

Sugar Hill Historic Preservation Society Meeting
Wednesday, March 20 2019, 7:00 P.M.
City of Sugar Hill City Hall – History Room
Meeting Minutes

I. Approval of the Agenda

Chris Walker, Sugar Hill Historic Preservation Society (SHHPS) Chairman, convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. He announced that Holli Stouffer, Margaret Neal, Tiffany Hale Carter, and Ed Lanfear were unable to attend the meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Stephanie Isaacs, board member, made the motion to approve the agenda. Brandon Hembree, Sugar Hill City Councilman, seconded it. The agenda was approved unanimously.

The following individuals were in attendance:

NAME

Jennifer Alsobrook	Special Guest
Katharine Alsobrook	Special Guest
Kathryn Baskin	Secretary/Board Member
Charlie Butts	Guest Member
Ryan Butts	Guest Member
Varessa Butts	Guest Member
Ryckie Fernandez	Board Member
Bill Harting	Guest Member
Brandon Hembree*	Board Member/City Liaison
Stephanie Isaacs*	Board Member
Kim Landers	City Staff
Darrell Pruitt	Vice-chairman/Board Member
Chris Walker	Chairman/Board Member

*Indicates committee chair

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chris Walker asked for approval of the February 20, 2019, meeting minutes. Ryckie Fernandez, board member, moved for the meeting minutes to be approved and Stephanie Isaacs, board member, seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted without objection.

III. Girl Scout Gold Award/Special Guests

Chris Walker introduced special guests, Katharine Alsobrook and her mother, Jennifer Alsobrook, to the SHHPS members. He explained that Katharine was proposing a Girl Scout Gold Award project and wanted to create a scavenger hunt as a walking/driving tour around the City of Sugar Hill. Katharine Alsobrook described her proposed "Sugar Hill Scavenger Hunt" project as having the goal of creating an informative and entertaining way to learn about the culture and history of our hometown, Sugar Hill. She added that the inspiration for her idea was a similar walking tour/scavenger hunt that she participated in when in Austin, Texas, as well as museum scavenger hunts she did when she was younger. Miss Alsobrook said that the Girl Scout's gold award is the highest service award to obtain.

Miss Alsobrook included on her project description handout the following ideas for stops on the scavenger hunt:

- City Hall – starting point

- Original Sugar Hill School
- Kile-Benson Family Cemetery
- Calaway Family Cemetery
- Shelley-Howerton Home
- Champion Red Oak Tree
- Gold mine(s)
- Sugar Hill Greenway
- Sugar Hill wagon
- E-Center
- EE Robinson park(s)
- The Bowl in Sugar Hill
- Sugar Hill ice rink (during season)

Following Miss Alsobrooks’s description of her proposal for a Girl Scout’s Gold Award, members opened up a discussion. Katharine and members discussed the possibility of organizing the tour into both a walking and driving tour since some of the destinations are not in walking distance of city hall. Several members suggested having a symbol to indicate a certain site. Ryckie Fernandez referred to the dolphin spickets in Savannah and Ryan Butts, guest member, gave an example of mice sculptures like in Greenville, South Carolina. Chris Walker posed the idea of partnering with the Art Commission on developing the tour markers. Varessa Butts, guest member, suggested that a duck would be appropriate for Sugar Hill since the community has such an affinity for the resident duck “George,” the city’s mascot. Councilman Hembree added that he thought these types of symbols help indicate to people that they are in the right place.

Ryan Butts inquired if Miss Alsobrook had considered having a GPS enabled function for an app so that people would receive an alert when they were in the right location.. Miss Alsobrook responded that she was still researching the possibility of developing an app for the project. Kathryn Baskin asked Miss Alsobrook what was the timeline for her project. Miss Alsobrook responded that it had to be completed by the Summer of 2021. Ms. Baskin suggested that the tour could be part of another event such as the city’s Sugar Rush which is usually held in October. In addition, Ms. Baskin told Miss Alsobrook that members would provide letters of support for the project if needed. Councilman Hembree offered to write a letter of recommendation.

In closing, Chris Walker told Miss Alsobrook that SHHPS members were excited to support her and thanked Miss Alsobrook for introducing her project to the Society. Mr. Walker asked that she provide updates whenever possible.

