

**Washtenaw County Historic District Commission  
Meeting Minutes**

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>Thursday, January 7, 2021</b>
<b>TIME:</b>	5:30 pm-7:00 p.m.
<b>PLACE:</b>	Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Call to Order**

Chair Ralph called the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

**Roll Call**

- **Commissioners present:** Alec Jerome from Scio Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Aprille McKay from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Alice Ralph from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Katie Remensnyder from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Blake Swihart from Ann Arbor Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Peter Kelley from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Patti Smith from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; James Mann from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; and Oliva Davidson from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- **Members of the Public:** Jacob Donner from Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- **Staff:** Melinda Schmidt, Chris Yelonek, and Edwin Peart

**Swearing in Ceremony**

Washtenaw County Deputy Clerk Edwin Peart swore in Historic District Commissioners Katie Remensnyder, Blake Swihart, Alice Ralph, and Oliva Davidson.

**Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting:**

Chair Ralph motioned to approve the agenda of January 7, 2021 Historic District Commission meeting. Commissioner Kelley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting: November 5, 2020:**

Commissioner Kelley motioned to approve the November 5, 2020 meeting minutes. Secretary Smith seconded the motion. Vice Chair Jerome and Commissioner Davidson abstained because they were absent from the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**Elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary:**

At staff request, commissioners introduced themselves. Chair Ralph is a retired architect, specializing in rehabilitation, and currently serves as Chair of the Historic District Commission. Vice Chair Jerome is Facilities Director at Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum. He serves as Vice Chair of the Commission. Secretary Smith is an Ann Arbor Public Schools teacher and local author specializing in Ann Arbor history. Commissioner Mann is a local Ypsilanti historian and has published several books about Ypsilanti history. Commissioner Remensnyder is an architectural historian specializing in historic landscapes with some archeology experience. Commissioner Swihart has an interest in local history and has been involved in several local preservation projects. Commissioner McKay is an archivist at the Bentley Library and was formerly a lawyer. Commissioner Kelley specializes in Northfield Township history and practices law. Commissioner Davidson is an Urban Planner who specialized in historic preservation, interior architecture, and works in local real estate.

Staff asked commissioners if anyone was interested in serving as HDC leadership. Current leadership volunteered to continue in their positions. No other commissioners expressed interest in a leadership position at this time. Chair Ralph nominated the following slate: Alice Ralph as HDC Chair, Alec Jerome as HDC Vice Chair, and Patti Smith as HDC Secretary/Treasurer.

Secretary Smith motions to approve the slate of candidates. Commissioner Mann seconds the motion. The slate of nominations was approved unanimously in a roll call vote.

## **Business and Reports: Staff Report**

Staff updated the Commission on the following items:

### **Programming and Promotional Materials**

Staff is working on a partnership with Ypsilanti District Library on a Storymap companion for the A.P. Marshall Online Oral History Archive that will be part of an upcoming Civil Rights virtual exhibit. Christopher Yelonek is taking the lead.

### **Certified Local Government Program**

**Northfield Township Survey Update:** Staff and preservation specialist Cheri Szcodronski have adjusted the Northfield Township reconnaissance survey schedule. The survey was completed in November and December. Staff will receive a draft of the report in March.

**Suggested 2021 Goals:** Staff reminded the commission adopting yearly goals is a CLG requirement. Staff suggested several goals. Commissioners requested several edits to the draft goals presented. Vice Chair Jerome motioned to adopt the goals as outlined below. Chair Ralph seconded the motion. The goals were adopted by a unanimous vote from the commission.

*(1) Continue and update oversight of Local Historic Districts in Washtenaw County.*

*(2) Promote survey and designation of historic sites in Washtenaw County.*

*(3) Promote heritage tourism and placemaking in Washtenaw County.*

1. Continue and update oversight of Local Historic Districts in Washtenaw County
  - Review and revise local historic district ordinances as needed
  - File Affidavits of Historic Designation for all historic district properties
  - Adopt an application for demolition permit for local historic districts
  - Complete annual Local Historic District Audit
  - Provide Michigan Historic District Tax Credit support for Local Historic Districts
2. Promote survey and designation of historic sites in Washtenaw County
  - Support townships and local groups seeking to complete surveys and seek designation
    - Northfield Township, Milan
  - Support individuals seeking to document or protect their historic property
3. Promote heritage tourism and placemaking in Washtenaw County
  - Seek creative platforms to promote heritage tourism resources
  - Work with community partners to support new products and events
    - Local libraries, museums, and historical societies
  - Maximize grant opportunities

### **Washtenaw County Updates**

**Temporary work situation:** The Office of Community and Economic Development will continue to work remotely. The HDC is able to hold virtual meetings as authorized by the State of Michigan amendment to the Open Meetings Act until December 31, 2021.

### **Local Historic District Update**

Staff has completed the 2020 Local Historic District Audit. Staff presented a draft of the Audit to the commission, and will distribute the final version in the coming weeks. During the presentation, staff highlighted several local historic districts with applications over the past year, including Gordon Hall, Geer School, and the Thornoaks Neighborhood.

Staff notified the commission that a vacant lot in the Thornoaks Neighborhood is under contract. Staff will make every effort to contact the owner in the coming weeks in order to work with them on plans for new construction. Commissioner Ralph noted the HDC should be clear in expectations and an asset to the property owner during the building process.

#### **Commissioner Updates**

Commissioner Kelley updated the commission on a historic home in Whitmore Lake currently for sale. It is not protected, and the historical society fears it will be altered. The porch as already been ripped off and home gutted. Commissioner Kelley hopes the tax credit will motivate future preservation efforts.

**Adjournment:** Chair Ralph motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 pm. Vice-chair Jerome seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The next HDC meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Virtual Zoom Meeting