



Meeting Minutes
Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
7pm – County Commission Room, Charles Town Library
Charles Town, WV
March 14, 2018

Members present: Martin Burke (Chair), Sara Lambert (Secretary), Jack Hefestay (Treasurer), Leigh Koonce, Ben Horter
Guests: Peter Onoszko, Bill Theriault, Tim Johnson, John Demer, Lauren Kelly, Rusty and Cricket Morgan, David Tabb

Burke called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m.

I. Public Comments

David Tabb saw that there are going to be two positions available on the county landmarks commission and let the commission know that he is available. Even if he is not chosen, he would like the commission to know he is still a friend and offered his assistance. He has experience maintaining historic homes.

Rusty and Cricket Morgan are struggling to save the old Hefflebower house in Rippon. It is 5000 sq. ft., and they are in the process of possibly tearing it down because of engineering requirements. They own a National Register farm and the property beside it. They have never been able to do anything with the other property or get a permit to do anything. The county planning & zoning has been helpful, but Morgan feels the International Building Code was clearly not written with Jefferson County in mind. The Morgans are willing to mothball the house. They have put a new roof on it, but can't afford more toward maintenance because they are taxed so highly on a house that is basically gutted. They have removed asbestos, paid for an architect to plan a renovation project, and had a structural engineer ensure the house is sound.

Lambert, a local architect, said she has had issues with the fire department as well as the state fire marshal's office when designing commercial structures. Tim Johnson added that he has a 1750 house in Middleway and has had to jump through many hoops but will be picking up his permit tomorrow. Lambert pointed out that the Morgans have the right to appeal decisions about permitting.

Morgan said it is cheaper to bulldoze and that Jefferson County is getting clobbered by the counties around us that recognize the importance of their historic structures. Burke noted that the Department of Highways will be giving the JCHLC \$50,000 for National Register

research, which will focus on the Rippon district. He pointed out that the county's comprehensive plan recognizes the need to revitalize the village districts and that there is more leeway in permitting for structures listed on the National Register.

II. Minutes for February meeting – Submitted by Sara Lambert & Lauren Kelly

Koonce moved to approve the minutes, Horter seconded, and passed.

III. Treasurer's Report– Hefestay

Hefestay reported that the landmarks commission has about \$18,000 in its bank account. He said that number reflects the balance after the checks for the well abandonment at the Eyler house in Shepherdstown and to the Preservation Alliance of WV had cleared.

Lambert moved to approve the treasurer's report, Burke seconded, and passed.

IV. Review of JCHLC Rules - Discussion/action

These rules appear on the website, and Burke proposed a number of edits. He made the chair title gender neutral (from chairman to chair). He began to clean up some of the language that says how the landmarks commission operates. He pointed out that the landmarks commission can change its rules without public notice because they're procedural in name only. He also changed meeting dates to reflect the current schedule and the notification time to the typical timeframe for county notices. After some discussion about making sure the JCHLC's meeting minutes are available to anyone, it was decided to keep the phrase "available upon request," as well as adding that they will be available on the commission's website.

Hefestay moved to accept the changes, Koonce seconded, and passed.

V. Nomination of Mount Zion Baptist Church/Johnsontown/Johnstown Church as a Jefferson County Landmark-Discussion/action

John Demer has worked with the trustees of the church to prepare the nomination. The Reverend Myers says the village is "Johnstown," not "Johnsontown," and was named after a settlement in Maryland. The history of the church was written by Pastor Johnson. Demer noted that the church is only in service once per year when former parishioners return to tend family graves, have a service, and share a meal. Burke noted that the county landmark status is purely honorific and said the commission would like to include more community structures as well as fine homes on its list of landmarks.

Koonce moved to name the Mount Zion Baptist Church Johnsontown Church a county landmark, Hefestay seconded, and passed.

VI. *Our History, Our Community Fund* – Discussion/action

The fund was established December 2016. Burke spoke to Seth Rivard from the city of Charles Town, who proposed that they establish a fund to care for old houses. As established at the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, the current charitable purpose of the

fund is to provide distributions to the JCHLC for a grant program to fund work on historic properties and purchase battlefield land within the unincorporated areas of the county. Burke has checked with EWVCF about whether the commission can change the charitable purpose to include all of Jefferson County. Charles Town is being asked to take on Fisherman's Hall and the Webb-Blessing house and is projecting forward to consider the maintenance of these properties. As the fund is outlined now, no one in Shepherdstown, Charles Town, Ranson, or Harpers Ferry could apply. Burke noted that this could open possibilities for financial contributions from the towns and their organizations. There was discussion about whether and how the other landmarks commissions in Charles Town, Harpers Ferry, and Shepherdstown are funded and whether they would be able to contribute financially to the fund.

Horter moved to strike the words "the unincorporated areas of" from the charitable purpose of the fund, Hefestay seconded, and passed.

