association.

**Mr. Karatassos** said if they are going to request approval from a neighborhood association, would they accept a verbal "they said it's okay or would someone with the neighborhood association give them something in writing"?

**Ms. Harris** said the neighborhood approval is required in writing.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked what would be done in case there is no neighborhood association.

**Ms. Harris** explained that this applies exclusively when it is purely a residential neighborhood. It does not apply when it is a mixed-use or commercial neighborhood. The approval from the neighborhood association would have to come from the official neighborhood association record's and the City of Savannah maintains the list or if there is not a neighborhood association, consent from everybody on the blockface would be requested.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked if this would be included in the guidelines.

**Ms. Harris** answered that this would be included in the application process. However, the guidelines state that the neighborhood association approval is required.

**Ms. Mendonca** asked why the neighborhood approval was not required in mixed-uses or commercial neighborhoods.

**Ms. Harris** said in looking at the case studies and where they have successfully been installed, as a matter of course, they tend to be in a more mixed-use and commercial areas. With just trying to put yourself in a property owner's shoes if you have purchased a property in Habersham Woods and completely surrounded by residential, you probably would not expect your neighbor to erect a mural on the side of their building. She believes, however, when someone lives in a more urban environment which tends to be more mixed-use and commercial, there is a certain amount of freedom of expression that is allowed. Of course, this would not circumvent any case if an existing neighborhood has covenants.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Mr. Patrick Shay, resident of Historic District, an architect and an elected official**, encouraged the HSMC to move forward and establish a community standard so that artists would have an opportunity to at least to use our city as a way to express themselves, but within the community standard. Art by its nature is controversial; it is intended to provoke thought at some level and it is not going to be universally accepted or loved. The examples that have been shown today of what other cities have done seems to be reasonable ways to ensure the opportunity, but not the obligation, to approve a high standard, quality and in general what would be an enhancement to our community. Mr. Shay said he is interested in helping to foster the idea that Savannah-Chatham County would be a creative person habitat as we have a lot of creative persons that come here to be educated and use their skills. This might be an outward expression so that when people do come here they would be able to identify this as a place where creative persons, whether they are artists that paint murals, animations, or other kinds of artistic expressions would know that they are welcome.

**Ms. Virginia Mobley** did not want what she was going to say to be perceived that she is against public art. They are not discussing art, but policy. In reading the guidelines and policy that has been presented, in her opinion, are too broad. The public has not had input. She has talked with a number of people who have questions and realize that mixed-use is in their neighborhood and, therefore, would be facing their homes. These people have not had the opportunity to express themselves.

**Ms. Mobley** stated that she had several points she wanted to point out. She explained that a

few years ago, Starland Dairy offered a building for public art. In six months Greg Jacobs was telling her that he would not do this again. They had public art popping up everywhere. There were no guidelines or standards for saying where the art could go or what it has to do. They are still living with these effects. She mentioned this mural because it shows her that they need definite guidelines and need to address this problem. However, it needs to be addressed in a public forum. According to what is proposed, a mural could be in every block. According to what she has seen, all four sides of the building could be painted. Is this what they want? This needs to be spelled out. This will impact the entire community and she believes the entire community needs to be aware of it. Presently, as she can see, there are no guidelines for addressing a mural that has gone wrong or a mural that is neglected. The City's policy currently for addressing graffiti that is on a property owner's building is he can call the City and have it painted over. In five years if the property is sold or the mural has been neglected, does the property owner or the neighbor has the right to call the City and request that the side of the building be painted? Ms. Mobley stated again that she supports public art. She maintains her living through art, but she believes that the guidelines are too broad. They expose the community to a lot of unknowns. She showed the HSMC a picture of the first mural art that was put in their neighborhood and said it was painted on a school, there was not a week that she did not get comments about when the mural would be taken down.

**Mr. Matt Hebermehl**, in response to Ms. Mobley's comments about Greg Jacobs and Starland Dairy, said the mural was done more than a year ago. It was painted in daylight with Mr. Jacobs's permission. There has been no response that graffiti was put on top of this work. Mr. Hebermehl believes that if there was a policy with what they are trying to implement, would actually have helped to control this and he believes the staff's proposal would help to answer some of the questions. What they have already done has actually deterred graffiti and the mural has been there for a year.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked if the HSMC would be able today to ask the persons who made presentations questions. Would they ask the persons questions during their presentation or at the end?

**Ms. Soule** said the HSMC would ask questions at the end.

**Mr. Daniel Carey of Historic Savannah Foundation** was supportive of the need for a policy. He believes the draft that has been put forth is a good start, but he would not be comfortable making a decision on the policy today. Mr. Carey believes the policy requires much more input, deliberation and discussion with the public's involvement. The HSMC needs some time to think the policy through. While the issue is right and the need is there, he believes there are many questions that need to be answered. Mr. Carey said he has only been aware of this for approximately a week and believes this is a large policy undertaking that will affect all of us citywide. Therefore, it warrants a lot more time and input. He does not mean that the policy be put off indefinitely, but allow time to have a deliberate policy for coming up with a good solution. Mr. Carey said hopefully the HSMC would take all the comments under consideration and extend a deliberative process.

