



**Meeting Minutes of the Soldiers Home Historic District
Community Advisory Council**

Wednesday, April 9, 2014, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Meeting held at Veterans Manor, First Floor Conference Room

Attendees:

Mark	Baldwin	Washington County Veterans Service
Tim	Baranzyk	American Legion Post #416, Wisconsin Vietnam Vets
Richard	Bills	AMVETS
Joe	Campbell	Veterans Board of Directors
Tim	Carpenter	Wisconsin State Senate
Bob	Cocroft	Center for Veterans Issues
Megan	Daniels	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Justin	DeDecker	Milwaukee VA Medical Center
James R.	Draeger	Wisconsin Historical Society
Bill	Goralski	Allied Veterans Council
Andy	Gordon	MU Law School Student, Iraqi War Veteran
Mike	Helbick	U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin's Office
Dan	Hereth	Congresswoman Gwen Moore's Office
Elizabeth	Hummitzsch	Mueller Communications
Rosalind	Johnston	Vietnam Veteran
James	Madlom	Mueller Communications
Dawn	McCarthy	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Daina	Penkiunas	Wisconsin Historical Society
Monica	Rhodes	National Trust for Historic Preservation
Laura	Rinaldi	Reclaiming our Heritage/VA Medical Center Library
Genell	Scheurell	National Trust for Historic Preservation - Midwest Office
Jennifer	Sustar	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Tom	Voss	Veterans Trek
Jill	Zahn	VA Medical Center Library
Debra	Zins	Historic Milwaukee Inc.

Materials Distributed at Meeting:

- [Agenda](#)
- [Letter to Secretary Shinseki requesting Section 111 guidance](#)

I. Update on Construction Activities in Soldiers Home District

Genell Scheurell provided an update on construction activities in the district. To view her presentation, please [click here](#).

- Approved and Funded Projects



- The Ward Memorial Theater (Building 41) and The Old Hospital (Building 6) have been approved for reroofing projects, to be started this spring.
- The Ward Theater's façade will also be repaired, including masonry work and restoration of its porch. These repairs are also expected to begin this spring.
- The Barracks Buildings (Buildings 5 and 7) will also undergo façade repairs this spring.
- Pending Projects
 - There are a few proposed projects for the Old Hospital that have not yet been funded, including: masonry and window restoration and painting.
 - Reroofing and masonry repairs to the tower of Old Main (Building 2) has been proposed but not yet funded.
 - The VA is waiting to hear if it will get funding to seal up the remaining holes in Old Main's roof.
- Fisher House
 - The Fisher House will break ground on June 3, 2014.
 - We will distribute further information to the Community Advisory Council members as soon as we receive it.
- Community Living Centers (CLCs)
 - Construction is nearly complete and we anticipate the first CLC will be occupied during Summer 2014.
- Parking
 - A memorandum is being circulated for agreement and approval of a parking lot that will be built on the southeast corner of the property, closest to National Avenue.
 - A parking structure will be built and three temporary parking lots will be returned to natural/green space.

II. Future Reuses of Bldgs. 2, 12, 45

Genell Scheurell provided an update on potential future reuses of Old Main (Building 2), The Chapel (Building 12), and The Power Plant (Building 45).

- At our last CAC meeting, we discussed three options to allow the buildings to be taken over by outside parties, who would rehabilitate them and put them back into the service of veterans.
 - Option One: Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act
 - Currently, this is not an option for the VA because they have not issued guidance on using it.
 - Genell attended meetings in Washington D.C. to discuss the National Trust for Historic Preservation's study, "Honoring Our Nation's Veterans: Saving Their Places of Health Care and Healing."
 - The VA was receptive to issuing guidance around Section 111
 - The CAC sent a letter to Secretary Shinseki to request that the issuance of guidance on Section 111 be expedited.



