

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

Members Present: Carol Deibel - Virtual
Dan Coates
Jacquelyn Seneschal - Virtual
Philip McCall - Virtual
Iris Barnes - Virtual

Staff: Jacob Bensen
Daniel Furman

Public: Laura Bianca-Pruett
Representatives of St. James AME Church

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was called to order at 7:03 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 February 1, 2023, minutes. A motion was made to approve the February 2023 minutes with amendments as stated. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Amendment to St. James AME Cemetery (HA-1720) Designation to include St. James AME Church (HA-1590)

There is a name and boundary change proposed for the parcel at 4139 Gravel Hill Road in Havre de Grace, Maryland. The current name is St. James AME Cemetery, and the proposed name is St. James AME Church and Cemetery. The MIHP numbers are HA-1590 (Church) and HA-1720 (Cemetery). St. James AME Church

is the owner/applicant. The church was constructed in 1888 with additions in 1970 and the cemetery began in 1864. The cemetery is currently a Harford County Historic Landmark as of 1996.

A map was shown with the existing boundaries of the Landmark. A proposed amended boundary was shown on a map. The proposed boundary is three acres and includes both the church building and cemetery and can be found on Harford County Tax Map 0044, Parcel 0561, and Tax account 02-051788. A photograph of the façade and east elevation was shown. The church is surrounded by the parking lot on one side and the cemetery on the remaining three sides. Close-up photographs of the east elevation, west elevation, south elevation, and cemetery were shown. Details of the AME Church stone dated 1888 and the schoolhouse bell were shown.

The significance of the St. James AME Church and Cemetery was noted: “It has been a significant part of the community of Gravel Hill and has played an important role in the lives of generations of African American Harford Countians.” It was also noted that it has yielded and has the potential to provide important information about local history. The staff recommends amending the existing designation to include both St. James AME Church and Cemetery. The significant architectural features, including the original materials, cemetery grave markers and school bell, should be protected.

Pastor Ricardo Burnes of St. James AME Church made a comment that they had received a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust to replace the siding on the church with cedar and new wood doors to represent its initial representation. Mr. Bensen noted that they are asking the church to put a brief hold on the alterations that were approved by the Maryland Historical Trust. He noted that the church has chosen to request this amendment to include the church as part of the grant from the county government.

A motion was made to recommend the approval of the proposed amendment. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The Harford County Historical Preservation Commission will recommend that the County Council approves of the change of name and amendment of boundaries for St. James AME Church and Cemetery.

Cherry Hill Road Bridge Repairs Update

There was an update of the Cherry Hill Road bridge repairs. The bridge was damaged by a fallen tree during a storm. The bridge placard was damaged beyond repair. The Department of Public Works has commissioned a replica to be manufactured. The two placards were received by DPW on February 15th. A contractor will clean and paint them to be ready for installation in April 2023.

Ongoing Business

Archeology Update

An update was announced for the Old Joppa Archeology project. On February 14th, county staff met with representatives from the Church of the Resurrection, County Historical Society, and Archeology Society of

Northern Chesapeake to discuss the next steps of the project. There will be a donation of Old Joppa artifacts from the Church to the Historical Society. The Archeological Society is considering donating some artifacts to the Historical Society as well as they want to keep the collection together. The Historical Society staff will meet with Church Vestry in the near future to answer questions regarding the donation. A report of Dr. Gibb is expected soon.

Mr. Coates noted that there was a disagreement between the Church and Dr. Gibb over the condition of the site. The site had not been backfilled. The Archeological Society of the Northern Chesapeake gave the Church \$150 to complete the backfill. The artifacts are located with the Archeological Society and at the Church. Some of the artifacts are at the University of Maryland. The Gibb archaeological artifacts are at the Smithsonian Research Center. Mr. Coates mentioned that the artifacts should all be together to tell the entire story.

April is archaeological month. The dig for this year is on the eastern shore of Maryland and there is a lot of interest. More information can be found at [Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc. \(marylandarcheology.org\)](http://Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc. (marylandarcheology.org)). The Susquehanna Canal lecture is scheduled for March 15th. The Garrett Island discussion at the Havre de Grace Opera House will happen on April 13th.

Harford 250 Commemoration Update

Ms. Seneschal mentioned that March 31st will be the First Look Evening Gala. Friday evening will be a gala for adults only. Jazz musician Tim Waters will be meeting and greeting people. Saturday, April 1st, will be a family fun day. There will be displays and concession stands (weather-permitting). There will be a display of historic firetrucks. There will be wildlife adventures and maybe the Ma and Pa trolley. Tickets are available through the Harford Community College on www.harford250.org. Harford250's activities for Juneteenth will be highlighted.

Mr. Bensen noted that there will be a commissioning of a public art piece at Bynum Run Park. There are two finalists. One of a mosaic panel and the other is a metalworks sculpture. Both designs are available to view on www.Harford250.org as well as a video of the finalists. There is voting for the winner both online and at in-person events.

There was a question from the public asking if there are any tables left for the March 31st event. Ms. Seneschal said there are no open spaces left.

Administrative Business

CY22 Annual Report

Mr. Bensen sent the report to the Commission for comments. Mr. Coates said there is a bridge between Harford County and Baltimore County that was not included in the report. Mr. Bensen noted that maybe it is a Baltimore County landmark. Mr. Bensen will investigate and try to find out why it was not included.

Ms. Seneschal asked why the adoption of the second piece of design guidelines was not included and noted that it should be identified as a success story. Mr. Bensen will add it.

A guest from the public asked if the report is available to the public. Mr. Bensen mentioned that it must be approved by the County Council and then will become available to the public. Ms. Barnes asked if Tudor Hall should be included on page 15. Mr. Bensen noted that the list is only for County Landmarks and Tudor Hall is not one.

A motion to adopt the CY22 Annual Report with the addition of the phase 2 guidelines with the understand that the members of the Commission will have time to review and comment on the amendments. There was a second. The motion passed unanimously.

2023 Historic Preservation Awards

Several nominations have been received. The deadline has been extended to March 17th. The plan is to have some type of awards ceremony in May. The commission will go through the nominations and decide which ones to accept. A guest from the public asked what they have done to get more nominations. Mr. Bensen noted that they have reached out to contacts, landmark owners, and has requested the County Executive to release a new press release and advertise on social media pages.

Public Comment

Two public comments were made. Rev. Dr. Harriett McCombs said that this was a most informative and helpful process and thanked the Commission and staff. Rev. Cordell Hunter said this was an excellent manner of gathering research and thanked the Commission and staff.

Adjourn

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