

**Harford County Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Summary: Wednesday February 1, 2023
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Carol Deibel - Virtual
Dan Coates
Eric Polk
Christina Presberry - Virtual

Staff: Jacob Bensen
Daniel Furman

Public: Laura Bianca-Pruett
Sharoll Love
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Doyle

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was called to order at 7:09 PM.

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Deibel welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Deibel opened the floor to anyone with comments on the January 4, 2023, minutes. A motion was made to approve the January 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

McComas Village Historic District (HA-0307/HA-0308) Nomination

Mr. Benson gave a presentation about the McComas Village Historic District. The address is 1911-1915 Singer Road, and the property is owned and operated by the Hosanna Community House. The McComas Institute was built in 1867, the Mt. Zion UMC was built in 1865, and the cemetery use began around 1867. The McComas Institute currently has other designations including the National Register of Historic Places (1980), The Harford County Historic Landmark (1982), and the MHT Preservation Easement (1993).

Mr. Benson noted that it is associated with the events that have made significant contributions to our history including the Reconstruction Period (1865-1877). It is one of four Freedmen's Bureau schools built in Harford County and one of only two remaining. Mr. Benson noted it has served a vital role in the lives of African-American residents of the surrounding communities as a center for worship, community, and education and has the potential to yield significant information about the lives of these individuals. Mr. Benson noted the staff recommends approval of the nomination. The McComas Village Historic District is at least 50 years of age or older, has sufficient integrity, and meets the criteria per §267-109 of the Harford County Zoning Code. There are many architectural features to be protected. At Mt. Zion UMC, the stained-glass windows, triangular and sash wood windows, bell tower, and marble dates stones should be protected. At the McComas Institute, the wood lap siding, bell cupola, wood sash windows, and paneled main entrance doors should be protected.

Mr. Timothy Doyle, in attendance as a guest from the public, raised a concern about future construction on the property. He said there is a covenant on the deed that he has an equal responsibility for the shared driveway and construction has the potential to damage it. There are currently issues with the driveway from stormwater runoff and the resulting erosion and mud. The driveway is crushed gravel but can become muddy during rain events and Mr. Doyle noted that an increase in sediment from construction would exacerbate this problem. Mr. Doyle also noted there is another house that shares the driveway and has trailers that can damage the driveway and the sediment around it. He also mentioned that the driveway is blocked during funerals and other events. Ms. Love said she is aware of the issues with stormwater runoff and the driveway. She also noted that it causes runoff toward the graves but the graves are not at risk at this time. This process should help them receive grants that can help improve the driveway and give them better parking options both onsite and offsite. In the meantime, they will try to prevent blocking the driveway and make sure the homeowners are notified of such events. Mr. Polk said this is good information to have for future grants and any construction. Mrs. Doyle said the shed next to the building is falling apart and has become a vulture nest. When asked about the safety of the driveway entrance, Mr. and Mrs. Doyle mentioned a tree that can block the view, but they trim it to prevent this problem.

A motion was made to approve of the nomination. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The Harford County Historical Preservation Commission will recommend that the County Council approves of the McComas Institute as a Historic District.

Ongoing Business

Archeology Update

Mr. Bensen and Mr. Coates talked about the status of the Old Joppa Archeology Project. The excavations are complete but not to the satisfaction of the church/evacuation team. The unit locations were mapped. A brick walkway was discovered again after it was excavated 40 years ago. There was large river cobble and an even foundation which Dr. Gibb had not previously seen. They found adult-sized burial shafts which

were a shroud burial. There was nothing particularly surprising found. Future goals include investigating the architecture of the church and seeing if anything is still intact.

The Archeological society will co-sponsor a presentation about petroglyphs at the Historical Society of Cecil County in Elkton on February 15th. A co-sponsored presentation about the Susquehanna Canal is scheduled for March 15th. A lecture at the Havre de Grace Opera House on April 13th is entitled “Garrett Island: Its History and Archeology”. “Archeology at Old Joppa” will be a HCC lecture on April 28th. April is Maryland Archaeology Month.

Harford 250 Commemoration Update

A FeBREWary event will be held on February 9th at 3 PM at Double Groove Brewing in Forest Hill. The Harford 250 showcase will continue with a March 31st evening gala and an April 1st family fun day at the APGFCU Arena at HCC.

Administrative Business

Historic Preservation Awards

There was discussion about whether to have a virtual or an in-person award ceremony. The month of May was suggested as an option for the ceremony.

Public Comment

Ms. Laura Bianca-Pruitt asked where to submit the Town of Bel Air’s request for a booth. A booth application is on the Harford 250 website (www.harford250.org).

Adjourn

There was a movement to adjourn. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.