- Jim Draeger also wrote a letter to the Secretary and received a response from the Secretary's office saying that they were working on it and hoping to have more information within the next six months.
- Option Two: Revocable License Agreement
 - With this option, a third party would take control of the site for five years, with an option for another five years.
 - The organization would complete the restoration/stabilization work and then return the building to the VA.
 - This option would be feasible if a donor would be interested in making a gift to the VA to fund the repairs.
- Option Three: Enhanced Use Lease (EUL)
 - While meeting with the VA in Washington D.C., EULs were discussed.
 - The VA is preparing to issue a request for Expressions of Interest for EULs on Buildings 1, 2, 12, 45 and 62.
 - With an EUL, the only purpose the rehabbed building can be used for is homeless veteran housing.
 - Next Steps: If developers reply back with expressions of interest, the VA will evaluate them and decide if it is feasible to move forward. At that point an RFQ or RFP would be issued and a public meeting would be held where plans would be shared with the community.
 - The priority remains on veterans' use of these buildings. If an EUL moved forward for one of the buildings, a "priority" waterfall list of people who would be served by the building would be created. For example, homeless veterans could be the first priority, followed by other veterans as a second priority, veterans' families as third priority, etc.
- Feedback from Veteran Organizations:
 - Bob Cocroft, Brigadier General, retired and President/CEO of the Center for Veterans Issues (CVI) shared that his organization is always interested in developing more veteran housing. They would want to know if everything had been worked out with the EUL process and how many projects have gone through for veterans housing using EUL.
 - He said there are often issues with veteran housing projects and CVI can't have long delays. His current facilities have a waiting list of roughly 80 veterans.
 - He said there is definitely a demand and he wants to do more to meet that demand. However, if his organization is putting in soft costs, he would need assurances that he wouldn't get caught up in delays. They would need to know that the EUL process has been worked out and resolved.
 - General Cocroft asked if the VA would put money in its budget to maintain and upkeep the buildings if we found a way to fund their restoration.



- Tim Baranzyk with American Legion Post #416 inquired as to whether a McDonalds or Burger King could be located in one of the buildings. Genell indicated that with these options there could not be a dual use.
- Tim also suggested that we explore options for funding through naming rights.

III. H.O.P.E. Crew Project

Monica Rhodes, Manager of Volunteer Outreach with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, described a new Trust program to the group called H.O.P.E. Crew. To view a handout on the new program, please [click here](#).

- The National Trust recently launched a new innovative program called Hands On Preservation Experience (H.O.P.E).
 - The program connects the youth corps movement to preservation projects.
 - The program was initially conceived as a way to help address the National Park Services' (NPS) backlog of maintenance projects on historic buildings.
 - The Shenandoah National Park is the first project, where the National Trust is partnering with the West Virginia Conservation Corps to rehabilitate a 1939 horse stable, using preservation carpentry skills.
 - Through the program, the National Trust partners with local job corps organizations and secures funders to support the project. The National Trust then provides the technical expertise to train corps members in the preservation trades and ensures that the work done meets the [Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation](#).
- The National Trust would like to create a veterans-only H.O.P.E. Crew to help with needed work at the Milwaukee Soldiers Home.
 - The National Trust is exploring a partnership with the Milwaukee VAMC now.
 - The group is considering starting with a small residential building then perhaps moving toward a larger project involving more trades training like the Administration Building (Building 1).
 - The National Trust will be meeting with Milwaukee VA Medical Center representatives to discuss the program and a potential partnership.
 - Currently the largest hurdle is working through the VA's procurement process.
 - Additionally, the National Trust is looking for names of individuals who could serve as "Craft Experts." This is a paid position that serves as a subcontractor to the corps.
 - The Trust is also looking for suggestions of individuals who could serve as "Preservation Advisors." These individuals are volunteers, and are brought in on an ad hoc basis to provide guidance on specific preservation issues.
- Monica Rhodes facilitated a question and answer session with CAC members, here is a summary of her responses:
 - H.O.P.E. Crew positions will be paid positions.



- No age restrictions have been set for a veteran corps and all participants will be recruited locally.
- The time commitment for all corps members will be 40-hour weeks viewed as a fulltime job.
- The number of veterans that would be part of the program will depend on the specific project and building that the corps is working on.
- Qualifications to participate will not require preservation experience, but a basic understanding of carpentry or masonry would be helpful.
- Quality control will be handled through multiple levels of oversight by the “Craft Experts” and “Preservation Advisors.”
- Classroom training will not be part of this program, rather it will be on-the-job training.
- Funds will need to be raised to support the program in Wisconsin.
- Once funding is secured, the timing should be just a few months to get the Crew up and running. If all elements fall into place, it could happen yet this summer.
- Once established, the veteran corps program could definitely carry over into other City of Milwaukee area projects.

