

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

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 6:00pm

Meeting Location: In person at the Carnegie Visual Art Center and via Zoom Virtual Meeting

BOD Meeting Attendees:

David Breland
Cindy Upton
Kelly Hutchings
Canitha Thomas
Darcy Hopkins
Kevin Malcolm
Astrid McIntosh
Harriette Mathews
Mike Meely
Brenda Henson
Marsha Ercegovic
Nancy Greenleaf

Guest: Caroline Swope

2021 HDA President Canitha Thomas called the meeting to order. The first meeting topic was the acceptance of the March meeting minutes. First motion of acceptance was made by Canitha, with a second from Kevin Malcolm. The acceptance of the minutes was with a positive unanimous BOD vote. The minutes are archived on the HDA website.

Mike Meely provided the treasury report next. There was \$850 collected in member dues since last report. The HDA has \$46,276.50 cash in the bank and there were expenses paid for the Christmas Tour, HDA insurance, tax filing and Welcome Wagon baskets. The BOD still has \$13,470.21 set aside for trees, leaving a total of \$32,806.29 in unobligated funds. So far this year, there are 63 paid member households. The motion to accept the treasury and membership report was made by Canitha, with a second made by Cindy Upton. The motion passed with a unanimous positive vote.

New Business was next. Canitha reported on the new street sign project. She met with Joel McWhorter, who said that the poles are standard and that he would get an approximate cost per pole. Caroline Swope is working with ALDOT to see how many signs are already covered by the One Decatur project. It's possible that the signs on 6th Avenue would be provided and the HDA could provide the rest of the signs within the neighborhoods in stages.

Caroline presented an overview of the many projects she has in work. She is aware of opportunities where a project that is ready to be considered could receive funding in cases where expiring funds are used, as an example, so she is preparing for quick responses to opportunities. She said that the state has additional funds to distribute to qualified local governments for historic preservation projects. I have submitted requests for 2 projects, a windows workshop/lecture and design/printing of pamphlets

Continuing the conversation on the new street signs, Caroline looked into timelines for the planned 6th Avenue upgrades and said that ALDOT controls the overall planning since that can include unknowns such as burying lines, curb work, etc. She reminded the group that the sign design should already be in sync with the overall new signage plans. She added that she is looking for sources of funding support for this street sign project. Brenda Henson added that the Decatur Police Department must also approve signs.

Caroline followed up on some possible rezoning for conditional use permits for the empty homes on the corner of Jackson Street and 6th Avenue. If successful, these longtime empty homes could be used for certain kinds of small businesses. There are still details to work through and Caroline mentioned that although the City Zoning Department is short staffed, the discussions had started on the conditional use permits, or another type of zoning overlay (exact mechanism is being discussed).

Caroline next discussed the use of the yard signs that indicate that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) had approved the renovations and repairs. These signs will also serve to make everyone aware that this approval process must be followed before work is begun. Canitha asked if there was anything that real estate agents could do to make potential buyers understand the added responsibilities of owning a historic home. Canitha noted that there is evidence of misinformation used by out of town agents who sell homes in our neighborhoods. David Breland added that every closing attorney in our city has information included in the closing package about the special requirements associated with purchasing a historic home. Caroline reminded everyone that she can be available to answer questions and provide information on the HPC processes.

Caroline added information to follow-up on workshops of interest to historic homeowners. The first planned workshop is on window restoration and repair. Caroline is working with a specialty group in Montgomery for some projects on some Decatur City properties over the course of the summer. Her idea is to use some of their time for a hands-on workshop that could also train local craftsmen. Caroline asked the HDA for \$1600 to fund the remaining costs after she applies the \$2400 grant funding she has received. She indicated that we can't charge admission since it's got some grant funding, but the HDA BOD discussed other options such as taking donations and getting sponsor contributions. The timing of this workshop is by the end of August, with the 21st being the tentative date and Ingalls's Harbor the desired location. Kevin asked if we could video the workshop and Caroline indicated this was a possibility. This would allow the HDA to use the video for reference and training later. The BOD took a vote on spending \$1600 on this workshop, with Kelly Hutchings providing the motion and Canitha providing the second. The vote passed, but there were 2 nay votes over concerns that the HDA did not receive Christmas Tour funds last year and our budget is flat. The BOD overall agrees that great care should be placed on conserving our funds, and so there was a new committee formed to seek sponsor donations with Marsha Ercegovic, Canitha, Kelly and Kevin providing support. Caroline said that the funds would be needed by the end of August, but she needed the commitment now so that she could proceed with planning. She also said that she would contact the Historic groups in Huntsville, Mooresville and Tuscumbia to see if they were interested in sponsoring and attending. Also, Caroline

agreed to provide some words/details about the window repair seminar so that we could approach persons of groups about sponsoring.

Caroline's next topic was the survey activities in Old Decatur and Bank Street. This activity is set to conclude sometime over the upcoming summer and buildings from 1975 and older could contribute. She plans to provide an article for the next HDA newsletter. The next area to study covers the Albany commercial district, which contains several post WWII buildings that are expected to be added to the preservation survey.

Caroline is requesting funding for Historic Structure Reports for the Princess Theatre and the stone structures in Delano Park. These reports are crucial for obtaining grants for repairs and preservation. The next buildings studied are planned to be the Old State Bank and the Carnegie Visual Arts Center.

Caroline described travelling along 6th Avenue with the state preservation representative, and both were impressed with several post WWII structures, such as the Bob Gibson's BBQ original neon sign and Simpson's florist.

The group started talking about the repair of the fountain outside of the Old State Bank and Caroline said that the Parks and Recreation Department was working on the repairs, but there was a large cost associated with the project.

The next discussion topic was continuing progress on the Welcome Wagon re-start. Canitha and Kelly asked the BOD to let them know as new people moved into the neighborhoods.

Canitha continued with her meeting agenda to discuss whether we would have a Christmas Tour this year. The general consensus of the BOD is to possibly have the Tour but scale it back to exclude the "Christmas in July" party and the Tour after party. Remaining unknowns concerning COVID-19 responses - especially regarding Sponsorship interest - and the lost time in determining the extent of Tour activities were the main drivers to scale back the Tour. There was a discussion on what kind of Tour Headquarters might be feasible, especially for refreshments. Portable pick-up bags and bottled drinks were discussed as possible refreshments. Brenda pointed out that a new on-line ticket vendor was needed since Vendini was no longer as a cost-effective option. Canitha asked if homes could be available for an in-person tour and some possible tour homes were noted. The goal is to have 3 houses in Albany and 3 houses in Old Decatur for the tour. The biggest need is for a chairman. There were several questions on what was needed for the website and other activities. Harriette Mathews, who served as the Tour chair for the last two Tours, offered to develop a task list to share with the group. A decision on the Tour leadership needs to be determined before or at the May HDA BOD meeting. Sponsors would also need to be quickly lined up.

Moving on, Canitha discussed the next newsletter. There were issues with the distribution of the last edition. The plan with the next newsletter is for Kelly to deliver them to the Street Captains for further distribution. The next newsletter is currently planned for an August 15th distribution so that Christmas

Tour information can be included. Articles are due to Harriette by July 22nd. This plan will be re-evaluated at the next BOD meeting.

Tree Committee chairperson Marsha Ercegovic said that there were two large oak trees recently removed from around the Carnegie Arts Center. She asked for a vote to replace those trees now as opposed to waiting until fall and would assure that they were properly watered over the summer. Marsha made the motion to replace the trees and David Breland provided a second. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

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 May 25, 2021. A blended meeting is planned with in-person meeting at the Carnegie and others online via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Upton
Secretary, HDA