

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
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METROPOLITAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION (MHC) MINUTES February 24, 2025

The Metropolitan Historical Commission held its regular meeting at the Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center on February 24, 2025, 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, Vice Chair Laura Rost, Tom Wood, and Chair 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 Robin Zeigler were **present**. Ann Mikkelsen (Metro Legal) was **present**.

County Historian: Dr. Carole Bucy was not present.

Guests and Council Attendance: Jean Roseman, Nashville History Club
Council Member Emily Benedict (District 7)
Council Member Jacob Kupin (District 19)

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

Chair Linda Wynn called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. and verified that a quorum was present after a roll call of attendance. Two commissioners arrived after roll call.

II. REVIEW OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES – *Chair Linda Wynn*

Chair Wynn presented last month's meeting minutes for approval. Commissioner McKee moved to accept the January 2025 minutes. Commissioner Hoobler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – *Chair Linda Wynn*

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

IV. HISTORICAL MARKERS – *Jessica Reeves*

Jessica Reeves presented the Islamic Center of Nashville historical marker for review. The MHC has already approved this marker in September 2024, featuring the same text on both sides. There has been a request to change the second side of text to an image of a Peace Train and a quote by Yusuf Islam, who provided initial funds for the purchase of the property, about his visit to the center in 2016. After brief discussion about placement of a comma, which ended with no changes to the text, Commissioner Jim Hoobler moved for approval. Commissioner Rost seconded, and the commission voted unanimously to approve the text change to the Islamic Center of Nashville historical marker.

Next, Ms. Reeves presented the Black Bottom historical marker for review. This MHC priority-list marker will be placed at the Bell Tower (former St. Paul AME church). Ms. Reeves drew attention to the mention of Zora Neale Hurston on the second side text noting that she has been in touch with the Hurston Foundation, which supports the marker. Commissioner Richmond moved for approval. Commissioner Bridges seconded, and the commission voted unanimously to approve the Black Bottom historical marker.

Ms. Reeves noted that markers are still taking about a year to arrive after she places an order with Sewah. Upcoming marker ceremonies include plans by Lipscomb University for the Nashville Christian Institute, which the university owns (to be announced), and the Metro District Energy System, which is scheduled for March 25 at 10:00 am at the corner of 1st Avenue South and Korean Veterans Blvd. Commissioners who plan to attend should let her know.

Commissioner Bailey asked for clarification about the number of MHC historical markers in Davidson County. Ms. Reeves stated that there are over 300.

V. PRESERVATION AWARDS: HONOR AWARDS NOMINATIONS – *Commissioner Bill McKee*

On behalf of the Events/Special Projects and Nominations committees, Commissioner McKee presented the committee's slate of nominations for the annual Honor Awards, which the MHC presents during the annual Preservation Awards program each May. The committees met together on February 6 and selected the following nominees:

Achievement Award (2): Dr. Kevin Smith and Ron Gobbell, FAIA
Commissioners' Award: Nashville History Club
Fletcher Coke Award: Shain Dennison

Jean Roseman, president and co-founder (with Bill Carey) of the Nashville History Club, requested time to address the MHC, which Chair Wynn granted. Ms. Roseman provided a brief background on the formation of the Nashville History Club and its origins with the Bellevue History Club and Bob Allen, former commissioner with the MHC. Commissioner Bridges moved for approval of the slate of four honor award recipients as nominated by the committee. Commissioner Cusic seconded, and the MHC voted unanimously for four honor award recipients as presented.

VI. [DISCUSSION OF BL2025-742, An Ordinance amending Chapter 2.128 of the Metropolitan Code pertaining to the Metropolitan Historical Commission and the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission and potential vote.](#)

Chair Wynn opened up the discussion of this bill, which proposes to move the MHC and MHZC under the Planning Department.

