

CLAYTON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for June 13, 2025

The June 13, 2025 meeting of members of the Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) was held at the Clayton County Development Office in Elkader, Iowa between 9:00 and 10:26 am. Attending on site were Chair Roger Thomas, Secretary Chris Schoen, Ellen Collins, Kathy Koether, and Bob Meyer. Absent were Deputy Chair Brandie Backes and Ed Ruff. Guests were Scott Koether and Emma Koether.

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Collins and seconded by Koether. The motion was passed unanimously. Minutes from the April 9, 2025 meeting were reviewed. Meyer made a motion to approve the minutes. Collins seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Thomas reported that the current balance for the 2024-2025 fiscal year beginning in July is \$1,286.00. No new expenditures were reported.

OLD BUSINESS

Thomas reported that the text was prepared for the Elkader's Founders sign planned to be erected by the Elkader Founders Park. Recognized are John H. Thompson, Clarence Sage, and Timothy Davis. The metal plaque will measure 24 x 24 inches and be made for \$60 by Sports World in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Thomas suggested we postpone making the plaque while he makes contact with the Dubuque historical society to see if they have any images of Thompson, Sage or Davis to include.

Koether inquired whether the sign would be done before the end of the current fiscal year (June 30th). Thomas said no, but the remaining money in the budget might be used to reimburse Schoen for attendance at the Preserve Iowa Summit or perhaps another project.

Thomas said that he had spoken with Ely Garms at the County's Secondary Roads about reuse of the limestone of the small keystone bridge on Drumlin Road. The bridge is deteriorated and the County would like to replace it with a different structure. Potential reuse of the stone for a proposed roadside park along US Highway 18 at Giard with a historical marker for Basil Giard and the Giard Methodist Church was discussed by the Commission and Emma and Scott Koether. Emma Koether is working on this project as an Eagle Scout project. The sign could include an overlay of the map of the Giard Tract awarded to Basil Giard by the Spanish Government over a map of the county.

Scott Koether reported that he had been discussing the project with the County Secondary Roads assistant engineer. Concerns were whether a public easement was needed, a permit to build, potential liability issues, and long-term maintenance of the roadside park. Meyer said that he had discussed the proposed location with the County and that they did not have any issues with it. Scott Koether said that the County is not interested in taking on maintenance. Thomas suggested that perhaps a trust could be created to fund routine long-term maintenance. Collins suggested that the Methodist Church, which owns the property where the wayside park would be sited, should have on record its ownership.

Thomas proposed that the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) sign for the Giard Tract and a sign discussing the history of the Giard Methodist Church could also be erected at the wayside park. This would be a way to promote the Giard community not just the church.

It was decided that Emma Koether should create a base map of the larger project area, possibly using Google Earth, to locate the specific project area for the Iowa DOT to review. Also a project description should be prepared. A budget and schedule would be valuable, especially if grants are sought.

Kathy Koether reported that the State had approved the nomination for NRHP listing of the Giard Methodist Church. The nomination had been prepared by historian Jan Olive Full (Tallgrass Archaeology, LLC). The National Park Service acknowledged receipt of the nomination, but due to reduced staffing and funding of the agency, the nomination would not be reviewed until October.

Thomas said that plans to hire Paula Mohr (Bentonsport Preservation, LLC) as an architectural historian contractor to help with the NRHP nomination of the Elkader Shelter House will be delayed until next fiscal year.

NEW BUSINESS

Thomas reported that he had been in contact with the organization that focuses on Zebulon Pike's exploration of the central part of the United States. Pike explored northeast Iowa before traveling west through present-day Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado.

Thomas proposed erecting plaques identifying rural schools in Clayton County. This idea was contributed by Muscatine County historic preservationists at the recent Preserve Iowa Summit.

Schoen reported on his attendance at the Preserve Iowa Summit held in Muscatine, Iowa June 6 and 7, 2025. He had submitted to the Commissioners a summary of the sessions he had attended in lieu of a long discussion. Schoen focused on the symbiotic relationship between the fish and mussels critical to the pearl button industry that had developed from and centered in Muscatine from around 1890 to 1930. His summary included ideas and historic themes that the Commission might consider for future projects.

Schoen reported on the status of the stabilization of two limestone pier supports that had been undermined by erosion at Motor Mill. In April and May, contractors constructed two concrete block stub walls and poured 8 feet of flowable cement behind aluminum forms to encase and stabilize the two pier supports. This "short-term" (5 to 10 years) solution will be monitored over the next year or two to determine whether the energy of new flood events is diminished and whether other sections of the bedrock ledge face are subject to erosion. Fundraising is on-going to raise an estimated \$200,000 needed for a long-term solution.

Thomas proposed that \$1200 of the current balance of the CCHPC budget (\$1286) be donated to the Motor Mill Foundation, pending approval of this action by the Board of Supervisors.

The next scheduled meeting will be July 11, 2025 at 9:00 am at the Economic Office in Elkader, Iowa.

Koether made a motion to adjourn and Collins seconded it. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted June 13, 2025.

Chris Schoen, Secretary.