

## **Meeting of the Historic Decatur Association (HDA) Board of Directors (BOD)**

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 6:00pm**

**Meeting Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting**

### **BOD Meeting Attendees:**

David Breland  
Cindy Upton  
Brenda Henson  
Harriette Mathews  
Kelly Hutchings  
Astrid McIntosh  
Canitha Thomas  
Darcy Hopkins  
Carol Chenault  
Kevin Malcolm  
Mike Meely

2021 HDA President Canitha Thomas called the meeting to order. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom rather than in person due to precautions involving the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first meeting topic was the acceptance of the January meeting minutes. These minutes fill a dual purpose in that they also record the new slate of BOD members and officers. Having this documented and accepted allows the officers to be able to sign HDA checks whenever Treasurer Mike Meely needs a second signature.

The January minutes provided the following information regarding the 2021 HDA BOD, and is repeated here for documentation:

The 2021 HDA BOD officers are:

- President: Canitha Thomas (motion: Cindy Upton, 2<sup>nd</sup> David Breland)
- Vice President: Kelly Hutchings (motion: Carol Chenault, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canitha Thomas)
- Secretary: Cindy Upton (motion: David Breland, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canitha Thomas)
- Treasurer: Mike Meely (motion: Cindy Upton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Darcy Hopson)

All motions passed with unanimous approvals.

For the record, the 2021 HDA BOD membership as approved at the HDA Annual Meeting is:

- David Breland
- Cindy Upton
- Brenda Henson
- Harriette Mathews
- Kelly Hutchings
- Nancy Greenleaf

- Astrid McIntosh
- Canitha Thomas
- Darcy Hopkins
- Carol Chenault
- Kevin Malcolm
- Mike Meely
- Marsha Ercegovic

The January 2021 minutes were accepted via first motion made by David Breland, with a second from Canitha Thomas. The acceptance was a positive unanimous BOD vote. The minutes are archived on the HDA website.

The only new correspondence discussed was a thank you card for Ellis Chenault's support for the virtual Christmas Tour. The card would be passed around to each BOD member to sign. There was some discussion on getting a card also for Donathan Hutchings to thank him for his Tour support.

Mike Meely provided the treasury report next. He emailed his report to the BOD prior to the meeting. The HDA has \$46,197.63 cash in the bank, including \$125 in dues recently collected. There was a total of \$4328.56 in expenses for the greenery and the virtual Christmas Tour since last report. The BOD still has \$13,470.21 set aside for trees, leaving a total of \$32,727.42 in unobligated funds. Mike reported that there was a total of 128 paid member households for 2020. So far this year, there are 42 paid member households. Mike reminded the BOD that all members should pay their dues immediately, per the requirements stated in the Bylaws. The motion to accept the treasury and membership report was made by Cindy Upton, with a second made by Carol Chenault. The motion passed with a unanimous positive vote.

New Business was next. Cindy Upton asked for a discussion on the administration and maintenance of the HDA website, since the volunteer previously supporting it had stopped. Astrid McIntosh indicated that she had used the log-in credentials she received several months ago to get into the website and post the minutes for 2020. She also posted several documents in order to bring the information on the site more up to date. Understanding that this activity would eventually require someone with the skills to make some changes to the site, Astrid asked that a new committee be formed to work through whatever was needed. Kevin Malcolm added that help could be requested through Nextdoor, and Brenda Henson reminded everyone that the website volunteer would need to be a paid HDA member. The BOD members who volunteered to support the newly formed Website Committee are Astrid, McIntosh, Kevin Malcolm, Brenda Henson, and Kelly Hutchings. Brenda added that she would like for the articles written on the history of the houses that we have from the Christmas Tours be added as a place to archive the information. The BOD agreed that there were many ways that the website could be used once it is updated.

The next discussion topic came from Brenda Henson, who referenced a Decatur Daily article on upcoming public meetings on the re-surveying of Bank Street and Old Decatur for the National Historic Registry. David Breland explained that the last time this survey was done was in the 1980s. This current survey is intended to document what buildings were still standing, what can be added to the list and

what buildings have been changed so much that they no longer can be considered to be on the historic preservation list. A question was asked about whether this same study was being done for the Albany district, and David said that could be the case later, but this particular study was mostly to document the changes around Bank Street.

Brenda also noted a public meeting concerning the rezoning and construction of townhouses that are planned for a lot that overlaps the Old Decatur area.

The next topic was the Garden Tour. Cindy Upton said that while this is the time of year to start planning for the Tour, with the remaining COVID impacts there was little confidence in the ability to congregate in large groups in mid-May. Adherence to COVID restrictions would mean that we could not provide a place for visitors to get refreshments and maps or use restroom facilities. While the BOD could decide to only have gardens open for the Tour, there remains a risk of exposure or non-adherence to COVID guidelines (masks, distancing, etc.). Brenda pointed out that the BOD would have to pay approximately \$300 as a special event added on our HDA insurance policy. The inability to have an in-person ticketed Christmas Tour last year means that the BOD must be especially conscientious about spending funds. With all this in mind, the BOD voted to cancel this year's Garden Tour. This motion was made by Cindy and seconded by Kelly Hutchings. This motion passed unanimously.

