

CLAYTON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for August 8, 2025

The August 8, 2025 meeting of members of the Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) was held at the Communal Building for the United Methodist Church in Giard, Iowa between 9:10 and 11:10 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 Brandi Crozier, Scott Koether, and Emma Koether.

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Collins and seconded by Meyer. The motion was passed unanimously. Minutes from the June 13, 2025 meeting were reviewed. Meyer made a motion to approve the minutes. Schoen seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Thomas reported that the current balance for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, which began July 1, was \$2050.00. No new expenditures were reported.

OLD BUSINESS

Thomas commented that Clayton County museums could receive \$500 from the County Board of Supervisors if they requested it. Not all of the museums appear to have done so in the past. Thomas did not have any data to show which museums actively pursue that money and which don't. He did note that museums are very good economic engines for a community.

Thomas proposed that he ask the Board of Supervisors if these funds could pass through the CCHPC and be distributed to each museum for specific projects. His reasoning is that this might stimulate the museums to provide new displays each year to encourage visitors to return to see them. This could also serve to invigorate museum staff and directors, thereby ensuring that a particular museum did not close from disinterest.

Brandi Crozier observed that residents often "dumped" family items from the estate of a deceased relative onto a museum, recognizing that the objects have some historic value. However, frequently the objects do not relate to the theme(s) of that museum. The objects, then, languish in a storage area and create a burden for the museum staff and directors who assume a long-term responsibility for the objects. To address this issue, Thomas said that the policy at the George Meier Rural Heritage Museum was to get a signed document that transfers ownership to the museum with the understanding that the museum could sell or transfer ownership to another museum or individual. The Clayton County Conservation Board/ Motor Mill Foundation have a similar policy.

Scott and Emma Koether reported on the status of the Basil Giard Wayside that Emma has been developing as an Eagle Scout project. Thomas noted that the wayside, which will include a historical marker and other information about the Basil Giard Tract, is being sited on a diamond-shaped parcel north of the United Methodist Church and south of US Highway 18. Also planned are three flagpole, one for the flags of three nations: Spain, which granted the 5,000-acre tract to Giard; France, because Giard

was a French trader and the land was part of the Louisiana Purchase sold by Napoleon; and the United States, which bought the land and developed it after 1833. Mr. Koether said that he could purchase a 27-foot-tall flagpole for \$400 from an individual in Illinois. Emma said that a 20-foot pole was donated by the Hawkeye group of the American Legion. An arched drive or a looped drive will access the wayside to facilitate vehicles with trailers. Limestones from the County DOT will be used around the flagpoles and perhaps to line the wayside. Commission members toured the proposed site and Emma and Scott Koether described what is being done to prepare the site and proposed site design.

Phase I of the Giard Wayside project is scheduled to be done by September 3rd. This phase will include (1) a plan map that shows the proposed design of the project, (2) work to prepare the site and install at least one flagpole, (3) a draft of the text to be used for a historical marker and informational signage about the Giard Tract. Collins suggested a sign that reports that the stone for the project was salvaged from a keystone rock bridge being replaced on Drumlin Road in the county. Thomas reminded the Commission that we have already approved up to \$1000 of our funds for signage.

Thomas said that he had spoken with the Iowa DOT and passed to Emma the contact information for Alan Foote of the Traffic and Safety Bureau. He said he had also contacted Allison Archambo at the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office and she in turn contacted Michael Plummer, who is in charge of the state's Historic Marker Program. The current location for the historical marker for the Giard Tract is in an obscure site in Marquette, Iowa, and is not easily accessed from US Highway 18. Meyer reported that the City of Marquette owns the location for the sign. Thomas reported that the Iowa DOT do not have any issues with moving the historical marker from its location at Marquette, Iowa to the new wayside.

Thomas said that he had spoken with Casey Stickfort at the County's Secondary Roads Department about reuse of the limestone of the small keystone bridge on Drumlin Road for the wayside project. The bridge is deteriorated and the County intends to replace it with a different structure. Eli Garms also supports this proposal. Schoen proposed that the bridge be documented with measurements and photographs before it is dismantled.

Collins suggested that documents associated with the Giard Tract currently located at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City be brought to Clayton County. The SHSI building is being vacated by the State Historic Preservation Office. Many of the books and other documents at the SHSI will be deaccessioned or transferred. The Garnavillo Museum, the Clayton County Genealogical Society, or the McGregor Museum could be an appropriate facility for the Giard documents.

NEW BUSINESS

Crozier reported that the City of McGregor is planning to rehabilitate ah historic horse trough and fountain located in the downtown area. I more recent years, the trough has been used as a planter. The concrete base was damaged and the City is looking to install a limestone base, which was typically used historically. Crozier inquired whether anyone knew of a company that could carve a new limestone base. Thomas suggested that she contact Keith Garms. He said that the Weber Stone Company in Stone City, Iowa, might do the work.

Crozier reported that the Museum Crawl held in June appeared to be an overall success. Thirteen museums in the county participated. The Carter House Museum in Elkader did not because they did not have enough staffing. The museums were pleased with visitor numbers. However, staff at the Earthmoving Legacy Museum in Elkader thought that some people were put off by their admission fee. Crozier noted that some museums did not charge admission during the promotion and relied on donations instead. Several museums rely solely on donations throughout the season/year.

Not every museum offered interactive or play activities for visitors. The activities that were offered were very successful. Some 69 entries were submitted for prizes. Three entries showed that they had visited 6 museums. Crozier requested that photos or videos relating to the Crawl be sent to her.

The Commission thanked Crozier for organizing the event. The consensus of the CCHPC is that the Museum Crawl promotion should be done again next year. Crozier stated that marketing the event was very time consuming. Facebook seemed to be a good venue to advertise the event. Crozier suggested having visitors register to track the number of people participating. Not every museum was consistent in recording visitation. She suggested that a list be generated of things to track for participation data. It was suggested that an App like Venmo, Cashout, or other venue be set up for donations. QR codes should be made available as another way that visitors could send donations.

Schoen reported that the Friends of St Mary's of Guttenberg (FOSM) continues to rehabilitate the former Convent building, which is part of the St. Mary's Catholic Church Historic District. The Parish Council recently agreed to lease the building to FOSM with the understanding that FOSM plans to turn the second floor of the Convent, which had been dormitory rooms for the nuns, into an apartment which FOSM would lease. The rent would cover the costs to maintain and continue improvements to the building and protect the asset value of the structure for the parish.

Thomas reminded the Commission that the German American Museum and the St. Lucas Historical Society will be hosting the Conference on the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation and Restoration of Fort Atkinson on September 17th. Advanced registration is \$20. Collins asked whether the conference would count as continuing education/training for historic preservation. Schoen said that he believed that it did. Collins made a motion to reimburse members of the Commission for attendance. Koether seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

The next scheduled meeting will be September 12, 2025 at 9:00 am at the Economic Office in Elkader, Iowa.

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

Respectfully submitted August 9, 2025.

Chris Schoen, Secretary.