



HIGHLAND PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Robert B. Blackwell Municipal Building
12050 Woodward Avenue
Highland Park, Michigan 48203
313-252-0050 x257 Chair A. Zobel

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION (HDC) MEETING Highland Park Fire Station, 25 Gerald Monday, 25th October 2021 OFFICIAL MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER - 5:44PM

The meeting was hosted by Chair Zobel in the Highland Park Fire Station and also called to order by Chair Zobel, roll call was performed by Secretary Harris

Commissioners Present: Anne Zobel - Chair, Malika Pryor - Vice Chair, Jeffrey Harris - Secretary, Commissioner Arthur Williams

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Debbie Morrison [excused], Commissioner Arthur Rizzo [excused]

Other: Ty Hinton - CED Director, Donya Clowney - Prospective Commissioner

Chair Zobel began this meeting by requesting a motion to approve the September, 2021 HDC Meeting Minutes. The motion was moved by Vice Chair Pryor and seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion passed unanimously at 5:45PM.

Chair Zobel then introduces CED Director Ty Hinton to the commission. Chair Zobel worked with Ty Hinton for Wayne County for many years and the two know each other well. The CED Director works in his role for both Harper Woods and Highland Park and as a result may not be able to attend each commission meeting, but he will try. Wayne county officials recommended Ty to Mayor Yopp to fill the city's CED Director vacancy.

Also introduced during this time was Donya Clowney, a prospective new commissioner. Donya is a lifelong, 3rd generation Highland Parker who lives on Rhode Island. She is an advocate for the city at large and hopes to continue doing so through the Historic District Commission. Chair Zobel will forward her information over to CED Director Hinton so a formal nomination and vote can be had.

REPORT FROM COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CED) DIRECTOR – 5:51PM

CED Director Hinton provided a report for multiple properties within the city. The first update was regarding the MacGregor Library. CED Director Hinton and Chair Zobel are part of a monthly meeting regarding the restoration of this library. The members of this meeting have

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deduced that a full restoration of the library will cost somewhere between \$23m and \$26m (a full restoration includes bringing the library digital).

Mr. Hinton took a moment to let the commission know there is a group of investors coming together to do projects in Highland Park. He hopes that they will start on McNichols south along Woodward. There is one group of investors that wants to build an entertainment complex in the location of the old city Highschool off Woodward. There is another group that would like to build a highschool for the city itself.

The group that wants to build the highschool is planning to begin working on Highland Towers and the apartment complex on Farrand Park in the near future. The apartment complex will be converted into a museum of American architects. They plan to preserve the entrances around the Highland Towers building and demolish the rest of the structure, creating a park where the building once stood. They would also like to keep the underground parking structure of the Highland Towers building. Vice Chair Pryor would like to ensure that the group investing in these locations is able to commit to community engagement; CED Director Hinton believes this group is very interested in community engagement. Donya would like to ensure that the elderly and low income residents will be able to afford their property taxes that might increase as a result of this project. Chair Zobel explains that the property taxes cannot be raised more than a small percentage point per year even if the value of the property were to skyrocket, helping to protect the elderly and low income residents from being priced out of their homes.

At this point, CED Director Hinton would like to make his way home. Chair Zobel asks that he stay for a few minutes of the next topic, as it concerns him.

MICHIGAN STATE PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) - CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM (CLG) – 6:19PM

Chair Zobel began by informing the CED Director that the HP HDC would like to be part of SHPO's CLG Program. She explained that becoming part of the CLG program would open the HDC, and by extension the city, up to funding opportunities and other resources to help solve problems related to the preservation of historic sites. Daijah, the assistant to the HP CED Director has already assisted the HDC in complying with Open Meetings Act requirements by posting Meeting notices, Agendas, and Minutes on the City's website. Chair Zobel thanked the CED Director for this help. The CED Director encourages the HDC to continue down this path. Chair Zobel also made a note that all current commissioners have sent over their resumes.

At this point, CED Director Hinton leaves (6:24PM).

CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS AND UPDATES / PUBLIC COMMENTS – 6:24PM

Chair Zobel opens the conversation to the rest of the commission regarding the goals that the commission should have for calendar year 2022, reminding the commission that the CLG program designation will provide the HDC with a great deal of resources.

Commissioner Williams asks how much time it will take to realistically bring the MacGregor Library back to a modern, functional state. Chair Zobel estimates that it would take roughly ten years to bring the library into good shape, contemporarily speaking. She also estimates that it will take roughly eight million dollars to bring the structure itself back into operating order. She explains that all of the money required to work on the library will come from many sources, and thusly it's important that the HDC become part of the CLG to assist with this process. At a possible \$100,000 a year from SHPO to help with the library, within a decade the HDC itself could contribute a million dollars to this project.

At this point, Chair Zobel explains that only she and Secretary Harris submitted their goals for

the commission through the link the Chair had sent a week prior. Thusly, she asks that all other commissioners share their goals with the commission during this meeting. Below are some of the goals that were shared.

GOALS:

- 1) Working to secure and re-open the MacGregor Library should be a primary goal of the commission. This goal could be broken down into many more specific goals, if necessary.
- 2) Expand the HDC to be able to provide information about historic places within the city of Highland Park. Vice Chair Pryor suggested this particular item and she references the Detroit Historical Society as a resource for the commission; the Society itself is interested in talking with Highland Parkers itself. Vice Chair Pryor also wanted to mention that the Detroit Historical Society is going for a millage on the next municipal vote.
- 3) The commission should also drill down harder on the current owners of the Ford Administration Building so that it is sold to someone who is willing to at bare minimum maintain the property. For instance, the 24 month "due diligence" prior prior to a sale being approved or denied seems a bit extreme.
- 4) The HDC should attempt to record or foster the recording of an oral history of the city, not necessarily connected to structures or properties. There are so many stories being lost to time, stories that help fill in the spaces between the individual structures within the community and give the buildings the HDC is charged with protecting a place in a much more grand story.

Chair Zobel will take these goals, refine them, and submit them, along with our resumes and other items SHPO needs in order to approve the HDC for the CLG Program by the end of the year. A rough draft of the refined goals will be sent to commissions a week prior to the HDC meeting in November.

Lastly, Chair Zobel notified the commission that Commissioner Art Rizzo has tendered his resignation to her by email on October 24th.

ADJOURNMENT – 7:11PM

Meeting was adjourned at 7:11PM

- The next Historic District Commission will be held on November 22nd, 2021.