Call to Order

- Commissioner Jerome called the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting to order at 5:30 PM

Roll Call

- Commissioner Jerome conducted roll call:
  - Commissioners present: Jerome, Kelley, Pinney, Mann, Remensnyder
  - Commissioners absent with notice: Cook, Ralph, Smith
  - Staff present: Melinda Schmidt

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting:

Commissioner Jerome asked if there were any corrections to the agenda. Staff noted that Commissioner Kelley was sworn in prior to the meeting by OCED notary Heidi Johnson. Commissioner Kelley moved to add Bell Road Bridge to potential projects and strike the swearing in of new commissioners from the agenda. Commissioner Pinney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting: January 3, 2019:

Commissioner Jerome asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. With none, the minutes stand approved.

Commissioner Elections: Staff proposed a slate based on commissioner interest. Commissioner Jerome opened the floor for discussion. Commissioner Kelley moved to nominate Commissioner Ralph as Chair, Commissioner Jerome as Vice-Chair, and Commissioner Smith as Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Pinney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Participation: none

Commissioner follow-up to citizen participation: none

Application Reviews: none

Business and Reports:

Staff Report

Staff Melinda Schmidt updated the Commission on the following items:

- Local Historic Districts Updates
  - Gordon Hall:
    - Staff, DAHS representative Neil Adams, and two Hopkins Burns architects met with John Hamlin, Washtenaw County Plan Reviewer at the Building Inspection office on February 15 to provide an overview of current proposed plans and discuss potential code difficulties. Mr. Hamlin will review the plans and return comments.
    - Staff submitted Hopkins Burns’ 75% plans for the Interior Rehabilitation of Gordon Hall to SHPO on February 22. Hopkins Burns plans to attend the May 2 WCHDC meeting to provide an update on the interior rehabilitation plans and how they may affect the exterior of the building. Later this year, DAHS leadership hopes to attend a WCHDC meeting to share their vision for Gordon Hall.
    - Commissioner Remensnyder updated the commission on the lecture hosted by the University of Michigan that outlined the findings of the archeology class that met at Gordon Hall in fall 2018. Commissioner Remensnyder reported that the class found the foundations for the outhouse and the original ell. The archeological resources are in good shape and could provide more information about the history of the property.
Conant Farm:
- Property owners Susan and Mark Hill hope to attend a future HDC meeting to share their rehabilitation plans and vision for Conant Farm. Staff shared the MEDC grant funding the infrastructure necessary for the large development surrounding the farm has been put on hold pending state investigation. Commissioner Jerome requested more information about the project, and suggested staff talk to the land conservancy.

Thornoaks:
- In mid-March, Staff will visit 4086 Thornoaks Drive, which was vacant for several months before it was recently purchased, and meet with the property owners to discuss their plans for the home.

Popkins School:
- Staff received a phone call on March 7 inquiring about allowed reuses for the Popkins School. The property is currently for sale and the inquiries were on behalf of a potential buyer. Staff reviewed the COA process and recommended the future property owner contact the HDC to discuss potential projects.

CLG Updates:
- 2019 Grant Application: Northfield Township Historical Society and Washtenaw County submitted a CLG grant application on January 31 to fund the completion of historic contexts for the Phase I Historic Resources Survey of Northfield Township already started by the historical society. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners approved the application at their February 6 meeting, and staff submitted all necessary signatures by mid-February. The Northfield Township Board of Trustees approved a letter of support for the grant application at their February 14 meeting. Notice of award will be given in early summer. Commissioner Kelley noted that Northfield Township Historical Society member Jacob Donner, a knowledgeable local historian, could give a presentation to the HDC pending grant award. Commissioner Kelley also mentioned most Whitmore Lake commercial property owners live in Brighton.
- 2018 Annual Report: Staff is working on the 2018 Annual Report, due to SHPO April 1. SHPO has provided a template for the report, which will cover October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018.

Legislation Updates:
- Senate Bill 54 and House Bill 4100 to reinstate the Michigan historic preservation tax credit were introduced in late January by Senator Schmidt in the Senate and Representative Frederick in the House. Governor Whitmer has expressed support of the bills. The bills would reinstate the previous tax credits, which was a 25% tax refund on qualifying rehabilitation costs for buildings located within local historic districts. The Senate and House bills are different. Senate Bill 54 is the preferred version, and would reinstate the 2011 version of the tax credits. House Bill 4100 carries over the most recent version of the bill from 2018, including all the revisions made during the negotiations last year.
- Preservation Advocacy Day 2019: Staff attended Preservation Advocacy Day in Lansing on February 26. The goal of this year’s Advocacy Day was promoting the historic preservation tax credit. Staff met with several Washtenaw County area representatives and senators or their staff, including Senator Theis, Senator Irwin, Representative Lasinski, Representative Peterson, and Representative Warren.
- Staff recommends giving support by passing a motion to request that the Board of Commissioners consider a resolution of support and letter of support for the bills. Commissioner Jerome stated the commission would consider the resolution after the staff report.

