



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

www.washtenaw.org/preservation
MEETING AGENDA

DATE: Thursday, March 4, 2021
TIME: 5:30 pm – 7:00pm
PLACE: Zoom: <https://washtenawcounty.zoom.us/j/98714637686>

To contact the Historic District Commission via email, please visit <https://www.washtenaw.org/1943/Historic-District-Commission> and click on the hyperlink name of the commission you wish to contact. There is also an option to contact the whole commission with one email.

Call to Order– Chair

Roll Call – Secretary

Board member Roll Call must include declaration of City/Township/Village, County and State from which they are attending. (i.e. *PRESENT and attending remotely, from City of Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan*)

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting – Chair

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting January 7, 2021– Chair

Citizen Participation and Commissioner follow-up – Chair

Business and Reports

• Staff Report

- Programming and Promotional materials
 - Storymap in partnership with Ypsilanti District Library
 - HistWeb Update project
 - Washtenaw County Historical Consortium
- Local Historic District Updates
 - Local Historic District Audit Report
 - Thornoaks new build update
- Certified Local Government Program
 - Northfield Township Survey Update
- Washtenaw County Updates
 - Virtual meetings
- Current Legislation: Michigan historic tax credit update

• Treasurer Report

Items for Discussion

- Commissioner Updates

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 6, 2020 – Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attachments:

Staff Report
Minutes of the January 7, 2021 Meeting
Historic tax credit fact sheet
Local Historic District Audit Report 2020

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission Staff Report

March 4, 2020

Programming and Promotional materials

- **Storymap in partnership with the Ypsilanti District Library:** The A.P. Marshal Oral History Storymap is live. You can explore the map and the virtual exhibit here: <https://www.ypslibrary.org/about/visit/exhibits/civrightsypsi/>
- **HistWeb Update project:** HistWeb is a GIS database of historic sites within Washtenaw County, specifically in the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission. The update will add recent survey data to the database, update the non-extant status of demolished buildings, and create a better user interface for the database. Chris Yelonek will complete this project with input from other staff.

Certified Local Government program

- **Northfield Township Survey Update:** Preservation specialist Szcodronski will submit a report draft in March.
- **Yearly Report:** Staff submitted the required yearly Certified Local Government report for 2020 to SHPO.

Washtenaw County Updates

- **Temporary work situation:** The Office of Community and Economic Development will continue to work remotely. The HDC is able to hold virtual meetings as authorized by the State of Michigan amendment to the Open Meetings Act until December 31, 2021.

Local Historic District Update

- **2020 Audit:** The final 2020 Audit is attached to this report.
- **Thornoaks:** Staff has been in contact with the property owner and the builder who will construct the new house in the Thornoaks Neighborhood. Staff provided background information on the application process and has discussed appropriate design principles with the property owner and the builder. Staff will continue to talk with the builder and reach out to the architect soon.

Current Legislation

- **Michigan Historic Tax Credits Hearing:** In late December, Senate Bill 54 (a bill to reinstate the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax Credit) was signed into law. Next steps include creating process and procedure. A fact sheet is attached.

Commissioner Project Ideas and Updates:

Please come prepared with any project ideas you would like to share with the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda Schmidt, Historic Preservation Specialist, Office of Community & Economic Development

Contact at schmidt@washtenaw.org or (734) 544-2954

**Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes**

DATE:	Thursday, January 7, 2021
TIME:	5:30 pm-7:00 p.m.
PLACE:	Virtual Zoom Meeting

Call to Order

Chair Ralph called the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

Roll Call

- **Commissioners present:** Alec Jerome from Scio Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Aprille McKay from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Alice Ralph from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Katie Remensnyder from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Blake Swihart from Ann Arbor Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Peter Kelley from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Patti Smith from Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan; James Mann from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan; and Oliva Davidson from Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- **Members of the Public:** Jacob Donner from Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan
- **Staff:** Melinda Schmidt, Chris Yelonek, and Edwin Peart

Swearing in Ceremony

Washtenaw County Deputy Clerk Edwin Peart swore in Historic District Commissioners Katie Remensnyder, Blake Swihart, Alice Ralph, and Oliva Davidson.

