



# Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Virtual Meeting  
November 4, 2021 4:00  
MEETING MINUTES

## November 4, 2021 Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument

Members Present: Kristopher Monroe, Chairman  
Lisa Watson, Secretary  
Ashley Rainge  
Eileen Baker  
Sean Mannion

Member Absent: Thomas Gensheimer, Vice - Chairman

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director  
Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation  
Bri Morgan, Administrative Assistant  
Julie Yawn, IT Support

### I. Call to Order and Welcome

### II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

#### [1. Approval of September 2, 2021 HSMC Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 09.02.21 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

#### **Motion**

Approve the September 2, 2021 HSMC meeting minutes as presented.

#### **Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Eileen Baker

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Aye

#### [2. Approval of October 13, 2021 Special Called Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 10.13.21 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

## Motion

Approve the October 13, 2021 Special Called meeting minutes as presented.

## Vote Results ( Approved )

Motion: Ashley Rainge

Second: Eileen Baker

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Aye

## III. Regular Agenda

### [3. Petition of the African Diaspora Museology Institute | 21-005657-HM | 505 West 36th Street | Historical Marker](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

[☞ AERIAL MAP 21 005657-HM.pdf](#)

[☞ COS Department Approvals.pdf](#)

[☞ Cost Estimate.pdf](#)

[☞ GHS Comments.pdf](#)

[☞ Kiah Museum Letters of Support for Historical Marker.pdf](#)

[☞ Staff Recommendation - 21-005657-HM - 505 W 36th St.pdf](#)

[☞ Additional Public Comment.pdf](#)

**Ms. Leah Michalak** presented the applicant's request that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to City Council for the installation of a historical marker on public property, within the tree lawn, for the property located at 505 West 36th Street. The marker proposes to recognize the significance of the Kiah House Museum.

The marker is proposed to read:

*The Kiah House Museum  
(1959-2001)*

*On November 28, 1959, the residence of Dr. Calvin and Virginia Kiah at 505 W. 36th Street in Savannah GA was opened to the public as the Kiah Museum. The Kiah's were pioneers in the black cultural and museum movement and created the first African American-founded museum in Savannah. The museum was always free to its visitors who included those from the historic Cuyler Brownville Neighborhood as well as civil rights activists and artists national and international. It served as the headquarters for the National Conference of Artists and hosted the International Students Art Show, a traveling exhibition of student art from 20 US states, including Hawaii and 12 foreign countries, including Ghana. Virginia Kiah began her museum collection in the 1930s. The collection included her own world recognized portraits, antique furniture, artwork of local youth and adults, fossils, animals, exotic plants, African carvings, and Native American artifacts. In 1974, the Kiah Museum was listed in Readers' Digest Treasures of American. The museum closed to the public in*

*2001 upon the death of its founder, portrait artist and educator, Virginia Kiah.*

*Erected by the African Diaspora Museology Institute, Friends of the Kiah Museum,  
Savannah Archaeological Alliance and Ethos Preservation.*

Staff recommends the following changes to the proposed marker text:

*The Kiah House Museum  
(1959-2001)*

*On November 28, 1959, the residence of Dr. Calvin and Virginia Kiah at 505 West 36th Street in Savannah GA was opened to the public as the Kiah Museum. The Kiah's were pioneers in the black cultural and museum movement and created the first African American-founded museum in Savannah. The museum was always free to its visitors who included those from the historic Cuyler-Brownville Neighborhood as well as civil rights activists and artists, both national and international. It served as the headquarters for the National Conference of Artists and hosted the International Students Art Show, a traveling exhibition of student art from 20 US states, including Hawaii, and 12 foreign countries, including Ghana. Virginia Kiah began her museum collection in the 1930s. The collection included her own world-recognized portraits, antique furniture, the artwork of local youth and adults, fossils, animals, exotic plants, African carvings, and Native American artifacts. In 1974, the Kiah Museum was listed in Readers' Digest Treasures of American. The museum closed to the public in 2001 upon the death of its founder, portrait artist and educator, Virginia Kiah.*

