



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
Telephone: (615) 862-7970

METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES December 18, 2023

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center on December 18, 2023, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners: Dr. Clay Bailey, Menié Bell, John Bridges, Dr. Don Cusic, Dr. Erica Hayden, Jim Hoobler, Dr. Jane Landers, Dr. Bill McKee, Sandra Parham, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Laura Rost, Tom Wood, Larry Woods, and Linda Wynn were **present**.

Dr. Celso Castilho was **not present**.

Staff Members: Tim Walker, Caroline Eller, Dr. Adam Fracchia, Bryan Gilley, Russell LeSturgeon, Scarlett Miles, Jessica Reeves, and Dustin Summers were **present**. Ann Mikkelsen (Metro Legal) was **present**.

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was **present**.

Guest: Metropolitan Council Member Terry Vo (District 17).

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:01 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present through a Roll Call of attendance [four commissioners arrived after roll call].

II. RECOGNITION OF FORMER COMMISSIONERS – *Chair Linda Wynn*

The commission had invited former Commissioner Gerry Searcy to return for recognition and appreciation of her service to the MHC. At the last minute, Mrs. Searcy was unable to attend this meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn presented the November 2023 meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Rost made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Hoobler provided a second. The commission unanimously approved the November 2023 minutes.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. No members of the public requested time to speak.

V. VOTE: HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

A. Historical Markers presented for review:

1. Coach Cornelius Ridley (1932-2003) – Funded by the athletics department at Vanderbilt, this marker will be placed at 613 17th Ave N in front of MLK Magnet School, formerly Pearl High School, where the Gupton-Ridley Gymnasium is located. Home to the Pearl High basketball team, the gym was named for the two legendary coaches. MNPS and the school are on board with the location and text, and they are excited about the marker. Since the draft text was sent to commissioners last week, a slight text change was proposed to clarify Coach Ridley’s record, inserting “season and” and removing “TSSAA” in the third sentence. It now reads, “an undefeated season and state title...” Commissioner Bridges motioned for approval as presented with these changes, Commissioner Hoobler seconded, and the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Coach Cornelius Ridley.
2. Metro Nashville District Energy System – This marker will be placed at 1st Ave S and Korean Veterans Blvd., across the street from the original location (present site of Ascend Amphitheater), to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the district energy system. Commissioner Hoobler motioned for approval as presented, Commissioner Bridges seconded, and the commission unanimously approved the historical marker for Metro Nashville District Energy System.

B. Revisions to Historical Marker Guidelines:

There are two proposed revisions to the Historical Marker Guidelines. One change, under the section “Text specifications,” clarifies that the same marker text cannot be placed in multiple locations. For example, churches or businesses that have changed locations over time may not place MHC historical markers bearing the same text at their old sites and at their new sites. The other proposed change, under the section “Historical fact,” codifies efforts by staff, the committee, and the commission to increase inclusivity in marker texts and

documentation by acknowledging and addressing underrepresented and historically marginalized groups. This will not apply for all historical markers.

Additionally, Ms. Reeves and the marker committee are working with Ms. Mikkelsen and Metro Legal to draft language that clarifies who owns the MHC's historical markers, particularly in the cases of markers that are no longer standing, are "on hold" awaiting installation, or that sponsors want to retain for their collections. Proposed revisions are forthcoming.

Commissioner Bridges asked for an update on the Racial Terror Lynchings/Lynching of Samuel Smith marker. Ms. Reeves reported that the office has ordered the replacement marker and is waiting for it to be fabricated.

Commissioner Richmond moved for approval of these revisions to the historical marker guidelines, which Commissioner Rost seconded.

Commissioner Parham inquired about the ownership of historical markers, specifically with regard to maintenance responsibilities. Ms. Reeves stated that this is an example of what will be addressed in the ownership piece of the marker guidelines. Regardless of location, MHC markers are owned by the Metro Historical Commission and Metro is responsible for their upkeep and maintenance. Markers can be refurbished through sandblasting and repainting, but that process is costly. Occasionally, private groups or individuals will take on this responsibility, usually for markers they've sponsored. The MHC has conducted a conditions assessment for its markers and plans to hold a clean-up day in the spring.

Chair Wynn called for the vote and the commission unanimously approved the proposed revisions to the Historical Marker Program Guidelines.

VI. NEW COMMISSIONERS – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn recognized newly appointed members Sandra Parham and Dr. Erica Hayden and welcomed them to the commission. Commissioner Richmond acknowledged Council Member Terry Vo (District 17) in the audience and welcomed her to the meeting.

Commissioner McKee inquired about the cost difference between a new historical marker and refurbishment. Ms. Reeves reported that new historical markers with 1-inch text are \$3,300 (double-sided are about \$3,500) and refurbishment is about \$2,000, for a difference of about \$1,300.

