

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 20, 2019**
Municipal Building Commission Room
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission (“HDC”) held Wednesday, February 20, 2019. Chairman John Henke called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

1) ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman John Henke, Vice-Chairman Keith Deyer, Board Members Doug Burley, Gigi Debbrecht, Patricia Lang, Michael Willoughby; Alternate Board Member Dulce Fuller (arrived 7:05 p.m.)

Absent: Board Members Natalia Dukas; Alternate Member Kevin Filthaut; Student Representatives Grace Donati, Ava Wells

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Nicholas Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

01-07-19

**2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES
HDC Minutes of January 2, 2019**

Ms. Debbrecht asked that the minutes be amended to reflect the correct spelling of her name and to change ‘is’ to ‘was’ on page five in reference to the curve in the upper corner of the windows of 539 S. Bates, since the windows have now been changed.

Ms. Dukas asked via email that ‘compliment’, in her comments on page five, be changed to ‘complement’.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Deyer

Seconded by Mr. Burley to approve the HDC Minutes of January 2, 2019 as amended.

Motion carried, 6-0.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Burley, Debbrecht, Henke, Lang, Willoughby

Nays: None

Absent: Dukas, Filthaut, Fuller

01-08-19

3) HISTORIC DESIGN REVIEW

None.

01-09-19

4) STUDY SESSION

A. Historic District Commission Action List -- 2019

Planning Director Ecker explained that she made a budget request for the Certified Historic Homes Plaques, but she does not yet know whether the request will be approved.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said:

- He and Sheila Bashiri went and looked at all the homes that were over 100 years old and crossed a few off the Master List which had been heavily modified.
- The last time he saw the Eco City Neighborhood Survey was about five years ago when he gave the disk to the Birmingham Museum Director at the time.

Chairman Henke said the sign standards should be left where they were on the list.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said the sign standards should be easy to approve because they were better than what was in the overlay.

Planning Director Ecker told the HDC that the City Commission approved the sign standards at their February 18, 2019 meeting and said the HDC could remove the sign standards from their action list as a result.

Chairman Henke asked Planning Director Ecker what the HDC should be focusing on regarding Alleys and Passageways.

Planning Director Ecker said it is largely a matter of the City enforcing the ordinance at this point, and for the Design Review part the DRB may be reviewing features that businesses add to their buildings within the alleys.

Chairman Henke said Alleys and Passageways could be left on the list but that it was almost a non-event at this point.

City Planner Dupuis explained the City is going through an alley improvement plan, and offered to add the information to his next staff report for the HDC.

The HDC confirmed the information on the alley improvement plan would be of interest.

Ms. Fuller emphasized that the alleys do need work, specifically highlighting the alley off Merrill Street as unclean and in need of repaving.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said parking in the alleys should be eliminated in order to increase walkability as well.

B. Certified Local Government Evaluation Report

Chairman Henke said he read Mr. Conway's letter on the Certified Local Government Evaluation Report, and that most of it has nothing to do with the HDC. Chair Henke explained he is fine with detailed minutes and that the HDC has no National Register nominations, ID or evaluations unless the HDC is able to get Adams and Maple.

City Planner Dupuis said the suggested actions are minor.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said they may be minor, but there needs to be discussion about implementation beyond leaving the actions to staff. He continued that the intent of the assessment of the historic structures in town was to see how many had been modified if at all, how many were still in tact, and to find some new houses of historic interest.

Ms. Debbrecht said there are members on the current study committee who are capable of performing a good assessment of the maintenance of the historic elements in Birmingham's historically-designated houses.

She also said that Senior Planner Baka had provided her with a booklet on what owners of historically designated houses may and may not do to their homes. She said making this booklet available would be helpful to both owners of historically designated homes and owners considering historically designating their homes.

Vice-Chairman Deyer told Ms. Debbrecht that the booklet she is referring to is available to the public in the Planning Department office, and said assessing houses for potential historic delisting may open a door the HDC does not want to touch. The best way to promote historic designation is to refresh and reuse the brochure prepared in 2009 reviewing the locations and information on Birmingham's historic assets.

Ms. Debbrecht said she would look for the booklet to see exactly what information it provides.

City Planner Dupuis mentioned there would be a number of ways the City could publicize the information, and that some of it is also available on the City's website.

Chairman Henke reminded the HDC members that the only time enforcement is within their power is when a building owner comes before the HDC for a review.

Chairman Henke told Vice-Chairman Deyer that he did not believe there are any actions from Mr. Conway's letter that need to be added to the HDC Action List for 2019. The HDC already works on education, but anyone interested in historic preservation will likely be doing the background research on their own. The HDC more often encounters owners who have no interest in preserving historically salient features on their properties, not people who are uninformed on the issues.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said the HDC's publicity around already-designated homes is a soft approach to promoting the idea of historic designation.

Chairman Henke told Mr. Burley that if one is interested, an owner can pay for a Historic Home Plaque on their own. Vice-Chairman Deyer said the plaques cost about \$30.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said the only other goal delineated in the CLG letter that struck him was the repair or updating of the porcelain plaques downtown, since several are in disrepair.

Chairman Henke asked Planning Director Ecker if she could request funds for the repair and updating of the porcelain plaques. Planning Director Ecker assented.

Vice-Chairman Deyer said there used to be a brochure with historical locations in the downtown area designated on a map, and that he would like to try and find it again.

City Planner Dupuis told the HDC that, per the requirements of the letter, he would be writing Mr. Conway back thanking him for his notes and explaining what the City would be doing in response.

Chairman Henke confirmed.

01-10-19

5) MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Staff Reports

1. Administrative Approval Summary - 2018

2. Administrative Approvals
3. State Historic Preservation Office Annual Report
4. Michigan Historic Preservation Network – Community Assessment Application
5. Certified Local Government – Historic Preservation Grant Application
6. Certified Local Government/Historic District Commission Training
7. Demolitions

B. Communications

City Planner Dupuis confirmed he would make sure that Ms. Debbrecht and Ms. Lang were registered for the State Historic Preservation Office's free Historic District Commission Training scheduled for March 15, 2019.

Vice-Chairman Deyer noted the mention of Birmingham's Wallace Frost homes in goal number four of the CLG letter, stating those homes were extremely well-documented. There is a book on the Frost homes with all their salient features and a video on the homes, featuring Mr. Frost's daughter, which is available in the Baldwin Library. He said the HDC could discuss designating the Frost homes as local historic districts, and that all the necessary research on the topic has already been done.

Chairman Henke reiterated to the HDC that forced designation of a home is not an option. He explained that any historically designated homes on the coasts, which are now being preserved, were designated as such decades ago, and that that is what allows them to be preserved now. He explained that once a house is designated, the City is able to protect it and enforce it, but that only a property owner is able to initiate historic designation of their property.

City Planner Dupuis noted that once a house is historically designated it is very expensive to do anything to it, and Ms. Fuller agreed, noting that historic designation can be financially onerous.

Chairman Henke also noted that many people will not purchase a historically designated house, which also makes it more difficult on the current owner. Education is the only option for the HDC before a house is designated.

01-11-18

ADJOURNMENT

No further business being evident, the board motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Nicholas Dupuis
City Planner