VII. Announcements and Reports

A. Status of the WV GeoExplorer Project – Theriault

Theriault is continuing to work with the programmer to convert WVGeoExplorer from its obsolete old software. The site will be a wiki. It will be easier to use but not open edit. Theriault can easily set up a review process. The site will have analytical features for deeper research and more context. Theriault is currently working on content and adding census information, not just for Jefferson but the counties around us. The site should be running in a month or 6 weeks, but the programmer is doing most work offline, so it shouldn't interfere with the site in the meantime. Horter asked about maps of archaeological sites out of concerns about looters. Theriault said he can make certain information confidential, and the site doesn't need to list specific locations. Theriault also needs to put a group of reviewers together because as of now, he is the only one.

B. Status of text amendment for Historic Preservation Zoning Ordinance – Burke

Burke said there is a public hearing tomorrow. The ordinance went back to the planning commission because of changes in the village district guidelines. Onoszko says it goes back for action tomorrow. The preservation ordinance was envisioned in the 2004 comprehensive plan and has taken 14 years. The addition to the zoning ordinance recognizes adaptive reuse and gives the JCHLC a voice in future planning projects.

C. JC Courthouse Committee – Koonce

Since the committee's last meeting, Bill Polk, county maintenance director, has implemented his plan to trap the pigeons rather than attempting to deter them with spikes on the courthouse. Koonce heard from the county clerk a week ago about an empty bulletin board that she would like to see filled. Koonce is working on a display about early women involved in Jefferson County politics. As of now, it is uncertain who will be the new judge on June 1. Burke said he will follow up with Bill Polk about the courthouse storm windows.

D. Status of *Wild Goose* NR nomination – Demer

Jeff Smith at the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (WVSHPO) has forwarded the nomination to Barbara Wyatt at the National Park Service (NPS). She has 60 days to review the nomination and ask for further information or approve it. It was sent around March 1. Demer says there is nothing more to add to the nomination.

E. Status of Rte. 340 – MOU with WVDOH – Horter

Horter said the WVSHPO had some issues with the MOU. It was re-signed around February 20, and the WVDOH has 90 days to decide how to distribute the \$50,000. Burke is looking for contractors who can conduct the research and prepare nominations. Horter will call in a couple weeks and get a time estimate.

F. Status of interpretative projects – Kelly

The mason is finally finished his work at the Coyle cemetery, and it should soon be time to apply for another cemetery grant from the EWVCF. The Stuart-Mosby Historical Society sent a check for \$800 to put toward Duffields Depot. Burke has had the debris tested from the wood portion, and asbestos was found. Kelly has applied for a grant from CSX and will apply for a grant from the National Railway Historical Society and an emergency grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Kelly and Burke have been talking to the Shepherdstown Visitors Center, who may be willing to print the 1862 Civil War driving tour and the Battle of Shepherdstown brochure. They are also willing to work on a colonial history bus tour this summer. Kelly is beginning a Beeline march brochure and has written a county landmark nomination for Popodicon. Burke is waiting for approval from Shepherd University as to their consideration of Popodicon as JC Historic Landmark. Shepherd University previously decided to not have Popodicon nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

G. Status of NR nomination – *The Rocks* – Kelly

Jeff Smith from the WVSHPO is coming to Jefferson County for a site visit on March 29, and a draft will be written of the nomination by then.

H. Status of JC Courthouse becoming a NHL – Kelly

The commission has not heard from the National Park Service since the last meeting.

I. Status of Eyler house asbestos abatement & demolition – Burke

The county commission did not grant any money, but the JCHLC has been successful in fundraising. There have been multiple checks from Civil War organizations. The total price for the demolition and asbestos abatement is \$15,000. Burke will receive \$6,000 from the Civil War Trust after start of new fiscal year, in April. The JCHLC should be able to tear down the Eyler house in the first part of May.

J. Status of site reviews & design for pull off on River Road – Lambert

Lambert needs to meet with Burke to plan the pull-off. She is looking for the old plan in CAD format.

K. Status of preservation easement for Snow Hill/Poor Farm – Horter

Horter is still working on it and will have a draft in the next week or ten days. Burke noted that Snow Hill has been offered to all the county offices, but no one is interested. After a preservation easement is placed on the house, the JCHLC will sell it.

L. Park Day April 7, 2018- Kelly

Park Day with the Civil War Trust is at 10 a.m. at the Shepherdstown battlefield. The commission and the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association will be doing clean-up and preparing to install two war department signs. Burke will meet with the landowners adjacent to the JCHLC's land to discuss building a trail along the river into town. Koonce asked that the commission install a sign to let people know there are places to pull off the road further down from the cement mill.

Morgan asked if the planning commission knows the JCHLC's stance on adaptive reuse and the care of old buildings. Burke said yes and no and pointed out that engineering is not necessarily connected with planning. Morgan said the county had to take on a building code to get impact fees, and IBC was the only option offered by the state. Burke said he can arrange a lecture about the IBC and historic structures.

Lambert motioned to adjourn, Horter seconded, and passed.
The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.