VII. GUEST SPEAKER: "Nashville Civil Rights Movement Documentation Project"

Robbie D. Jones, Principal Senior Architectural Historian and Tennessee Branch Manager with Richard Grubb & Associates (RGA) presented the firm's findings regarding the Nashville Civil Rights Movement Documentation Project. The project was funded through a National Park Service grant. MHC staff members

Caroline Eller and Claudette Stager began survey and research in summer 2022 and RGA began its work in January 2023. The grant-funded project has resulted in a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), “The Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, Tennessee, 1942–1969,” and two individual nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): Clark Memorial Methodist Church Complex, prepared by RGA, and First Community Church, prepared by Claudette Stager. The MPDF focuses on the Nashville Student Movement and the desegregation of public accommodations, for which Nashville was most well-known, most influential, and had the biggest impact.

The project team identified three main property types: strategy centers, conflict centers (including march routes), and properties associated with prominent persons (i.e., key leaders in the movement). In total, the team documented approximately 130 extant properties and identified over 75 properties as being listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Jones highlighted properties from each of the three property types, several of which are endangered due to various factors. The project also included a significant public outreach and engagement component, which employed an online survey, targeted emails to specific Fisk alumni classes, and outreach at community events, resulting in several oral history interviews. The MPDF/research can be used for additional nominations to the National Register and to inform local preservation planning, local landmark designations, and public interpretation such as markers, exhibits, tours, or books. The MPDF and two nominations will be submitted to MHC staff and National Register staff at the Tennessee Historical Commission next week, to be considered by the State Review Board in spring 2024, and hopefully listed in the NRHP shortly thereafter.

The question-and-answer period addressed a variety of topics, primarily commissioners’ concerns about preventing additional loss of historic properties, including those on the Fisk University campus.

Director Walker reported that the office is adding the new and updated information to its survey files. The office also plans to reengage with property owners like Fisk to share these findings. Fisk has a new president, so this is an opportune time to connect with the university’s leadership. Additionally, the office will share these findings with all council members, including Council Member Taylor who represents Fisk [District 21]. Several of the council members who attended the public meeting [December 7] spoke with Director Walker and Mr. Jones after the event and asked about legislative tools to protect these properties.

Brief discussion followed about plans for sharing the findings with the public, including posting the video recording of this presentation and the MPDF and NR documents to the MHC website as well as outreach to property owners with information about preservation tools and incentives.

Discussion continued regarding property flags and the office's role in reviewing demolition permits for flagged properties, as well as the pre-demolition documentation process (i.e., reviewing properties at Fisk). These properties will be flagged in the Metro permitting system.

Discussion concluded with brief comments about photography collections (*Nashville Banner*, *The Tennessean*, Getty Images) and the use of the MPDF research by property owners for grant applications, etc.

[Watch Mr. Jones' presentation on the Metro Nashville Network YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7qg3_rQGH0]

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

Sunnyside Construction Update: Mayor O'Connell's office has found additional funding to help complete the last parts of the construction project, including purchasing furniture and finishing the smokehouse and other buildings, funding for which was pulled last year. This is great news, and the department is very appreciative of the mayor and his administration for this support. We hope to move staff into the space beginning in early March 2024, with an open house to be scheduled upon the project's completion.

Chair Wynn encouraged all commissioners to read the Director's Report as it is thorough and detailed and covers a lot of the staff work that is not discussed in the meetings. Chair Wynn expressed her appreciation for staff's work. Director Walker also recognized staff members Claudette Stager and Caroline Eller for their work and leadership on the Civil Rights Movement Documentation Project.

IX. HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – *Robin Zeigler*

Historic Zoning Administrator Zeigler was not present. No commissioners expressed questions about what was contained in this month's Director's Report.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Wynn opened the floor for other business. No additional business items were brought forward.

XI. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Wynn opened the floor for other Comments/Announcements:

- a. The next MHC meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 22, 2024, one week later than usual due to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Holiday.
- b. Then and Now: Nashville's LGBTQI+ Community: Commissioner Richmond, who was one of the panelists, reported that the event held on December 6 was well attended. The program was recorded and is available for viewing online. [Watch the program on the Nashville Public Library's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM2zG80rKdU> (allow a few minutes for it to start)]

- c. Wreaths Across America: Commissioner McKee reported that the Nashville City Cemetery participated in National Wreaths Across America Day on Saturday, December 16, with a good crowd in attendance.
- d. Commissioners Parham and Hayden expressed appreciation for their appointments to the MHC and are looking forward to service.
- e. Nashville Music History Lecture Series: Commissioner Cusic's next session in the ongoing Curb Lecture Series is scheduled for Wednesday, January 24, 2024. The topic is "The Hank Williams Era in Country Music." This session will start at 6:00 pm at RCA Studio B.
- f. Commissioner Wynn thanked attorney Ann Mikkelsen for her guidance over the past year.
- g. Commissioners wished each other happy holidays and happy new year.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKee moved for adjournment, Commissioner Hoobler seconded. Chair Wynn wished everyone happy holidays. The meeting ended at approximately 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, January 22, 2024.
Scarlett C. Miles