IV. I-94 Expansion Update

Megan Daniels provided an update on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s (WisDOT) effort to expand I-94. To view her presentation, please [click here](#).

- Megan updated the group on recent meetings with consulting parties regarding the expansion of I-94.
- Megan reiterated that our priority is protecting the views of the NHL in order to preserve the serenity of Wood National Cemetery.
- WisDOT has proposed a few options for expansion:
 - Option One: At Grade
 - This option would add a fourth lane at grade by removing shoulders and narrowing lanes.
 - With this option, WisDOT is proposing removing the Hawley Road entrance/exit. This poses an issue for accessing the VA, cemeteries and the Hunger Task Force.
 - Concern for safety has been expressed with this option.
 - Option Two: Double Deck
 - With this option, the top deck would be roughly 30-40 feet above grade. The lanes would converge and one would slide on top of the other.
 - Eastbound traffic would be above westbound traffic.
 - This option would completely block the view of the cemetery and could be seen from the Soldiers Home grounds. The continuity of the landscape/design would be interrupted.
 - Option Three: Partial Up
 - This option would put one lane slightly below ground, and raise the other roughly 25 feet above grade.



- Megan asked the group for their opinion on the expansion options, here is a sampling of responses:
 - “It’s too bad you couldn’t do something subterranean and keep the cemetery as it is. I don’t want to hide the cemetery, I’m proud of it.”
 - “If you have the double decker, you will have snow plows dumping snow into the cemetery.”
 - “Being in the cemetery a lot with what we do, with any kind of double decker, you’re adding places for people to hide.”
 - I feel that it was bad enough to move the graves and split the cemetery in the first place and lose continuity. Any families on the north side have been short changed because all the ceremonies are on the south side. Any further disgrace of trying to remove or move the graves, I don’t think the veteran community would go for it. We aligned with Story Hill Neighborhood to stop it last time and we’ll do it again.”
 - “I think visual continuity adds to the serenity of the cemetery. If you isolate that, you’re diminishing the people who are buried there.”
 - “We have to speak for those who have passed. If we don’t, it’s going to happen to us.”
 - “Why not go for a subterranean route and reclaim the land on top so the cemetery is one again. That would be the best solution.”
- After hearing from everyone, CAC members provided additional detail about the project.
 - Making the freeway double decker would cost roughly \$250 million. In addition to the 30 foot height of the double decker, there would be an additional 25 feet added for noise barriers. Some of the double decker designs do not have the arches that allow you to “see through” to the other part of the cemetery.
 - The argument WisDOT has used against burrowing is that it is too expensive, however they have not produced any estimates.
 - WisDOT is currently developing Environmental Impact Statements and all input will need to be recorded before the end of the year.
 - It is unclear what formula WisDOT is using to calculate the need for the expansion. WisDOT’s claim is that they are looking at increased traffic over the next 30 years as the basis for the expansion.
 - It will be critical for the Bluemound Neighborhood Association, Story Hill Neighborhood Association, Preservationists and veterans to make sure their opinions are heard.

V. Wayfinding & Awareness Campaign Update

Dawn McCarthy and Megan Daniels provided an update on the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance’s Wayfinding & Awareness Campaign to raise \$30,000 to install Soldiers Home signage along the Hank Aaron State Trail and on I-94.

- There has been a great response from individuals who have stepped up to donate.
- MPA met the requirements to receive a matching grant from the National Trust.



- MPA has submitted grant applications to local foundations.
- MPA is currently halfway to its fundraising goal.
- MPA is confident that the project will be fully funded and will share details as they become available.

VI. Outreach Updates

Megan Daniels and James Madlom provided an update on outreach activities. To view James Madlom's presentation, [click here](#).

- Megan provided an update on a recent partnership with the Milwaukee Rep's afterschool program, through which Megan coordinated tours of the grounds with Milwaukee students.
- Megan also indicated that the Soldiers Home would be a part of this year's Doors Open event on September 20-21st, building on the success of last year's event.
- We have numerous summer activities planned, including hosting informational tables at Jazz in the Park and the Layton Boulevard West Neighbors' Summer Concert Series.
- James Madlom provided an update on media coverage that has been secured over the past few months.

VII. Adjourn

The next meeting will be called pending next steps and progress.