



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
December 5, 2014 4:00 P.M.
Meeting Minutes

December 5, 2014 Regular HSMC Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. Welcome

Mr. Eli Karatassos called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the role of the Historic Site and Monument Commission.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2. Affirmation of Approval of September 4, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Attachment: [September 4, 2014 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Affirmation of Approval of September 4, 2014 Meeting Minutes. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer

Second: Robert Pirro

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Robert Pirro - Aye

3. Approval of November 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Attachment: [November 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approve November 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Robert Pirro

Second: Walt Harper

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Walt Harper	- Aye
Eli Karatassos	- Aye
Robert Pirro	- Aye

III. Regular Agenda

4. [Affirmation of Approval for Petition of SeeSAW, LLC | 14-005159-PA | 104 East 40th Street | Mural](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)
Attachment: [Application and Submittal Packet.pdf](#)
Attachment: [Public Support Letters.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Affirmation of approval of the mural at 104 East 40th Street because it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Robert Pirro
Second: Walt Harper
Thomas Gensheimer - Aye
Walt Harper - Aye
Eli Karatassos - Aye
Robert Pirro - Aye

5. [Petition of City of Savannah Research Library and Municipal Archives | 14-005531-HM | Cluskey Vaults - East of City Hall on Bull Street Ramp | Historical Markers](#)

Attachment: [Staff Report.pdf](#)
Attachment: [Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

Ms. Luciana Spracher, Director, City of Savannah Research Library & Municipal Archives was present on behalf of the petition.

Ms. Leah Michalak gave the staff report. The petitioner is request to erect historical markers for the Cluskey Embankment Stores (consisting of four individual interpretive panels). The stores are located east of City Hall on the Bull Street Ramp. One panel will be located within the mouth of each of the four vaults. They will be off-center, on the east side of each vault, adjacent to a bollard. No other markers exist along the Bull Street ramp. The vaults are city-owned, and therefore, public property. Ms. Michalak explained that each interpretive panel is 24 inches high by 36 inches wide. They will be mounted to two freestanding metal posts at a 45 degree angle. The pole height is 32 inches above the ground. They will be c constructed of HPL (high pressure laminate). They are full color, with a background shade of blue, reminiscent of blueprints. They contain text, photographs, drawings, maps, and other images. They have a 10 year warranty from the

company that is manufacturing the panels.

Ms. Michalak reported that staff recommends approval to City Council for the four historical markers, as requested, because the proposed project meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

Mr. Harper asked if parking will be allowed in front of the markers. He believes that parking is allowed along the ramp.

Ms. Michalak stated that the petitioners will be able to answer this question, however, her understanding is that the public parking as been removed.

Mr. Harper said he as not been in the ramps area for some time, but he remembers that when parking was allowed here, the people parked close up against the area until you could not even wall along here.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Spracher stated that her department has been coordinating all the different interpretive projects involving the vaults. She explained that at one time, the vaults were used for parking. This was discounted and the bollards were put up to keep individuals from parking inside the vaults. There is no parking in front of the vaults. but parking is allowed further up the ramp as you go up the hill. However, in front of the vaults has always been a fire lane. Therefore, cars cannot parking in from of the vaults.

Mr. Karatassos asked Ms. Spracher how is this prohibition in indicated.

Ms. Spracher said signs are posted here that say "No Parking - Fire Lane." As soon as city parking was disallowed, they had the Mobility and Parking Services do greater rounds before they put the bollards up as they were having people taking advantage of the vaults at nighttime and on the weekends. The bollards have put a stop to this.

Mr. Karatassos said he remembers several years ago that Georgia Southern University conducted an archeological research in the vaults. Did this prelude any of what's taking place now?

Ms. Spracher answered yes. Actually, there has been a series of events that have led to the interpretive panels. The vaults have been an intrigue to local citizens and visitors for a long time. Therefore, many questions have come up about them. In 2011, a youth group known as the Shinholster Leadership Institute visited the vaults and became very interested and wanted to know more about them. There has been a long understanding that the vaults were used to house slaves. The young people approached the City as they were upset that parking was allowed in the vaults. A research was started. Their project was learning about archives and how to do historical research so that they could learn more about the vaults. These young people made a presentation to City Council along with recommendations. Their recommendations were: 1) Eliminate the parking inside the vaults and 2) Conduct an archeological survey can could help supplement the historical research that has been to date.

Ms. Spracher said that the City Manager and City Council were very excited about this and

they eliminated the parking and then partnered with Georgia Southern University's Anthropology and Sociology Department to do an archeological study. The onsite work was done in 2012. She said that the artifacts went back to the Georgia Southern Laboratory where they were curated and analyzed; and then they came back to the library in archives. Consequently, the City's Research Library holds the archeological collection which is available to the public for research and all the reports from this project.

