

AGENDA
Minnetonka History Commission
Tuesday, April 22, 6:30 p.m.
Shady Oak Room, Minnetonka Community Center

1. Roll Call
DeeAnn Bloom, Jenna Burfeind, Joan George, Betty Johnson, David Olson, Joe Van Sloun
2. Discussion Items
 - a. Minutes of the January 14, 2008, meeting of the Minnetonka History Commission
 - b. Burwell House
 - Tour guide training: April 29
 - Tour season extended
 - Tree stump
 - c. Burwell House Ice Cream Social: June 28
 - Art Fair
 - Antique Market
 - House tour hours
 - Shuttle service
 - d. Ideas for summer event/workshop/seminar
 - e. Historical markers
 - Meeting with consultant regarding design specs
 - Review rough draft
 - f. History commission visioning
 - Where do you see the history commission in 5 years?
 - What should be the role of history commission members?
 - If you were to write a job description for commission members, what would it include?
 - What activities would excite or interest you for the commission to engage in?
4. Adjourn
 - Next meeting: May 19, 2008

Minutes
Joint Meeting of the Minnetonka History Commission and the Minnetonka
Historical Society
Meeting of January 14, 2008

1. Roll Call

Commission members present: DeeAnn Bloom, Jenna Burfeind, Joan George, Betty Johnson, David Olson, Joe Van Sloun

MHS members present: Lorena Hooyman, Bill Jepson, (Van Sloun)
MHS members absent: Florence Bogle, Chuck Donley, John Evans,
Barbara Mattill, Phyllis Mattill, Dorothy Welch,
Staff: Jacque Larson, Laura Ronbeck

Chair Van Sloun called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

2. Discussion items

- a. **Minutes of the November 27, 2007 commission meeting**
George moved, Olson seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the November 27, 2007 history commission meeting. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

- b. **Report from Minnetonka Historical Society**
Jepson reported the following:
 - The society would like to have the Frear book typed up. They are willing to pay someone to do this. Once it has been typed up they'd like Betty to go through it and make necessary corrections.
 - The society is planning on offering the Mill Wheel to members via email.
 - Bill will be working on a virtual tour of the Burwell House.
 - The spring membership meeting will be Tuesday, May 8 at 7 p.m.
 - Holiday Tea. About 200 people attended. The society will consider being open for two weekends next year.

- c. **Report from the Minnetonka History Commission**
 - Annual report
 - Increased attendance at the Burwell House due to increased marketing.
 - Addition of the Art Fair to the Ice Cream Social.
 - The program presented by Deborah Morse Kahn was very well attended.
 - Goals for 2008

- Update the Burwell Use Policy
- Historical markers

d. **Burwell House**

- Ronbeck reported on the proposed expansion of Burwell tour hours next year and asked the society if they would be able to staff the museum the additional hours. She also asked for a contact person to open the house for special tours. Jepson said Phyllis Mattill would be the contact person.

e. **Discussion items**

- Ronbeck asked if there was a society member willing to cut current news items from newspapers. Jepson indicated that Phyllis Mattill was already doing some of this. Ronbeck will contact her and see if this project could be coordinated with the city.

- Oral histories. The oral history that Kathy Magrew did with Audrey Nicol is missing. Jepson will check with Art Nicol to see if he has a copy. Ronbeck will email Kathy to see if she knows the whereabouts of the tapes.

- Ice Cream Social. After a discussion it was agreed that the hours will remain the same for both the antique market and art fair vendors. It was also decided that city staff should plan the event and let the society and commission know what they could do to help. Barbara Mattill is the society contact for volunteers.

- Society Records. Ronbeck reported that most of the records have been moved to the Burwell House. Jepson indicated that the society would perhaps be interested in hiring a person to work on the records. Staff distributed the Deborah Morse Kahn proposal. Ronbeck will arrange a time to meet at the site with society members to look at the records.

f. **Upper Minnehaha Creek Project**

Larson explained that the project involved other groups in addition to the city. The commission and society are invited to attend an information meeting and input session on January 31. Those indicating they would attend the Jan. 31 meeting includes Betty Johnson, Lorena Hooyman, Joan George, Joe Van Sloun, DeeAnn Bloom and Bill Jepson.

g. **Kids' Fest**

The commission will sponsor the old-fashioned valentine craft. A sign up sheet was passed around.

h. **Joint projects.**

The commission and society agreed to work together on publicity

for their programs.

4. Adjournment

Bloom moved, Burfeind seconded a motion to adjourn. All voted "yes."
Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Ronbeck
Administrative Projects Specialist

Historical Markers Rough Draft

Glen Lake

Location: Glen Lake Park

The early settlers of the Glen Lake area were mainly farmers from the Bohemian region of Czechoslovakia, who arrived in the 1860s and 1870s. The present-day street names in Glen Lake, such as Dvorak, Kinsel, Chastek and Kral, reflect this heritage.

