

**HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
October 8, 2012, 6:00 p.m.**

DRAFT MINUTES

In accordance with PA 169, Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, The Historic District Study Committee held a Public Hearing on October 8, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. The purpose of the hearing was to gather public comment on the preliminary report of the Historic District Study Committee in regards to the 600 Block of Ludington Street.

PRESENT: Chairman Peter Strom, Delta County Historical Society; Karen Lindquist, Delta County Historical Society; Blaine DeGrave, City of Escanaba Community Planning; Carolyn Stacey, Escanaba Public Library.

ALSO PRESENT: Stephen Buckbee, Chair, Escanaba Planning Commission, Patrick Connor, Escanaba Planning Commission, Brady Nelson, Escanaba City Council, Pete Baker, Escanaba City Council, Ron Beauchamp, Escanaba City Council, Jim O'Toole, Escanaba City Manager.

ABSENT: Donald Curran, Historic District Study Committee Member

Chairperson Strom opened the public hearing at 6:00 p.m. and stated the purpose of the hearing.

1. PRELIMINARY REPORT OVERVIEW

Following a slide show of historic photos from the 600 Block of Ludington, Mr. Strom elaborated on the recommendations for City Council found in the executive summary of the preliminary report:

- Designate the 600 Block of Ludington Street as an area to include in an application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Request that the consultant retained by the State Historic Preservation Office use this report as an aid in applying to nominate downtown Escanaba on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Request that the Escanaba Downtown Development Authority investigate the feasibility of applying for Certified Local Governmental Status as an additional tool for advancing historic preservation in the downtown district;
- Encourage property owners within the 600 Block of Ludington Street to take advantage of the tax credits and other economic incentives available through the process of historic preservation, to preserve and improve their buildings on the 600 Block of Ludington Street.
- As detailed in the attached report, the Historic Study Committee does not recommend creation of a local historic district for the 600 Block of Ludington Street at this time. The committee has determined that it would be better to support a broad approach to historical downtown. This approach recommends that the downtown, as a whole, (rather than just the 600 block) be included in the application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Strom opened the hearing for public comment at 6:20 p.m. Ron Beauchamp, speaking as a city resident, stated that he had attended the Historic District Commission meeting where State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultant Bill Rutter had presented his recommendations for boundaries for the National Historic Register nomination process and inquired how those recommendations fit into the Study Committee's recommendations. Blaine DeGrave stated that the boundaries for the potential National Register designation were larger in the original request for proposal issued by SHPO. Mr. Rutter and Bob Christensen of SHPO have since determined that the larger boundaries will not be possible within the scope of the project and that the study would be limited to Ludington Street only. Mr. DeGrave also provided some clarification on the difference between local historic districts and national historic register status.

Brady Nelson inquired about the tax credits involved with local historic district designation. Mr. Strom explained that the credits are on a percentage basis and referenced detailed handouts available through the Study Committee.

Patrick Connor inquired if local historic district status could be applied to residential areas, such as the homes on Lake Shore Drive across from Ludington Park. Mr. Strom replied that while future efforts could target residential areas, this particular study does not. Mr. O'Toole stated that a historic district overlay, which would include residential areas, is mentioned in the master plan for the City.

Mr. O'Toole asked Mr. DeGrave to elaborate on the "honorary vs. compulsory" nature of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) designation. Mr. DeGrave explained that a NRHP district will not carry any property restrictions or oversight to the buildings within the district (this comes only with a local historic district designation). Listing in the NRHP is an honorary program that does not prevent a property owner from altering or managing their property in any way.

Mr. Baker inquired about the amount of money that has been invested in this project to date and how much would be required in the future. Mr. DeGrave explained that the NRHP study has been 100% funded by the SHPO. There was no actual dollar amount attached to the award; SHPO is contracting with the consultant independently. Mr. Strom acknowledged the "in-kind" contributions of the volunteers and city staff involved in the project.

Mr. O'Toole inquired about the next steps. Mr. Strom explained that the report will now be sent to the City Council for their review and action, at which time, if approved, it will become the final report of the Committee.

Mr. DeGrave thanked Mr. Strom and members of the Historic District Study Committee for their work.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Public Hearing was concluded and closed at 6:35 p.m

Submitted by Carolyn Stacey, Secretary, Historic District Study Committee