Ms. Spracher explained that once they got the final report that was delivered in June 2014, they started working on how they could share the new information they had and the things that they do know and that they have historical evidences of. Therefore, the panels are a part of this. They also have an exhibit with the artifacts that were recently installed in Council Chamber to highlight some of the artifacts that were found. The City's website shows the history as well. Ms. Spracher said the panels are intended for the visitors who are walking by and see this intriguing structure and wants to know more. They get a lot of tour groups that go there and this gives them more information to use in their interpretation. Whether or not the vaults held slaves, none of their research or archeology approved or disapproved this. Therefore, what they wanted to do with the panels is talk about all the great stories of these vaults. The panels address several different things, the historical research projects talk about the archeology projects with the students which had a lot of public outreach as well as Charles B. Cluskey and his work. She said that Cluskey as an architect is important not only locally, but regionally and even nationally. Ms. Spracher said, therefore, they wanted to touch on Cluskey's role and also how do these vaults fit into the larger Factors Walk area.

Mr. Karatassos asked Ms. Spracher if there is a Cluskey building.

Ms. Spracher answered yes. Mr. Cluskey did several projects in Savannah.

Mr. Karatassos asked if a plaque or anything commemorating this is on the building.

Ms. Spracher said a name sign may be on the building, but she is not sure.

Mr. Gensheimer said he noticed that the panels are located inside the vaults. He asked if there is illumination inside.

Ms. Spracher explained that about one year ago, they upgraded the lighting inside the vaults. Lighting was there but they were not bright; therefore, more energy efficient was done and put in brighter lights in the vaults. They went through several discussions about where the panels should be located. At one point, they were going to have them inside with lights focused on them, but they ended up on staff's recommendation to move them forward so that they could see from the street. This would alert the public to go see the panels. They were set back a little behind the bollards so they would be protected and also to ensure that they were not in the direct sunlight.

Mr. Harper said he is aware that these are to be quick interpretative plaques, but he wanted to know if there was a way that put QR code on there so that the people will be able to use their smartphones and get additional information.

Ms. Spracher answered that this is a possibility or they can put the website there that one

may go to and get archeological information.

Mr. Karatassos said his only concern is that if there was a way that when the sun goes down that there was some sort of security here. Unless someone goes there and really look inside, you cannot tell if someone is there.

Ms. Spracher said the lights remain on all night. This was one of their concerns, too, because the vaults do get a lot activity during the night and on the weekends. The lights are much brighter than the old lights. She explained that a discussion was held about possibly installing gates so people could only stand on the outside, but they felt that this is such a unique structure that they did not want to take away the experience from being able to walk on the inside and explore the vaults.

Mr. Karatassos asked Ms. Spracher was is the possibility of putting a camera inside each vault.

Ms. Spracher explained that several cameras are in this area. One camera is focused on the elevator of the Hospitality Center. A camera is at the back door of City Hall and another camera is at the Gamble Building. She said she could make a request to get an additional camera that could be focused on the vault area.

Mr. Karatassos said this would enable them to have an ongoing record of what is actually going on there.

Ms. Spracher said the structures come under the purview of the Park & Tree department. Therefore, it will be Park & Tree responsibility to work with the appropriate City department to get the cameras. She will relay the information to the Park & Tree Director.

Mr. Harper asked if the outside has good lighting.

Ms. Spracher said the ramp is a traffic way that is used actively and she believes that the lighting there at night is good.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Amir Jamal Toure of Day Clean Journeys Tour Company stated that the City has done a wonderful job with the lighting. They tour this area at night and the lights are great. They applaud the City for the tremendous work.

Mr. Toure thanked the HSMC for recommending approval to City Council for the historical markers. The markers will provide a lot of valuable information.

Board Action:

Recommends approval to City Council for four (4) historical markers, as requested, because the proposed project meets the standards in the Master - PASS Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and

Public Art.

Vote Results

Motion: Walt Harper

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Walt Harper - Aye

Eli Karatassos - Aye

Robert Pirro - Aye

IV. Other Business

6. [2015 HSMC Schedule of Meetings](#)

Attachment: [CALENDAR YEAR 2015.pdf](#)

Ms. Harris said the 2015 Meeting Calendar is ready. The meetings are scheduled every other month. They have an application already and it is scheduled for the second Thursday in January as the first Thursday is a holiday. Other than this, she believes the meetings fall on their normal schedule.

Ms. Harris asked the HSMC if there were any alterations that needed to be made with the calendar.

