

## OAKLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

— DRAFT MINUTES —

### REGULAR MEETING MARCH 1, 2022

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**Meeting called to order at 7:14 PM.**

**Roll call:** Rich Stamps, Jim Craft, Jerry Murphy, Stephanie Suszek, Rosie Richardson, Carol Egbo

Motion made by Craft to approve minutes from February 1, 2022 meeting: Seconded by Richardson, **motion passed.**

#### **Announcements**

Oakland County Historical Resources (library, historical/genealogical consortium) annual meeting is Tues March 29 at 10am (Zoom meeting). Stamps suggested some OCHC members should go to the meeting and join the consortium. Goals are to help avoid redundancy in OCHR and OCHC initiatives and to have a regular OCHC presence at OCHR meetings. Stamps will get OCHC members on mailing list and will send out the OCHR meeting flyer.

#### **New Business**

**Discussion: How can OCHC more effectively meet our charge to support historic preservation?**

- Craft pointed out the importance of being proactive vs. reactive (for example, millage or establishing fund for grants to save endangered structures). **Stamps will talk with Mike McGuinness about a move to get us a tax base.**
- Thinking of the historical commission as a conduit to resources for people/organizations in the county, could OCHC compile and share yearly a regularly updated list of at-risk properties, funding templates for historic preservation, resource lists for common historic structures issues (fixing windows, etc.) – this could include MHPN, which does workshops, etc.
- Murphy noted the importance of having a built-in group of supporters for specific at-risk properties, such as the Rochester school building, whose community supporters are currently advocating for its preservation. Establishing community support from people who have personal connections to old properties is key to preservation.
- Richardson suggested setting up a quarterly communication from OCHC that includes historic preservation funding resources for individuals or organizations seeking to save or restore endangered properties. Murphy noted that MHPN's recent e-newsletter was good looking, informative, and interesting, with a really detailed article on the Rochester school building—perhaps a communication from OCHC could be built on this model.
- Egbo pointed out that OCHC needs more visibility in the local historic preservation community. **Could OCHC work with Decker to help Oakland County History Coalition get going again and give presentations at coalition meetings?**

- Richardson suggested creating a video for local access cable to introduce public to OCHC, show what we've done so far (such as the letters of support, etc.), and let people know what's coming up.
- Murphy suggested creating an OCHC e-newsletter to help raise our visibility and fulfill our charge to support historic preservation. While we might not be the type of organization that does regular e-blasts, Craft pointed out that such an e-newsletter could be linked on the future OCHC website.
- Egbo noted that being able to access our social media accounts is really important. Suszek and Stamps have been unable to get a response from Jordan about the Facebook and Instagram logins or updating the administrator(s) for these accounts. **Stamps to reach out to Mike McGuinness to see if he can help.**

### Follow-up items

#### Replacement for Melinda

- Member – Decker contacted Ruth Dufresne (Commerce, Wixom, Walled Lake) and Egbo also recommends Ruth as a great candidate for membership.
- Secretary/Treasurer – Melinda had volunteered to keep books in the past; Suszek will take over Secretary job but not Treasurer.

#### Certificates of thanks

- Egbo created a template for the certificates. Discussion on whether the wording should be special for each person or a consistent standard message. Group decided these will be Certificates of Appreciation (rather than Recognition) and we could have more than one template and pick whichever seems appropriate for the occasion. Certificate signatures could include: **OCHC Chair** (although we can all sign Melissa's and Melinda's), **Oakland County Executive** (easier if we get a bunch printed and have County Executive sign them so we have them ready. It's also a good chance to see the County Executive!), and **David Woodward** as a third signatory as OCHC is under the Board of Commissioners. **Egbo to draft and finalize two certificates (Melissa and Melinda).**

**Archive of OCHC minutes** is on to-do list for Stamps.

#### **Distribution of booklets to libraries – done; historical societies – open**

- Distribution to last of the historical societies will be easier when history coalition meetings resume. Each new Commissioner can also be given a booklet. In thinking about ordering a reprint, we should consider who would be on distribution list and keep in mind that when we give presentations, booklets tend to get picked up. Lots seem to have been picked up from Board of Commission meeting. The initial goal of distributing this first printing is considered accomplished!

### At risk properties updates

- Who should be maintaining this list? Decker has been doing it. Planning and Economic Development could also be an appropriate place, although they have seen budget and personnel cuts, so they might not be able to— **Stamps to approach John Bry at Egbo's suggestion.**
- Egbo requests **Davisburg Barn on the site of the John C. Davis property be added to at-risk list.** Risk of being demolished? The Ernst Barn, pre-Civil War, is on County Park property (Watkins Lake & Scott Lake in Waterford) but it has been saved and will be moved to Holly Agricultural Park in April – document the move and share as a success story? Oakland County Parks or Waterford local access to make the video? **Egbo will touch base with OC Parks' communications to see who should be recording.**
- McMath-Hulbert update: Most documentation completed for historic designation; Craft spoke with Melissa Proust at County about a long-term vision for the facility, including who will own it. OC Parks is the logical choice and it's on their March 16 property assets acquisition meeting. Current owner and society don't know about this yet. A credible organization with resources and expertise is needed to approach Kinsler – this could be a group made up of County government, maybe universities, Cranbrook Science, etc. Could OCHC make a statement in support of building's importance for local history and science? **Egbo to let Melissa know there's strong support from OCHC to move forward on this.**

### Committee reports

- Stamps and Egbo have a visit to the County records storage and meeting with Lisa Brown on their to-do lists.
- Website update: OCHC website updates must go through County IT; Decker is trying to get a meeting scheduled for March.
- African-American history projects updates from Richardson and Egbo: the Elizabeth Denison Forth sign is in process, working now on design and the installation location on county property (where should it go for best visibility?). Wanted to add historical street sign University at Paddock, but some residents feel it would be better to do it at Paddock instead of University (Paddock is named for a family but it's misspelled). BOC approved two signs – one exterior and one interior.
- Essay contest update from Richardson: "How COVID-19 Changed My Life" student essay contest guidelines have been drafted, a rubric has been created, and there is a possible time capsule component. Richardson also pulled kids' essays on polio epidemic, as this could be a good thing to share with participants—and remember, the polio vaccine was made in Rochester, Oakland County! Stamps can help with time capsule. **We should come up with time capsule size, types of submissions that can be accepted, etc.** Awards for top three essay submissions and prizes are TBD. How to get this out to schools? Maybe through Language Arts department at Oakland Schools? Egbo to send a

contact to Richardson. Send to local access in all the cities. TIMELINE: Send framework for contest to teachers in spring; kick it off this fall; receive submissions and award prizes by late December. For the contest winners, is there publication potential? This also creates a good primary source for future historians. School libraries, history center, school offices could also receive copies of submissions. Essay contest will be for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades. 3<sup>rd</sup> graders could write a poem or a shorter essay, even a list (Top 10 or something), could include pictures.

### **Local History as a subset of American history update**

Craft connected with GM archives and is continuing to work on it; work in progress for everyone. Distribution of posters could be divvied up among OCHC members. Do the posters get redistributed or recycled when new cycle of posters becomes available? Stamps shared the Peter Pilles quote re: impossibility of respecting/appreciating something without being educated about it first—this local history as American history initiative will help make that knowledge available!

Reminder: posters are for general public and ideally will appear all over the county; Power Points will be aimed at junior high and high school.

### **Local government workshop - tabled**

Chairperson Stamps paused and was grief-stricken on the history we're living through right now.

Stamps shared "How Did They Do It?" poem.

**Next meeting: April 5, 2022.**

**Moved to adjourn, seconded. Adjourned 8:47 pm.**