

Cherokee Historic Preservation Commission

Minutes of Meeting at the Cherokee Depot

Wed. Sept. 4, 2024



Commissioners Present: Pingel, Snapp, Busch-Mott, Greenwood, Samsel, Caldwell, Younie

Commissioners Absent: Adamson, Wilberding

Guests Present: Mayor Schmidt

1. Meeting called to order by John Snapp at 5:17
2. Minutes of meeting from July 24, 2024 reviewed and approved. Motion to approve by Greenwood, second by Busch-Mott. All ayes. (Only meeting in Aug. was unofficial and held on Aug. 28 at the Steele House to discuss the tour)
3. MHI Land Sale Update:
Mayor Schmidt: No new news. Councilman Nitz is hoping the whole sale will get dropped due to our flooding situation. No response from the state at this time.
Snapp: MHI has marked a bunch of trees to be removed as of late so some of that work appears to be moving forward.
4. Pillars Project at 500 Park St. (Fountain House entrance):
Busch-Mott: CHPC was awarded \$2500 for the Pillar Project. City Council has approved it and we have been given an extension to June of 2025 for the project as per Sara Lucas. We need to get it in this year's budget. We will work on getting bids.

Samsel: Has a call in to Benson Construction. Elite Masonry is likely busy thru the fall. Greenwood inquired about Thrasher as a possibility.

5. Updates on **Wilson Bldg**

Fouch has given a summary of the next few months work and has been there with crew pretty regularly since the end of the summer. Steps to original west side entrance have been completed. Most recently, work is being done on the east side of the building. Dirt and concrete work has begun for the parking lot on the east side and the sidewalk along Willow St. has been repaired. Progress is being made!!

Debbie Durham (Iowa Economic Development) is still hopeful that his funding will come through in September.

June- Focus on outside cleanup, painting and some steel framing inside.

July- Complete sidewalks and new roof covering installed

August-Nov.- Interior framing, electrical, plumbing, HVAC rough in, all utility connections, install parking area subgrade gravels.

Winter 2024/2025- Final interior utilities, drywall, replacement windows

Spring 2025- Finish drywall, painting, interior finishes, cabinets, flooring. Parking lot paving.

Summer 2025- Final construction, cleanup, leasing.

Updates on **Brummer Bldg** from John Snapp:

Snapp: First floor is complete. West wing, back lobby and restrooms completed with the Catalyst grant dollars. Chamber Coffee being held there for history week on Sept. 20.

Apartments on Riverview Dr.:

Mayor: The city is breaking ground this month on the new family apartment buildings with 46 units each.

6. Pilot Rock National Registry Update from Busch-Mott, Snapp:

Snapp: A preliminary request has been sent to SHPO. 30 day waiting period has come and gone so Snapp will likely send them an inquiry email. SHPO Lorinda Bradley (National Registry coordinator) is in agreement for Pilot Rock qualification of the National Registry. They will set up a consultation meeting with us. Steve Thomas has shared this information with the rest of his family.

7. Cherokee History Week: September 20 - 28, 2024

Friday, September 20th @ 9:30 am: Cherokee Chamber Coffee Hour at the newly renovated Historic Brummer Building (west storefront)101 East Main Street. Sponsored by Cherokee Historic Preservation Commission. CHPC commissioners will be bringing breakfast items to eat. 59 Grind will be doing coffee for us and Barb B. will bring oj. John S and Kayla L will talk about upcoming events. We will go to Steele House after Chamber to go through a quick run through at 11:00.

Saturday, September 21st, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm: Tour the historic 1893 Steele Family Home at 801 West Main Street. All 200 tickets sold out in 2 days. Martha has 10 people lined up to help with indoor portion of tour. CHPC, DAR and Archives volunteers will also help if needed. Wilberding has 1 pop up tent and chairs and Barb will talk to Jason Cook for a second pop up, and tables coming from the depot. Busch-Mott is ordering cookies from HyVee and we will have left over cookies from Chamber Coffee. Snapp working on a hand out for tour participants. Greenwood will go on KCHE if Adamson cannot. History Week Events ad will go in the Chronicle Times for \$270 for 2 Fridays (Sept. 13 and 20). Busch Mott motioned ad pricing/timing and second by Pingel- all ayes. See below for Steele Home history.

Sunday September 22nd at 2:00 pm: Tyler Hahn, Cherokee Library director, will present the program, "A True Cherokee Crime Mystery - The Missing Piece: Investigating the Disappearance of Chester Brown" at the Sanford Museum.

Tuesday September 24th at 5:30 pm: “Walk and Talk” Tour at the Historic Pilot Rock site - 1650 Pilot Rock Road (1/4 mile east of Hwy 59) by Sanford Museum Archaeologist, Mark Anderson. Parking at Pilot Rock site.

Friday, September 20th thru mid-November: New exhibit opening “One of Cherokee’s Finest: Soldier, Lawyer, Senator Guy M. Gillette” opening. The Exhibit will include some of the recent donations of Guy Gillette memorabilia, photos, and home movies. Open daily.

