

MINUTES

TALBOT COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

12 July 2010

I. ROLL CALL

The regular monthly meeting of the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission was called to order at 9:30 AM on Monday, 12 July 2010. Those members in attendance were Mr. Steven K. Hack, Chairperson, Mr. Ward Bucher and Ms. Peggy Pickall. Mr. Eric Lowery was absent. (The other three Commission seats have not yet been filled by the County Council.) Representing the County were Mr. Martin Sokolich and Ms. Florence Ball. Also attending on behalf of John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in Oxford was Ms. Kathleen Radcliffe.

II. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. REVIEW MINUTES OF 7 JUNE MEETING – The minutes of the 7 June TCHPC meeting were read. Since there were no corrections or additions, *Mr. Ward Bucher moved to approve the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steven Hack and it was carried.*

B. DISCUSSION OF MEETING WITH THE COUNTY COUNCIL – Mr. Steven Hack said the Commissioners were met by the County Council with limited success. Councilman Dirck Bartlett was not in favor of the Demolition Delay Ordinance as presented months ago in the form of a draft by former TCHPC Commissioner Robert Arnouts. In regard to promoting the Demolition Delay Ordinance, Ms. Peggy Pickall suggested a face to face meeting between TCHPC and the County Attorney, Michael Pullen, might be the next appropriate step. However, it was decided after some discussion that it would be best for the Commissioners to review the draft once again, as well as the various versions that were edited by Ms. Florence Ball and Mr. Martin Sokolich and perhaps tweak it before meeting with the Mr. Pullen.

Mr. Steven Hack said the Commission's suggestion to provide tax incentives to owners of Historic Overlay Properties did not go over well with the Councilmen. He did, however, feel that over all, that the session somewhat improved the relationship between TCHPC and the County Council, and the Councilmen might be more responsive to the suggestions and needs of TCHPC in the future.

C. MILLER'S HOUSE IN WYE MILLS (T-70) - The Miller's House (T-70) – Mr. Ward Bucher announced that emergency funding from Maryland Historic Area Authority (MHAA) in the amount of \$100,000 has been raised contingent on matching funds for purchase of the property, funds for preservation of the structure, and escrow funds for maintenance. Some of the funding will also be allotted to the

Wye Mill. Mr. Martin Sokolich offered to draft a letter from TCHPC to Preservation Maryland in support of The Miller's House.

Motion: Ms. Peggy Pickall moved to send a letter to Preservation Maryland in support of The Miller's House. It was seconded by Mr. Steven Hack and carried unanimously.

- D. TCHPC BROCHURE AND SCENIC BYWAY– The idea of having an open house event at one of the historic overlay properties was revisited by Mr. Steven Hack. He said some of the HDO property owners are open to that idea and others very adamantly against it. Mr. Ward Bucher said, according to the caretaker at Fairview, William Hill Manor makes regular trips to tour that property. The caretaker told him it might be possible for TCHPC to hold an open house event there. The Commissioners discussed whether the open house would be for the general public or limited to HDO property owners. It was felt that opening a property to the general public would not be wise or feasible. Ms. Florence Ball suggested it might be profitable to TCHPC's efforts to get more historic property owners to apply for HDO coverage if some of the more historically attractive properties on MHT's inventory list were selectively invited to attend an open house. It would be an opportunity to convince them of the benefits of having their properties protected with an HDO and acquaint them with what TCHPC does. After some discussion, the Commissioners agreed this might be a good approach to take.

Regarding the mailing of brochures, Mr. Martin Sokolich said a cover letter is needed to explain the purpose of the mailing; otherwise when people get the brochure, they may not understand why they were selected to receive it. He said he has drafted an appropriate letter. Mr. Steven Hack asked Mr. Sokolich to bring the brochure and cover letter to the next meeting to discuss it.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- A. PROPOSED SIGN FOR JOHN WESLEY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN OXFORD – Ms. Kathleen Radcliffe, who appeared on behalf of John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, said she came to TCHPC for help in choosing an appropriate design for a sign to display information about the historic church structure. Before Ms. Radcliffe presented her information, Mr. Martin Sokolich said he became acquainted with Ms. Radcliffe and John Wesley Church while working with Eastern Shore Heritage (Stories of the Chesapeake) and has been working with her to establish the church property as a target investment zone (Maryland Heritage Area) for a rehabilitation project. The intention is to get the church included on the National Scenic Byway map which is currently under development.

Ms. Radcliffe said the project actually began seven years ago. Beginning with a grant application, it took years to get deeds and other documentation together. She said the original building which was built in 1838 was replaced after the Civil War in 1875, as evidenced by the cornerstone of the building which remains in existence today. During the 1850's, before the Civil War, the congregation consisted of

29 African Americans and 31 Caucasian Americans. It was not until after the Civil War that the congregation became completely African American.

