

CITY OF AURORA
OHIO
LANDMARK COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
September 22, 2009

The Aurora Landmark Commission met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 2009, in the Council Chambers of Aurora City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman John Kudley.

ROLL CALL:

Present:: John Kudley
Richard Fetzer
Sue Sutton
Absent: Melanie Miguel-Courtad
Tom Spape
Also Present: Ron Lowe, Advisor to Landmark Commission
Karen Mitchell, Liaison - Aurora Historical Society
Susan Dombeck, Secretary

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

There were no amendments to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the March 24, 2009 meeting as printed.

Mr. Fetzer moved for approval; Mrs. Sutton seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0, on a voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS:

SEWARD-GILES CEMETERY FOLLOW UP

Mr. Lowe told the members that there is only one item to close out with the contractor. He explained that they waited over the winter to see how things would go regarding growth. He reported that there was some damage to the walkway, which had tire tracks in that area. Mr. Lowe stated that the city is satisfied regarding the checklist with the contractor. The city is now waiting for as-built drawings to be done regarding the bridge. He said that when the site was surveyed, a portion of the metal sign and bench was placed outside of the easement on the walkway down to the cemetery. The members felt that both items should be left as is since the encroachment is so minor.

Mr. Lowe said that Ross Brankatelli followed through on the project and the owner sent a letter stating that they would work with the city to resolve the issue of encroachment. Mr. Lowe then described the site and area.

Mr. Kudley suggested meeting with Mr. Lowe, Mr. Brankatelli and Mr. Constantino at the site to try to discuss the situation. A short conversation on the encroachment followed, and the other

members agreed that a meeting at the site might be best. Mr. Lowe agreed to make contact with Mr. Brankatelli and have him set up a meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

COUNCILMAN TOM DREHER – DISCUSSION OF PRESERVATION OF CITY PROPERTIES

Mr. Dreher explained how the city receives and uses funds to purchase and maintain parcels of land. He gave some background on the demolition and repair of buildings on the Moebius property. He stated that all of the buildings on the land purchased with the bonded land acquisitions are in disrepair. Mr. Dreher then explained that the Building and Grounds Committee toured the sites twice and requested \$24,000 to retain Mr. Selzer for his services. He added that Mr. Selzer is an architect, a hands-on preservationist and has a great background for the type of work that is needed. Mr. Dreher said that the Finance Committee rejected the fund request. The Building and Grounds Committee then asked the Parks and Recreation Committee to endorse the request for funds, but they decided that the funds should be added to their budget.

Mr. Dreher informed the members that some members of Council have stated that the constituency that they represent does not want to spend money on old buildings. He wanted to point out to this commission and acknowledge on the part of the Buildings and Grounds Commission that there is a serious problem. He wondered if the buildings acquired should be demolished or if everyone can work together to solve the problem by conserving and preserving. Mr. Dreher added that it would require planning and study, much hard work and cooperation among various agencies, City Council, the administration and the boards and commissions to do what should be done. He mentioned that it would be a rough ride and asked the commission if they would be willing to join the effort.

Mr. Lowe said he supported Mr. Selzer's proposal for doing a structure report on the buildings. He said he did a small report several years ago for one of the barns on the Harmon property. He then explained what information a structure report contains and how it is used. Mr. Lowe said that without a structure report on each building it would be difficult to know what each building needs and whether they could be preserved.

Mr. Kudley asked Mr. Dreher how comprehensive the reports by Mr. Selzer would be. Mr. Dreher replied that he would evaluate the buildings and make specific recommendations. He stated that he is concerned about two properties, which are the two Harmon farms. The Margaret Harmon farm is used as an employee assembly center for the Parks and Recreation Department, and they are doing their best to preserve the interior of the home. The two barns, however, need an assessment done in the hope of salvaging them. The Ray Harmon farm has the buildings and mound area landmarked. Only 49 acres of the 119 acres of that property are usable for recreational purposes. The remaining are sites that cannot be disturbed because of their classification by the state. But they could be used for passive recreation, e.g., walkways, etc.

