

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

Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 6:00pm

Meeting Location:

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Meeting Attendees:

David Breland
Cindy Upton
Brenda Henson
Mike Meely
Harriette Mathews
Marsha Ercegovic
Sue Powell
Canitha Thomas
Tyler Davis
Nancy Greenleaf
Astrid McIntosh
Darcy Hopkins

2020 HDA President Brenda Henson 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 minutes from the last meeting were approved with Harriette Mathews providing the first motion to accept and Astrid McIntosh seconding. The approval vote carried unanimously. The minutes will be archived on the HDA website.

Under New Business, Brenda asked for approval to provide the final \$15,865.30 payment to the McComm Group for the wayfinding signs. Continuing the discussion on signage, Brenda said that the entire cost for phase 2 was \$31,730.60. Our reimbursement grant from the group Alabama's Mountains, Rivers and Valleys Resource Conservation and Development was for up to \$50,000, so we did not need the entire amount. All of our phase 2 signs have been placed, with the schedule urgency being final installation before the September 3, 2020 deadline. The motion to pay the final payment to McComm was made by Cindy Upton, with a second from Nancy Greenleaf. The vote carried with a unanimous positive vote.

Brenda announced that a dedication ceremony for the new signs was planned for August 6th at 6pm at Walden Oaks Park. Harriette made invitations and asked for a budget to get them printed. A budget of up to \$50 was motioned by David Breland, with a second from Nancy. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Harriette asked for volunteers to distribute the invitations to each neighbor. Brenda asked for a \$200 maximum budget approval for refreshments to serve at the dedication. Canitha Thomas volunteered to oversee the refreshments. The motion for the \$200 max budget was made by David with a second from Canitha. The motion carried with a successful unanimous vote.

Continuing with discussions involving the signs, Brenda said that the Decatur Parks & Recreation employees had been especially helpful in getting the Phase 2 signs installed. In particular, Aaron Lang was instrumental in the successful installation in a timely manner so that we did not lose our reimbursable grant funding. As an example of Aaron's above and beyond support, Brenda said that when she was concerned about the new sign going up in the parking lot of the abandoned Express Oil site (the sign had to be installed now to meet the grant specifications), that Aaron promised that he would assure that the sign was moved before the demolition of the old building and would be re-installed once the site was cleared and the new pocket park was in place. Brenda suggested that the HDA provide a thank you to Aaron in the form of a note and gift card for a local restaurant – one that had supported the Christmas Tour. Simp McGhee's was suggested, with a gift card value of \$100. The motion to accept this gift card cost was made by Darcy Hopkins, with a second from Nancy. The motion passed unanimously.

Brenda had more good news to share. She received a call from Rick Paler/ Decatur Downtown Redevelopment to tell her that the HDA had been nominated for a Main Street award because of the new signs.

Treasurer Mike Meely presented his report, which was sent to all BOD members prior to the meeting. He said that we have \$30,058.48 cash on hand in the bank. We have remaining obligated funds for trees and signs, and we have not received the reimbursable amount from the grant provider. We currently have 79 paid HDA member households, an increase of 28 new/renewing member households from last month. The increase in membership is at least partly attributable to the recent newsletter, which included the membership form. The HDA is still down from the 158 paid member households we had for 2019. The motion to accept the treasury report was inadvertently skipped and will be voted on at the August meeting.

Continuing the discussion concerning member households, Mike also commented that he added several names to the HDA roster this month, indicating new members who had not previously joined. Astrid McIntosh commented that there were several names on the roster of people who have left the neighborhoods and it was noted that unless people let Mike know about changes that they will likely not happen. Brenda asked the BOD to review the roster and highlight names of people who have moved out of the neighborhoods. Mike reminded everyone that dues are now our only source of income since COVID-19 is preventing us from having the normal ticketed Christmas Tour.

Brenda mentioned that the BOD needs to appoint a nominating committee for the 2021 slate of members. This should be done earlier than the usual end of the year timeframe.

Continuing with New Business, Brenda noted that there are areas within both neighborhoods that are not kept up, with problems ranging from weeds to junk in publicly viewed areas. Brenda asked for ideas to encourage residents to take pride in their properties. Absentee owners are an issue, with several houses within our neighborhoods in varying states of decay. Brenda asked the BOD to identify a spot within the neighborhoods that could be cleaned up on either the city right of way or in some limited cases with the resident's approval. The idea is to tackle some easy to get to blighted areas and hope that this also encourages people to take care of their properties. A Clean-up Day will be announced

later for the fall timeframe. It was noted that someone in Old Decatur has an old refrigerator on their front porch. Astrid reminded everyone that there is a Decatur City ordinance which forbids such storage in public view. Brenda said that she would get in touch with David Lee to discuss next steps. Nancy Greenleaf asked about paint color choices which sometimes do not blend with historic structures. David said that the Historic Preservation Committee does not have jurisdiction over the color choice made, but did not allow previously unpainted brick to be painted.

The next discussion topic was the Christmas Tour. Chair Harriette Mathews said that she is scheduling tutorials on Facebook Live. She and her committee are looking for people to provide demonstrations in areas such as kid's crafts, recipes, décor, etc. Harriette said that Caroline Swope's newly purchased home on Jackson Street was set to be the Preservation in Progress this year. Caroline, who is also Decatur's Historic Preservation Specialist, has received a Department of the Interior grant to restore the home to historic standards as far as the layout, materials and decorative trim that would have been present when the home was built. The plan is to have the completed home on the Tour next year. Harriette said that Ellis Chenault's photography skills were needed to document Caroline's progress. Since he is already donating his time to video the two virtual tour sites, the BOD discussed paying him for this additional task. Harriette took an action to determine what this payment should be and will report to the BOD at the next meeting.

There was no report from the Garden Tour Committee.

The Tree Committee report was next. Chair Marsha Ercegovic had a meeting at her home with committee members. The tree installations last year were discussed, as well as forward plans for the next group of trees to be planted this fall. Marsha has toured both neighborhoods and talked to many neighbors about possible tree installation sites, and desired tree sizes and types. Once she has given neighbors ample time to come forward with a tree request, she and her committee will work with Cory Brown from the Catbird Seat Garden Center to get the trees delivered and installed.

The Social Committee had nothing to report.

The Communications Committee had nothing to report.

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 expected to occur on August 25th. The meeting is planned to be conducted virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Upton
Secretary, HDA