

## MINUTES

### KENTWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

January 9, 2023

Present: Karleen Root, Debi Crawford-Poyner, Dwell Moore, Erika Plunkett (remote)

Absent: Dave Van Dyke

Others present: Lisa Golder, Bill Rohn

#### 1. Roll Call

Visitor Bill Rohn was present. He had visited the Heritage Room while Gerry was there on a Saturday.

#### 2. Approval of minutes

A motion was made by Karleen Root with support from Debi Crawford-Poyner to approve the minutes of December 5, 2022.

--Motion Carried--

#### 3. Digitization of Oral Histories

Lisa said that she had gone through the city's digital files and updated the list of oral histories to determine how many have been digitized. Now it appears that there are 65 cassette tapes that need to be digitized. Debi has a contact from DVS Inc., Paul LaVigne. The company provides customized, digital media services and is located on Hall Street in Grand Rapids. They said they would give the city a rate of \$30 per tape. Lisa wanted clarification if this is just one tape or an entire interview. The cassettes are probably of different lengths. Debi will check on this. Lisa talked to the Purchasing Department (Carla Kane) at the city. A project under \$1,500 would require getting three quotes and then the Planning Department can sign off on it. With higher amounts, the Mayor or the City Commission would have to approve. Carla found some services that seemed to be less expensive—as little as \$15 a tape, or \$18 per tape for up to 80 minutes long. The city generally tries to select the lowest bid in order to use taxpayers' dollars wisely. However, there may be benefit in this case for going with a local company. Debi said that DVS may be more likely to work with a low-quality tape to improve the sound or to let us know if the tape is so poor as to be un-usable. The Commission would be assured that the tapes were not lost in the mail because they could be hand-delivered if a local company was chosen. There was discussion regarding this. Lisa said that we will have to do a request for proposal to get three quotes. We may want to specify that we would like to know whether the tape is usable before it is recorded, or even try to listen to the tapes ourselves to figure out whether the quality was good. We will want the tapes to be digital but the type of format would have to be specified. Erika asked about cloud storage.

The Commission discussed other aspects of the project including how to use the information after it is collected, storage of the information on the city's servers or in an external hard drive, whether there is a

Word document of all of the transcripts or a pdf, making the written document a searchable document so people can look up specific names, areas, etc. when searching the oral histories, how and where the transcripts are stored currently. It was agreed that this is a good project because we want to preserve this information, and the tapes may be degrading over time.

While we do not have a budget item specific to the digitization of the tapes, there is budget money set aside for retaining and preserving documents, and we can access that. If there are not enough funds to do this fiscal year, we can do some this year and some next year.

It was suggested Lisa and Debi meet with Mr. LaVigne to discuss the process.

Lisa will work with the purchasing department to develop a request for proposal for the digitization of the oral history tapes. She will send the document to the HPC for review. By the next meeting, it is possible we may have some responses to the request for bid. Lisa will also go through the tapes and make sure we have all the cassettes; some of them may be lost over time.

#### 4. New calendar for 2024

The HPC discussed the calendar. For the 2022 calendar, City branding was recommended. It is unclear whether the city wants the HPC to give away the calendar or to sell it. If it is required to be branded, Sabo PR would have to help the Commission with this. They would also be excellent proofreaders of the calendar. We had discussed a now and then format. The Commissioners were asked to look through the 2022 calendar to see what pictures would work for a now and then calendar. It would be best to look for pictures where the old building may still be standing, albeit changed. We will come back with a list. Dwell suggested a field trip to each of the sites to see what camera angle would be appropriate to do the now and then photos. Lisa will talk to the new Deputy Administrator regarding the project and whether the city has an issue with participating or whether the calendar is sold or not. If it is to be branded with the city logos and colors we will need permission to work with Sabo PR on it and determine whose budget will pay for that work.

Erika suggested that one of the calendar pictures could be the former Tassell home, now the Three-2 Ranch. She can ask the owner if there is an interest. We do have some older pictures of the home. Erika said she would ask for a tour of the home for the Commission if there is interest in the tour.

We could also put the churches of Kentwood in the calendar, as discussed last meeting. Lisa said that the city is ok with the idea but warns that we should be as inclusive as possible in selecting churches for the calendar. There are several churches that have been in the city for over 100 years so that might be a good place to start. Many of the churches already have their histories written and have pictures that we could potentially use.

#### 5. Patterson Farm designation

Lisa provided the Commission with information on the Patterson family and the Patterson farm. She described some of the steps that would need to occur if the city were to designate the home as a historic resource. It is unclear whether the owner would be in favor of it. It may reduce the developable land on the site, since it is located on higher ground relatively close to 28<sup>th</sup> Street and there is an interest in

commercial development of at least some of the site. Lisa would like to see if the Historic Commission can look inside the house. If the house is not designated as historic, then the Commission should document its existence through photos and any artifacts that could be donated to the city.

There was discussion about the Patterson family tree and any future development, and whether the family would be interested in the preservation of the home. The home is not a grand building, but is a simple farmhouse, but this is the farming history of the City of Kentwood.

The city would have no interest in owning the property. A developer would need to find a use for the home within the development. The home could potentially be moved.

If there is interest in designation there are some tax credits available from the state of Michigan, but the credits have been used up for 2022 and 2023.

There was discussion regarding the Tassell property and whether there would be interest in designation of the home as a historic resource. It is unclear whether the home would qualify for tax credits because the work was done so long ago. The tax credits were just reinstated during the Whitmer administration. Still, it may be of interest to the current owners. They would need to understand that the designation could limit what they can do to the outside of the building.

There was discussion about getting the oral histories of some members of the Tassell family, who grew up in the area and may have many stories to tell about the family, the house, the manufacturing plant (Lescoa) and the city.

Erika will ask about getting a tour of the Tassell home, preference would be weekends or evenings in March. Lisa will see if it would be possible for the Commission to get to look inside the Patterson farmhouse.

Debi will not be available in February,

Next meeting:

The next KHPC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 6, 2023 at 6:00PM in the Heritage Room of the Library.

Action Items for February:

Inventory of cassette tapes and lengths

Determine format of existing transcriptions and where they are

RFP for digitization, selection of contractors

Meet with DVS?

Send RFP to Historic Commission

Review calendar—note photos that can be used for then and now

Talk to Shay about branding of calendar and budget

Talk to Mayor about historic designation of Patterson Farm and whether the HPC should tour home

Newsletter topics:

Octagon House

Airport History

Diversity in Kentwood

Paris Township name

Heyboer Farm

Historic Preservation Commission

Snowstorm of 1978

Library history

Relocating the VanderLaan barn

Grange

Gypsum mines

Strong Mayor

Landfill

Township structure

City Hall

Train wreck

Heritage Room

Heyboer family

Plank roads

Civil War Veterans

Bowen House