

CLAYTON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for October 17, 2025

The October 17, 2025 meeting of members of the Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) was held at the Marquette Depot and Museum in Marquette, Iowa between 9:00 and 11:30 am. Attending on site were Chair Roger Thomas, Secretary Chris Schoen, Ellen Collins, Ed Ruff, Kathy Koether, and Bob Meyer. Absent was Brandie Backes. Guests were Audry Polsten, Dennis Mason, and Jerry Kruse.

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Collins and seconded by Meyer. The motion was passed unanimously. Minutes from the September 5, 2025 meeting were reviewed. Meyer made a motion to approve the minutes. Koether 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. Koether submitted expenditures associated with developing the Giard Wayside. These included \$272.00 for a US flag and solar flag pole light, \$35.00 for a flagpole, and \$41.36 for plants placed around the base of the flagpole (Total = \$358.36). The Commission had approved expenditures up to \$1000 for developing this project.

Collins submitted expenses incurred to attend the Conference on the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation and Restoration of Fort Atkinson that was held on September 17, 2025 at the German American Museum, St. Lucas, Iowa. The conference was hosted by the St. Lucas Historical Society. Expenses included \$20.00 for registration and mileage. Thomas asked that Meyer and Schoen also submit their expenses for attending the conference.

OLD BUSINESS

The first phase of development of the Giard Wayside has been completed. The next phase will include (1) pulling a large tree stump, (2) some filling and grading, (3) cutting of a few additional trees on the east margin of the site to improve identification of the memorial by traffic approaching from the east, (4) construction of one or two driveways, (5) installing two more flag poles for the French and Spanish flags (to acknowledge that this area was previously owned by these two nations prior to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803), (6) constructing and installing an informational kiosk, and (7) transferring the Giard Tract roadside historical monument from Marquette, Iowa to this location.

Thomas reported that Allison Archambo (Certified Local Government coordinator) of the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office sent a letter stating that SHPO had no concerns about relocating the monument and that it was a local government decision. Koether reported that the Marquette City Council will need to approve transfer of the roadside historical monument to the Giard Wayside.

Thomas said that he had contacted Dr. Julia Badenhope, a professor of landscape architectural design at Iowa State University, to inquire as to whether one of her students might want develop a design concept for the Giard Wayside.

Koether noted that the property for the wayside is owned by German Methodist Episcopal Church at Giard. She said that the church members would continue to mow the wayside area. Currently it is being done by Emma Koether (the Eagle Scout who initiated the wayside development) and her two sisters. Koether and Meyer said that they would meet with the Church Council to update them on the project.

Two representatives from the Northeast Iowa Viet Nam Veterans organization, Dennis Mason and Jerry Kruse, asked if the development of the Giard Wayside could be expanded to include a memorial to the 53 servicemen from the area who were killed during the Viet Nam War. Mason noted that this year was the 50th Anniversary of the end of that conflict. They had recently approached Kathy and Scott Koether and discussed the idea on the 1-1/4-acre site. Veteran Mike Smeltzer had made some rough sketches of the wayside area and how the Viet Nam memorial might be placed in relation to the Giard memorial.

Mason shared a photograph of a memorial, which lists the names of the deceased servicemen, that rests on a small trailer. The veterans proposed constructing a small building (e.g. 12 x 24 feet), in which the mobile memorial could set. Large glass windows would make it possible to view the memorial. Wide doors at one end would permit the trailer to be moved in and out so that the memorial could be used for parades and other commemorative events. A precast concrete pit toilet also would be placed on site. Two or three flag poles would be grouped at the west side of the memorial to provide symmetry to the flag poles at the east side of the Giard memorial. Mason suggested a fundraising event for the project that could also benefit completion of the Giard memorial. He proposed an article in the veteran's magazine as a means to solicit donations. Thomas suggested another source of funding might be through the Scenic Byways program.

Thomas noted that the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) would erect signage to direct travelers on US Highway 18 to the wayside memorials. Schoen suggested that a general name be used in signage, such as the "Giard Wayside Memorial". The "Viet Nam Veterans and Giard Tract Memorial" might also be an option.