Approval of the Agenda of the Current Meeting:

Chair Ralph motioned to approve the agenda of January 7, 2021 Historic District Commission meeting. Commissioner Kelley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meeting: November 5, 2020:

Commissioner Kelley motioned to approve the November 5, 2020 meeting minutes. Secretary Smith seconded the motion. Vice Chair Jerome and Commissioner Davidson abstained because they were absent from the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Elections for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary:

At staff request, commissioners introduced themselves. Chair Ralph is a retired architect, specializing in rehabilitation, and currently serves as Chair of the Historic District Commission. Vice Chair Jerome is Facilities Director at Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum. He serves as Vice Chair of the Commission. Secretary Smith is an Ann Arbor Public Schools teacher and local author specializing in Ann Arbor history. Commissioner Mann is a local Ypsilanti historian and has published several books about Ypsilanti history. Commissioner Remensnyder is an architectural historian specializing in historic landscapes with some archeology experience. Commissioner Swihart has an interest in local history and has been involved in several local preservation projects. Commissioner McKay is an archivist at the Bentley Library and was formerly a lawyer. Commissioner Kelley specializes in Northfield Township history and practices law. Commissioner Davidson is an Urban Planner who specialized in historic preservation, interior architecture, and works in local real estate.

Staff asked commissioners if anyone was interested in serving as HDC leadership. Current leadership volunteered to continue in their positions. No other commissioners expressed interest in a leadership position at this time. Chair Ralph nominated the following slate: Alice Ralph as HDC Chair, Alec Jerome as HDC Vice Chair, and Patti Smith as HDC Secretary/Treasurer.

Secretary Smith motions to approve the slate of candidates. Commissioner Mann seconds the motion. The slate of nominations was approved unanimously in a roll call vote.

Business and Reports: Staff Report

Staff updated the Commission on the following items:

Programming and Promotional Materials

Staff is working on a partnership with Ypsilanti District Library on a Storymap companion for the A.P. Marshall Online Oral History Archive that will be part of an upcoming Civil Rights virtual exhibit. Christopher Yelonek is taking the lead.

Certified Local Government Program

Northfield Township Survey Update: Staff and preservation specialist Cheri Szcodronski have adjusted the Northfield Township reconnaissance survey schedule. The survey was completed in November and December. Staff will receive a draft of the report in March.

Suggested 2021 Goals: Staff reminded the commission adopting yearly goals is a CLG requirement. Staff suggested several goals. Commissioners requested several edits to the draft goals presented. Vice Chair Jerome motioned to adopt the goals as outlined below. Chair Ralph seconded the motion. The goals were adopted by a unanimous vote from the commission.

(1) Continue and update oversight of Local Historic Districts in Washtenaw County.

(2) Promote survey and designation of historic sites in Washtenaw County.

(3) Promote heritage tourism and placemaking in Washtenaw County.

1. Continue and update oversight of Local Historic Districts in Washtenaw County
 - Review and revise local historic district ordinances as needed
 - File Affidavits of Historic Designation for all historic district properties
 - Adopt an application for demolition permit for local historic districts
 - Complete annual Local Historic District Audit
 - Provide Michigan Historic District Tax Credit support for Local Historic Districts
2. Promote survey and designation of historic sites in Washtenaw County
 - Support townships and local groups seeking to complete surveys and seek designation
 - Northfield Township, Milan
 - Support individuals seeking to document or protect their historic property
3. Promote heritage tourism and placemaking in Washtenaw County
 - Seek creative platforms to promote heritage tourism resources
 - Work with community partners to support new products and events
 - Local libraries, museums, and historical societies
 - Maximize grant opportunities

Washtenaw County Updates

Temporary work situation: The Office of Community and Economic Development will continue to work remotely. The HDC is able to hold virtual meetings as authorized by the State of Michigan amendment to the Open Meetings Act until December 31, 2021.

Local Historic District Update

Staff has completed the 2020 Local Historic District Audit. Staff presented a draft of the Audit to the commission, and will distribute the final version in the coming weeks. During the presentation, staff highlighted several local historic districts with applications over the past year, including Gordon Hall, Geer School, and the Thornoaks Neighborhood.

