

# Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2022

Michigan History Center

Morris Learning Center

**Commissioners in attendance:** Laura Ashlee, Timothy Chester, Brian James Egen, Delia Fernandez, Eric Hemenway, Tom Truscott and Larry Wagenaar.

**Excused Absence:** Joe Calvaruso, Robin Terry

**Staff:** Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis and Troy Masserant.

**Contractor:** Noah Levinson, Detroit Marker Audit Project

**Public:** Terry Cwik, Salem Area Historical Society

President Egen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Approval of Agenda:** Wagenaar moved to approve the agenda as presented; the motion was seconded by Hemenway and was unanimously approved.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Truscott moved to approve the March 16, 2022, meeting minutes; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously adopted.

**Public Comment:** Terry Cwik from the Salem Area Historical Society addressed the commission on the historical importance of the Dickerson Barn and asked that the commission reconsider its decision to not include the barn on the Jarvis Stone School historical marker. Egen asked Cwik to send Davis the information he referenced and stated that the commission will take it under advisement for further discussion at an upcoming commission meeting.

## Marker Project –

- **U of M Capstone Project** – Clark, Chester and Davis attended the capstone project final presentations held on April 13, 2022, at the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor. One item the students produced is a source review workbook that explains what a primary source is, how to find primary sources, and other helpful tips on completing a marker application. This may prove to be a helpful tool that can be shared on the marker website once staff has an opportunity to review the document. The students were also tasked with making text revisions to the Finney Barn historical marker. The students worked with Jamon Jordan on adding reference to George Dolerson, an African American individual who worked with Seymour Finney on the underground railroad. They will present their final text revisions to Clark and Masserant for final review.

Chester noted that it was encouraging to have three diverse individuals who knew little about the historical marker program dig deeper into the elements of the program. He appreciated their thinking and concern surrounding the educational portion of the marker program. They thought outside-of-the-box and suggested more emphasis on such areas as what is done with the marker once it is placed, how it is used to educate the public and children, and how markers can be part of a plan and not just stumbled upon.

Truscott shared his past experience of working on a collaboration of a bike/walking tour of historical markers located throughout Lansing.

The final report from the capstone project will be shared with commissioners prior to the next meeting.

- Clark introduced Noah Levinson, the new contractor who will be working on the NEH Grant funded Detroit marker audit project. Levinson grew up in Huntington Woods and lives in Detroit. He obtained his master's in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program in New York. Some of his past work include the Detroit 67 oral history project at the Detroit Historical Museum, research assistant at the Ruether Library at Wayne State, and working with a photo historian in Huntington Woods.

Brief introductions were made by the commission.

Clark stated that Levinson has started contacting people in Detroit who may be interested in sitting down to discuss the markers that are already located in Detroit and start conversations about the stories that may be missing and need to be told. The Black Historic Sites Committee has assigned Leslie Williams to be its liaison with the center on this project. Clark asked commissioners to share with Levinson any contacts they may have of academics that would agree to review the marker text and help the community groups look for the gaps in what stories still need to be shared. She noted that one area of the project that continues to remain a concern is finding the most useful way to divide up Detroit into five areas in order to begin reviewing the markers. Cwik shared the possibility of using Detroit council districts.

Clark noted that Maud Lyon will be working on the Grant House portion of the NEH Grant.

### **Marker Program**

- **Tyrone Township Hall, Site No. L704, Livingston County, Fenton** – Clark stated that several individuals from the Tyrone Township community have contacted the center asking numerous questions about the possible relocation of the Tyrone Township Hall. It seems the current plan is to move the hall approximately one mile from where it is now located. Clark asked the commission to provide its feedback on the possibility of approving a new marker. The building has already been moved once and that is noted in the current text. After discussion, the commission concluded it could not make a firm decision given the lack of detailed information provided about the proposed move. However, if the proposed move does happen and all changes done to the structure follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation and are reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office, the commission would consider a new application and allowing the marker to be placed at the new location.
- **Reports**
  - ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting.
  - ◆ The Marker Fund report was distributed prior to the meeting.

## **Director's Report**

- Director Clark asked the commission to consider topics for future meetings.
  - ◆ Chester suggested having a deeper conversation about the Michigan Marker Audit Process organization chart that was shared with the commission in November 2021.
  - ◆ Ashlee proposed having Stacy Tchorzynski, DNR Archaeologist, talk about State Archaeology and a guided tour of the Archaeology lab.
  - ◆ Chester proposed having a presentation given by the Museum Exhibit team that provides a demonstration of the steps involved in creating or maintaining an exhibit. Also, a tour of the production space would be very helpful.
  - ◆ Davis proposed a visit to the Collections facility. Clark noted there is a large meeting room at the Collections site and could host a meeting.
  - ◆ Ashlee noted it might be nice to include the Michigan History Foundation in some of the topics/activities.
- Clark stated that the Governor's proposed budget included \$485,000 for a one-time Archive project to do a large digitization of microfilm that is aging and decaying. The House of Representatives completely eliminated this budget line, and the Senate took the amount down to \$133,400. Clark stated that now is the appropriate time to reach let legislators know that there is support for the Governor's proposal. Egen asked Clark to provide a written summary of the situation to the commission.

## **Business Updates**

- Mackinac Island Agenda Focus
  - ◆ Ashlee proposed discussing the long-term administration of the historical marker program.
- Fernandez stated that she will be taking a course on community engaged scholarships. She hopes to teach a class that will help Latino communities apply for historical markers. She intends to have an update to share with the commission at the Mackinac meeting.
- Egen appointed Hemenway to chair the nomination committee, which also includes Ashlee and Terry. The committee will present its recommendations at the next meeting.

**Public Comment** – No public comments were given during this portion of the meeting.

## **Commissioner Comments**

- Truscott noted that the customer is the most important item when it comes to the historical markers. He suggested using the “KISS” message – Keep it Simple Stupid. He also noted that it is amazing what can be accomplished when no one cares who receives the credit. It seems that at times the commission makes things more complicated and difficult than it should be or needs to be.
- Wagenaar shared that the Historical Society of Michigan has a new website.
- Hemenway shared that a friend of his, a retired teacher, received a grant that funds a bike tour for fourth graders that stops at various locations. One of those stops is at the location of the Hiawatha Pageant historical marker. This allows time to share the importance of this story and educate students about the history of this site.

- Chester stated that the management of the parking lot does not provide good customer service to those individuals visiting this facility. He asked that Clark share that information with those in charge.

Wagenaar moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and the meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra S. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'C'.

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Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary