

MINUTES

TALBOT COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

1 June 2009

I. ROLL CALL

The regular monthly meeting of the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission was called to order at 9:35 AM on Monday, 1 June 2009. Those members in attendance were Ms. Peggy Pickall, Chairperson, Ms. Kathleen Kurtz, Ms. Kearby Parker and Mrs. Christine Dayton. Mr. Robert Arnouts arrived while the meeting was in progress. Mr. Eric Lowery and Mrs. Polly Shannahan were not present. Representing the County were Mr. Martin Sokolich, Mrs. Stacey Dahlstrom and Ms. Florence Ball. Also attending was Ms. Joyce Roberts Lima, who is interested in preserving Williamsburg UME Church.

II. CURRENT BUSINESS

- A. REVIEW OF 4 MAY MINUTES – The minutes of the meeting on 4 May 2009 were read. Since there were no corrections or additions, *Mrs. Christine Dayton moved to approve the minutes as read. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.*
- B. DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE – Mr. Martin Sokolich reported that the draft of the Demolition Delay Ordinance has been sent to the County Attorney's office. There is no further word regarding its review at this time.
- C. 925 PORT STREET (T-347) – Mrs. Christine Dayton said Rick Towle wants to get more definitive information about how the property and the spaces inside the building might be used before pursuing an Historic District Overlay (HDO), or presenting his ideas to the County Council.
- D. DEVELOPMENT OF TCHPC GUIDELINES – Mrs. Christine Dayton said she has not yet called Richard Wagner about writing the guidelines, but will do so and email the Commissioners with the information.
- E. REVIEW OF TCHPC MISSION AND DUTIES – Mrs. Stacey Dahlstrom, Planning Officer, expressed concern that annual site visits to check on the condition of the County's HDO properties continue. She also informed the Commissioners that there are numerous courses available to train new Commissioners. Ms. Kathleen Kurtz complained that site visits are a pain to schedule because owners want to be present at the time of the site visits and they do not respond in time to schedule the visits. Mrs. Christine Dayton suggested that when the letters are sent to schedule the site visits, it

should be stressed that it is not necessary for the owners to be present since the purview of the Commission is limited to the exterior of the buildings, and the grounds. She also emphasized that most of the County's HDO properties are private and somewhat secluded, in comparison with properties in town historic jurisdictions. It was also suggested that site visits could be assigned to alternating Commissioners since it is not necessary for the whole group to attend. This would ease the burden of the time it consumes in an equitable way. Mrs. Kearby Parker said TCHPC needs to look to the future, for example, Port Street and various village centers may be added to the County's list of HDOs, and those are all very much in the public view. In light of that, TCHPC may need to change its strategies in context of the properties it takes on.

Mrs. Christine Dayton expressed frustration because the County Council does not respond positively to TCHPC efforts to preserve important spaces such as the Old Music Hall. She said in spite of the information presented to the Council, not even the most elementary steps have been taken to protect the integrity of that space. Mrs. Peggy Pickall said most people think TCHPC gets grants to do all its work, but fail to realize that those grants have to be matched with like funds, and those funds are not forthcoming from the County. She also mentioned that tax credits are another topic that most people find hard to understand. Mrs. Christine Dayton explained some of the regulations and procedures in obtaining tax credits.

Mr. Martin Sokolich said TCHPC has inherited various procedural duties over the years, but conditions have changed, and maybe TCHPC needs to restate its mission, and explore possibilities of marketing and raising funds, possibly by working in tandem with other commissions or departments. Mrs. Stacey Dahlstrom informed the Commissioners that Preservation Maryland now has a local representative, Elizabeth Beckley. Mrs. Dahlstrom said she will contact Ms. Beckley to see if she would like to attend next month's TCHPC meeting.