Saturday September 28th 10 am – 1 pm: Fall Family Fest at the Historic Illinois Central RR depot, 119 South 4th Street downtown Cherokee. Horse drawn wagon rides, clowns making animal balloons, rides on the miniature train, and a luncheon served. Tours of the depot, cabooses, and bunk car as well.

Steele Home History:

The Steele family home will be the main attraction of the Cherokee Historic Preservation Commission’s annual History Week. This home is the true meaning of a grand old home and is as rich in history as it is in architectural detail and design.

The house that stands at 801 West Main Street was built by Ernest C. Herrick, an early businessman and lawyer in Cherokee. He purchased the land in 1891 and 1892 from the Iowa Railroad Land Co., and the house was completed in 1893. After E. C. Herrick’s death, the house passed to his son, W. Karl Herrick and his wife, Lucille, who lived there until 1945 when it was sold to Lydia and Harrison Steele who lived there until 1959 when after Harrison’s death it was sold to Gordon and Joan Steele.

Upon completion, Mr. Herrick had a picture taken of the house and sent it to a photographer in Chicago. The picture was reduced and engraved into the bowls of 12 spoons. At that time, he named the house Elmdene because of the many elm trees planted on the property. One of these spoons has been found and will be displayed on the tour.

The foundation and first story are constructed from of Sioux Falls quartzite, which was brought in by train. The house has some very interesting features:

On the east side of the house there is a Port Cochere which was built to cover the carriages when people arrived. There is a very high step on the porch so the travelers could get out of the carriage directly onto the porch. Once inside, there is a lavatory near the front door so guests could wash off the dust from the journey.

The house has four fireplaces. The fireplace in the living room has tiles from Italy depicting the Goddesses of Twilight and Dawn, and the God Apollo.

The dining room walls are covered with eleven layers of leather carved with the English and Roman feasting scenes. This room also has a drinking faucet mounted on granite which had its own refrigeration unit.

The house also has eight tower (turret) rooms and features fourteen pocket doors all original to the house.

The current garage was the former carriage house. The horses were kept in the carriage house basement with access to the alley, and the carriages were stored on the first floor. The upper floor of the carriage house was later converted to accommodate the Elmdene School of Cooking which was owned and operated by Gordon and Joan Steele.

8. Bills: none

9. Balance CHPC Account \$3602.79

10. Balance CFHP Account \$3031.47

11. Post Flood Update on plans for Skateboard Park from Cindy Wilberding:

Skate Park on hold for 2 weeks but still hoping for the third week of Sept. for grand opening.

12. 2024 Flood impact on residential and commercial bldgs., any historic bldg. impact, etc.:

Mayor: People still waiting on FEMA to pay out. FEMA will be doing some kind of buyout. 19 homes and businesses were considered "Catastrophic" but those people are not obligated to tear down. 119 homes impacted by flood in some way. Bypass bridge will be reconstructed starting this year rather than next. Waste water system needs to be replaced at \$42 million. Hopefully grants will cover that.

13. Communication with building owners of historic building deterioration and possible remedies:

Shared wall of Mudd on Main and Cardsmart is deteriorating. Russ Harvey has been contacted and they are hoping to get up on the roof of the Cardsmart building to take a look at water infiltration problem. Maybe contact CFD for use of ladder truck.

14. Update on Cherokee History Website and any queries:

Pingel: Richard Shutler has had follow up from both Linda Burkhart and Mark Anderson at the Sanford, regarding the items he has from the Cherokee Sewer Site. He helped his father uncover several things from the site as a teenager and will bring them to the museum at some point when he comes from CA.

15. Carriage for a prop at the porte cochere Steele Home tour:

Duane Mummert suggested talking to Junior Pierson near Marcus. He has 2 fully restored carriages we may use. Junior wants \$200 donation to his museum to bring it over in an enclosed trailer. Busch-Mott made a motion and Greenwood second (all ayes) to have CHPC pay \$200 to transport carriage if Jomi Anderson can't attain a \$200 donation from Cherokee State.

16. Items not on the agenda:

Pingel: Shared an email she received from Jenn Barritt in regards to DNA testing of remains found from the old Pioneer Cemetery north of the gravel pit near Mill Creek that Snapp, Busch-Mott and Pingel are researching. Jen is a Cherokee grad and former intern for the Sanford. She is currently working at Offutt AFB as a DNA Tech with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and works with identifying POW remains through DNA testing. While her organization is not able to help, she has suggested we contact

the State Forensic Anthropologist, Heather Garvin, for help. We could also contact USD and ask for assistance from a forensic anthropologist there.

The land owners and the quarry have been notified by Lara Noldner, State Bioarchaeology Director at OSA. Hallett Materials have agreed not to dig any further to the north. Snapp, Busch-Mott, and Pingel hope to get permission from owners in the near future and go to the area to look for any markers that might remain. There were some headstones there as late as the 1920's according to old newspapers.

17. Next scheduled meeting for Wed Oct. 16 at 5:15 at the depot.

Motion to adjourn at 7:10 by Younie, second by Samsel. All in favor.

Kerisa Pingel, Secretary