IV. Treasurer’s Report

Chris Walker announced that Joann Burel, SHHPS Treasurer, was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a written report. He said the report indicated that there is a balance of \$10,000 as of March 20, 2019. Ms. Baskin, SHHPS Secretary, made a motion to approve the treasurer’s report and the motion was seconded by Stephanie Isaacs.

V. Committee Chair Reports

Mr. Walker commented that the next item on the agenda was for the committee chairs to report their progress thus far. He announced that Tiffany Hale Carter, Chair of the Museum Committee, was unable to attend the meeting. He called on Brandon Hembree to give an update.

Museum Committee – Councilman Hembree reported that there were no new activities to report. He added that the next step would be a meeting with city staff to discuss SHHPS ideas and provide input on the design and displays for the museum.

Research Committee –At this time Chairman Walker called on Stephanie Isaacs, Chair of the Research Committee, to provide her report. Ms. Isaacs announced that she had followed up on Varessa Butts idea for the committee to meet at a public library to learn how to research historic records. She informed members that she had polled the committee and had determined that the meeting would be scheduled for April 10, 2019, at 7:00 p.m., at the Collin Hills library. Ms. Isaacs added that staff from the Buford library also would participate. She said one of the primary goals of the event would be to provide instructions on how to conduct research with the use of microfilm. Ms. Isaacs advised that she would send out an announcement with the details and that she would provide any handouts to all members.

In addition, Ms. Isaacs reported that she was developing a spreadsheet which would include the research topics for committee members to work on. She told members that she would be involved in all the research topics and provide guidance when needed. Ms. Isaacs advised the group that she had been conducting some work on the “Then and Now” topic and had taken a photo of the new First Avenue sign so that it could be contrasted with the old one stored in the museum. She mentioned that she intended to do the same with the gas station that use to be in the location where the Home Spun restaurant and the Pit Stop store are presently located. Ms. Isaacs continued with comments regarding her investigation of the accidents at Mangum Crossing including one in 1908 and the 1970s one when five girls from Cumming were killed. Councilman Hembree shared a photo of a truck crossing the bridge that was built over the Crossing.

Next, Ms. Isaacs told the group that she had begun the task of developing an excel spreadsheet to archive the inventory of historic items that had been collected and donated to the city. She told members that Ms. Baskin had worked with her to collect some of the information. Ms. Isaacs emphasized that the spreadsheet would be a “work in progress” and would require regular updating and confirmation. She said that she will be going to the Sugar Hill Community Center to explore the files that are located at that facility.

Also, Ms. Isaacs advised members that she continues to collect articles and books related to the city’s history as well as in general. She explained that she had obtained books related to African Americans in Gwinnett as well as Native Americans at the time. Ms. Isaacs noted that she had purchased a book on the Atlanta prohibition to support some of the research on moonshining, one of the research topics related to the history of Sugar Hill. She informed the group that she had numerous articles that she had saved on various topics and that she would share those with the committee members researching specific topics.

Following this discussion, Ms. Isaacs told the members that she had worked on a project in the past with the Lawrenceville Seminary that involved her identifying and photographing tin roof structures in the county. She remarked that her independent project might be something that could be taken up in partnership with the Art Commission in the future if there is interest. While searching for these types of structures, Ms. Isaacs noted that the old wood house across from the construction ongoing at the former Buice school site had caught her interest. Ms. Isaacs said that she had researched the Robinson property on Level Creek Road and reported that the house was built in 1910 and included 37 acres of property valued at approximately \$800,000 today. In addition, Ms. Isaacs reported that during her search for these structures that she came across the Suddereth property on Suwanee Dam Road near Highway 20. While she was exploring and taking

photos, Ms. Isaacs stated that she had met Cereta Suddereth, who offered to help with future research related to her family's property. Varessa Butts suggested that SHHPS invite Cereta Suddereth and Maron Buice, a relative, to attend SHHPS meetings in the future.

Ms. Isaacs continued by telling members that she had photographed a garage with a tin roof behind a house on Whitehead Road that will be demolished soon. Kim Landers commented that the house was in downtown Sugar Hill and she had prepared the ad for the designer review for it. She stated that the legal description included the property beside it which was owned by her grandfather in 1918. Ms. Landers stated that according to the legal ad, the property was part of a subdivision in 1918. Ms. Isaacs said that she had met a gentleman that lived nearby named Cleon Adkins and he would probably be a good source for information. She added that the house currently on the property was built in 1945.