Because of the inability to meet current parking requirements and because there is no septic system or running water in the church, it is no longer used for regular services. However, it is used on occasion as a place of assembly. Therefore, the group involved with preserving and utilizing the building **have considered incorporating under the name of the John Wesley Chapel Preservation Society.**

Ms. Radcliffe said her group would like to install a sign to identify the building and list some of its historic information such as the date of the original church (1838), the date of the church that replaced it (1875) and presently exists, times the building is open and information about making an appointment to see it when it is not open. She displayed a presentation board illustrating the of the history of the church 's various rehabilitations and renovations, as well as that of the accessory structure she called the "cook shop" She also showed some photos of signs in front of various old churches to get an idea of which design might be suitable for John Wesley.

Peggy said she was not sure if the sign should look like these examples because they announce services. She felt it should look more like a historic marker. She also mentioned the plaques that TCHCP makes available for historic structures, adding that a plaque would not be adequate for the purposes of the proposed sign. She suggested a sign more along the lines of a storyboard type. She cited Williamsburg Church as an example as to the appropriate placement of the sign.

Mr. Steven Hack and Mr. Ward Bucher felt Williamsburg might not be the best example for the sign. Mr. Steven Hack suggested a church up in Stevensville, which also no longer has services, might be a good resource for an example for the sign. Mr. Hack also suggested checking the internet for resources. Ms. Radcliffe said she has photographed several State signs from which to get ideas.

Ms. Radcliffe said there is a grant that recently became available from the State for Afro-Americans, and her group is applying for it in hopes of restoring the cook shop, a small one-room accessory structure where food was prepared for those who attended the marathon Sunday services.

- B. TCHPC SITE VISITS – Mr. Steven Hack said Pleasant Valley (T-84) was visited on Monday, 21 June. The property was found to be extremely well maintained. He mentioned that several buildings had been reroofed with asphalt shingles, however, the follow-up letter he sends after the site visits are completed advises the property owner that the Commission should be consulted before making repairs such as reroofing.

The site visit for Monday, 19 July will be at Clays Hope (T-189) in Royal Oak. Those attending shall meet in the Acme parking lot in Easton at 9:15 am.

IV. OPEN FLOOR

- A. PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY FARMHOUSE AT TROTH'S FORTUNE (T- 50) – Ms. Florence Ball informed the Commissioners that the current owner of Troth's Fortune has applied for a building permit to demolish the rear wing of the secondary dwelling and enlarge the structure significantly. She said that although the main house at Troth's Fortune is on the National Register, according to Peter Kurtze, Administrator at MHT, the late-nineteenth century farmhouse is not. The property is not currently protected by a Talbot County Historic Overlay, and there is nothing in the current zoning ordinance to prevent or delay demolition on an unprotected historic structure. However, because the property is in the Rural Conservation zoning district and the existing farmhouse exceeds the current gross floor area limit for an accessory dwelling in the RC zoning district, the building permit application was denied. Ms. Ball distributed a copy of the denial letter to Commissioners and displayed photos of the farmhouse she had downloaded from MHT website. The Commissioners commented that this is a compelling illustration of why Talbot County needs a demolition delay ordinance. Had the zoning district been different, and gross floor area was not an issue, there would have been no way to prevent extensive alterations to a significantly valuable historic structure and resource. The Commissioners applauded Ms. Ball's efforts to ensure that the historic aspects connected with the building permit application were thoroughly addressed.
- B. CHANGE OF MEETING TIME – Mr. Ward Bucher said he would like to suggest an alternative time for TCHPC meetings. After discussing several options, and the fact that the meeting place may also need to be changed, and the new time and place would need to be publically advertised, the following motion was made:
- MOTION – Mr. Ward Bucher moved to change the meeting time for future TCHPC meetings to 3:30 pm on the first Monday of each month. The motion was seconded by Ms. Peggy Pickall and unanimously carried.*
- C. SECTION 106 REVIEW FOR PROPOSED TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER AT 6929 TILGHMAN ISLAND ROAD AT KNAPP NARROWS – Mr. Martin Sokolich presented information submitted by the applicant. He said the current ordinance makes the scope for TCHPC review and comment extremely limited. The submitted information states that the proposed site for the tower, which is limited by code to 100 ft in height in the Village Center zoning district, does not negatively impact nearby historic properties. The State's view is that unless a proposed tower has direct impact on a protected historic site (HDO), there is no adverse effect. Mr. Ward Bucher recommended delaying TCHPC decision until a balloon test is done because the proposed tower could potentially impact several historic properties that have potential eligibility for National Registry. Mr. Martin Sokolich said TCHPC has 30 days from 28 June to respond. He will draft the letter of response and forward it to Mr. Steven Hack to approve before sending it.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 2 August 2010 at 3:00 pm in the Bradley Meeting Room..

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:50 am.

15 July 2010