Staff notified the commission that a vacant lot in the Thornoaks Neighborhood is under contract. Staff will make every effort to contact the owner in the coming weeks in order to work with them on plans for new construction. Commissioner Ralph noted the HDC should be clear in expectations and an asset to the property owner during the building process.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Kelley updated the commission on a historic home in Whitmore Lake currently for sale. It is not protected, and the historical society fears it will be altered. The porch as already been ripped off and home gutted. Commissioner Kelley hopes the tax credit will motivate future preservation efforts.

Adjournment: Chair Ralph motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 pm. Vice-chair Jerome seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The next HDC meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Virtual Zoom Meeting



Michigan State Historic Preservation Tax Credit

PA 343 of 2020

PA 343 of 2020 requires the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to conduct a public rulemaking process. Items such as application procedures, more detailed eligibility requirements, transfer rules, etc. will be determined through this process. Rulemaking is expected to be conducted in Winter/Spring 2021.

Definition

A tax credit is a dollar for dollar reduction in taxes owed. The State Historic Preservation Tax Credit is a credit against state income tax liability. The credit is **twenty-five percent (25%)** of qualified rehabilitation expenditures.

Eligibility

Expenditure Requirements

- For commercial properties, expenditures must exceed 10% of the state equalized value.
- For residential properties, expenditures must exceed \$1,000 (adjusted annually on "Detroit Consumer Price Index").

Ownership Requirements

- Commercial Credits for Income Producing Properties
 - Owner
 - Lessee for 31.5 years
- Residential Credits
 - Owner
 - Lessee for 27.5 years
- Types of Entities
 - Corporations
 - Associations
 - Partnerships
 - Individuals
 - Non-profits

Designation Requirements

- National Register of Historic Places
- State Register of Historic Sites
- Local historic district

(Individually Listed or Contributing to a Listed District)

313 E. César E. Chávez Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48906
Phone 517-371-8080
Fax 517-371-9090
Email info@mhpn.org

Availability

- \$5 million in credits each calendar year
 - \$2 million for commercial with expenses of \$2 million or greater
 - \$2 million for commercial with expenses of less than \$2 million
 - \$1 million for residential
- No project can receive more than \$2 million in one calendar year
- Credits awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis

Usage Requirements

- Maintain property under [*Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*](#) for 5 years after project completion.
- Retain ownership of the property for 5 years after project completion.
- May claim up to 10 years after the project completion date. Must initially claim within 5-years or forfeit credit.

Transferability

- Credits may be transferred to another entity.



Washtenaw County Local Historic Districts Audit

2020

Purpose of the Report: The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission staff conducts yearly site visits to each of the fifteen designated Washtenaw County Local Historic Districts. The purpose of this annual visit is threefold: to stay in contact with property owners by providing them with resources and information; to ensure the continued stewardship of designated Local Historic District resources; and to keep an updated photo log of all resources. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, site visits were not conducted for the 2020 Audit unless requested by the property owner, or required to complete the report. Instead, staff called each property owner and discussed ongoing maintenance, future plans, and any questions the homeowner had about upcoming projects. These conversations aim to foster positive relationships with property owners and promote a culture of historic preservation within Washtenaw County.

USS Washtenaw Artifacts Display

200 N. Main, Ann Arbor

Staff visited and documented the USS Washtenaw artifacts on July 14 in order to complete and submit the yearly report required by the Department of the Navy. The artifacts are housed in a museum-grade glass case located in the lobby of the Washtenaw County Administration building at 200 N. Main Street. The artifacts remain in good condition.

Esek Pray House

8755 West Ann Arbor Road, Superior Township

Staff spoke with Esek Pray property owners on August 25 over the phone. They have undertaken maintenance over the past year, including painting and replacing failing cedar shake shingles on the chicken coop. Future maintenance plans include replacing remaining failing cedar shake singles on the chicken coop.

Old Zion Parsonage

2905 South Fletcher Road, Freedom Township

Staff spoke with Old Zion Parsonage property owners on August 25 over the phone. Over the past year, they replaced failing gutters on the home with new gutters in the same color, and did some painting. Replacing gutters is considered ordinary maintenance, and the property owner notified staff of the project during the 2019 Audit visit. Next year, they plan to replace the brick walkway from the driveway to the back door with the same brick as the driveway. The walkway will be the same dimension as the current walkway, but graded to prevent pooling water.