Council Member Kupin acknowledged the chaos of the past couple of weeks and expressed his appreciation for the conversations he has had and those that are forthcoming. He addressed the MHZC last Friday and wanted to let the MHC know that they [council] are listening. Historic preservation is important to him. He recognizes the different charges of the MHC and MHZC and he has previously shared his thoughts on the importance of keeping the MHC intact. He's been studying the code and has some ideas. He encouraged commissioners to email and call him as he wants to get this right. He encouraged commissioners to review the posts on Council Connect and noted that Council Member Benedict has said that she will move for a public hearing on March 18, which is third reading. CM Benedict is also working on a substitute bill which may address some of the commissioners' concerns regarding the proposed move of the MHC. He remains committed to Nashville's historic preservation.

Commissioner Richmond asked which committee(s) the bill was referred to [after 1st reading last week]. CM Kupin did not know but Director Walker was able to answer that it is going to Metro Council's Planning and Zoning Committee on March 3rd. CM Kupin encouraged commissioners to google Nashville Metro Council Agenda for the link to Legistar for the legislative details. Chair Wynn thanked CM Kupin for attending this meeting.

Commissioner Bell provided an update on the discussion at the MHZC meeting last Friday [rescheduled from 2/19/25 to 2/21/25 due to inclement weather]. The MHZC had a lengthy discussion (available for viewing on YouTube) about a resolution, proposed and drafted by Commissioner Price (which he eventually withdrew). Vice Chair Stewart proposed a revised version of the draft resolution which called for amendments to the bill, including an amendment that would "maintain the MHC as a standalone body and consideration of other amendments which could ensure Nashville strongest protection for historic properties to preserve and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by Nashville's citizens." At the end of the two-hour discussion, the MHZC was not ready to vote

on a resolution. Commissioner Bell read some of the MHZC members' comments expressing that they did not like the rushed nature of this bill, doubts about what the Broadway Entertainment Association and the state legislature would do, and need for answers about how the reorganization would work. Commissioner Bell mentioned the unfavorable press and comments directed at the MHZC more than the MHC. She thinks Chair Wynn's letter to CM Benedict provided helpful information about the work of the MHC. The MHZC also discussed what they believe is the driving force of the local bill is a bill in the state legislation (SB0340). That bill, as introduced, specifies that a privately owned property built after 1899 that is located in a tourism development zone is not subject to the authority of a historic zoning commission or a historic zoning law, rule, review, guideline or regulation with respect to certain aspects of a project, which amends TCA, title 13, chapter seven, part four. In summary, the MHZC was hesitant to weigh in and Commissioner Bell wanted the MHC to have its own discussion. CM Benedict has said she will move for a public hearing, and that is important to have because we have 11,000 properties and 35 overlays that need to be heard. How it's going to impact Nashville is truly a serious and significant matter. MHZC established a committee to meet and discuss its response to the local bill. Commissioner Bell also passed out an email to the MHZC from CM Benedict. CM Benedict has also posed 16 questions to Planning Director Lucy Kempf about how this reorganization would work, from Planning's perspective, and everyone is awaiting Dir. Kempf's responses [which should be posted to the Council Connect portal].

Commissioner McKee asked who was appointed to the MHZC committee. Commissioner Bell reported that the committee includes her as Chair, Vice Chair Stewart, Commissioner Price, Commissioner Cotton, and Commissioner Smith.

Council Member Benedict (District 7) then spoke to the MHC stating that the bill Comm. Bell presented is the state legislation she is working to prevent. She has been working on a substitute bill which she will be sharing with Legal staff tomorrow to finalize a draft which she will file as a substitute bill tomorrow. She will share it with Dir. Walker and commissioners. It will still be open to amendments by other council members. CM Benedict thanked Chair Wynn for meeting last week and for her follow-up letter which helped the CM understand more about the MHC's work. She acknowledged the "critical and important role" that the department plays in our city, and she thought combining the historic preservation department with a larger department would help it leverage a larger budget for programming. Now, she is considering keeping MHC as a separate entity. She explained that this bill pertains to Title 2 and thereby does not require a public hearing but at second reading on March 4 she will move for a public hearing to be held at third reading on March 18.

Commissioner Bell asked CM Benedict when the answers to the sixteen questions posed to Dir. Kempf would be provided. CM Benedict stated that some answers have been posted to the SharePoint drive/Council Connect page. She

hopes the remaining answers will be provided today. Dir. Kempf and her staff are working on them.

Commissioner Bell asked about the timeline as it relates to the state legislation. CM Benedict said in her substitute bill she is asking for a six-month transition period to Planning. Her goal is to keep all employees, keep them in their civil service status, move them to the planning department, and make sure that everybody's working well. She likes the idea of the archaeologist being in the Planning department to comment on SPs, etc., but also acknowledges that the position also "wears the historic hat." These are the things she is contemplating.

Commissioner Bell asked about the six-month implementation and the state legislature's adjournment in April, and how that pushes the council's decision. CM Benedict said the TDZ includes the central business district and extends all the way to 440 between West End and Charlotte; the MHZC would lose control of all zoning decisions in that area if the state legislation were to pass. The state legislature adjourns in April and the state legislation is said to be in committee, according to lobbyists, including those employed by the mayor's office and council. The "six-month runway" should demonstrate to the state that we are making the change and are implementing it. When the substitute bill is ready, she'll send the draft to the mayor's office for review by Mr. Jernigan in hopes that it will placate the state.

Vice Chair Rost asked how moving the MHZC to the Planning Department satisfies the state enough to withdraw the state bill. CM Benedict said this is what "folks on the Hill" have said will work. It's the tail that "wags the dog." People on Broadway have concerns and their fix [the state legislation] would impact too many Nashvillians, but she's been advised by the staff attorney and staff lobbyists, is to move the MHZC. Vice Chair Rost followed up by asking how the move to Planning satisfies the state or the Broadway group, if the MHZC continues to operate the way it does now, but just under Planning. What, as a practical matter, is changing that makes the state happy? CM Benedict replied that Dir. Kempf would take some time to review processes and see where improvements could be made. If we don't change this, then she thinks council will bring legislation that dictates the change they are hearing from the community, not just Broadway but also Inglewood, where she lives, and Madison. If we only address the TDZ, we are only doing what the state wants us to do, and she is trying to find a holistic approach to this.

Chair Wynn asked how the budget(s) of MHC and MHZC would be impacted under the CM Benedict's bill. CM Benedict said it would be the same as any other department reorganization, there would be an internal departmental transfer, and she'd look to the mayor's office for direction on that. Chair Wynn noted the fiscal year begins July 1, and asked if the commissions would keep their current budgets until then and then be subsumed under Planning. CM Benedict said the goal is to keep both commissions whole with no budget cuts,

CM Benedict said her goal was to have the transition complete by September 1. She is trying to protect Nashville's zoning without having the overreach. Chair Wynn asked if the departments could keep their current FY25 budget and then transition at the start of FY26. CM Benedict acknowledged that request.

Commissioner Hoobler stated that he worked for the Tennessee State Library and Archives from 1975-1978. At the time, it was under the Department of Education and was poorly funded while under such a large agency. When it was moved under the Secretary of State, a smaller department, it gained more independence and received more funding and staffing. CM Benedict acknowledged the comment.

Commissioner Bailey asked Ms. Mikkelsen if she had any guidance for the MHC, to which Ms. Mikkelsen replied that her job is to take instruction from the MHC. Comm. Bailey then asked CM Benedict if there'd been any discussion about how this will impact the uses of Sunnyside, which is an is now an extraordinarily effective and beautiful community resource that really enhances historic preservation in our city. CM Benedict acknowledged that Sunnyside is a gem, and we have many gems around the city that we need to preserve. She said nothing changes relative conservation and historic overlays and it won't change anything relative to specific sites like Sunnyside. It would be up to the MHC Director and Director of Planning to determine. She does not want Sunnyside to be empty. Empty buildings fall apart. So, we need to make sure that it doesn't remain empty, especially after all the renovations that have taken place. Comm. Bailey followed up by asking CM Benedict to consider the possibility of the MHC and possibly the MHZC continue to use Sunnyside for offices. CM Benedict said she would pass this idea on to Dir. Kempf. CM Benedict does agree that Sunnyside needs to be used and is a great location for MHC.

CM Benedict shared her phone number with the MHC. She said she has spoken to many historians, Chair Wynn, Director Walker, Director Kempf, state historians, and constituents, and is happy to answer more questions. She thanked the MHC for service to the city.

With no other discussion on BL2025-742, Chair Wynn suggested forming a committee to discuss a possible response, on behalf of the commission, to the bill. The committee would include the executive committee, Chair Wynn, Vice Chair Rost, and Commissioner Bell, as well as two additional commissioners. The commission would grant the committee the authority to perhaps introduce an amendment if that committee deems it necessary. Chair Wynn asked Commissioners Hoobler and McKee about serving on the committee, which will likely meet on Wednesday, 2/25, at 4:00 pm. Commissioner Hoobler is available, but Commissioner McKee has a conflict. Chair Wynn invited Commissioner Bridges, who agreed to serve.

CM Benedict interjected and said she hopes to have the substitute bill finalized by Wednesday, prior to the committee, but if the committee could meet on Thursday, she would certainly have it ready by then. Chair Wynn expressed appreciation for her consideration, but several commissioners are planning to attend the Peace Summit on Thursday so they will need to meet on Wednesday.

Vice Chair Rost asked CM Benedict if she could offer some insight into what she's thinking now after this meeting and will it be a good use of time for the committee to meet if the substitute bill is not yet ready, acknowledging that Council can certainly make amendments. CM Benedict just said that she thinks it will be pleasing to the commission, and she will share it as soon as it is ready. She again encouraged the committee to meet on Thursday to ensure the substitute bill was ready. Due to time constraints, Chair Wynn determined that the committee needs to meet on Wednesday, and she hopes the substitute bill will be ready by then. If not, they can send it around to the committee and get feedback. CM Benedict again expressed urgency due to the state legislation. Chair Wynn said she has been following the legislation through her role with the Tennessee Historical Commission. CM Benedict also said she could attend the MHC committee meeting to explain the substitute bill. Chair Wynn said they would keep that in mind and thanked CM Benedict for the offer.

Vice Chair Rost asked Ms. Mikkelsen if there are any restrictions on how the committee can draft its comments. Ms. Mikkelsen indicated that there is flexibility in how the committee forms its response.

CM Benedict said her deadline to file the substitute bill is Friday [2/28] at noon, so she will have time to take into account the comments she receives Wednesday night. Chair Wynn thanked her for the offer.

Chair Wynn confirmed the committee members and the date and time for the meeting. She would also like the commission to grant the committee the authority to draft an amendment to the bill, if the committee deems it necessary, and called for a motion. Commissioner Bridges made the motion. Commissioner Hoobler seconded, and the MHC voted unanimously to establish the committee consisting of Commissioners Wynn, Rost, Bell, Hoobler, and Bridges, and grant it authority to respond on the MHC's behalf.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT– *Tim Walker*

Chair Wynn thanked Director Walker for the thorough and inclusive Director's Report detailing the work of the MHC staff over the past two months. Director Walker welcomed questions about the report and reminded commissioners about the Peace Summit taking place later this week. Commissioners should let him know if they plan to attend so they can join the group for lunch. Also, all commissioners are invited to the Wednesday evening reception and should let him know they did not receive an invitation and would like to attend.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Wynn thanked commissioners for attending the Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture. She thought the presentations were well done and carried through the theme, which commemorated the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. She also expressed condolences to Commissioner Cusic on the recent passing of his mother.

IX. ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Wood expressed concerns about parking limitations at the Fulton Complex and asked if the MHC is required to meet at this location. Ms. Mikkelsen stated that the MHC is required to meet in a public building, properly noticed. Dir. Walker noted that property taxes are due this month and that is why the parking and building are so busy. Comm. Wood then asked if Midtown Hills MNPDP precinct would be a better option. Historic Zoning Administrator Zeigler answered that the precinct is not preferable because the community room is not set up for audio/visual presentations and it is very difficult to hear (each other and the audience) when holding a public meeting there.

Vice Chair Rost expressed her appreciation for the MHC's impressive work as detailed in the Director's Report. She also congratulated Chair Wynn on an excellent conference.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKee moved to adjourn; Commissioner Cusic seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted Monday, March 17, 2025.
Scarlett C. Miles