Mr. Karatassos stated that he believes the way the Historic Site and Monument Commission was setup is that they have monthly meetings. He is aware that not every month they have had a reason to have their monthly meeting due to no applications. He said personally, he has every month blocked off for the meeting on the first Thursday of every month. He was not saying that they need a monthly schedule; however, he thinks that to the extent that anyone on the Commission knows their schedule in advance in particularly the members who work, they need to be very thoughtful about getting to staff and let them know when they have a meeting conflict. They have a meeting in May, July and September. The meeting in September may need to be held after Labor Day weekend. May be they might need to meet on September 10, 2015. Also school will be back in session.

Mr. Harper said that when he initially became a member on the Commission, they had a meeting every month. If there was no petition received for that month, the meeting was cancelled. He, too, has scheduled every first Thursday of every month off and his boss knew this. When, they did not have a petition for a particular month, he informed his supervisor of that. Mr. Harper said he would like to have a monthly schedule and if they do not get a petition for a particular month, then cancel the meeting. Keep the meetings monthly.

Mr. Gensheimer said his schedule is somewhat open. Therefore, he can meet any Thursday. Mr. Gensheimer said he schedules his classes so that he can be present on the first Thursday of the month.

Dr. Pirro said, he, too, can meet every month on the first Thursday. However, he does not believe that they should make a decision until the full Commission is present.

Mr. Karatassos asked staff to poll the Commission and let them know that monthly meetings are being considered. If in a particular month no applications are submitted, the meeting will be cancelled in a timely manner. If a member has an objection to the monthly schedule, to please advise staff. He asked staff that in the meantime, go ahead and plan to have the meetings scheduled monthly with keeping in mind holidays and so forth.

Mr. Gensheimer asked how does staff feel about the monthly meetings.

Ms. Harris explained that staff is happy to do whatever the Commission says. The only thing she would need to do is to ensure that the Hearing Room is not already booked for a meeting on September 10.

Mr. Harper said based on what Ms. Harris said, he believes it is a good idea to keep their meetings on the first Thursday as the meeting room is shared by many people. It is difficult when you have so many Boards meeting in the same room to reschedule a meeting.

It was the consensus that the Commission will schedule monthly meetings.

7. Proposed By-Laws Revision

Attachment: [Bylaws- revised 12-5-14.pdf](#)

Ms. Harris reported that the Commission discussed during a revision to the By-Laws to change the quorum. There are six members on the Commission. Presently, the By-Laws state that a majority is a quorum. Staff consulted with the City Attorney and he said a majority would be four members not three members.

Ms. Harris said they talked about revising the By-Laws to state that three members is a quorum. She explained that in order to do this, the staff would have to send this to the Commission members in advance. The staff has written up the change.

Mr. Karatassos stated that he realizes that the Commission talked about this and his only objection is that if they have a three member quorum, the petitioner will not have unanimous agreement as they would have two members decision on the petition. He said the last time, they had three members to agree, but they held it over to get affirmation approval. He is uncomfortable with actually having two people make a decision with what six people should be deciding. He asked that the quorum matter be tabled.

Mr. Harper said he knows that unexpected things do come up, but all the members of the Historic Site and Monument Commission requested (with the exception of him) to be a member of the Commission. Therefore, they have an obligation to come to the meetings. He apologized for not being able to attend the last meeting, but a circumstance came up that would not allow him to be present. This was the first meeting that he has missed in six years. Consequently, as persons who asked to be on this Commission, they should make every effort to be present at their monthly scheduled meetings.

8. [Commissioner's Items](#)

Mr. Harper informed the Commission that today is Mr. Jerry Flemming last day at the Park & Tree Department. Mr. Flemming will be the City Manager of a city in Texas. He is excited about moving to Texas. Mr. Flemming has been in Savannah 25 years.

Mr. Karatassos said that Mr. Flemming has done a good job working for the City of Savannah. He did a great job at the Cemeteries and carried the same attitude to Park & Tree. Mr. Flemming attended many of the Historic Site and Monument Commission meetings and he was always interested in serving the public's interest. Mr. Flemming put a lot of interest into the signage for Yamacraw Village. This Commission will really miss him. Mr. Karatassos asked staff to draft a congratulatory letter to Mr. Flemming for his signature thanking him for all his coordination and facilitation for this Commission, but more importantly for the citizens of Savannah.

Mr. Harper said that Gordon Denney will be the interim Park and Tree Director.

9. [Next Meeting - Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. in the Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room, MPC, 112 E. State St.](#)

V. Adjournment

10. [Adjourned](#)

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Karatassos adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

EIH: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.