*Erected by the African Diaspora Museology Institute, Friends of the Kiah Museum,  
Savannah Archaeological Alliance and Ethos Preservation.*

The appropriate standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art have been met:

The petitioner provided the following statement regarding the theme of the historical marker:  
*Social and Humanitarian:* *The Kiah's were a significant force in education and civil rights, but not as commonly understood by organizing marches and protests. While other family members were deeply involved as NAACP leaders, Virginia and Calvin chose education and art, rather than legal means, to make positive changes in their community. The Kiah's used their professional position as educator/activists to teach the next generation of teachers as well as mentor young people in the soft skills of navigating and contesting the Jim Crow South. From 1865 until today, education remains a priority in the African American community. First, education was a critical means toward full citizenship, including voting and opportunities to be candidates for elected office. Today, education is a means to economic improvement, increased job prospects, and the still on-going fight for civil rights and freedom from harm (Williams 2005).*

*Williams, Heather Andrea. "Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom." Chapel Hill, Nc: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.*

The site currently does not have any "objects", and there are no visually related examples of historical markers. The marker is proposed to be adjacent to a large Live Oak tree. Staff recommends that the applicant confirm with the City's GreenScapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.

Information on the location of ground utilities was not provided; staff recommends that the

applicant confirm with the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration. The marker will be located in the tree lawn in front of the Kiah Museum house and will not encroach. The tree lawn in front of the Kiah Museum house is not utilized for special events. The City's Traffic Engineering Department provided comment that they do not have concerns with the proposed marker location. The marker is to be visible from the public street. The marker is proposed within a City-owned tree lawn. The historical marker will shed light on a story of the neighborhood and enhances the character of the surrounding neighborhood. No alterations of signage are required and The City's Traffic Engineering Department provided comment that they do not have concerns with the proposed marker location. The historical marker will enhance an empty portion of the tree lawn. The historical marker is proposed to be less than 100 feet from the property which its' content represents. The marker is proposed to have a black background with "satin finish" lettering. Although the marker is not sponsored by GHS is has the same design; the GHS logo on the top is replaced with the logo from the Kiah Museum. Staff recommends that the letters be changed to white or gold so as to differentiate it from some GHS markers which have a black background with silver lettering.

The applicant stated that the African Diaspora Museology Institute has already raised \$5,290.00 through a dedicated fundraiser to erect the marker. Additionally, the applicant states: *The African Diaspora Institute (ADMI) recognized that part of the request for a historical marker ... being placed on public property requires us to take responsibility for future maintenance of the marker.*

**Escrow Payment.** *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.*

The applicant stated: *An initial escrow payment is also required of us prior to construction and installation. Please be assured that funds will be set aside by ADMI for this purpose. We were made aware of the escrow when we applied for a marker through the Georgia Historical Society and that we could anticipate a cost range is generally between \$250 and \$500. This amount has already been budgeted.*

A letter of support was received from Mayor Van Johnson and Council Persons of the City of Savannah. 152 letters of support were received from the public.

#### **PETITIONER COMMENTS:**

**Ms. Ellen Harris**, of Ethos Preservation, stated they are amenable to all of Staff's recommendations and the Commissioner's. She shared the comments of acceptance from GreenScapes (Gordon Denney).

**Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simone**, petitioner, stated she has an additional 82 letters of support. She gave additional history of the Institute.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Ms. Sue Adler**, of the Historic Savannah Foundation, gave support of the petition.

#### **BOARD COMMENTS:**

The Board offered additional grammatical recommendations for the Marker.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to City Council for the installation of a historical marker on public property, within the tree lawn, for the property located at 505 West 36th Street with the following conditions because the proposed marker otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

1. Revise the text as described in the recommendation.
2. Change the marker text from “satin finish” to white or gold so as to differentiate from GHS markers.
3. Confirm with the City’s GreenScapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.
4. Confirm with the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration.

**RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:**

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends approval to City Council for the installation of a historical marker on public property, within the tree lawn, for the property located at 505 West 36th Street with the following conditions because the proposed marker otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

1. Revise the text as described in the meeting (as follows):

*The Kiah House Museum  
(1959-2001)*

*On November 28, 1959, the residence of Dr. Calvin and Virginia Kiah at 505 W. 36th Street ~~in Savannah GA was~~ opened to the public as the Kiah Museum. The Kiah’s were pioneers in the black cultural and museum movement and created the first African American-founded museum in Savannah. The museum was ~~always~~ free to its visitors who included those from the historic Cuyler-Brownville Neighborhood as well as ~~national and international~~ civil rights activists and artists. ~~national and international~~. It served as the ~~youth~~ headquarters for the National Conference of Artists and hosted the International Students Art Show, a traveling exhibition of student art from 20 ~~US~~ states, including Hawaii, and 12 foreign countries, including Ghana. Virginia Kiah began her museum collection in the 1930s. The collection included her own world-recognized portraits, antique furniture, ~~the~~ artwork of local youth and adults, fossils, animals, exotic plants, African carvings, and Native American artifacts. In 1974, the Kiah Museum was listed in Readers’ Digest Treasures of America~~n~~. The museum closed to the public in 2001 upon the death of its founder, portrait artist and educator, Virginia Kiah.*

*Erected by the African Diaspora Museology Institute, Friends of the Kiah Museum, Savannah Archaeological Alliance and Ethos Preservation.*

2. Change the marker text from “satin finish” to white or gold so as to differentiate from GHS markers.
3. Confirm with the City’s GreenScapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.

**Motion**

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends approval to City Council for the installation of a historical marker on public property, within the tree lawn, for the property located at 505 West 36th Street with the following conditions because the proposed marker otherwise meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

Revise the text as described in the recommendation and Board recommendation.

Change the marker text from "satin finish" to white or gold so as to differentiate from GHS markers.

Confirm with the City's GreenScapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.

Confirm with the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration.

**Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Eileen Baker

Second: Lisa D. Watson

Thomas Gensheimer	- Not Present
Kristopher Monroe	- Abstain
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Aye
Eileen Baker	- Aye
Ashley Rainge	- Aye

[4. Petition of W Projects, Erin Wessling | 21-005663-PA | 1204 Gwinnett Street | Pedestrian Walkway Mural](#)

[☞ Staff Recommendation - 21-005663-COA - GWINNETT ST.pdf](#)

[☞ AERIAL MAP 21-005663-PA.pdf](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet - Narrative.pdf](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet - Artists.pdf](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet - Mural Aerials.pdf](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet - Mural Layout.pdf](#)

[☞ ANTIGraffiti Coating\\_SherwinWilliams.pdf](#)

**Ms. Leah Michalak** presented the applicant's request for approval for a pedestrian walkway mural for the city property located at 1204 Gwinnett Street. The Water Works Site Pedestrian Walkway mural will be painted directly onto the asphalt of the Water Works site which is adjacent to the Arena and developing Canal District Trail.

*Per the applicant: Nearly 130 years ago, the Savannah Water Works Pump Station began treating the city's water supply at the corner of Gwinnett Street and Stiles Avenue. With its expressive arches and towering stack, the 19th-century brick industrial warehouse building strikes a commanding presence on its Westside Savannah lot. In light of the neighboring Arena District development, which began in 2020, attention turned toward breathing new life into the Water Works site while maintaining its historic character and architectural relevance. The City of Savannah has expressed a clear desire to preserve historic structures and*

*enhance the lot for environmental, social, and economic benefits.*

*Per the applicant, the theme of the mural is: Given its importance to the site and its neighboring communities, the artwork should encompass the theme of Savannah's Pathways which can be taken from physical pathways such as roads, nature trails, and man-made paths, as well as the structures, natural and/or man-made, that line those physical pathways utilizing familiar landmarks and flora or fauna native to the Savannah Area. The artwork on each section of the mural will consist of flowing gestural lines or "paths" that connect figures and flora into one body, threading a thoroughfare to our collective path, present and future. Visitors and art enthusiasts alike will share the experience of seeing themselves in the works as well as marveling in the colorways, the formal aspects of the art itself, and the flowing shapes and interconnected lines. This work is designed to create an endless number of paths within the pathway.*

The mural is not on the Water Works building; however, it is intended to complement the building's surrounding site and context. The standards are met. The mural will be respectful to the greater context of the neighborhood and, because it is generally internal to the Water Works site, will not cause undue distraction to drivers. The mural is located within a mixed-use area.

