

Mobile Historic Development Commission
August 4, 2025
Richards-DAR House Museum
256 N Joachim Street
5:30 PM

Call to Order:

The meeting commenced at 5:30 p.m.

Present:

Virginia “Ginny” Behlen, Jaime Betbeze, Jean Dodge, Jeffery Hartley, Alison Henry, Joan Hoffman, Tim Maness, and Ivy Thompson

Absent:

Peters Drey, Virginia Edington, Jessica Fairley, Kimberly Knowles, and Stephen McNair

City Staff:

Annie Allen, Kimberly Branch-Thomas, and Meredith Wilson

Approval of Minutes:

Jean Dodge moved that the minutes be approved. Jaime Betbeze seconded, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve.

Treasurer’s Report:

Mr. Betbeze reported that there had been no transactions since the July meeting.

Old Business

1. Nominations Committee presentation of nominees

Mr. Betbeze, chair of the Nominations Committee, announced that the following slate of officers were proposed: for Treasurer, Virginia Edington; for Secretary, Tim Maness; for Vice-President, Jaime Betbeze; and for President, Alison Henry.

Ms. Dodge moved that the Commission elect the candidates to make up the new Executive Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Amendment to the By-Laws

Mr. Maness explained that the change to the By-Laws would move the nomination of officers from the June meeting to the July meeting, to avoid the conflict with the Banner and Shield ceremony.

Mr. Betbeze moved that the Commission accept the change to the by-Laws. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Update on Design Guidelines Project

Meredith Wilson, City Staff, explained that staff had received a completed draft of the Design Guidelines from Chronicle Heritage. Hard copies of the draft were provided to each of the three

members of the Design Guidelines Update committee, which are Jaime Betbeze, Jean Dodge, and Joan Hoffman. Ms. Wilson explained that the document had been reformatted using the text from the existing 2016 Design Guidelines. The text had been reorganized with sections edited or removed in response to feedback from the various stakeholder meetings held in February. Ms. Wilson stated that the photos were poor quality and that staff would be retaking and replacing all photos. Otherwise, Ms. Wilson stated that staff would welcome feedback on the text and organization from the committee members. Annie Allen, City Staff, stated that committee members should provide feedback to staff by August 11, 2025.

4. Update on 906 Center Street

Ms. Wilson stated that Stephen McNair had been in touch with the mayor and that the property was to be removed from the blighted properties list. The property therefore would therefore not come before the City Council as a recommendation for demolition. Mr. Betbeze asked what the Commission could do moving forward. Ms. Wilson recommended consulting with Jessica Fairley who had been in closer contact with the building owners and other interested parties. Ms. Wilson suggested that, if needed, the Commission could aid with seeking capital improvement grants, such as those offered through the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Heritage Grant program.

New Business

1. Banner and Shield – proposal for online application process

Ms. Wilson reported that she had discussed the possibility of an online submission platform for Banner and Shield applications with Tim Maness and Alison Henry. Ms. Wilson explained that the online platform would improve the application process in the following ways: eliminating confusion over paper applications currently going to two separate P.O. boxes (one for the Friends and one for the Historic Development Office); preventing the accidental loss of paper applications; removing the need to make a trip to the bank to deposit checks; and providing a more convenient way for applicants to pay the fee, considering many younger applicants no longer use checks. Ms. Wilson reported that an online application and payment portal from Jotform would cost approximately \$200, considering Jotform's 50% non-profit discount. Ms. Wilson suggested that the Friends could pay the \$200 annual subscription fee out of proceeds from the Banner and Shield application fees.

Mr. Betbeze moved that the Commission move forward with setting up the online portal and requesting funding from the Friends of the MHDC. Ms. Dodge seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

2. DAR Address

A representative of the DAR spoke to the Commission about ongoing efforts to replace the roof of the carriage house behind the Richards-DAR House. The DAR had already raised funding for the project and was only waiting for City approval to move forward with a contractor. The representative stated that they were having trouble getting anyone from the City to respond to their request and asked if the Commission could assist in moving the process along. Ms. Allen stated that she would facilitate contact with the Architectural Engineering department of the City of Mobile.

There being no additional business, the meeting was concluded at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Meredith Wilson