Thomas said that the City of Elkader may still have cut stone salvaged from house foundation demolitions that could supplement stone salvaged from the keystone culvert bridge on Drumlin Road which the Clayton County Secondary Roads Department has offered to the project.

Collins made a motion to support the proposed expansion of the Giard Wayside to include the Viet Nam Veterans memorial. Ruff Seconded the motion. It was carried unanimously. Thomas asked Koether and Meyer to represent the CCHPC to develop plans for the combined memorials at the Giard Wayside.

Koether reported that the National Park Service (NPS) is reviewing the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination submitted for the German Methodist Episcopal Church at Giard.

NEW BUSINESS

Thomas reported that a 2026 Museum Crawl was planned for next year. Review of responses about the results of the 2025 Museum Crawl were positive overall. One issue was the high admission price to the

Earthmoving Legacy Museum. Another issue was lack of staffing for some museums so they could not be open for tours. Thomas reported that Effigy Mounds National Monument would like to participate. While the park headquarters and much of the park is in Allamakee County, the Sny Magill mound cluster is in Clayton County. Thomas also said that the Clayton County Development Office has \$1200 tagged for this event.

Thomas said that he had spoken to Allison Archambo, the CLG Coordinator at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the apparent lack of Native American response concerning a proposed cell tower in Clayton County. Of some 28 recognized Native American nations, only the Arapahoe Nation, who have no known cultural interest in the area, responded. Schoen commented that the lack of comment by tribes who have interest in proposed projects in northeast Iowa and elsewhere was not uncommon as the tribes have few staff persons who have time or expertise to review such projects.

Thomas reported that he had received a notice by The Towers, LLC for a proposed cell tower near the northwest corner of Bush Road and Archer Road in Volga, Iowa. The proposed Area of Potential Effect (APE) for construction for the 266-foot-tall self-supported telecommunications tower and associated equipment will set within a 100 x 100-foot area with a 30-foot-wide easement on the south side and east sides. of the tower is 100 x 100 feet. Because the tower will be sited 0.5 miles east of the Sacred Heart Cemetery and the Old Stone School Cemetery, both of which are located on a hill at least 60 feet above the floodplain and tower site, there was concern that the tower might adversely affect the viewshed of one or both cemeteries.

Both Schoen and Collins independently visited the proposed project area to assess the viewshed concern. Schoen reported by email to the Commission that tall trees at the east sides of the two cemeteries, combined with the height of the hill and the distance from the tower site, suggested that the narrow upper portions of the cell tower would probably not adversely distract visitors to either cemetery. Collins reported in the meeting that she also did not think the tower would be a viewshed issue. Further, the property has been cultivated for many, many years so that intact archaeological deposits were unlikely.

Thomas asked whether the Commission thought that the buildings associated with the White Springs Supper Club in northwest McGregor, Iowa should be considered an “endangered property.” As an endangered historic property, it might be eligible for funding to make repairs. The restaurant is one of the few Supper Clubs that operated in NE Iowa. These restaurants were more common in neighboring Wisconsin. The property recently was sold. It is believed that the new owners will continue to operate the restaurant. The roof of the barn on the site near the restaurant appears to need repair/replacing. The condition of the other restaurant and house are unknown.

Thomas proposed sending information about the site to the Iowa Barn Foundation as that organization might provide a grant for the roof replacement. Koether noted that Michelle Petit at the McGregor Historical Society has a large file on the property. It was decided to talk to the new landowners about their plans for the property and suggest funding ideas.

Collins proposed an idea to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the country’s founding. She said that pioneer cemeteries in Clayton County include the graves of 1 veteran of the Revolutionary War and 11

veterans of the War of 1812. Historian David Beck is planning to dress in character to speak about the War of 1812 at the Read Cemetery near Volga. It was proposed by Schoen that a list of these pioneer cemeteries be made available to the public with notations of which cemeteries were accessible to the public and which were on private land. Schoen also suggested that a memorial sign be erected at the Cassville Ferry landing to commemorate the Revolutionary War engagement on the Mississippi River in 1780 where the British prevented supplies from being transported upriver to Prairie du Chien.

The next scheduled meeting will be November 21, 2025 at 9:00 am at the Economic Office in Elkader, Iowa.

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

Respectfully submitted October 18, 2025.

Chris Schoen, Secretary.