Mr. Dreher stressed that the buildings are very important and told the members that the condition of the Ray Harmon house is a disgrace. He said that the city is at a juncture and

must make decisions about the future of the buildings. He suggested that the commission members speak with George Yonda, a retired architect, who has much information, and asked that they get involved with regard to saving the structures.

Mr. Kudley reminded everyone that studies were done previously, by Dr. Frederick, on the Harmon properties. Dr. Frederick made some recommendations, which were never followed. He wondered how a new study would tie in with the previous one. He asked if there would be any duplication, or if the study would be more toward the buildings rather than the use of the land. Mr. Dreher replied that Mr. Selzer's background and knowledge is distinct from that of Mr. Frederick. He explained that Mr. Frederick deals more with planning and zoning whereas Mr. Selzer is involved more with preservation and conservation.

Mr. Dreher suggested that if Mr. Selzer is retained by the city, he review Mr. Frederick's recommendations. He asked the commission to meet with Mr. Selzer either at a meeting or individually. He also pledged to help follow through with recommendations made by Mr. Selzer as well as help find funding necessary for projects.

Per an inquiry by Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Dreher stated that the city has some money to do maintenance in the general fund, but it is not enough. It doesn't address directly the matters now being discussed. A brief discussion on city funds followed. Mr. Dreher felt it was up to this commission to recommend to the Finance Committee and City Council the amount of funds expected to be spent on the rehabilitation of the historic properties.

Mr. Fetzer asked if the Harmon properties are the only ones landmarked. Mr. Dreher explained that none of the others are landmarked. There was a long conversation on the condition of some properties and how to help maintain them. Mr. Lowe recommended having a priority list with amounts to help obtain the funding. A long discussion on necessary building maintenance and funds followed.

CHURCH IN AURORA, 156 SOUTH CHILLICOTHE – REQUEST FOR HISTORICAL MARKER

Mr. Kudley explained that the church is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. It was decided that the members would like to obtain a historical marker for the location. Mr. Lowe said that the markers cost anywhere from \$1800 to \$2100. To obtain one from the Ohio Historical Society, the text must be submitted with an application. The society will review both and then compare it to a list of criteria to see if it falls within one of the categories allowed to use one of their markers. The reviews are twice a year and the application dates are Oct. 1st and April 1st. Those dates are for decisions on funding from the state, which could be up to \$750 towards a marker.

Mr. Lowe gave some information on what the society is looking for in the applications. He then described the different type of markers that could be considered. Mr. Lowe then told the members about the process for applying for either marker. He said that the commission would apply for the marker but the Church in Aurora would be responsible for the cost of the marker. Additional conversation on the information to include in the text ensued.

Mr. Kudley said that the church was the first federated church in Portage County and makes claims to being the first federated church in the country. It had an impact on other parts of the country, so it may meet the criteria.

Mr. Lowe gave some additional information regarding the process for the application and marker, and discussed possible locations for markers. Much additional conversation on the markers followed.

Mr. Kudley asked Ms. Mitchell if the Aurora Historical Society would be willing to support the application, and she replied that it would. It was decided to inform the Church that it would need to submit a formal request for an application and to ask that it contribute whatever they could to the marker.

Mr. Lowe began a conversation on the budget, and there was concern about having the city spend any funds on the marker for the church. It was decided that the church would be responsible for any monies needed.

MISCELLANEOUS:

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY RENEWAL

The members decided to renew its membership for the next year.

MOTION: To renew the commission's membership in the Ohio Historical Society.

Mr. Fetzer moved for approval; Mrs. Sutton seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0, on a roll call vote.

Mr. Lowe informed the others that he received a call from Bob Luckay regarding a house on Crackel Road that is to be demolished. Mr. Lowe said he walked the site and the building looked like there were several contemporary alterations or additions. He saw nothing historic in terms of windows, etc. Mr. Lowe stated that there has not been a demolition permit pulled yet, and he would try to get in touch with the caretaker so that he could see the interior of the building. He said that Mr. Luckay was concerned that there may be trim, etc. that could be salvaged from the building.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs. Sutton moved to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.; Mr. Fetzer seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0, on a voice vote.

John Kudley - Chairman

Susan Dombeck - Secretary
AUDIO TAPE ON FILE