

# CLAYTON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes for November 14, 2025

The November 14, 2025 meeting of members of the Clayton County Historic Preservation Commission (CCHPC) was held at the Giard United Methodist Church community building at Giard, Iowa between 9:00 and 10:53 am. Attending on site were Chair Roger Thomas, Secretary Chris Schoen, Ellen Collins, Ed Ruff, Bob Meyer. Brandie Backes attended via cell phone. Kathy Koether was absent. Guests were Correspondent Audry Polsten for the *North Iowa Times*, *Clayton County Register*, and *Guttenberg Press* and seven members of the Northeast Iowa Viet Nam Veterans: Dennis Mason, Mike Schmeltzer, Randy Moose, Mike Steffler, Greg Clark, Gary Mosher, and Jerry Kruse.

A motion was made to approve the agenda by Collins and seconded by Backes. The motion was passed unanimously. Minutes from the October 19, 2025 meeting were reviewed. Meyer made a motion to approve the minutes. Ruff seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Thomas reported that the current balance for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, which began July 1, was \$1903.20 following payment to Schoen and Collins for registration and mileage associated with attendance of 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.

## OLD BUSINESS

Thomas reported that he had applied for a Main Street Challenge Grant with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for development of the proposed improvements to the building occupied by the Schera Restaurant in Elkader, Iowa. Plans are to remodel the storefront, establish a retail business in the current storage area, and create apartments of the second floor.

Thomas said that he had been discussing another Museum Crawl event in 2026 with Brandie Crozier and Darla Kelchen. A letter was sent to the 15 museums in Clayton County that participated in 2025 to ask whether they were interested to do it again. To date, four had responded. Some had concerns about which days and the number of hours they would need to plan staffing for the event. The dates and hours that participating museums will be open and any fees will be advertised by flyers, social media, and other means.

Thomas stated that Susan Snow, the Superintendent of the NPS Effigy Mounds National Monument, would like to participate in the Museum Crawl. While much of the park and the Visitor Information Center (VIC) is located in Allamakee County, the Sny Magill Mound Group associated with the park is in Clayton County. Schoen suggested that a temporary VIC be placed at Sny Magill, particularly as the current VIC will be closed for renovation in 2026 and 2027.

Collins urged the CCHPC to erect signage near where the Turkey River empties into the Mississippi east of Millville to help celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the United States. This location was the site of a Revolutionary War skirmish where British ships intercepted boats carrying supplies for the American garrison in Prairie du Chien. Schoen suggested signage be erected at the Cassville Ferry landing which is just downstream from the battle site. Collins intends to visit the museum at Prairie du Chien to collect information about the skirmish.

Planning continues for the next phase of development of the Giard Wayside situated between US Highway 18 (on the north) and Giard Road on the west and south sides. Private property is on the east side. In November, the CCHPC voted to support the Northeast Iowa Viet Nam Veterans proposal to create a memorial to the veterans of NE Iowa who had died during the Viet Nam War west of the Basil Giard monument being established at this location.

Thomas reported that he and Dennis Mason from the Northeast Iowa Viet Nam Veterans met on site. Mason said that he and Schmeltzer had met with a landscape architect on site to discuss the project. It was proposed that landscape architecture students at Iowa State University might provide concept plans and illustrations for the two memorials. Mason said that this would cost about \$4,000. Schmeltzer provided some preliminary sketches for the veteran's memorial.

Thomas emphasized that the two memorials must be kept as separate projects as the Basil Giard memorial is being completed by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) while the Viet Nam Veterans memorial is being done by the veterans. This separation could be advantageous when seeking funding.

Thomas also expressed concern about parking, particularly for semi-trailer trucks, buses, or 5<sup>th</sup>-wheel campers. Fill would be needed to create off-street parking. Permits and coordination with the Iowa Department of Transportation for signage and with Clayton County Secondary Roads.

Thomas proposed changing the name of the project area from the "Giard Wayside" to something like the "Giard Memorial Park" to capture the expanded nature of the project.

Thomas stated that he had spoken with Jennifer Cowsert, the Elkader City Manager, regarding access to limestone salvaged from demolished buildings that the City has saved to be used at the memorial site. It is available to be used. Thomas also reported that the cut limestone blocks from the keystone bridge/culvert on Drumlin Road will also be available when it is demolished, courtesy of the Clayton County Roads Department.

Thomas inquired as to who would assume responsibility for maintenance activities at the site. Currently members of the Giard United Methodist Church, which owns the property, do the mowing. Meyer said that he and Kathy Koether would work with the Church to get permission for the Viet Nam Veterans memorial. The Church had already approved the Basil Giard memorial project. Schoen asked if the Church might give a long-term easement to the veterans for the memorial park.

Greg Clark said that he would approach the Veteran's Commission with regard to supporting the project. Thomas said he and Mason should meet with the Clayton County Board of Supervisors and Secondary

Roads to discuss the project and determine whether there were any zoning issues, whether they would provide fill, and get the Board's approval for the project.

Thomas asked who would be responsible to fund costs associated with liability insurance and power for lighting. Mason proposed setting up a perpetual fund. Thomas asked who would write grants and do fundraising. Collins inquired whether an attorney would work on the legal details of the project.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Thomas said that he and Collins had inspected the proposed location of a cell tower at 33001 Evergreen Road. Neither reported any concerns. Collins made a motion to report that the CCHPC had no objections to construction as planned. Meyer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Thomas stated that he is writing an Endangered Properties Nomination for the former barn at the White Springs Supper Club in McGregor, Iowa to be submitted to the Preserve Iowa program. He said that the natural limestone caves at the site were used by Native Americans prior to settlement. The caves were expanded when the West McGregor Brewery was established in 1857. The 20x24-foot limestone barn was constructed in 1910. The supper club was established in 1936. The roof of the barn is collapsing. The nomination is due December 5, 2025.

Thomas reported that he was planning the budget request to the Clayton County Board of Supervisors for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. He planned to request \$200 for office supplies, \$200 for event advertising, \$800 for travel, \$50 for training, and \$700 for hosting the CCHPC website. Thomas indicated that the County might host the website for the CCHPC. Schoen suggested that the organization not request the \$700 for that purpose if the County would perform that service for CCHPC.

The next scheduled meeting will be December 12, 2025 at 9:00 am at the Community Center in Garnavillo, Iowa.

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

Respectfully submitted November 21, 2025.

Chris Schoen, Secretary.