

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF GROSSE POINTE HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE  
Wednesday, January 13, 2021 HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM.

Chair Dale Scrace called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Dale Scrace, Chair  
George Bailey, Kay Burt-Willson, Brian Connors, Julie Jones, Bob Lucas, Terri Steimer

Committee Members Absent: None

Also Present: Pete Dame, City Manager; Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation

AGENDA

1. Introductions – Chair Scrace welcomed everyone to the first historic district study committee meeting, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

George Bailey represents the Grosse Pointe Historical Society on the study committee as the designee required under state law. He is an architect and has projects in historic districts in Detroit; Columbus, OH; and Savannah, GA. He is a history aficionado and serves on the Grosse Pointe Woods Historic District Commission and Planning Commission.

Kay Burt-Willson is a resident on Rivard and active in the Grosse Pointe Historical Society. A retired teacher she has a deep interest in history and is an advocate of historic preservation.

Brian Connors has a keen interest in the preservation of historical properties in Grosse Pointe and has lived in the Grosse Pointes all of his life. He lives in the historic district study area. He is a CPA and is a Managing Director and Shareholder at Conway MacKenzie, Inc.

Bob Lucas has been a resident of the Grosse Pointes for 48 years, of which 30 were in the City of Grosse Pointe. He is a realtor specializing in residential real estate for Higbie Maxon Agney. He is a retired Certified Public Accountant and a former State Certified Property Tax Assessor. He has been a longtime admirer of the beautiful older homes in the Grosse Pointes.

Dale Scrace, Chair of the Committee is a registered architect and worked on many historic projects in his practice. He served on the Grosse Pointe City Council for 28 years, including serving as Mayor for 16 years.

Terri Steimer has lived in Grosse Pointe City for 23 years and is a retired history teacher from Grosse Pointe North High School. Before living in Grosse Pointe, she resided in the community of Romeo where she lived in an historic home in the historic district and was a member of the planning commission and historical society. Her sense of community and historic preservation are the factors that prompted her to serve on this committee.

Julie Jones is a lifelong resident of Grosse Pointe and a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Michigan who specializes in building envelope systems. She has ten years of experience as an architectural engineer and has worked on a number of historic buildings projects in designated historic districts.

Pete Dame, Grosse Pointe City Manager, provides staff assistance to the committee and previously worked in a community with historic districts.

Kristine Kidorf, principal of Kidorf Preservation Consulting, an architectural historian meeting the historic expertise qualifications required by law and has thirty years of preservation experience with multiple municipalities.

2. Review of study committee duties – Dame explained that the Historic Study Committee is a public body and subject to Open Meeting requirements including minute taking. Dame shared how the City Council requested the investigation in the summer of 2020 of whether to create a historic district in area designated as the City’s estate district as a means to prevent demolitions of original estate homes and as an added tool to preserve the character of that area.

Kristine Kidorf used a powerpoint slide presentation, which Kidorf stated would be posted on the City website for reference, to explain the duties of the Historic District Study Committee, as set out in Michigan law for establishment of historic districts. After an intensive level survey is conducted collecting data and pictures for each property in the study area, the committee issues a preliminary report. The preliminary report of the study committee is circulated for comment and a public hearing would be held on it not less than 60 days after its approval. After consideration of public comment, then the Historic District Study Committee makes a recommendation on creating a district to City Council in a final committee report.

3. Review of Draft Intensive Level Survey Report – Kidorf continued to use the powerpoint slide presentation to review the results of the collection of data so far in the draft intensive level survey report. She stated that a few properties in the study area were missing with addresses on Maumee and Jefferson needed to be added. She noted that several streets in the study area set by Council are not eligible to be included in a district including Stratford, Wellington and Elmsleigh due to the newer age of those developments. Using three Secretary of Interior criteria for historic districts, the draft intensive survey report demonstrates a significant portion of the study area could qualify for historic district status. 56 of 92 homes would contribute to a potential historic district – with Kidorf noting those numbers will change after updating the draft survey. The draft intensive survey report and presentation outlined an eligible district between Maumee and Lake St. Clair and from Lakeland to Lincoln using a period of significance from 1898 to 1940. The district would meet the criteria for 1) the association of the homes with the early development of Grosse Pointe, 2) the association of the residences with key figures in the development of Detroit and Grosse Pointe, and, 3) the significant number of those properties were the original large homes designed by many noted architects. Kidorf noted that the potential border of Maumee on the north related to the later platting of those properties known as the Grosse Pointe Colony.

Committee member Connors asked if there was a minimum of properties that needed to be contributing to a district versus non-contributing. Kidorf replied that there is no set rule but it is best to have at least a majority of resources in the district be considered contributing.

4. Study committee next steps - Kidorf pointed out areas in the reports and survey data where she sought any additional information Study Committee members had or could research to add to and correct information. Specifically, Kidorf mentioned any details to add to the survey sheets on important people who may have lived in the homes being reviewed, about 2 properties on Lakeland south of Jefferson, walls on Jefferson and Maumee, and about changes to 333 Washington. She also asked for detailed biographical information from each member.
5. Set next meeting date – The Committee set Monday, February 15, 2021 at 7 pm as the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT - Before public comment, Chair Scrace noted that this was the first, organizational meeting. Comments, concerns and questions are appreciated and would be considered by the Committee. Scrace also pointed out that a FAQ section already has started on the City website. Dame noted answers would be added to the FAQ as more questions are raised.

Larry Dowers, 243 Lakeland has information to share on 243 Lakeland and 203 Lakeland. Suggests finding ways to engage residents about the district.

Benjamin Gravel, resident on St. Clair, founder of the Grosse Pointe Architecture group on Facebook, has lots of information that could add to the intensive level survey.

Karen Yoo, 340 Lakeland, submitted questions to be answered, and concerned residents were asked before beginning the study.

George Yoo, 340 Lakeland, expressed concern on undue burden on homeowners and whether enough homes contribute to qualify for district.

Rick Ruffner, 355 Lakeland, asked about role of residents in district decision, whether City could just alternatively require architect to be on building projects, and whether City would provide historic building contractor resources.

Cat Ruffner, 355 Lakeland, wants to be sure everyone is notified and let everyone be involved.

Peter Huebner, 341 Lakeland, concerned that a historic district infringes on property rights, and concerned about how style requirements can be legislated with some many architectural types within the area.

Cassandra Brown, 334 Lakeland, concerned that it would have made it more difficult and costly to do the rehab on their house that was on the market for 17 months and in the manner they did it with a different driveway and garage. Also expressed concerns about finding contractors to work on old houses.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Committee was adjourned at approximately 8:29 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by:

Peter J. Dame, City of Grosse Pointe City Manager