At the same time, streetcars began traveling between Minneapolis to Excelsior, making the Glen Lake Station a well-used stop by farmers, commuters and Glen Lake Sanitarium workers until 1932, when bus service became faster and more convenient.

In the 1930s, Glen Lake contained two grocery stores, filling stations, a post office, a garage and a barber shop. However, during the gas rationing of the 1940s, traffic through Glen Lake was so light that a storeowner's dog would often sleep in the middle of the street, undisturbed for hours! Today, shoppers can visit many of the same types of businesses in Glen Lake.

Where skateboards and young athletes now congregate, schoolchildren once gathered at Glen Lake School, located east of Glen Lake on Excelsior Boulevard. The school was purchased by the city of Minnetonka in 1960 for use as a community center, then torn down in 1990 to make way for athletic fields and a skate park.

(218 words)

Big Willow Park

Location: TBD

Beginning in the late 1860s, railroads crisscrossed Minnesota just as highways do now, carrying raw materials, goods and people. By 1888, Hopkins was the largest rail hub west of Chicago. The spur line for the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba railroad brought boxcars of grain to the Minnetonka Mill elevator or granary on the north side of Minnehaha Creek and took boxcars away loaded with flour sacks destined for markets as far away as Europe. St. Alban's Station was located where the spur line left the main line to come south parallel to the east side of Plymouth Road. The station closed, the spur line was abandoned and the tracks and ties removed after the mill closed in the 1890s. Traces of its location can still be found by hikers in the northern and western parts of Big Willow Park.

Taken from "Minnetonka Mills" by Betty Johnson

(139 words)

Purgatory Park

Location: TBD

Because this marshy area was difficult to walk through and full of mosquitoes, early settlers first suggested calling it Hell Creek, but someone else argued it was worse than that and should be dubbed Purgatory Creek, because those who entered might never escape. The name stuck.

Later, when the streetcar company had a stop here, it was renamed Clear Spring. The streetcar line paralleled Excelsior Boulevard and crossed Purgatory Creek on a bridge. The east abutment of the bridge is still visible on the east side of the entrance road to Purgatory Park.

Just east of the park entrance is a red barn, which was part of the Westburg farm. The Westburg family started a bottled water business using water from the spring located near Purgatory Creek. Later, they operated a grocery store, which in the 1950s and 1960s was an aquarium shop.

Clear Springs Road, located on the north side of Excelsior Boulevard opposite the Purgatory Park entrance, follows the route of a trail predating the first survey of the area, taken in 1852. A grist mill was built there in the 1880s on Purgatory Creek but washed out in a spring flood before it was ever used.

(199 words)

Oak Knoll

Location: Westridge Pavilion

From the mid 1880s, several small communities developed in what was to become the city of Minnetonka – Minnetonka Mills, Glen Lake, Groveland and Oak Knoll. Today, Minnetonka Mills, Glen Lake and Groveland remain viable neighborhood centers, but Oak Knoll has nearly disappeared.

Located at Hopkins Crossroad on both sides of a popular route from Minneapolis to Lake Minnetonka (now I-394), Oak Knoll started as a farming community. In the 1920s, a few families looking for country places near Minneapolis began buying land in the new Boulevard Gardens housing development. The area soon became known as Oak Knoll, named for the forests of oak trees on rolling hills.

Businesses located in this area over the years included grocery stores, a root beer stand, a drug store, a tavern, garage and automobile service stations, and a kennel that trained guide dogs.

The Oak Knoll community was nearly wiped out in the 1960s when the east-west highway was widened to four lanes with a median, and a bridge was built over the highway to carry the north-south traffic of Hopkins Crossroad. A few of the small store buildings on the north side of the highway stood until the late 1980s.

Today, the only remnants left of this once-vital community are the Oak Knoll Lutheran Church a few blocks north of I-394 (not its original location), and the former Oak Knoll School on Hopkins Crossroad, now privately owned.

(230 words)

Groveland

Location: TBD

Located at Minnetonka Boulevard and County Road 101, Groveland was first settled by workers who helped build the sawmill, boarding house and Minnehaha Creek dam at present-day Minnetonka Mills.

In 1854, William Chowen donated land on Minnetonka Boulevard for the first school building in Minnetonka. To accommodate the area's growing population, a larger school was built in 1871 at the present site of Groveland Cemetery – the water pump from this school can still be seen on the cemetery grounds. Groveland School became part of the Minnetonka School District in 1949, and nine years later another new school was built. Since then, additions, remodeling and new construction have resulted in the present-day Groveland School, which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2004.