Scholarship Committee – Next, Mr. Walker announced that Holli Stouffer, Chair of the Scholarship Committee, was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Baskin stated that Ms. Stouffer had asked her to give an update on the committee's progress. She reported that activities were on schedule and that the committee was now in the marketing phase of the project. Ms. Baskin reported that the scholarship had been posted on-line and that the SHHPS web site had been updated and listed current board members. She said that Ms. Stouffer had contacted the principals at North Gwinnett High School, Lanier High School, Buford High School, and the Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology. Ms. Baskin added that Ms. Butts was developing a press release on the scholarship that would be submitted to numerous media outlets.

Digital Archives Committee – Chairman Walker advised the group that Ed Lanfear was unable to continue as Chairman of the Digital Archives Committee. He announced that Margaret Neal had agreed to serve as chair. Darrell Pruitt, SHHPS Vice-Chairman, asked to be added to the digital archives committee.

Ms. Neal was unable to attend the meeting so Mr. Walker called upon Councilman Hembree to give an update. Mr. Hembree told the group that Ned, the city's IT director, was willing to help with the digital archives committee work. Mr. Pruitt commented that he thought that the information needed to be posted where it is easily accessible. Councilman Hembree suggested that the society might have its own web site at some point. He added that the committee needs to meet so that a concept can be developed and presented to the IT Director. Mr. Pruitt and members expressed the need to ensure that a SHHPS would still be linked to the city. Ryan Butts commented that perhaps a link could be provided on the city's web site that would link people to the SHHPS separate web site. Varessa Butts told the group that she thought the Sugar Hill Art Commission maintained its own web page.

Next, Councilman Hembree told members that the Sugar Hill citizen interviews should fall under the purview of the Digital Archives Committee in the future. Stephanie Isaacs passed along the names of potential interviewees to Kathryn Baskin to include in the minutes and which are listed below:

- J.W. Bailey
- Maron Buice
- Jean Terrell
- Anelle Stripland
- Wayne Hill
- Gloria McDaniel

- Warren Johnson
- Joann Burel
- Cleon Atkins
- Louis Grizzle
- Ed Breedlove

Cemetery Committee - At this time, Chairman Walker asked City Councilman and Committee Chair, Brandon Hembree, to give an update. Councilman Hembree began with an update on the Calaway cemetery and the Suwanee Creek Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) clean-up days on March 2nd and March 9th. He told members that Stephanie Isaacs had helped with the cleaning of the grave markers. Mr. Hembree reported that the Gwinnett Historical Society planned to provide signs for the cemetery as well as an old school house that had been located there at one time. He added that the location had once been known as Pigeon Mountain.

Mr. Hembree continued his report in noting that he had become aware of a location of a slave cemetery that was near Settles Bridge Road and Moore Road. He said that he had learned through the DAR that there were probably over 100 graves located at the site and that it could possibly be the largest slave cemetery in Georgia. Mr. Hembree mentioned that the DAR indicated that they may want to work with SHHPS to organize a clean-up day in the future.

Councilman Hembree continued with a discussion of DAR activities that would involve the city. He said that there would be a Memorial Day Celebration on May 27th that would include a wreath laying and placement of flags on veteran graves. He provided SHHPS members with a list of graves for veterans that are buried in the Sugar Hill Historic Cemetery. The councilman continued by reporting that activities for Veteran's Day on November 11th included a 5K as well as the unveiling of the veteran's memorial. He said that he believed there were 120 veterans buried in the city's historic cemetery.

In addition, Mr. Hembree told the members that the DAR planned one more clean-up at the Kile/Benson Cemetery. He said this effort would include the laying of more pea gravel. The councilman told members that the DAR plans to take up some more shrubs and connect the clean-up day with the Gwinnett Days of Service event.

Next, Mr. Hembree reported that the Calaway Cemetery is not actually in the City of Sugar Hill but rather in Buford. He told the group that the annex package that was currently being considered in the Georgia General Assembly did not include this property. Councilman Hembree advised that he would be working with the City of Buford and the Kile-Benson descendants on the issue. He provided everyone with a copy of a boundary survey for the Kile/Benson Family Cemetery indicating its legal location.

