

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MARCH 18, 2015**
Municipal Building Commission Room
151 Martin, Birmingham, Michigan

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Historic District Commission (“HDC”) held Wednesday, March 18, 2015. Board Member Keith Deyer acted at chairman and called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Present: Board Members Mark Coir, Keith Deyer, Natalia Dukas, Vice Chairperson Shelli Weisberg, Michael Willoughby; Student Representatives Zoe Bowers, Patrick Rogers

Absent: Chairman John Henke

Administration: Matthew Baka, Sr. Planner
Laura Pierce, City Clerk
Carole Salutes, Recording Secretary

03-16-15

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES
HDC Minutes of February 4, 2015**

**Motion by Mr. Willoughby
Seconded by Mr. Coir to approve the HDC Minutes of February 4, 2015 as presented.**

Motion carried, 5-0.

VOICE VOTE
Yeas: Willoughby, Coir, Deyer, Dukas, Weisberg
Nays: None
Absent: Henke

03-17-15

**HISTORIC DESIGN REVIEW
Historic Greenwood Cemetery
Mill Pond Neighborhood**

Zoning: PP Public Property

Proposal: The City of Birmingham recently established the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board (“GCAB”) to provide input to the City Commission on

Capital Improvements, Day-to-Day operations, as well as annual and special reports, as needed, on Greenwood Cemetery related issues. Recently, the GCAB has been studying the potential for creating additional grave sites within the unused green spaces throughout the cemetery. The cemetery is City owned property and therefore does not require review and approval from City boards. However, as Greenwood Cemetery is a designated historic site within the City the GCAB felt it was appropriate to request a courtesy review from the HDC for the proposed changes.

The proposal is to add additional graves throughout the site. The majority of the grave sites that have been proposed to be added are located in sections B and C of the cemetery with some additional sites proposed to be added to sections D, K, L, and O. The GCAB is not proposing to add grave sites to section A (the oldest part of the cemetery) or in the portions of sections B and C that are closest to Oak. All of the proposed new grave sites would be perpendicular to the existing sites and be required to use headstones that are flush with the ground so that they don't interfere with the visual rhythm of the existing headstones.

While researching the appropriateness of this proposal, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") recommended using the "Michigan Historic Cemeteries Preservation Guide" as a reference.

The proposed addition of grave sites to the cemetery may be done successfully without compromising the historic value of the site provided that careful consideration is given to the current configuration of headstones and landscaping. The Planning staff believes that such additions should only be done if no existing headstones or mature landscaping are compromised or moved and if flush headstones are used for all new grave sites. If that can be done in a tasteful way then the proposal would meet the Secretary of the Interior Standard for Rehabilitation #9.

Design Standards and Guidelines

1. (a) In reviewing plans, the Commission shall follow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation and guidelines for rehabilitating historic buildings as set forth in 36 C.F.R. part 67. Design review standards and guidelines that address special design characteristics of historic districts administered by the Commission may be followed if they are equivalent in guidance to the Secretary of Interior's standards and guidelines and are established or approved by the SHPO of the Michigan Historical Center.

Ms. Pierce said the GCAB has not had any discussions about columbariums at this point. If they do they will come before this board again. For any new graves that are sold, 25% would go to the contractor and 75% to the City for the cemetery Perpetual Care Fund. There are no capital needs at this time. Currently there are 144 names on a list of people who are interested in

purchasing a grave. As of 2009 there were 200 to 300 graves that had not had any activity for 50 years.

Chairman Deyer called for comments from the public at 7:25 p.m.

Ms. Pam DeWeese who lives on Purdy said she has an interest in seeing the historic nature of the cemetery well preserved. It is one of the oldest city cemeteries in the State of Michigan. She thinks this plan has a lot of merit. However, there should be attention paid to the accessibility and structural integrity of the historic markers, as many of them are over one hundred years old.

Ms. Pierce advised that the cost of graves is set by the City fee schedule. Currently a full grave goes for \$3 thousand. If this proposal is accepted and recommended by the HDC and the City Commission approves it, the GCAB will be recommending a tiered schedule depending on the size of the space.

Mr. Willoughby said it strikes him that if this proposal is not enacted there won't be money to maintain the cemetery.

HDC members agreed if this plan were to proceed their suggestions would be:

- That the commission extends its appreciation that they have been given the opportunity to comment on this plan;
- No existing headstones or grave sites are moved;
- No existing trees or mature landscaping is removed;
- Flush mounted headstones are used for all newly created grave sites so as not to provide any visual disruption;
- The structural integrity of all of the historic markers and the landscape is maintained;
- Contractors that do work in the cemetery must be bonded and insured to ensure that if any damage is done the cost to repair is covered; and
- The HDC hopes to have the opportunity to continue with reviews of the cemetery.

03-18-15

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Staff Reports

-- Administrative Approvals

- 123 W. Maple Rd., Art Loft - Recover existing awning with new fabric and color.

- 211 W. Maple Rd., Roots - Install a non-illuminated set of Roots letters and a non-illuminated blade sign.
- Violation Notices (none)
- Demolition Applications
 - Lyonhurst
 - 1947 Haynes
 - 519 Bird
 - 1700 Pembroke
 - 1640 Maryland
 - 631 Bird
 - 1808 Stanley
 - 2576 Buckingham

Mr. Baka said there has been discussion about photographing all four sides of a structure before it is demolished. It looks like this will be started. Mr. Coir volunteered to photograph the buildings.

B. Communications

- Commissioners' Comments

The HDC Action List was considered and it was decided to remove Bates St. Historic District Signage.

Mr. Baka noted that Overlay standards for signage apply only to buildings that were developed under the Overlay. So, in the Downtown they are all mixed in together. Chairman Deyer thought it would be a lot easier to deal with applicants if there was somewhat of a consistency. It may be possible for the HDC to work on achieving uniformity by cleaning up the Sign Ordinance.

At 7:40 Mr. Jim Verbish, 878 Greenwood, joined the meeting in order to find out about the proposal for Greenwood Cemetery. Mr. Baka explained that the goal is to maintain the current look and layout of the cemetery by filling in the green spaces and that the new graves would have flat headstones.

It was noted that the April 1 HDC/DRB meeting will be canceled because of lack of a quorum.

03-19-15

ADJOURNMENT

No further business being evident, the board motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Matthew Baka
Sr. Planner