

Harford County Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Summary: Wednesday January 4, 2023
Hybrid Meeting

Members Present: Dan Coates (Co-Chair) - Virtual
Phil McCall - Virtual
Jackie Seneschal - Virtual
Iris Barnes – Virtual
Eric Polk
Christina Presberry

Staff: Jacob Bensen
Joel Gallihue

Public: Laura Bianca-Pruett

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was called to order at 7:12 PM.

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Coates welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Coates opened the floor to anyone with comments on the December 7, 2022, minutes. Mr. Bensen said Ms. Deibel sent an amendment in. In the sections of the minutes where the decisions were made, she wants the minutes to reflect that the approval was made off a staff report and the testimony provided. Mr. Coates agreed.

Mr. Coates requested a motion for approval with the amendments Ms. Deibel identified. Ms. Seneschal made a motion to approve the December 2022 minutes. Mr. Polk seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

CY 2023 HPC Work Plan

Mr. Coates said everyone should have gotten a one-page copy of a Work Plan. Mr. Bensen said it is the same format as before. It is just updated. It is the 2023 Work Plan for approval. They are identifying calls from the County's Master Plan HarfordNEXT. They are looking at steps the Commission can make to work toward those goals. Most of the goals are ongoing. The first goal is POH – Preserving our Heritage. Goal 1.2 is to expand the County's Landmark list. Also, to work with the Community Advisory Boards to identify potential landmarks of historic districts that are favored by community members. They would also like to work with County Departments to identify and designate (County or Municipal designation) county owned historic sites.

In progress, investigate incentives to encourage county designation and help property owners care for historic sites. Right now, there is a 10% County historic preservation tax credit. They are investigating ways to increase that tax credit. They have the African American heritage grant. Ms. Seneschal mentioned she would like to see more specific goals in the Work Plan. For example, they will make presentations to each of the Advisory Boards through the course of the year. She says it is easier to track if the goals were met.

Mr. Coates asked if the brochure the homeowner gets needs to be updated. Mr. Bensen said that is one of our work items. The digital version has been corrected. They can look at if they want to make any other changes. And then they can be printed. Mr. Coates said the updated brochures can be used to give to property owners, especially rural properties.

Ms. Barnes asked if there is a list of Community Advisory Boards. What are they? Mr. Bensen said they are advisory boards to the County Executive. Mr. Gallihue said they are an official part of the County Government. Ms. Barnes said they can say County Community Advisory Boards. Ms. Presberry asked if they were the Community Councils at one time and now they are the Advisory Boards. Mr. Gallihue said they were.

Mr. Coates asked about the Grant recipients. They voted on Fairview at the last meeting. Are there more grant recipients that required addressing their landmark status? Mr. Bensen said there is one more but we have not yet received their application for nomination. This is for the expansion of the McComas Institute into a historic district to incorporate the Mt. Zion church. Ms. Barnes said she will aim to have it for the next meeting.

They discussed the need to hire new Historic Preservation staff. They want it added to their work plan. Ms. Seneschal would like to change "investigate incentives" to "recommend incentives."

The second goal is identification and evaluation of historic districts. It is to continue to identify existing local historic districts with the potential to be elevated to a national designation. Ms. Seneschal said that should be clarified. It should say National register. Ms. Barnes said there are other national. They have the underground railroad, and they have civil rights. Mr. Bensen said we could include those. Ms. Barnes said they are separate from the national register. Mr. Bensen said the community college, through their

Civil Rights program, is investigating a property on Route 40 for a potential nomination to the national civil rights. They can say to elevate it to a national designation as appropriate. That leaves it open to decide which nation designation they could be in.

The third goal is where staff increase could be added. It is identify areas of archeological interest and establish a local archeology component to our existing program. Encourage P&Z to complete draft of Archeology Guidelines. Coordinate with local organizations and MHT to formulate best practices and goals. And investigate updates to Zoning Code to incorporate archeological review into development process. Ms. Seneschal said the first item should be to hire an Archaeologist and then update. And instead of “investigate,” have it say “recommend.” There is no timeline for this goal because of the lack of an archeologist on staff or to consult.

Ms. Barnes asked about the numbering of the goals. Mr. Bensen explained some of the goals in HarfordNEXT are related to the Historic Preservation Commission. They are numbered the same. If a goal in HarfordNEXT does not relate to Historic Preservation, it is not included in this list. So, the number may be skipped.

Mr. Bensen read the next goal. It is goal POH 4.1: Promote Public Understanding and Appreciation for the County’s Heritage. Administer and promote 2023 Historic Preservation Awards. For ongoing, they will work with Community Relations to include historic preservation program in County messaging. Also, investigate revisions to Historic Landmarks Program brochure. Ms. Seneschal said she would like it to say publish and revise the brochure. Also, support the work of the Harford 250 Steering Committee. And a new goal is consult with HCC faculty/staff on ways HPC can collaborate with HCC history/public history students. Mr. Polk said maybe they can go younger than Community College students. Mr. Bensen said they can add Harford County Public Schools staff to that goal. Ms. Seneschal said it should be a separate goal. Mr. Gallihue said there has been work with the Boy Scouts. And Mr. Coates suggested the library system. They could set up a display. Mr. Bensen said there are also books available to use. Ms. Seneschal said the goals should be specific. And they may be able to do something with home school students. Mr. Polk said something more than a display might be needed. Mr. Bensen said reach out to the public library system regarding potential displays and programs to encourage historic preservation interest.