The public was notified. No response was received. However, per the applicant: *During the RFP submission period an online Webinar was held for the public to answer any questions and expand on the concepts of both the mural pathway and the entire Water Works site activation. In addition, the Arena Community Task Force which is comprised of several presidents and active members of several West Wise Neighborhood Associations as well as Alderman Lanier, was presented the mural project concept, and chose the theme of the mural itself "Savannah Pathways." Several of the chosen artist groups will be holding charettes with neighboring communities to present their designs and gain feedback and engagement.*

To staff's knowledge, no other murals are located in the vicinity. The mural is large, which is appropriate as this is a large site. The mural is an original design and is appropriate within the context of the neighborhood.

The proposed materials are:

- Behr Premium Tinted concrete paint with primer
- Behr White concrete base paint and paint tint
- High quality exterior Modern Masters acrylic theme paint
- Exterior Water Based House Paint over top of Exterior Primer
- H&C SHIELDCRETE Acrylic Clear Glaze Coat
- H&C COLORTOP WaterBased Solid Color Concrete Stain

**Staff requests additional information regarding weatherproof and vandalism-resistant coating.** No non-paint materials are proposed.

There are four artist teams each led by experienced mural artists; the four mural artists are Adolfo, Amiri, Brian McGregor, and Hebermehl. Past work was provided for the selected mural artists; these artists were selected through an RFP (Request for Proposals) process; they were selected by a group of community members and public art enthusiasts within Savannah. The artists will utilize local artists under teams of the mural artists.

Per the applicant: *Timeframe will depend on construction development of the Canal District Trail and the completion of the Enmark Arena. Each section will be scheduled by its designated area with position 1, bordering the Arena to start in December of 2021 with*

*continued installation scheduled throughout January and February of 2022.*

The City is funding the project.

**PETITIONER COMMENTS:**

**Ms. Erin Wessling**, petitioner, stated the mural would be painted on concrete and asphalt. The paint types have been considered regarding temperature and dry time, for all of the scheduled artists.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**BOARD COMMENTS:**

The Board asked about blanket approval or per panel approval. **Ms. Melanie Wilson**, Executive Director, stated it would be best to approve panel by panel. This discussion today is for the fifth panel (by location).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approval for a pedestrian walkway mural for the city property located at 1204 Gwinnett Street with the following condition to be submitted to staff because otherwise it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art:**

- 1. Ensure that the mural has a weatherproof or vandalism resistant coating.**

**Motion**

The Historic Site and Monument Commission approves a pedestrian walkway mural for the city property located at 1204 Gwinnett Street (section 5) with the following condition to be submitted to staff because otherwise it meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art:

**Vote Results ( Approved )**

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Eileen Baker

Thomas Gensheimer - Not Present

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Aye

**IV. Other Business**

[5. Presentation: Forsyth Park Master Plan - Ellen Harris, Ethos Preservation](#)

**Ms. Ellen Harris** presented the results of the Forsyth Park Master Plan. Highlights of initial and revised Master Plan designs. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

[6. Sign Postings Discussion](#)



**Ms. Leah Michalak** presented the public notice requirement for the Historic Site and Monument Commission. Posting signs at least 15 days at the public right-of-ways and letters to area property owners are required.

There being no further business to present before the Board, the November 4, 2021 HSMC meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully,

Leah G. Michalak  
Director of Historic Preservation

/bm

#### **V. Adjournment**

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