

OAKLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

— MINUTES —

REGULAR MEETING June 7, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:02pm.

Roll call: Rosie Richardson, Carol Egbo, Dave Decker, Jim Craft, Stephanie Suszek, Dave Walls

Motion made by Richardson to approve minutes from May 3, 2022, seconded by Walls, **unanimously approved.**

Old Business

- **Replacement for Melinda**

Potential new candidate Ruth DuFresne has a conflict with our regular meeting time of first Tuesdays. Other reasons to change it are voting, holidays, etc. – should we pick a different day of the week to meet, possibly **switch OCHC meetings to first Wednesdays?** Richardson moves, Decker seconds. **We need to run it by Stamps and JoAnne before making a switch!** Voted to table the motion for now.

Kathy Bilger from Farmington is another potential candidate with many contacts in the historical community.

- **Treasurer – volunteers? Open point for next time**

- **Certificates of thanks to Melissa and Melinda** have been printed. Stamps needs to get Dave Coulter’s signature, then they will be ready to send.

- **At Risk properties**

Walls shared that the 1860s Greek Revival Walls house on Old Orchard Trail has been demolished. No attempt was made to save it (seems to have been unknown in historic preservation/local community); some old lumber – not from the house – was also dumped on the site after demolition.

Decker is working on state marker applications for the McConnell House and the Byers property in Commerce to reapply for designation. Ruth Byers was instrumental in keeping I-275 from cutting through the center of Commerce Village; ties into local history as American history, urban renewal history, etc.

- **Tax millage proposal, SB 653** – no updates on the current proposal, which doesn’t necessarily support small Oakland County museums and historical societies as much as it works for Detroit-based institutions. Egbo pointed out that Oakland County Parks has

a millage for its operating budget; this is a model we could look to for a future Oakland County history millage proposal.

- **Report on MHPN conference from Egbo**

Successful event, even though membership numbers were down. Next year's will take place at Mackinac Island at Mission Point Resort. Take-aways: MHPN is doing a better job at emphasizing the importance of grassroots organization to save historic structures and the importance of adaptive reuse; lots of info on using tax credits; inclusive history also coming alive.

MHPN conference sessions are all recorded; registrants have full access. **OCHC should push for broader access to these recorded resources, so that people who didn't attend can benefit now that the conference is over.** AASLH also has leaflets on adaptive reuse – we can link to this info on our website. **Can we co-sponsor a conference on adaptive reuse in the future?** There are good examples (and counterexamples!) in Oakland County.

- **1857 Map update from Decker**

LaVere Webster (conservationist/preservationist who treated /recreated mural and Oakland Twp. Historical Society Board member – another OTHS member donated this map) says it is substantially coming off of its canvas and needs to be reattached. Decker thinks it can be restored, although some pieces may be missing. A large workspace is needed.

What else is required? Find out and seek funding from the County. Stamps and Decker reached out to Henry Ford through Jeff. Leslie Pielach has a couple of names of preservation contacts we could try (Decker to follow up). Also: DIA? Michigan State Archives/Michigan Museum – Craft to reach out? DHM? Cranbrook? Meadowbrook? Wayne State – Suszek to reach out? OU? Might need to leave map unrolled for months while work is being done. LaVere has proper canvas and list of proper glues and binders. We need an expert in paper and canvas. **Next steps: continue contacting preservations/conservators and get a list together.** For reference, the map at OCPHS is about 4.5' x 6'

Committee Reports

- **Website update**

Craft drafted a brief history overview of Oakland County, we just need to update it through the 2020s. **Craft will resend to OCHC.** Now that we have a content editor, we can make any updates we want to the website. **Craft will send her the 1877 pamphlet PDF.** We can link to History in Our Parks videos, too. 1877 house lithographs can go up

there or be linked to; a lithograph photo gallery would be really neat. We can also link to the digitized 1877 and 1912 books, as well as the plat map books at LOC or U of M. **Decker and Walls to work on getting digitized maps and lithos on the website.** We also need to start building a historic photo gallery (currently, we just have a gallery of museums), and as we identify links to research resources, census data, and other publications that make sense for us to have on our website – send to Craft.

- **Finding Guide**

Decker is sending Oakland History Center's finding aid to historical societies to give them an example and ask for them to send us what they have digitally or give us a "top ten" of their collections.

- **African American History**

Signage draft, based on look of MotorCities signs, is in process. City of Pontiac has engaged a muralist to paint an Elizabeth Denison Forth mural on a bank building. Hoping to meet with Commissioners again to see about process for getting more signs out in the community.

Freedom Seekers project – trying to get more Underground Railroad sites documented and on the register for Oakland County. Egbo working with Leslie Pielach and others on this project.

- **Essay contest and time capsule**

Richardson drafted a letter to all middle schools and high schools in Oakland County (**Richardson will send to OCHC to see it**) introducing the essay contest to educators.

Timeline: send essay contest information to teachers approximately second week of August. Aimed at 4th-12th grade. OCHC to review submissions with a rubric. Kathy Bilger is a judge for National History Day; she might be a good resource for us.

Time capsule: each of the 28 Oakland County school districts can submit capsule contents in November when essays are due. Schedule a ceremony and time capsule burial. Need to come up with a list of items or guidelines for time capsule contents to give to schools. Could use the school time capsules at History Center as a guide.

Was polio a "pandemic" or is there another term that fits better? Maybe "epidemic" instead? Keep in mind when finalizing essay contest letter. Need to decide about awards (in addition to a participation certificate for all entrants). A scavenger hunt for the youngest kids would be another engaging way to get students and parents learning about polio vaccine development.

- **Local History as a subset of American History**

Craft has drafted a letter to JoAnne Stringfellow to get the ball rolling on funding for poster project; will reach out to ISD with draft Power Point and topics list to see if they are interested before developing further. Stacy Woodward is Primary/Secondary Social Studies Consultant, Egbo suggests we reach out to her. Egbo suggests getting one Commissioner to champion the poster project before requesting funding.

- **History Coalition** – Decker will schedule a meeting with Coalition in July

New Business

- OCHC to have a presence at July 30-31 OCPHS Summer Ice Cream Social

Next meeting: July 5, 7:00pm

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Richardson, seconded by Walls, meeting adjourned at 8:43pm.