The next goal is to Promote Heritage Tourism. Work with staff to develop Historic Landmarks & Districts Story Map for publication on County website. An ongoing goal is work with Visit Harford to advertise heritage tourism with special emphasis on Harford 250 Commemoration. And work with Parks & Recreation staff to ensure interpretive materials for County Parks are inclusive and tell a whole history of sites. Mr. Bensen talked about specific sites. Ms. Barnes said Swan Harbor should be included. Mr. Bensen said it is. The last part of this goal is to continue support of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway.

The last goal is to collaborate with stakeholders to advance shared objectives. An ongoing project is to maintain support for local museums, programs, and exhibits, which tell the story of the County’s history. Support the HSHC’s mission and encourage new partnerships to preserve and interpret an inclusive history

of the County. Work with municipal partners to build and promote local designation programs. Ms. Barnes asked if there is a list somewhere with all the County owned buildings. Mr. Bensen said that is part of the next goal. Work with County Depts. to ensure preservation of County-owned buildings and structures. Ms. Seneschal said they need to make Tudor Hall a landmark. Mr. Bensen said the nomination is finished. They are almost done. Ms. Barnes asked about Medical Hall. Mr. Bensen said it is not County owned. There was no response from the private owners. Mr. Gallihue talked about other ways to communicate with private owners. The last work item is investigate starting regular meetings of County and Municipal HPCs and staff to discuss County-wide preservation issues.

Mr. Bensen said they can make the revisions and vote on it next month. Or they can agree to it with the stipulation to make the changes. Ms. Seneschal motioned to adopt the workplan with the proviso that the staff with bring back the revised version next month. Mr. Polk seconded the motion. Mr. Coates said something needs to be mailed to the Commissioners to start the Awards process. Will the awards be in person or live? It will be discussed later. The motion vote was 4-1. The revised work plan will be mailed to the Commission members as soon as possible.

Ongoing Business

Archeology Update

Mr. Bensen talked about the status of the Old Joppa Archeology Project. He heard from Dr. Jim Gibb. And he said they have or soon will backfill the three excavations. They have drafted plans and profiles, working to map unit locations. The few artifacts have been cleaned and catalogued. The Preliminary Results are as follows. They exposed the pebble footer for the east wall and the brick foundation for what appears to have been a tower entrance. They identified one clear grave shaft and two possible grave shafts in the interior of church site. The next steps are to expose portions of the remaining three walls and a corner or two of the entrance, which is about 5 additional field days. They will provide data on church location, configuration, and deteriorations. Upon completion of church investigation, identify next portion of town to investigate.

Mr. Coates said he talked to Dr. Gibb about what type of archival research is being done on those graves. Dr. Gibb said he had no interest in researching the grave sites. Mr. Bensen said they were trying to determine was the overall layout of the town. The details may not be part of their investigation. But if someone wanted to take the research on it could be complimentary to the broader goals. Mr. Coates says he plans to take that item up. He discussed where the records have gone. Also, Dr. Gibb is giving a talk about what they have done to the garden club in Aberdeen on January 20th. Mr. Coates hopes Dr. Gibb will give a lecture in April. And their next Archeological Society meeting will cover Swan Harbor Farm. The meeting is at the Town Hall in Havre de Grace at 7pm on January 11th.

Harford 250 Commemoration Update

The RFQ for artist for Public Art Piece is due January 13th by 4 PM. A Pre-Submission Meeting was in December and FAQs were posted to website. The segment on Kaleidoscope was on HarfordTV. Harford 250 Showcase is March 31st – April 1st at APGFCU Arena at HCC. Deadline for performers to apply is

January 15th. And the deadline for a display booth/table is February 1st. Ms. Seneschal said they made presentations to Havre de Grace and the Town of Bel Air. And a presentation at the County Council meeting in December. And Monday they will make a presentation to Aberdeen. February 9th at 3 will be the first event at the Double Group Brewery in Forest Hill. It is unveiling of a Harford 250 Beer Brew available at most local breweries throughout time of Harford 250. The Susquehanna orchestra's spring concert is March 18th at Bel Air High School at 7pm. The first part is music about places like Harford County and the second half is music composed by people who live in Harford County. They would like pictures of favorite Country Lanes by the end of the month.

Harford County MIHP Survey Update

Mr. Bensen noted there are 229 surveys in progress. 220 surveys have been completed. An intern helped get a few done. And they took updated photos in Havre de Grace. 20.78% of Harford County resource surveys are completed or in progress. Progress has slowed because of the staff vacancy.

Mr. Bensen said from MHT they received the final versions of the determination of eligibility forms that were looked at during the last meeting. The 2 Grier Properties got full determinations for eligibility and the other was found not eligible. MHT agreed with MDOT/SHA's findings. They found no adverse effects with the bridge replacement project there.

Administrative Business

Mr. Bensen said the process for applying for Boards and Commissions has changed slightly. They are using a digital platform, but paper copies can be requested. It is through the County website. The members up for reappointment are Daniel Coates, Carol Deibel and Jacquelyn Seneschal. There is no limit to the number of terms that can be served.

Historic Preservation Awards

Mr. Coates asked if they want to have a virtual or in-person/live event. If it is live, they need to start getting the nominations and planning done. Ms. Seneschal asked what the timeline is. Mr. Polk asked if it must be in May. Ms. Seneschal said May could be the best month because of the other events. Mr. Bensen asked how long the application period should be. Ms. Seneschal said in 2019 they voted on the awards at the March meeting. Mr. Coates said we need to contact and get the word out. Mr. Bensen said they would have a press release.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjourn

Ms. Seneschal moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Barnes The motion passed unanimously.