



Andy Schor, Mayor

CITY OF LANSING HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

316 N. CAPITOL AVENUE • LANSING, MI 48933-1236 • (517) 483-4066 • FAX: (517) 483-6036

PLANNING OFFICE 316 N. CAPITOL AVE., SUITE D-1

Minutes – *Approved 1/9/23*

Lansing Historic District Commission

Monday, September 12, 2022

Regular Meeting – Letts Community Center

[No quorum at the August 3, 2022 Special Meeting]

1. CALL TO ORDER – Vice-Chair Skillings called the meeting to order at 5:36 pm.

- a. Roll Call:

Present: Carol Skillings, James Bell, Jacklyn Lillis-Warwick, Cassandra Nelson, Sam Troutman

Absences:

Staff Present: Andy Fedewa, Planner

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Revised to move items 5.a. Minutes, and 5.d. Strategy for recruitment of HDC members, to Other Business. Approved by unanimous consent.
3. COMMUNICATIONS – None
4. PUBLIC HEARINGS – None
5. DISCUSSION/ACTION

- b. Procedure for Establishment of Local Historic Districts

Mr. Fedewa explained that there are three different ‘levels’ of historic districts, those being federal, state, and local registers. Each have their own distinct rules, but all are established relatively the same way. The local historic district is the only level at which changes to the exterior of district resources are reviewed and voted on by a historic district commission, a public body of city residents appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.

Mr. Fedewa stated that there are only 10 ‘single-resource’ districts and one neighborhood district in Lansing, much fewer than other similar cities in Michigan. There has been a general aversion in Lansing over the decades that may account for this. Mr. Fedewa outlined the procedure for establishing a local historic district. Briefly, any property owner, resident, neighborhood organization, or HDC body may request to establish a district. If taken up by City Council, that body then calls for a committee (appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council) to be formed that oversees the survey report and process. All properties must be photographed with general conditions and background being detailed on a ‘survey form’. A report is drafted detailing the history of the resource or neighborhood. Normally public hearings are conducted at Historic District Commission and City Council. This process ends with an official vote by City Council and if approved the district is created by a new City Ordinance.

Mr. Fedewa noted that all reports created for local historic districts are compiled on the City website for public viewing.

c. Potential neighborhood survey and report

Mr. Fedewa stated that Lansing is a Certified Local Government (CLG) program through the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office. This program offers technical assistance on historic preservation concerns and projects as well as an annual grant opportunity. Because there was such interest in surveying the Westside neighborhood, Lansing applied during the 2021 grant cycle but was not awarded. The Historic District Commission and City Planning and Zoning staff are still interested in this project and have proposed to at least conduct a photographic survey of homes in the neighborhood. Because the boundaries of the neighborhood association are so vast the survey would focus on sections first, along the borders of the original plats that created the westside as we know it today.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Fran Russell asked if street or landscape elements within a neighborhood can be included in a historic district and if those elements can be retroactively protected if a district was established. Mr. Fedewa answered that those elements can be included in a local historic district, but they would have to be expressly stated in the survey, report, and ordinance. A good example of this is the Saginaw St. bricks in Flint. Historic District review is only in effect once the ordinance is established.

Emily Dinh asked if individual residential property owners may propose local historic district listings. Alan Higgins, Certified Local Government Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office answered that residential properties are included on a neighborhood level as they give context about how the resources fit in the broader area. Mr. Higgins stated that individual properties cannot opt-in or opt-out of a district per State law.

Heidi Frei asked if landscape elements have been continuously a part of a neighborhood, would they be included in a proposed local district. Ms. Nelson answered that it may depend on how long they have been established and that generally resources must be at least 50 years old.

John Nizol stated that many homes have had their original components such as siding and windows replaced and asked what assurance could the Historic District Commission provide homeowners. Ms. Nelson answered that the Commission has no motive to gentrify any local historic district and that HDC could not force property owners to reinstall original components if they have already been replaced. The Historic District Commission is there to provide an opportunity to discuss the advantages of historic preservation and maintaining original components during project review.

Emily Stevens asked if the policies of the Historic District Commission remain the same even if the members change. The Historic District Commission is governed by their approved ‘rules of procedure’ and their reviews are tied to the adopted ‘design guidelines’.

Nick Schmistrz asked for a follow-up about federal tax credit opportunities and about Section 106 reviews of landscape elements.

[Name not recorded] Spoke against the survey, the report project and local designation.

Cole Bouck asked if the City could circumvent its own ordinance if there was a project like the combined sewer overflow separation one. Mr. Higgins answered that the City is

beholden to its own ordinance and review process per State law.

Aleks Bomis asked for confirmation that interior changes are not reviewed by HDC.

Diane Thompson reminded everyone that there have been Westside Home tours and that pamphlets are still at the library downtown.

Elizabeth Rice spoke about the CSO project, the loss of the traffic islands, and the condition of street lights. Ms. Rice stated that she believes that there are other ways to address the issues than a local designation.

7. STAFF AND COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

The Commission thanked everyone for attending and staff looks forward to future discussions about the potential photographic survey.

8. Presentations – None

9. OTHER BUSINESS –

5.a. Minutes for Approval – July 11, 2022. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

9.a. Selection of Officers

5.d. Strategy for recruitment of Historic District Commission members.

Items 9.a. and 5.d were tabled to the next Regular Meeting October 10, 2022.

10. PENDING ITEMS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT – 7:05 p.m.