



## Historic Preservation Commission

### Meeting Minutes February 09, 2023

This meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held at the Parks, Recreation & Tourism (PRT) Office at 1224 Progressive Drive on February 09, 2023. Chair Knight called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Commissioner Lowery reminded the group that the New Chesapeake Men for Progress, Inc. will host their Annual Black History Month Program on Saturday, February 18, 2023. Speakers include representatives from the Hampton 1619 Project, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and Chesapeake Councilperson Dr. Ward.

<b>Members Present:</b>	Ms. Jennifer Knight; Ms. Amelia Wallace; Mr. Kyle Taduran; Mr. Ernest Lowery
<b>Members Absent:</b>	Dr. George Reed; Mr. James "Ervin" Young; Mr. Gerald Martin
<b>Staff Present:</b>	Planner II Kevin Finn; Assistant City Attorney I Joe Melton; PRT Director Mike Barber; PRT Planning Administrator Ana Elezovic; Historical Services Office Specialist Kim Putland; Historical Services Manager Jessica Cosmas

Ms. Cosmas called the roll. Attendance reflected a quorum with 4 voting members present and 3 voting members absent.

#### **MINUTES:**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chair Knight asked if there were any corrections to the January minutes as presented. Chair Knight asked that the minutes be amended to reflect a discussion of the recent bill that was signed by President Biden regarding a feasibility study to deliberate a possible designation of the Great Dismal Swamp as a National Heritage Area. Commissioner Wallace moves to accept the corrected minutes. Commissioner Taduran seconds the motion. The amended minutes are approved.

#### **HEARING OF CITIZENS:**

No citizens were present.

#### **REPORTS:**

##### **A. Staff Reports:**

##### **I. Historical Village at the Dismal Swamp**

- a. On January 27, 2023 a meeting was held on-site at the Superintendent's House with the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) staff, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) staff, PRT staff, and the consultant, Bay Environmental, completing the Environmental Assessment per federal grant requirements, to assess the bats that were documented inside the Superintendent's House in December 2022. During the inspection of the Superintendent's House, only one little brown bat was observed.

However, given the December 2022 photographs and the amount of droppings on the second floor of the structure, DWR believes the Superintendent's House is home to a significant roost of sixty to seventy bats. DWR would like to see the structure remain as a habitat for the bats, however, PRT expressed a desire to rehome the bats so the building can be rehabilitated and accessible to the public as part of the Historical Village. A compromise was discussed where alternative habitats perhaps could be built nearby that the roost could migrate to. DWR stated that no work on the building should take place until the bats have been removed. However, DWR said that archaeological work could take place on the site without disturbing the bats. DWR will provide a report of their findings, including possible mitigation efforts, and submit the report to Bay Environmental to be included in the required assessment.

- b. On January 23, PRT staff attended the Cornland Board School Foundation Meeting to present a rehabilitation plan for the Cornland School. After reviewing the plans and consulting with the alumni, some changes to the front entrance were suggested. The plans will continue to be refined in the upcoming weeks before being submitted to DHR for their approval.

**II. Williamson Farmhouse at the Chesapeake Arboretum**

- a. Chair Knight signed the letter that the Commission voted to submit to City Council regarding the COA process for renovations of the Farmhouse.
- b. An invitation to bid on the project was posted on January 18, 2023. Pre-bid conference was held on February 8. Six different contractors were present at the pre-bid conference. They were able to walk the site and ask questions regarding the scope of work.
- c. Bids will most likely close in late March.

**III. African American History Month Programming**

- a. Staff is hosting a variety of programs during February to commemorate Black History Month.
  - i. Social media campaign highlighting successful Black entertainers and athletes from Chesapeake.
  - ii. Two free open-house style events at the Cornland School on Thursday, February 2, and Tuesday, February 28.
    - a. The first open house went well and was featured by WVEC Channel 13 news.
  - iii. Two free bus tours on Saturday, February 11, and Saturday, February 18.
    - a. Both bus tours are fully booked and there is a waitlist for each date.
  - iv. One historically inspired cooking demonstration on Friday, February 24.
    - a. There are spots still available to register for this program.

**IV. HARB Guidelines Review**

- a. Planning Department Liaison Kevin Finn reminded Commissioners that the Request For Proposal is still live and interested vendors have until 4 P.M. on February 14, 2023, to submit their bid package to the City's Procurement Department.
- b. K. Finn reminded commissioners that new planning staff member Nat McCormick will be the project lead.

**V. Gravesite Ordinance**

- a. City Attorney Liaison Joe Melton reminded the group that the draft ordinance has been submitted to the City Manager’s office, but no date has been set for it to be included on Council’s agenda.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- A. **PLN-REZ-2022-015, Proposed Rezoning at 4168 S. Military Highway (includes parcels within Sunray Agricultural Historic District):**
  - i. During February 8, 2023, Planning Commission Public Hearing this application was considered by the Planning Commission. Citizens expressed concerns about impacts on traffic and neighboring residential communities. The Planning Commission voted to deny this application. City Council will review the application on March 15, 2023.
  - ii. Chair Knight asked if the Commission should consider reaching out to the State historic preservation office, DHR, to see if the parcels could qualify as “threatened sites.” J. Melton noted that the commission involving a state agency is not included in the City Code that gives HPC the authority to act on local issues. Also, DHR’s “threatened sites” program is intended for archaeological sites and therefore would not apply to the Sunray parcels.
  - iii. Commissioners drafted a letter to submit when the application is reviewed by Council. Commissioners discussed topics to be included in the letter like mitigation efforts, land use planning, and screening with vegetative buffers. K. Finn raised concerns that discussing land use policies is not within HPC’s duties as described in the city code. The draft letter includes a summary of the history of Sunray. Commissioners decided to continue their review of the letter at the March meeting

**HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:**

Commissioner Taduran stated that he disagreed with K. Finn’s point regarding the discussion of land use within the draft letter addressing PLN-REZ-2022-015. He also announced that he will be taking a remote position with a California-based company and his availability may change based on the new work schedule.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Vice Chair Wallace expressed an interest in continuing the May Preservation Month video series that Commissioners contributed to in 2021 and 2022. Wallace suggests that each Commissioner comes to the March meeting prepared to share a topic they would like to explore more with the video series.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 PM.

**NEXT MEETING:**

**The next meeting will be on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at 5:00 PM at PRT Office at 1224 Progressive Drive.**

Minutes submitted by Jessica Cosmas, Secretary.