McMahon Springs

2426 Whitmore Lake Road, Ann Arbor Township

Staff talked with the McMahon Springs property owner on September 3. Over the past year, the property owner replaced the ridge caps and some failing shingles on the roof of the house. The house will be painted this year. There are no work plans for next year.

Gordon Hall

8341 Island Lake Road, Webster & Scio Townships

Staff spoke with the Dexter Area Historical Society President Beverly Hill about Gordon Hall on August 27. Phase I of the rehabilitation plan for Gordon Hall is complete. DAHS submitted an application for the rehabilitation plan in January, which was approved by the HDC. The pictures below document the approved changes, which include the demolition of the skylight on the north wing; installation of a new, ADA accessible door on the front elevation of the north wing, re-installation of a door to the back porch in its original location on the north wing; repair of the back porch; and installation of a new back door.



North wing, door on to rear porch door



North wing, rear elevation



New back porch door



New door on the front elevation of the north wing





Rear elevation of Gordon Hall

Alder Farm

9505 Bethel Church Road, Freedom Township

Staff spoke with Alder Farm property owner on August 27 over the phone. The property owner requested staff visit the farm, and staff conducted a site visit on September 1. Over the past year, the property owner finished rebuilding the pig barn and has undertaken a large amount of maintenance. Maintenance included installing lightning rods and lightning rod balls, cleaning roof tiles, installing zinc strips along ridge caps, oiling sliding doors on barns, removing the juniper tree next to the house, cleaning gutters, removing wasp nests, painting porch steps, replacing rotten tread on the back porch, and painting the balcony railing. Plans for the coming year include painting porch steps, repairing and replacing some deteriorated siding on the barns, installing flashing on the side porch roof, and replacing wood covering over the well.



Rebuilt Pig Barn, front elevation, September 2020



Rebuilt Pig Barn, rear, September 2020



Rebuilt Pig Barn, September 2020



Rebuilt Pig Barn, September 2020

Delhi Bridge

Delhi Mills at Huron River

Staff talked with a Washtenaw County Road Commission representative about the Delhi Bridge on September 19. Over the past year, the Road Commission has sealed the deck and painted the railing. No projects are currently planned for the bridge in 2021.

Geer School

9981 West Ann Arbor Road, Superior Township

Staff spoke with the Plymouth-Canton School District liaison on August 27 about Geer School over the phone. Over the past year, the School District replaced the front doors. The HDC approved the application for the doors prior to order and installation. The school district has kept up basic maintenance over the past year. Due to COVID-19, no school programs will take place at Geer School until spring 2021. Staff visited Geer School on September 1 to document the installation of the new doors.



Geer School, new front doors, September 2020

Geer House

8605 Plymouth-Ann Arbor Road, Superior Township

Staff talked to the Geer House property owners on September 3. Over the past year, maintenance items include rebuilding the rotted porch steps and rotted column molding. In the next year, they will repaint the milk house. In 2021, they plan to submit an application to construct a garage in place of the Quonset hut. The Quonset hut is not a contributing building to the historic district.

Conant Farm

5683 and 5671 Napier Road, Salem Township

Staff spoke with Conant Farm property owners on August 25. Over the past year, they have continued maintenance for the property, but current circumstances have stalled any other projects. Specifically, they would like to move forward with the construction of a new garage in place of the current building. The property owners presented their plans for the garage for feedback at the September HDC meeting, and hope to submit an application soon.

McCormick Farm

9105 Ann Arbor Road West, Superior Township

Staff spoke with McCormick Farm property owners on August 27 over the phone. Over the past year, they have undertaken a large amount of maintenance, including pruning the mulberry tree off the large barn roof, removing the sumac at the east end of the big barn, removing a large pile of firewood on the south side of the big barn at the east end, removal of a dead oak tree in front of the house; and repairing and painting the windows in the small barn. This year they plan to repair the windows in the big barn and replace the shingles on the south side of the big barn. The shingles will match the existing north side of the roof.

Popkins School

2211 Old Earhart Road, Ann Arbor Township

Popkins School sits on property owned by Integrus Ventures, alongside the Earhart Corporate Center. Staff talked with Integrus Ventures staff and on-site engineer about Popkins School on October 13. Basic maintenance, including landscaping, has occurred over the past year. There are no plans for work in the coming year.