Ms. Peggy Pickall said perhaps TCHPC should write a mission statement and add it to the County website and also put it in any future TCHPC brochures. Ms. Florence Ball suggested that perhaps it could serve as a preface to the TCHPC guidelines. Mrs. Christine Dayton felt TCHPC needs to get its mission statement written before even considering compiling a brochure.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- A. PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF "THE RETREAT" (T-930) - Mr. Martin Sokolich said the people who contacted him about The Retreat, which is at 26004 Royal Oak Road, had concerns that the demolition might occur. However, at this time, he does not have further details. Mr. Robert Arnouts said TCHPC urgently needs to get County Council support of the proposed Demolition Delay Ordinance so issues like this can be better addressed.

Mr. Martin Sokolich suggested TCHPC might want to document the outbuildings, some of which are of particular interest. Ms. Peggy Pickall asked how the Commission would like to address issues like this in the future, and whether the owners should be contacted to express TCHPC interest and ask if photographs could be taken.

- B. JUNE SITE VISIT DESTINATION – Ms. Kathleen Kurtz said she has called the owners of Bolton (T-336) and Weber House (T-818) but to date has had no response from either of them. She will try to arrange a site visit elsewhere, and inform the Commissioners by email.

IV. OPEN FLOOR

- A. WILLIAMSBURG UNITED METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH – Mrs. Joyce Roberts Lima, who is a daughter of the late Reverend James Roberts, presented information to the Commissioners concerning preservation of Williamsburg UME Church, which is located on Old Trappe Road, which is approximately five miles south of Easton (Tax Map 42, Parcel 69). She said the church was built in the 1800s. In the 1990s, the membership began to dwindle, and the United Methodist Conference grouped it with two other churches on a charge. The church was eventually closed because most of the congregation on the charge was from Oxford and attended Waters Methodist Church. The deed for the church is presently in the name of Waters Methodist Church. The trustees want to sell the property, and she and others fear the church may be demolished. There is also a social hall (Tax Map 42, parcel 241) which she said was once White Marsh School, which was built in 1900. That property is on a separate deed. There is also a church cemetery (Tax Map 42, Parcel 182) is located away from the church, and is deeded to the trustees of Williamsburg UME Church.

Ms. Kathleen Kurtz asked if TCHPC can get signage restored for the community of Williamsburg (currently known as Stumptown) through the State historic signage program. Mr. Martin Sokolich said he will check to see if the church is on the Scenic Byway. If so, it might be fairly easy to get a historic marker to commemorate the historic information about the church. Mrs. Kearby Parker asked Mrs. Lima if Waters Church would be interested in talking to TCHPC. Mrs. Lima plans to meet with the trustees on June 25th, and will ask if they would be interested. Ms. Peggy Pickall advised Mrs. Lima that TCHPC will need documentation from the owner of the church expressing a desire to apply for an HDO before any concrete efforts could be made by the Commission to protect the church. Mrs. Lima thanked the Commissioners for giving her the opportunity to present her information, She said she will be in touch with TCHPC after she meets with the trustees.

- B. PENDING WIND TURBINE LEGISLATION – Mr. Martin Sokolich

advised the Commission that county legislation is currently pending in regard to wind turbines. The turbines will be subject to TCHPC review similar to the review required for cell towers.

- C. COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS – Mr. Martin Sokolich reported that Ms. Peggy Pickall has been reappointed, and the County Council has appointed a new Commissioner to replace Mrs. Kearby Parker, who is resigning her seat. Mrs. Parker has served on the Commission since 2003 and today’s meeting culminates her term of service. The Commissioners expressed their gratitude for her past participation, wishing her well and saying how much she will be missed. Mrs. Parker said she has enjoyed working with TCHPC and wished them every success in their endeavors. Mrs. Stacey Dahlstrom said she heard about the newly appointed Commissioner at the last Department Heads meeting, but could not recall the appointee’s name since she did not bring her notes with her today.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 6 July 2009 at 9:30 am at the Bradley Room in the South Wing of the Courthouse.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:05 am.

4 June 2009