

# Oakland County Historical Commission Minutes

7:00 pm, May 13, 2024

BOC Conference Room

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- I. **Roll call:** Present: Decker, Egbo, Mutch, Arwady, Richardson. Absent: Walls, Murphy, Milne. Meeting called to order at 7:19pm.
- II. **Additions/changes to this agenda; acceptance of the agenda**
- III. **Approve Minutes from April 8, 2024** – Richardson moves, Mutch seconds. Minutes approved.
- IV. **New Business:**
  - a. BOC Presentation – Decker reports it went really well.
  - b. Decker wrote a report for Leslie Pielack re: the UGRR banners that we displayed at the OCHC table during the Local History Conference – the banners were well-received at the conference, but a little difficult for visitors to read behind the table. **Decker will share the report with us.**
    - i. Richardson and Egbo agree that the banners are fairly text-heavy and viewers might not really be engaging with all of the content.
    - ii. Decker recommends less text, more images, don't position them behind a table, a printed handout would be helpful, in addition to QR code they should provide a URL for people who aren't comfortable using QR codes.
    - iii. OCHC will offer the above suggestions for subsequent banner printing, as well as de-centering Farmington to let the banners highlight some of the true focal points for freedom seekers and abolitionists, like Pontiac.
  - c. 2025 HSM Local History Conference – Discussion – Should OCHC join the planning committee for next year's conference?
    - i. Yes! Mutch points out that this includes a single brainstorming meeting and that the Conference will take place at OU again; it makes sense that we are represented on that planning committee. Egbo and Mutch are interested in joining the Local History Conference planning committee; Egbo representing the County, Mutch representing OCHC, and Decker representing OCPHS. **Mutch to look into getting OCHC onto the Local History Planning committee – and what is involved with in-kind sponsorship opportunities.** Decker reminds us to register early next year to get a better table, and that OCHC has funds to cover our registrations.
- V. **Old Business**
  - a. Action Items
    - i. OCHC Projects Assessment – completed last month
    - ii. Potential new members – Ron Campbell has applied (we think), **Egbo will follow up with him to make sure.**
    - iii. Funding request to BOC for additional banners – tabled to determine what that request will look like. Which commissioners should we approach? Decker has a list that we need to add to (as more communities are added to the UGRR project). Suggests asking the entire BOC; Egbo suggests approaching Markham and others who have been supportive of OCHC projects in the past.
    - iv. Time capsule – Richardson will send to districts one more time, with details on theme, size, etc. so that they are all somewhat uniform. Richardson will

reach out to Teasly. As far as timeframe, we will let them know that we want the time capsules for 2026.

v. Thank you for Jim Craft – **Decker will print and get Coulter's signature.**

## VI. Committee Reports

- a. History Coalition – Egbo – great meeting at Bowers Farm, with excellent presentations from Bowers staff and Bloomfield Historical Society. Good turnout with 12-14 individual societies/groups represented. Next meeting: Waterford Oaks Co Park, Lookout Lodge, June 4, 1-3pm. This is a combined meeting with Oakland County Cemetery Coalition, with Amy Bradford, re: America 250.
- b. Cemetery Coalition – Egbo – fairly well-attended meeting in March. Dave Carter discussed cleaning and repair of headstones with Farmington group that works on Utley and East Farmington historic cemeteries. Farmington discussed how they worked with volunteers to help preserve their historic cemeteries.
  - i. SAR/DAR efforts at Lakeview Cemetery in Independence Twp. to change the Caleb Merrell marker with a plaque have been stalled. Egbo recommends Decker request cemetery bylaws.
  - ii. Do Coalition members ever run into this type of issue with their municipal cemeteries?
- c. At Risk Properties
  - i. Rochester High School – tabled for Murphy next time
  - ii. Roosevelt High School – injunction still going, but it's not looking good. Decker says it's important to start getting objects and papers out of the building and catalogued (whether the school survives or is demolished). Egbo says the structural elements will also be important to save – some things could be repurposed, such as bricks to line park pathways. Tiles, cornerstones, cupolas – all interesting elements to preserve, if possible.
  - iii. At-Risk Properties list – we need one, but we need community members to help populate it. Board of Commissioners, historical societies, people in municipalities could all contribute.
    1. **Can we take this to the History Coalition and suggest that members contribute to list**, especially as we are planning America 250 – what historic places might be lost before then?
    2. Egbo suggests OCHC sponsor a fall workshop on saving historic buildings – legalities, what do you need to do, etc. What does it take to get State or National designation? Ask SHPO to present. Mainstreet, DDA, historical societies could attend. Ask them to bring an at-risk property to our attention when they come! Mutch points out that these markers can be taken down, even after they've been acquired and paid for—HSM has a sign program, too, that has less behind it as far as criteria (it's more a fundraiser for HSM). These markers won't necessarily save a historic property and might keep people from further researching a building.
- d. 1857 Map Digitization – Clarkston map still needs to be photographed (Decker and Walls); Independence Twp Library Director is open to doing this, the photo session just needs to be scheduled around library programming and building maintenance availability. Troy and Hadley also have photographable maps, but we want to focus on Clarkston's because it needs to be removed from its plastic sleeve.
- e. African American History – folded into UGRR project

- f. Poster Project – Egbo spoke with Steve Dorsey (Pam Tremble’s replacement) who is excited to work on this project with us re: branding, etc. OCHC to send content and graphics; Dorsey will connect with Decker to move forward on this.
    - i. Richardson says Great Migration poster is pretty much ready to go; OCHC can take a final look before sending to Dorsey for design and printing
    - ii. All posters – QR code, Learn More About...the corner, etc. other teasers,
    - iii. African American History poster topics/themes could include Sports (Richardson)
  - g. Website
    - i. List of National Historic Markers in Oakland County
      - 1. Milne to look into getting data from National markers database
      - 2. Decker – could use Wikipedia, Mutch – could use LOC
      - 3. Reach out to SHPO for Michigan markers
  - h. Preservation
    - i. MHPN had a conference relatively recently in Kalamazoo, we have worked with them in the past
    - ii. Historic House Preservation Guide – Decker, Egbo, Ron Campbell. Can we link to MHPN’s, published recently?
- VII. Tabled/Further Discussion Points
- a. OCHC to visit Archives to better understand the collection and to offer our help; what is their accession/deaccession policy? Continue this conversation. They made land records available for free to researchers, how can we help support them?
  - b. 1820 Proclamation – don’t need to have one put in Coulter’s office. Bicentennial Oaks proposed park – if it happens, then Egbo suggests putting proclamation in executive office, since then it will have context.
  - c. Finding Guide – Decker and Mutch had discussed prior to meeting; Mutch is researching. Goal is to compile a directory of which Oakland County sites/archives contain which historical resources. What are the highlights of local collections, and what information is accessible to the public and open to researchers? We can help promote this! History Coalition – “tell us about your coolest photograph?” Matching pieces of artifacts (wheel with whatever piece of farming equipment it came from). “Which newspapers do you have in your collection?” America 250 – get people to explore all these local places (whether they live there, or not!)
- VIII. Upcoming Events/Announcements
- a. Juneteenth – put OCHC as a supporting organization on the event program; look into getting an info table, can we get our African American history poster printed smaller as a handout “takeaway” for attendees? **Decker will email Milne to ask if he can reformat OR send the info digitally so that we can give it to Dorsey to reformat before the event.**
  - b. Richardson moves, Mutch seconds, meeting adjourned at 8:57pm.