

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
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METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES January 27, 2025

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center on January 27, 2025, with Chair Linda Wynn presiding.

Attendance

Commissioners: Menié Bell, John Bridges, Dr. Don Cusic, Dr. Erica Hayden, Jim Hoobler, Dr. Jane Landers, Dr. Bill McKee, Sandra Parham, Dr. Marisa Richmond, Vice Chair Laura Rost, and Chair Linda Wynn were **present**.

Dr. Clay Bailey, Dr. Celso Castilho, Tom Wood, and Larry Woods were **not present**.

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

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was present.

Guests: Jane-Coleman Cottone, public comment
Jill Meese and Ann Roberts, Nashville Historical Foundation

- I. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND WELCOME – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present after a roll call of attendance. Two commissioners arrived after roll call.
- II. **REVIEW OF DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES – Chair Linda Wynn**
Chair Wynn presented the December 2024 meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner Bridges moved to accept the December 2024 minutes and Vice

Chair Rost provided a second. The commission unanimously approved the December 2024 meeting minutes.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn opened the floor for Public Comment. Jane-Coleman Cottone requested time to address the commission regarding a report titled “Historic Zoning Review” prepared by HDR Engineering, Inc. [For background, HDR’s report, dated January 23, 2025, was “commissioned by the Metro Codes and Building Safety Department (Codes) Director Bill Herbert and the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Department (Planning) Lucy Alden Kempf” to “study Metro’s historic preservation efforts, including policy, process, and organizational elements.”]

Mrs. Cottone is a lifelong resident of Nashville. She currently works as a historic preservationist and architectural historian at a civil engineering firm. She is speaking to the MHC in a personal capacity. In her professional work, she drafts similar reports on a regular basis. She has read the HDR report several times and found serious issues with the research methods and the presentation of findings. A report like this would not have passed quality controls at her firm, and she is surprised Metro Planning commissioned and accepted the report without requiring substantial revisions. The list of persons interviewed showed a strong bias toward a particular outcome, which is the recommendation that the Metro Historical Commission be reorganized under the Planning Department. The motivation behind this seems clear to anyone with some background knowledge about the issue; special interests are involved, and they would rather go through a political process of rezoning certain historic districts in the downtown area. There is an attempt to weaken the authority of the Historic Zoning Commission by reorganizing it under another Metro department. This reorganization, depending on how it works, could be in violation of state enabling legislation for how historic zoning is allowed to operate. No other department should have veto power over a historic zoning decision. Mrs. Cottone lives in a historic district and her home is currently undergoing renovation. Her Certificate of Appropriateness sailed through the approval process, just like hundreds before it, and they are very, very satisfied, happy customers. The Metro Historical Commission, both this commission and the Historic Zoning Commission, is a well-run agency that operates with transparency, professionalism, and fairness. She urges the Planning Department, Mayor’s Office and anyone else who is listening to not make any hasty decisions based on a questionable report filled with factual errors. Additional study is needed before any changes are considered.

Commissioners asked Mrs. Cottone about her qualifications: she used to work for the Tennessee Historical Commission working with the Certified Local Government program, which gave her a lot of insight into how historic zoning works in every municipality in Tennessee. She holds an MSIS degree from the University of Tennessee, an MA in Public Humanities from Brown University, and an MA in History from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Dr. Bucy, Davidson

County Historian, requested a copy of the report; Director Walker will send a copy to her.

IV. PRESERVATION PARTNER – NASHVILLE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION.: Jill Meese, Board President and Ann Roberts, Past President

Ms. Meese is the new board president of the Nashville Historical Foundation, which changed its name from the MHC Foundation in December. Despite the name change, the organization is still the friends group to the MHC. She is joined by Ann Roberts, who served as president for the previous five years. Ms. Meese then presented updates on the work of the Nashville Historical Foundation. The group recently debuted its new logo and new website featuring monthly articles contributed by NHF board members. NHF's largest project is Nashville Sites, spearheaded by Dr. Mary Ellen Pethel. There are now over 35 tours, some walking, some driving, and all available online. Ann Roberts reported on other NHF projects, including funds for Fort Negley (archaeology, cultural landscape report, historic structures report, master plan), Music Row MPDF, and sponsorship of the NCAAHC and Preservation Awards. Many funds come from foundations (i.e., Steve and Judy Turner, Curb, Martin-Brown Family, Rich Family, etc.), as well as individual gifts, fundraising events, and some merchandise. Preservation Station is a partner, with some proceeds of salvage going to the NHF. Also supported by grants from TCWHA, Humanities TN, National Trust for Historic Preservation. The DISTRICT and the CVC have also provided contributions. Projects are typically identified by Dir. Walker and staff. NHF looks to them for guidance on needs as well as potential sources of funding. Mrs. Roberts is proud of the organization's assistance with Sunnyside renovations (architectural folly) and detailed studies (dendrochronology, paint color research) which have added to the knowledge of the site and fill in the gaps. The dendrochronology study is being expanded to cover other historic sites in Davidson County like the "1802 House" at Two Rivers and the Hodge House. After the 2020 bombing, the NHF organized the 2nd Avenue Strong televised fundraiser and is currently wrapping up a project that will note historical facts on new pavers along 2nd Avenue North from Commerce to Church. Jessica Reeves is assisting with this project.