**Mr. Jay Baron** said he has lived in Savannah approximately a decade. He thinks this city is steep and rich in a proud tradition of art and history. Mr. Baron believes this is what draws people here and also what keeps them here. There is certainly a need for a policy on murals and wall art as shown by the audience. He believes further that this is a good way to preserve and maintain a part of the history of this city as evidences have shown the case

studies that have been laid out before them. Mr. Baron encouraged the HSMC for bringing this on as it is somewhat a new thing that obviously has undergone a lot of research and due diligence on the part of the staff and many persons present today. Their research constitutes wall murals versus signage versus blight. They have come up with a well-thought out, articulated policy that has been presented that not only properly channels and approve what would be art, but included if complaints surface, how they would be received. Mr. Baron encouraged the HSMC not to delay this for a long period of time.

**Mr. Karatassos** asked Ms. Mobley how she knew about this meeting.

**Ms. Mobley** answered that Mr. Hebermehl called her and asked if he could meet with her about the rotating mural. This was the only way she knew about this.

**Mr. Karatassos** responded that Ms. Mobley was present and others could have been at this meeting too. He does not like that it appears there is an insinuation that they are trying to do something behind closed doors. Presently, a house could be painted all around and there is nothing that could stop someone from doing so. There is not a law that says a mural cannot be painted on four corners of your house. If they had a rule or guidelines, then there would be the determination that if someone did, what are the community standards that must be met? Presently, the community standards would be set in a court of law. Therefore, as Mr. Shay said earlier, they are trying to develop some community standards. He was grateful that we have murals and have people who have the thought and talents to do so. Rather than do what Savannah has gotten use to doing over the last 15 or 20 years figuring out how not to do something, they are trying to figure out how to do something. They will make it public and they are also going to approach it from the standpoint as suggested by the Historic Savannah Foundation. There will be guidelines as presently there is a gap in how this is regulated. The HSMC will be looking for constructive comments relative to the guidelines.

**Ms. Mobley** stated that the impression is she wants to “shot this down,” but she does not. Since she sat on the HSMC, she has been a supporter of public art and has recognized the need for regulations and guidelines for such art.

**Mr. Harper** said the HSMC received the proposed policy last week. They have gotten some input, but due notice should be given to the public so they may come and voice their input. He believes that all the members of the HSMC want a mural policy.

**Mr. Harper** said normally the HSMC meets every other month, but he suggested that this be put on an agenda for October 6 as a special meeting to discuss only the policy on murals and public art.

**Mr. Karatassos** agreed with Mr. Harper regarding the special meeting, however, today they have a rotating mural wall petition. He asked if it would be agreeable to include the rotating mural wall petition at the special meeting.

**Mr. Harper** stated that he did not know if the rotating mural wall petition should be included in the special meeting as he did not know if the HSMC would come to a conclusion. He does not want this to be drawn out, but he wants the public to be given time to provide their input on the revisions to the master plan.

**Ms. Mendonca** believes the research that has been done on the mural policy has been quite thorough and impressive. However, she does not believe that everything will be resolved

at one meeting. She has several technical questions that she wants answered regarding the guidelines.

**Mr. Karatassos** said they could have a meeting as suggested. The purpose would be strictly for them to receive input from the public in writing or verbally. Some people who are knowledgeable in this area could come to the meeting. The technical advisory committee could review the material and the next month the HSMC would have a meeting and review the technical committee's report and they would have gotten input from the public. The HSMC would then be in a position to make a decision.

**Mr. Harper** asked Mr. Karatassos if he was saying have a meeting in October and then at their meeting in November they could come up with a decision.

**Mr. Karatassos** explained that he was saying making the meeting in October and "input session." In November they would have had two months to discuss this.

**Ms. Soule** asked Ms. Mobley to submit her ideas she wanted included to staff. Mr. Carey has already informed the the HSMC that he would put his questions in writing to staff.

**Mr. Karatassos** said today they had many persons present at their meeting and this is unusual. He asked how many came because of the mural.

**NOTE:** At this point, many persons raised their hands in confirmation that they were present because of the mural policy.

**Ms. Soule** advised everyone in attendance that the HSMC would be happy to hear from them all; just put their concerns in writing and give to the staff.

**Board Action:**

Continue the Revisions to Markers, Monuments,  
and Public Art Master Plan and Guidelines for the  
City of Savannah to a special called meeting  
October 6, 2011 to get additional public input. - PASS  
During this time, the staff will get together and  
come up with proposals for the November 3, 2011  
meeting for review by the HSMC.

**Vote Results**

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

7. [C-110822-34879-2 Rotating Mural Wall](#)



Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Supplemental information.pdf](#)  
Attachment: [Artist Information.pdf](#)

**Ms. Soule** informed Mr. Matt Hebermehl that due to the fact that the Mural Policy is continued the HSMC would hear his petition at their November 3, 2011 meeting.

8. [Master Plan and Guildelines- REFERENCE](#)

Attachment: [Masterplan 3-10-2011 Final.pdf](#)

**Mr. Karatassos** asked that staff extend an invitation to the public and affected people to be in attendance at their meeting so they will get an opportunity to understand what the HSMC does.

**IV. Other Business**

**V. Adjournment**

9. [Special Called Meeting](#)

The Special Called Meeting of the HSMC will be held on Thursday, October 6, 2011 at 4:00 p.m.

**NOTE: The Special Called Meeting was subsequently changed to October 13, 2011.**

There being no further business to come before the HSMC, Ms. Soule adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris,  
Cultural Resource and Urban Planning Manager

EH:mem