In 1946, Ty Abel built a service station on the northeast corner of the intersection. The architectural style of the building, the length of time Ty operated the station and other businesses in the area, and his community involvement, all contributed to Groveland also coming to be known as "Ty Abel's Corner." The crossroads remains a thriving commercial area.

As tourism on Lake Minnetonka diminished in the early 1900s, city dwellers began building summer homes along the shores of Wayzata and Grays bays. One of Minnetonka's first residential developments, Tonkawoodcroft, was platted in 1913.

(214 words)

Old Town Hall

Location: plaque on Town Hall?

Built in 1907, this Greek Revival-style building at Baker Road and Minnetonka Boulevard housed first the Minnetonka town council, then the village council, and finally the city council. While the current city hall was being built, Minnetonka's first city manager worked out of a trailer because there wasn't enough space in the town hall. After Minnetonka's government offices moved to the current city hall in 1971, the town hall was sold to its current owner, the Minnetonka Community Church. The church and the city agreed that should the church decide it no longer needs the town hall, it will be sold back to the city for one dollar.

(108 words)

7-Hi Area

Location: TBD

The intersection of County Road 101 and Highway 7 reflects the many changes in Minnetonka over the years due to population growth and urbanization.

From 1955 to 1975, a drive-in movie theater occupied the southwest corner of the intersection. Residents who lived on the hill to the south of the theater recall lying on their house roofs and watching the movies, and parents often brought their young children dressed in their pajamas, anticipating they would fall asleep during the show.

Snuffy's drive-in restaurant and a miniature golf course occupied the northwest corner of the intersection, both of which were replaced in the late 1960's by the 7-Hi Shopping Center, which contained a fabric store, furniture store and buffet-style restaurant, among other stores.

In the early 2000s, the 7-Hi Shopping Center became the latest casualty of the changing retail landscape, as it was demolished to make way for a large "big box" retail store as well as small commercial and service stores, restaurants and banks. Most recently, the stretch of County Road 101 from Minnetonka Boulevard to Hwy. 7 was expanded and redesigned with center turn lanes and other features to help safely carry increased traffic through the area. Work was completed in 2007.

(198 words)

SECTION 135. HISTORY COMMISSION.

135.005. Statement of Public Policy and Purpose.

1. The Minnetonka city council declares that the preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, structures, and other objects having a special historical value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the community. The purposes of this ordinance are to:

- a. safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving sites and structures that reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political, visual or architectural history;
- b. foster civic pride in the beauty and notable accomplishments of the past; and
- c. heighten community awareness and appreciation of the city's history and promote the preservation and continued use of historic sites and structures for the education and general welfare of the city.

135.010. History Commission.

The history commission will serve as an advisory board to the Minnetonka city council. This board will consist of:

1. one member from the Minnetonka historical society; and
2. five to seven members from the city at large. To the extent feasible, there should be gender representation and reasonable geographic balance from the community. The city council will determine the number of members based on the commission's work-load and the availability of qualified and interested members.

(Amended by Ord. #2004-21, adopted June 28, 2004; amended by Ord. #2001-05, adopted February 26, 2001)

135.015. Appointment Procedure and Term.

1. Terms on the history commission will be for two years or until their successors are appointed and qualified, not to exceed an additional 90 days.
2. All commission members will be appointed by the mayor, with approval of the city council, and must be residents of the city.

(Amended by Ord. #2001-14, adopted May 21, 2001)

135.020. Duties.

The history commission will:

1. serve as the “municipal heritage preservation” commission for the city, as an advisory commission to the city council, with the duties set forth in Minn. Stat. § 471.193. These duties include:

- a. designating local historic structures, sites, and archeological artifacts;
- b. maintaining a system for the survey and inventory of historical properties;
- c. providing adequate public participation in the local historic preservation programs, including the process of recommending properties for nomination to the national register of historic places;
- d. regulating historic districts located within the city; and
- e. facilitating the collection, preservation and display of historical records, maps, photographs and artifacts.

2. serve, in an advisory capacity to the city council, in matters related to the city's culture.

135.025. Officers.

The history commission may adopt by-laws providing for the election of officers and appointment of committees.

135.030. Rules.

The history commission must adopt rules governing its organization and procedures.

135.035. Meetings.

The history commission must meet on the schedule established in its by-laws but at least six times each year.

135.040. Relationships.

The history commission is advisory and reports directly to the city council.

135.045. Compensation.

The history commission will be reimbursed by the city for expenses incurred in carrying out its functions.

(Section amended by Ord. 2007-04, adopted February 5, 2007; Ord. #2001-33, adopted December 17, 2001)