

**CITY OF MASON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF JUNE 21, 2021**

Vice Chair Cummings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Mason City Hall.

| Roll Call | | Present | Absent | Notes |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Commissioner | Clinton | X | | |
| Vice Chair | Cummings | X | | |
| Chair | Klein | | X | With Notice |
| Commissioner | Shattuck | X | | |
| Council Liaison | Vogel | X | | |
| Commissioner | Neville-Palmateer | X | | |
| Commissioner | Vacant (Schulien) | | | |

Also present: Community Development Staff - Elizabeth A. Hude, AICP, Director/HDC Secretary; Haley Clayton, Intern; Alan Higgins, SHPO CLG Coordinator

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Vogel, second by Clinton to approve the Historic District Commission meeting minutes from May 17, 2021.

Yes (5) Clinton, Cummings, Shattuck, Vogel, Neville-Palmateer
No (0)
Absent: (1) Klein

MOTION APPROVED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Master Plan Update

Director Hude informed Commissioners that the selection of contractors for the Master Plan has been narrowed down and that the formal announcement will come at the City Council meeting in July. In addition, she reminded everyone to sign up for the Master Plan email updates and to share this with friends and members of the community. Cummings asked what the approval process was for the Master Plan. Director Hude stated that after the Master Plan is drafted, it goes before the Planning Commission. PC will recommend it being approved/adopted by City Council. City Council then adopts it. The Plan is then implemented in two primary ways: through spending (budget) and laws (ordinances). The next step to implement the Master Plan would be to update the zoning ordinance, which is part of this project, and making sure that the Capital Improvement Program and operating budgets are investing money in what the community wants. Cummings asked if the Master Plan was linked to the budget process. Director Hude stated that it is one of the ways the plan is implemented. Once the Master Plan has been adopted, we look at the Capital Plan and the Operating Budget. The plan is reviewed and then it is determined how to spend the money in a way that supports the plan. Cummings asked if the plan would be adopted this year. Director Hude stated that it would probably take a year to a year and a half to get through.

B. SHPO – CLG – Community Survey Project Update – Final Presentation by Haley Clayton, Intern

Director Hude introduced Haley Clayton, Community Development Intern working on the CLG Project and Alan Higgins from SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office). Alan Higgins provided a brief introduction of himself as the CLG Coordinator for the SHPO. He coordinates the Certified Local Governments (CLG) Programs, which Mason participates in. He helps CLG's with Historic Preservation. He also manages the Grant programs that are applicable to the communities that are in the CLG Programs. Cummings asked if there were an increase in the number of cities that qualify for CLG status. Higgins responded that any local unit of government can become a CLG. They must have an Historic District Ordinance, an Historic District Commission, they must survey the historic resources in their community and there are a couple of participation requirements as well. There are currently thirty-three (33) communities that participate. There are three (3) that have come on in the last year and a half. There are five (5) to eight (8) that are in the process of becoming CLG's right now. Technically there are seventy-eight (78) communities in the State of Michigan that have Historic District Commissions already that could become a CLG. Cummings asked in an average year how many CLG's submit funding requests. Higgins stated that it varies. Last year there was a great response to the funding applications. Prior to his arrival at SHPO (late 2019), they were not getting a lot of applications for the CLG funding, and they were trying to solicit applications. Prior to him working with SHPO, the position was vacant for over 10 years. There were people helping with that position along with other things. Last year there were nine (9) applications total. Cummings asked if there had been any incremental increases to the funding amounts allocated in the years that Higgins has been with SHPO. Higgins replied yes; their funding is dependent on what is allocated from National Park Service. Those funds are distributed to the State Historic Preservation Office. They (SHPO) by law, are required to distribute 10% of the funds received directly to communities that participate in the CLG program. Because Park Service allocations to state offices are trending upward, that in turn means that what they distribute to communities is increasing also. Cummings asked what the process was for evaluating and reviewing the applications that come in for the CLG funding. Higgins responded that when applications come into the office, they go through a preliminary feedback round, making sure there are no deficiencies, and that the application is complete. They then are reviewed by the program staff depending on the classification of the application. They are not scoring the applications, but they are making sure they are technically sufficient and that what is proposed is acceptable. Any applications that are technically acceptable and complete move on to the scoring committee. Then it is competitively scored based on the criteria that has been established for that year. SHPO considers several different things, making sure that the funds are distributed fairly among the communities. Cummings asked if the applications are reviewed separately. Higgins stated that everyone reviews the applications individually at their own, then collectively come together to review. Every CLG must submit an annual report to our office, that helps us to review the communities' goals and what they are working toward. Council Liaison Vogel mentioned the Library Phase 3, which is loosely a wish list, is on our CIP in case some money or grant opportunity comes, it will show that we have had that on there and that it is part of our plan.