Astrid McIntosh suggested posting pictures of neighbor's gardens on the HDA website and the Garden Tour Facebook page. This idea was discussed as a good possibility, since it also allows neighbors to participate who may not be interested in opening up their gardens to the public.

The Christmas Tour report was next. Because of the tremendous amount of work that is required for a successful ticketed Tour, it is too soon to determine whether COVID restrictions will ease in time to allow an in-person event this coming December. The Committee recommended cancelling the Tour for 2021. The 2020 virtual Tour was still labor intensive and involved costs, while not bringing in revenue to cover those costs. There was an initial vote to cancel the 2021 Tour, which would have passed. Kevin Malcolm requested a delay in the final vote in order to see if the effects of the accelerated vaccine distribution would make a difference so that an in-person Tour would be possible. Given that the Christmas Tour is our only fundraiser, Kevin argued, we need to watch the changes to COVID response in the near term before we cancel too early. The rest of the BOD members agreed to delay the vote to the March meeting, but to make a final decision then so that the Committee would have enough time to work on the Tour if we continue. So, the final vote on whether to proceed with the 2021 Christmas Tour will be made at the March 30, 2021 meeting.

Brenda Henson requested a discussion on special projects. She had been instrumental in completing the wayfinding signage project and was ready to move onto the next BOD sponsored project. Brenda had investigated a nearby source for large fountains and had the idea of placing a fountain in the new pocket park installed on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue at the former Express Oil Change site. Brenda said that she would continue to explore this option, including more conversations with the vendor in Tuscaloosa and with Decatur City and the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority. David Breland provided some insight that he had through the Redevelopment Authority Board, and suggested contacting their director, Rick Paler, to discuss plans for the new pocket park. Brenda continued the conversation to suggest ways the HDA

could contribute toward the park while partnering with the appropriate groups, such as adding benches, additional landscaping, etc., in addition to a new fountain.

Another new project introduced by HDA Vice President Kelly Hutchings was to restart the “Welcome Wagon” type activities that were offered to new neighbors in years past. As part of a military family growing up, Kelly is aware of the many ways these welcoming gestures make newcomers feel welcome. The BOD brainstormed on some ideas, such as welcome baskets with coupons for local shops, newcomer’s guide to Decatur, our latest HDA newsletter, etc. The BOD discussed possible methods for knowing who has moved in, with the most probably method being alert neighbors letting that committee know once we are operational.

Canitha and Kelly then discussed the need to bring back Block Captains, in order to ask neighbors to take leadership roles in their areas to welcome new neighbors, deliver newsletters, etc. There was a conversation on additional roles that the Block Captains would take on, such as overseeing the Christmas swags that adorn the street sign posts in our neighborhoods. Cindy mentioned that years ago in the Albany neighborhood, there were baby welcome signs that would be placed in the new parent’s yard. These kinds of ideas will continue to be developed and volunteers will be sought for the Block Captain roles. Kelly asked that all BOD members serve as the Block Captains for their blocks, as a start. More discussion on these ideas and assignments will be part of the next meeting.

The next discussion topic was the next newsletter. Since Brenda oversaw the newsletter production for the last few years sometimes singlehandedly, she asked that someone else take over this role. Harriette Mathews stepped up to volunteer. Her technical skills align very well with producing a high-quality newsletter, but she requested help from the entire group on gathering the content. The number of newsletters per year was discussed, since printing costs must also be considered. The BOD settled on three newsletters per year, with target release dates of April, August and December. The upcoming April 2021 edition will highlight the benefits of HDA membership and will include the dues form. The HDA also discussed including a list of the paid HDA members to date and provide a thank you note. Mike Meely suggested this idea and will send the most up to date list to Harriette for inclusion in the newsletter.

The next discussion topic was trees. Astrid McIntosh expressed concern over the tree limbs that were growing into walking paths on the city right of way. Astrid stressed that we wanted to avoid random, disfiguring cuts and preserve the beauty of the tree while keeping it healthy. The BOD also discussed the need to properly trim the newly planted trees while they were small enough for normal gardening implements to make the cuts. Astrid asked if some of the tree budget could be used to hire someone knowledgeable to trim the trees properly. Cindy took an action to contact Cory Brown at the Catbird Seat Garden Center to ask about possible people to hire for tree trimming maintenance and also to ask Cory to submit an informational article on tree trimming for the newsletter. Mike offered to use his chain saw to make some of the cuts, and several of the BOD members offered to cut the smaller limbs that normal loppers could handle. Astrid took an action to do an inventory of specific trees that need some trimming.

There was some additional discussion on the next newsletter. Articles are due by March 15<sup>th</sup>. Canitha's President's letter will also address the status of the Garden and Christmas Tours.

The HDA BOD normally meets at 6:00pm on the last Tuesday of every month except December. The next meeting of the HDA BOD is scheduled to occur on March 30, 2021. The meeting is planned to be conducted virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cindy Upton  
Secretary, HDA