Mr. Walker commented that last year SHHPS had purchased stone markers for the unmarked graves in the Kile-Benson cemetery. He said there were three markers for the unknown persons buried in the graves. Chairman Walker showed the group one of the markers which will be placed on one of the unmarked graves.

VI. Further Discussion/Questions

Chairman Walker announced that the City of Sugar Hill's red oak tree had officially been designated as a "Champion Tree" and that the notification just had occurred. He said that the city planned to

connect the announcement with Arbor Day on April 26th and intended to have a “sister” tree planting of a red oak at a different location in the city. Ms. Baskin inquired if SHHPS still planned to provide a marker at the location of the tree. Ryckie Fernandez asked who had responsibility for the marker and would it be a SHHPS marker. Mr. Pruitt responded that it had to be officially announced as a “Champion Tree” before we could place a marker for it. Varessa Butts asked if the surrounding area would become a “pocket” park. Councilman Hembree affirmed that he thought the city would make it one. Bill Harting, guest member, asked if there would be a fence surrounding the tree to protect it. Councilman Hembree said that it had not been discussed but was a possibility. Mr. Walker also commented that the pecan tree at the Shelley-Howerton property also is a Champion Tree. He said he thought a marker would be appropriate at the site.

Next, Chairman Walker showed members the Native American artifacts including a game piece and arrowheads that were donated by Dwayne Cash. He noted that these types of artifacts were found near the Sugar Hill golf course and Riverside. Ms. Isaacs commented that she had noticed an archaeology book at the library that included information on the relationship of an arrowhead to a tribe based on the carving. She noted that she would add the artifacts to the inventory.

Under New Business, Councilman Hembree advised the group that Georgia Senator Renee Unterman had introduced a resolution to name the bridge at Mangum’s crossing for Maron Buice, who would be moving to Blue Ridge in the near future. He said that Senator Unterman wanted to commemorate Mr. Buice because of his effort to make the community safer when the five girls from Cumming, Georgia, were killed trying to cross the railroad tracks in a car. Mr. Hembree noted that Mr. Buice was a driving force to gain community support to build a bridge to make the area safer. He suggested that the dedication of the bridge would be a good opportunity for the society to interview Mr. Buice. Mr. Fernandez asked if this was the bridge that is currently near the intersection of Peachtree Industrial and Highway 20 where RaceTrac is located. Councilman Hembree responded that it was. Ms. Landers commented that Maron Buice had posted some articles about the bridge on his Facebook page about six months ago. She added that he included a lot of Sugar Hill history in his postings and she encouraged members to follow him on Facebook.

Councilman Hembree reminded members that the city of Sugar Hill will be celebrating its 80th birthday on Sunday, March 24. He said the celebration will be held in downtown Sugar Hill on the Plaza at the E-Center. Mr. Hembree said that the birthday will be a simple festivity with cake for those attending.

Ms. Baskin announced that the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center was featuring a presentation by Michael Gagnon, Ph.D., on Thursday, March 21 at 6:30 p.m. She stated that Dr. Gagnon’s presentation would be on the History of Gold Mines in Gwinnett County and she encouraged members to attend.

Ms. Baskin added that she had been elected as secretary of the Gwinnett Historical Society on Monday, March 18. Councilman Hembree told Ms. Baskin that he had tried to contact people at the Gwinnett Historical Society regarding items that Bruce Howerton said he had given to the society. Ms. Baskin announced that she would be going to the Gwinnett Historical Society to talk to them about allowing SHHPS access to the items. Ms. Baskin also described the historic churches tour that she and Margaret Neal recently took. She informed the members that the State of Georgia, Department of Tourism, sponsors and arranges for the tours with some counties and that another tour would be available in the Fall.

In closing, Ms. Isaacs commented that there was a song called *Final Run* written about Ben Drewberry, the engineer on the 1908 crash, and that it was recorded by Johnny Cash. Ms. Isaacs also mentioned that she had found a burial where the person died in Sugar Hill but it wasn't our city. Members discussed other various locations that are also named Sugar Hill.

There being no further business, Chairman Walker adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

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