Jarvis Stone School

7991 North Territorial Road Plymouth, MI

Staff spoke with the Salem Area Historical Society president Terry Cwik on August 27 over the phone. All events planned at Jarvis Stone School have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. The Historical Society has continued maintenance at the School over the past year. Plans for 2021 include the installation of a Michigan historical marker.

Merriman Farm

15490 Buss Road, Manchester Township

Staff visited Merriman Farm on December 3, 2020 after repeated attempts to contact the property owner. The house, barns, outbuildings, and trees remain in good condition. The property holder reached out after the site visit. Over the past year the property owner has continued maintenance. Future plans include replacing the rotted header boards on the porch, and exploring alternative materials to replace rotting siding. Staff requested the property owner include staff in discussions regarding potential new siding materials.



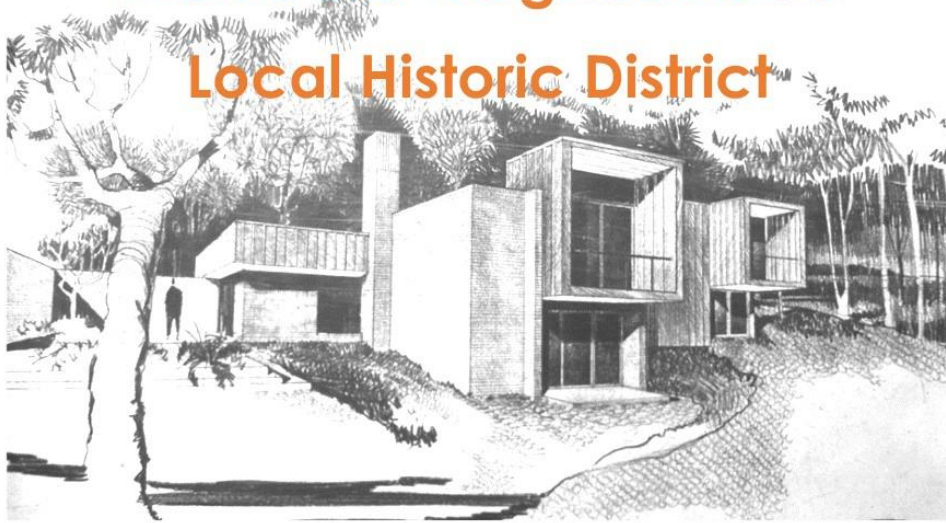
Merriman Farmhouse, December 2020

Thornoaks Neighborhood

Ann Arbor Township

Staff mailed postcards to the Thornoaks Neighborhood in early fall of 2020, because attending the neighborhood picnic was not an option this year. Staff walked through the Thornoaks Neighborhood on December 3, 2020. The homes remain in good condition. The HDC received 10 applications between fall 2019 and the end of 2020. One decision was appealed to the State Historic Preservation Review Board, but the property owner and Historic District Commission were able to settle out of court after the Administrative Law Judge asked the property owner submit a new application with some guidance from HDC staff. The HDC approved the new application. Another approved application, which includes some exterior changes as part of a large-scale interior renovation, is still in process and staff is monitoring the progress. In 2021, staff anticipates an application for a new build on an empty lot in the neighborhood. Staff will work with the applicant and encourage several informal presentations to the HDC before a formal application is submitted for consideration by the commission.

Thornoaks Neighborhood Local Historic District



Thank you for your stewardship of this unique neighborhood!

The Thornoaks Neighborhood Local Historic District was established in March of 2018. The district is administered by the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission (HDC).

What does designation mean for you? Any changes beyond ordinary maintenance to the exterior of properties or landscape, and any additions, alterations, or new construction must be reviewed by the HDC before any work is started on the project. You can find the Application for Work, the Thornoaks Design Guide, and additional resources on our website, www.washtenaw.org/preservation.



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Collaborative solutions for a promising future



Contact:
Washtenaw County Historic Preservation
schmidt@washtenaw.org

Conclusion

It was a unique challenge to connect with Local Historic District property owners in 2020. We look forward to visiting each property again in 2021. Washtenaw County local historic districts continue to add a unique character and sense of place to rural, semi-rural, and suburban parts of the County.