Washtenaw County Updates
- Bylaws and Standing Rules: The revised Bylaws and Standing Rules passed by the WCHDC at the January meeting were approved by the Board of Commissioners (BOC) on February 6th.
- HDC Appointment: The BOC posted the HDC commissioner vacancy on February 12, but declined to appoint a new commissioner on March 6. Any applications to serve on the HDC from fall 2018 remain active for consideration by the BOC for appointment. The Commission expressed their disappointment. Staff will talk to OCED leadership regarding the appointment.
• Transition of boards and commissions to temporary employee status: The County appreciates the feedback the WCHDC gave regarding this transition at the end of 2018, but sees no other option but to move forward in order to comply with IRS requirements. Corporation Counsel has confirmed the transition will occur. This means each commissioner will become a temporary employee and receive a $25 stipend for each meeting. A few of you have already completed the paperwork required, thank you! If you have not yet completed the paperwork, you can find the packet online. Staff is happy to mail you a packet as well.

• Programming and Promotional Updates
  o WCHDC Brochure: Staff asked the commission to consider the best ways to distribute the brochure. Commissioner Jerome suggested distributing some through historic preservation students at EMU, who may be able to distribute them while working on class projects. He also suggested giving some to the Towner House Group. Commissioner Pinney suggested giving some to the local realtor association. She has a contact at the association. Commissioner Mann suggested distributing the brochures at realtor meetings. Commissioner Pinney also suggested looking into the new Opportunity Zones which could benefit from the additional tax credits that come from designation. Commissioner Jerome requested staff send out more information on Opportunity Zones.

• Potential Projects
  o 1330 N Huron River Drive:
    ▪ Ralph Gerganoff, a prolific local architect who designed many residential and academic buildings in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, designed his mid-century home on the Huron River in Ypsilanti Township. The home still stands, though in a state of disrepair. It was recently purchased by an individual seeking to restore the home, and staff visited 1330 N Huron River Drive in early February. Staff discussed the possibility of designation and its benefits with the owner, who expressed interest in designation pending the return of the Michigan Historic Tax Credit program. Commissioner Mann noted that the Ypsilanti Historical Society archives had helped the new owner research the home.
  o Maple Foster Bridge:
    ▪ A Barton Hills resident interested in designating the Maple Foster Bridge as a local historic district contacted staff in mid-February. Staff sent the resident more information regarding designation and will follow up in the coming weeks. If the resident would like to move forward with the designation process, next steps would include gauging community support for designation. Commissioner Jerome is hopeful that neighboring residents would be supportive. He also indicated both Scio and Ann Arbor Township would need to agree to a study committee.
  o Bell Road Bridge:
    ▪ Commissioner Kelley inquired about the status of the Bell Road Bridge, noting that it is also a significant bridge worthy of local designation. Commissioner Jerome said he would ask Scio Township. It was recently mothballed, and though Scio Township was looking into making it a pedestrian bridge, there was local opposition to moving the bridge. Commissioner Mann mentioned another Pratt through truss located in Washtenaw County, now at the bottom of Ford Lake.

• Items for Consideration of Adoption or Approval by Commission
  o Resolution in support of reinstating the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax credits:
    ▪ Staff presented the proposed resolution to the commission. Commissioner Mann noted the date was wrong on the resolution.
    ▪ Commissioner Kelley moved to request that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners pass a resolution in support of the bill to reinstate the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax credits as presented with the revised date. Commissioner Mann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
  o Resolution of Appreciation for Terry Cwik:
    ▪ Staff presented the draft resolution of appreciation for Terry Cwik, the previous HDC chair.
Commissioner Pinney moved to adopt the resolution of appreciation for Terry Cwik as presented with a formatting revision. Commissioner Remensnyder seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report: none

Adjournment: Commissioner Pinney motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:00pm. Commissioner Remensnyder seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The next HDC meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at Eastern County Government Center Office of Community & Economic Development 2nd floor 415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI