

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

February 22, 2018

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
303 Pearl Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Cabinet Room

Commissioners in attendance: Laura Ashlee, Joe Calvaruso, Timothy Chester (by phone), Jack Dempsey (by phone), Brian James Egen, Eric Hemenway, Susan Safford (by phone), and Thomas Truscott

Excused Absence: Larry Wagenaar

Staff: Sandra Clark

President Calvaruso called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

After introductions, Calvaruso reviewed the plans for the rest of the day's events, which included a reception, a lecture by Bill Brands, presentation of the MAK Award, and dessert.

Approval of Agenda: Egen moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Truscott, and was unanimously adopted.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Safford moved to approve the November 16, 2017, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and was unanimously adopted.

Goals for Next Five Years:

- Discussion focused on the Michigan Historical Marker Program. Commissioners agreed that the marker committee should initiate the review of current markers for accuracy, language and inclusiveness. They will start with the markers on Mackinac Island and those for the Great Lakes. Safford asked that a copy of the Mackinac marker texts be sent to the marker committee.
- In discussing the future of the program and the relationship with Eastern Michigan University, commissioners agreed that the greatest concern was ensuring long-term continuity in the professional historian management of the program. They agreed that this need not be a full-time job if the administrative part of the program is handled by other staff. They asked Clark to share the Center's long-range plan for sustaining the program at a high professional standard at their next meeting.
- The other goals remained as discussed at the previous meeting.

Marker Program:

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided on three new marker applications. (Appendix A)
 - ◆ **Grosse Pointe Shores Village Hall, Grosse Pointe Shores, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Russell Kirk Home, Mecosta, Mecosta County**
 - ◆ **Heritage Cross Site Park, Harbor Springs, Emmet County**

Egen moved to approve the Grosse Pointe Shores Village Hall application; Ashlee seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously. Dempsey moved to approve the

Russell Kirk Home application; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and it was adopted unanimously.

After discussion, Chester moved that the Heritage Cross Site Park be rejected due to the inability of the site and the cross on it to meet the marker criteria of having sufficient primary source documentation of significance and the changes made over time in location and the cross itself. Egen seconded the motion. Hemenway recused himself and the other members of the Commission adopted the motion unanimously. The Commission asked that the letter to the sponsor clarify for the applicant why the application was rejected and share their belief that Cross Village has other stories worthy of a marker.

➤ **Approval of Marker Text** – Two new marker texts were presented to the Commission for review and approval.

- ◆ **Hoyt Park Shelter and Field House, Saginaw, Saginaw County**
- ◆ **Grace Episcopal Church/Grace Episcopal Church Buildings, Holland, Ottawa County**

Ashlee moved to approve the Hoyt Park Shelter and Field House marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott, and the text was unanimously approved. Ashlee moved to approve the Grace Episcopal Church/Grace Episcopal Church Buildings marker text with amendments and direction to eliminate some of the passive voice; the motion was seconded by Truscott, and the text was unanimously approved.

➤ **Reports**

- ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting. Ashlee asked if the SHPO had reviewed the Masjid Wali Muhammad site. Clark will check.
- ◆ The Marker Fund Report was distributed prior to the meeting.
- ◆ Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg marker, Grand Rapids, Kent County – Chester previously noted the spelling error on the Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg marker. Dempsey moved that the Commission pay 50% of the cost to correct the error and replace the marker; the motion was seconded by Egen and was unanimously accepted. Clark will provide copies of the annual report to Chester to aid in soliciting funds for the other half of the cost.
- ◆ War of 1812 Dead marker replacement—Clark reported that a draft of a one-post, different text each side text was shared with Jim McConnell. The War of 1812 Commission has provided funds for this size of a marker. McConnell has asked if the Commission would provide the added funds needed for a two-post marker. There is sufficient information for an expanded text. Dempsey moved that the Commission deny the request. Truscott seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

Historic District Study Reports: The Commission accepted the reports on the Cass Henry Local Historic District, Detroit; the Warden House Local Historic District, Green Oak Township, Livingston County; and the delisting of 832 W. Wattles, Troy.

Committee Chairs: Calvaruso appointed the following committee chairs:

- Markers: Susan Safford

- MAK Award: Tim Chester
- Nominating: Brian Egen

Milliken/Adams/Kelley (MAK) Award: The committee will assess current materials and set the schedule for seeking future nominations.

Director's Report

- **Annual Report:** Clark presented the final draft of the annual report. The Commission recommended adding information on the Commission and MHC/DNR leadership to the final page.
- **Grant Home:** Clark reported that Eastern Market has set aside a location off the Dequindre Cut for the house and shared a plan showing the exact location. The next step is to work out an agreement and easement with Eastern Market.
- **“Inventing the Outdoors” in Escanaba:** The special exhibit on Webster Marble and his outdoor equipment company has inspired people in Gladstone, home of the company, and Escanaba to create a new welcome/visitor/economic center with permanent space for the exhibit. Parts of the exhibit are now on display at the Iron Industry Museum. The center will work with the original exhibit curator, Dennis Pace, and the Upper Peninsula communities to create the new version of the exhibit.

New Business: Commissioners asked that the time of the April meeting be changed in order to accommodate attendance by DNR Director Keith Creagh.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Truscott moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Egen, and the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Marker Application for Approval
February 22, 2018

Grosse Pointe Shores Village Hall

Applicant: Village of Grosse Pointe Shores

**Marker Location: 795 Lake Shore Road, corner of Lake Shore and Vernier Roads,
Grosse Pointe Shores, Wayne County**

Requested Marker Type: 2-post, different text

Dedication: None Scheduled

The Village of Grosse Pointe Shores was chartered in 1911. The council held meetings in homes and a rented building. It turned to Albert Kahn for the design of its Village Hall, which was dedicated on December 10, 1915, two years before Kahn designed the Ford River Rouge Complex. (The first council meeting held here occurred on November 1, 1915.) The Linsell Company became the primary contractor for the project with a bid of \$17,200.

In addition to offices and council chambers, the hall housed police and fire services, including a dormitory for firemen. The village's first public library opened there in 1922. The second floor had a public space that was often used as a dance hall. In 1929, in response to a lack of housing for men in the fire and police departments, the second floor was converted into two apartments for married public safety officers. In 1947, council minutes began referring to the building as the Municipal Building.

There were multiple renovations in the 1960s, including new fire doors to accommodate new fire engines in 1962. In 1982, a day after a Planning Commission meeting to consider renovations, the ceiling in the superintendent's office collapsed. Structural engineers deemed all of the ceilings on the first floor unsafe. The award-winning renovations completed in 1984 included a 6,000-square-foot addition and barrier-free design with a new elevator tower on the east side of the building.

Recommend approval

Heritage Cross Site Park

Applicant: Cross Village Community Services/Jane Cardinal

**Marker Location: 6541 N. Lakeshore Drive, Cross Village
Harbor Springs, Emmet County**

Requested Marker Type: 2-post, different text each side

The site is a small park with a large wooden cross. The applicant presents a story of the founding of Cross Village based on French and subsequent Euro-American documentation that emphasizes French efforts to establish Christianity and "bring civilizing life ways to Native Americans."

A wooden cross has marked the area for centuries, though it has been moved and replaced from time to time. The Jesuits had a mission in the area in the 18th century. The applicant says that the Odawa at the Straits moved there (L'Arbre Croche) in 1708-10, followed by the Jesuits, and again, with French permission, in 1740. A 1799 letter from Father Gabriel Richard notes a large cross on the shore, about 100 feet high, five miles north of the Odawa village. Later historians assumed it was placed there by Father Marquette or Father du Jaunay, who had a mission there. There is no evidence presented that Father Marquette had any association with the place or the cross.

L'Arbre Croche/Cross Village is an important historic site. Currently Leggs Inn is the only marker there (in English and Polish). The Odawa narrative of this place would not put nearly as much emphasis on the missionary work as this application does.

We could reject the application because the documentation of the first placement of a cross along the shore is not clear, and this is obviously not that cross. We could try to move forward after making it clear to the applicant that the marker language will have to be approved by the Odawa and reflect their knowledge of the place. Or there may be other options.

No recommendation at this time

Russell Kirk Home

Applicant: Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal

Marker Location: 729 W. Main St.

Mecosta, Mecosta County

Requested Marker Type: 2-post, different text each side

Russell Kirk, one of America's foremost theorists of post-war conservatism, was born in Plymouth, Michigan in 1918. He spent his summers with his grandparents in Mecosta. He received his bachelor's degree from Michigan State and his master's from Duke University before serving in the Army during World War II. He earned a Doctorate of Letters from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland in 1953.

The New York Times said that his book *The Conservative Mind*, based on his doctoral thesis and published in 1953, "gave American conservatives an identity and a genealogy and catalyzed the postwar movement." He taught at Michigan State until 1959, when he returned to Mecosta. There he converted a furniture factory into his library and office, planted hundreds of trees, and built his Italianate house. From there he wrote, lectured and held seminars on conservative thought and principles. He was also known for a fondness for ghost stories, and among his many books are five works of fiction. He received the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Ronald Reagan in 1989.

After his death in 1994, his family continued his commitment to research, study and thoughtful conversation by founding the Russel Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.

Recommend approval