Director Hude stated that part of the reason Alan Higgins was invited to the meeting tonight was to observe Haley's Community Survey Project presentation. The Community Survey is an item listed as a goal in our CLG report. The Library renovation is a great example of how the survey supports historic preservation: we have taken our community vision statement, the Master Plan and identified an historic city property that we are going to invest in and all these components helped us to receive the grant funding we applied for. Director Hude expressed her appreciation to both Clayton and Higgins for their help with the grant process.

Clayton presented the final draft for the Historic District Survey Workplan. The goal is to collect information on all historic structures in the City of Mason starting in 2021 and completed by 2030. Prior surveys were done in 1984 (city wide), and the façade study of the Historic District in 2009. In the last draft of the workplan we had the survey mapped out by street, it is now mapped into 26 different areas and are color coded. The inventory forms need to be completed for each property. A photo will be taken, and research will be done for that area. All information collected will be entered into the SHPO template and sent. Vogel asked if they are color coded by priority, especially if there are areas or properties not previously researched/surveyed and recorded. Director Hude acknowledged that there might be some fine tuning to the color coding. There is research that needs to be done on the subdivisions so that more information is available regarding the different subdivisions and confirmation of the boundaries. Director Hude felt strongly that the Laylin Park neighborhood should be first, as there are upgrades being done to the park, the new signage and the kiosk telling the story of that area. Director Hude shared history about Mr. Jewett naming the streets in that area after people he personally knew, and how he presented deeds to pieces of property in that neighborhood to soldiers coming home from WWII.

Cummings wanted confirmation that we were able to obtain this information and put it into our own database and then submit to SHPO to be uploaded into a larger database. Clayton said that currently it is in an Excel spreadsheet. Higgins informed the commission that they can use whatever database they want. Data will be extracted from the forms sent to SHPO and entered in their main database. That information will be a resource when communities need technical support. With the workplan in place, the next step is to determine if we have staff to handle this, if we need technical assistance, or do we need money to hire someone to do this? All of this will be reviewed, and determinations will be made regarding what should be budgeted to get this done. This should be viewed as an investment, because if this leads to grants than there is a return on the investment with the money coming back to us.

Cummings wanted to know if volunteers would be required to use pen and paper to document their research and then must upload that information. Director Hude is working to get tablets for the building inspectors, and she is researching if those tablets can be multipurpose for this project as well. Neville-Palmeteer asked if there would be standardized language on the surveys so that everything would be consistent. Director Hude indicated that there will be a reference page in the survey packet along with some training materials and links to videos. Director Hude will email the information out to everyone once it is finalized. Neville-Palmeteer asked that if the survey were completed, would it make it easier to apply for National grants and funding. Director Hude answered that yes that is one of the reasons to have this done, it also serves as the documentation for the process of nominating something for the National Register. By doing that, when properties/neighborhoods are recognized federally, opportunities for funding become available if projects related to preservation and restoration arise. That is why the work needs to come first.

Vogel asked if it was considered and cheaper to seek out a canvassing firm to do this in one summer and get it done. Hude said she and Alan could discuss and see how other communities went about gathering the information. Higgins referred to a large neighborhood in the City of Kalamazoo that was utilizing some of their CLG grant funds to hire a canvassing firm for 3532 homes. Vogel asked what the timeline on that project was. Higgins indicated that CLG grant funds have sixteen (16) months to get the work done; that is a federally mandated timeline. Cummings expressed concerns about the historic use of properties and inquired if there could be a portion of the survey done and submitted with the basics and then further research later. Higgins informed that this would be the first level type of survey focused on the

architecture and that the research at this level is whatever is readily available. At this level it is not a deep dive into each property, just a first step of documentation. There are some sections on those inventory forms that will not have information. Details can be added over time. There are different expectations when communities do the surveys versus when they hire consultants to do the research as the latter are being paid to do the research. Clayton said that after this survey, the community can go for another grant for an Intensive Level survey which was confirmed by Higgins. Hude asked the Commissioners if there were any additional questions. Vogel stated that when she started on the HDC this survey project was always discussed and that she appreciates the groundwork that has been laid by Director Hude to see this survey project to fruition. Director Hude expressed her appreciation to Alan Higgins for his guidance in the process.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

LIAISON REPORT

A. City Council Liaison Report

Vogel presented her liaison report for City Council. The Water Report is back from last year and that looks good, currently waiting for the water study to come back with information on what the funding will be for, and the Police Department is working on E Citations.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.



Elizabeth A. Hude, AICP, Community Development Director and HDC Staff Secretary