V. HISTORICAL MARKERS – Jessica Reeves

Jessica Reeves presented the Tennessee Tribune historical marker for review. This privately funded marker will be placed at 1501 Jefferson Street. Ms. Reeves presented some edits to the previously submitted text, including text attributing the building's design to McKissack and McKissack, which is unconfirmed. Commissioner Richmond moved for approval, seconded by Commissioner Bridges. The commission voted unanimously to approve the Tennessee Tribune historical marker.

Next, Ms. Reeves presented the Cumberland Heights historical marker for review. This privately funded marker will be placed at 8283 River Road Pike. Commissioner Bridges recommended the addition of a comma on the first line.

Commissioner Bell moved for approval, seconded by Vice Chair Rost. The commission voted unanimously to approve the Cumberland Heights historical marker.

Ms. Reeves presented the Robert Churchwell Sr. historical marker for review. This privately funded marker will be placed at 1625 Dr. D.B. Todd Jr. Blvd at Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School. Edits will include adding a comma on the first line and replacing “belongings” with “possessions” on the second side. Commissioner Cusic moved for approval, seconded by Commissioner Rost. The commission voted unanimously to approve the Robert Churchwell Sr. historical marker.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

Director Walker shared a flyer for Peace Summit: A Reflection on the Past, A Call to Action, scheduled for the end of February 2025. Sponsored by Belmont University, Fisk University, and Queen's University Belfast, the symposium will highlight the shared struggles and triumphs of Nashville and Belfast, two cities profoundly shaped by their histories of conflict and resilience. The event is free; registration is now open. Commissioners will receive an invitation to the opening reception. There is no official Director's Report this month as efforts were focused on completing the department's budget submission.

Regarding the HDR report referenced in the Public Comment period, the department is working with our preservation partners regarding the report, its shortcomings, and its recommendations. Dir. Walker and Admin. Zeigler met with Kristin Wilson and Darren Jernigan in the Mayor's Office, followed by a second meeting that did not include Zeigler, but did include Mayor O'Connell, and the Planning and Codes directors, to discuss the report's shortcomings and the concern about state legislation that might undermine historic zoning. Dir. Walker and Admin. Zeigler are speaking with leadership for both commissions who are meeting with Mayor O'Connell tomorrow; THC Director Patrick McIntyre will also attend. Hopefully, the department won't be embroiled in a fight that ends up impacting budget issues.

VII. HISTORIC ZONING REPORT – *Robin Zeigler*

As reported in past months, Green Hills Neighborhood continues to seriously explore neighborhood conservation zoning and Council Member Preptit plans to hold a community meeting. Council Member Hancock has filed legislation for a new neighborhood conservation zoning overlay district for Marlin Meadows (in Madison). Council Member Benedict requested revision of the Inglewood Place design guidelines; the MHZC took no action at the January meeting. Council Member Gadd has filed legislation to designate Belle Meade Theater as a historic landmark; this is on hold as she is still working on solutions with the developer. Lockeland Springs-East End has resumed efforts to revise the district's design guidelines.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Wynn reminded commissioners of the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture taking place on Friday, February 14, 2025, at TSU's Avon Williams Campus downtown. Registration is now open. Chair Wynn reviewed some of the details of the program.

IX. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Richmond attended the ceremony for the renaming of Cumberland Park to Wasioto Park. She was the only Metro Government representative present at the event. Commissioner Richmond also mentioned the "More than a Name" remembrance event at the Nashville City Cemetery on Saturday, February 8, from 10am to noon. Visitors can place flowers at unmarked graves and take a walking tour. Finally, she completed her duties with the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans. The Advisory Commission submitted its report to President Biden; she is happy to share a copy of the report upon request.

Vice Chair Rost reminded commissioners about an email from Ann Roberts and noted that it is a good opportunity to contribute.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKee moved to adjourn; Commissioner Cusic seconded. The meeting ended at approximately 12:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted Monday, February 24, 2025.
Scarlett C. Miles