

Historical Commission Meeting
Madison Heights, Michigan
April 9, 2025

A Historical Commission Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 6:30 PM at Library
- 240 W. 13 Mile Rd.

CALL TO ORDER

at 6:30 p.m. by Chair.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chair Margene Scott
Vice Chair Jennifer Ballantine
Rebecca Chambliss
Martha Covert
Regina Juska-Svoba
Martha Kehoe
Kate Kapas
Jason Kowalski
Cheryl Suiter
Kevin Wright
Staff Liaison Vanessa Verdun-Morris

EXCUSED

Treasurer Justin Suarez
Council Representative Mark Bliss
Council Alternate Sean Fleming

ABSENT

Robert Koneske

1. **Excuse members who gave notice of absence.**

Motion made by Kehoe, Seconded by Covert. Passed unanimously.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Add "Commission IDs" as number 11 per Juska-Svoba.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. **Approve Minutes from January 2025.**

Motion made by Vice Chair Ballantine, Seconded by Juska-Svoba. Passed unanimously.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No public present wishing to speak.

REPORTS

3. Treasurer Report

Report sent by Treasurer Suarez.

Donations from March 8, 2025: \$91

Approved expenditures:

Pants and a head: \$50 (Cheryl Suiter)

Annual budget for office supplies: \$300 (Approved by commission)

Balance: \$11,939.86

4. Moments that Made Madison Heights Subcommittee Report: Council Representative Bliss, Chambliss, Treasurer Suarez, Chair Scott, and Wright

Report sent by Council Representative Bliss.

Below are 12 possible “Moments That Made Us” that our Historical Commission can utilize for our anniversary year. Please review for inaccuracies, as well as provide any feedback on additional moments that could be included.

Early History

(Date Unknown): The history of Madison Heights predates its official incorporation. The area was originally inhabited by the Anishinaabe people, known as the Three Fires Confederacy, comprising the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi tribes. Evidence suggests the presence of a Native American settlement along the banks of the Red Run, a significant waterway that flowed through the region

1833: The Township of Royal Oak, encompassing present-day Madison Heights, was founded in 1833, coinciding with the growth of Detroit and Oakland County 2. Initially, the economy of Royal Oak Township relied heavily on agriculture. However, with the rise of the transportation industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the township's economic focus shifted towards railroads, carriages, streetcars, and related industries

1955: A defining moment in the history of Madison Heights occurred when residents of the eastern portion of Royal Oak Township voted to incorporate as an independent city . This decision reflected a desire for local governance and a stronger sense of community. The first city hall was established at 26305 John R Road, utilizing the former township offices . While the Charter Commission drafted a city charter within six months, it was initially rejected by the citizens in a June election . However, a revised charter was presented and approved in December 1955, officially establishing Madison Heights as the tenth city in southern Oakland County

1960: Madison High School Opens

1961: Lamphere High School Opens

1963: As the city grew, a new municipal building was constructed at 300 West Thirteen Mile Road, which remains the location of City Hall today . This dedicated space for city administration symbolized the city's commitment to efficient governance and providing essential services to its residents.

80's and 90's:

1983: The Lamphere School District sold the Simonds Woods area to the City of Madison Heights for use as a public park . This acquisition expanded the city's green spaces and provided residents with additional recreational opportunities.

1989: The Southeast Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority (SOCRA) incinerator, with its towering smokestacks, was shut down . While the facility had served as a waste incinerator for the region, its closure was driven by growing environmental concerns and a shift towards more sustainable waste management practices . This event marked a turning point in the city's approach to environmental responsibility.

1994: Lamphere High School graduate and internationally recognized marine life artist Robert Wyland returned to his alma mater to paint a whale mural on the walls of the high school pool . This artwork not only beautified the school but also served as a symbol of environmental awareness and artistic expression

Modern Era

2002: The Meijer store in Madison Heights was relocated from Sterling Heights, and built over the Frank Lloyd Wright subdivision. The new location provided residents with convenient access to a wider range of products and services, stimulating local economic growth.

2014: A historic rain event caused significant flooding, impacting thousands of Madison Heights residents, City Hall, and other city buildings. This event highlighted the city's vulnerability to extreme weather and prompted a reevaluation of infrastructure and emergency response protocols.

2023: The Civic Center Plaza, the largest municipal project in the city's history, was completed. Included in the connected-campus project were fully-renovated Library and City Hall facilities, as well as a brand new Active Adult Center. The project improved efficiency, and finally made it possible to visit our historical museum, library, city hall, and active adult center facilities under the same roof.

Potential other moments:

Creation of notable city boards like Historical (1984), Arts (2017), and Library (2000)

Acquisitions of parks (???)

Bandshell (2024)

1st Memorial Day Parade (???)

1st Festival in the Park (???)

City Hall Gazebo (1987?)

Active Adult Center creation (1976)

Members of the commission suggested adding historical information about the Galaxy Drive-In, Post Office, John R Lumber Fire, Green Lantern Fire, Reenactment of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Early Childhood Center, correcting the date of the original Madison High School opening to 1924, and including equal coverage of the three high schools: Madison, Lamphere, and Foley.

Chair Scott recommended any additional suggestions be emailed to Liaison Verdun-Morris to pass on to Chair Scott & Council Representative Bliss.

Motion to add Martha Covert to the Moments that Made Madison Heights made by Chambliss, Seconded by Juska-Svoba. Passed unanimously.

5. Heritage Rooms

Chair Scott reported the March 8 open house had 36 attendees.

WORK PLAN REVIEW

6. Historical Commission Work Plan 2025.

Experiencing Madison Heights for its 70th Anniversary. Council Alternate Bliss reported via email to commission that subcommittees did not meet formally, but many ideas for the "Moments that Made Us" were discussed at the Open House.

Naming Madison Heights. No update.

Digitizing Madison Heights. Council Alternate Fleming provided a verbal report to Staff Liaison Verdun-Morris asking the Commission to seek a Request for Proposal for scanning documents in the Heritage Rooms.

Motion to create Request for Proposals for scanning documents in the Heritage Rooms by Chambliss, Seconded by Covert. Passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7. Review updates requested by City Clerk to Park/Facility Naming Policy and send recommendations for updates to policy to Council.

Approve Park/Facility Naming Policy after removal of "Cumbersome, corrupted, or modified names" from Exclusion section of draft version 3.

Motion made by Wright, Seconded by Vice Chair Ballantine. Passed unanimously.

8. Heritage Rooms Hours and/or Volunteer Schedule, including opening volunteer opportunities to non-commission members.

No discussion. Chair Scott requested this item be removed from future agendas.

NEW BUSINESS

9. 70th Anniversary Booklet

Verdun-Morris reported that if anyone is interested in contributing an article for the 70th Anniversary booklet, please send to Staff Liaison Verdun-Morris, who will pass it on to the publisher, Tom Tesnow, along with the Moment that Made Madison Heights list. Articles and Moments list are due by the beginning of August.

10. Oakland County Underground Railroad Exhibit for January & February 2026 - Wright

Motion to approve payment not to exceed \$150 for Historical Commission's portion of a \$300 payment for an exhibit on Oakland County Underground Railroad to be shared between Madison Heights Public Library and Heritage Rooms in January & February 2026.

Motion made by Wright, Seconded by Juska-Svoba. Passed unanimously.

11. Commission IDs.

Commissioners should send a photo to Staff Liaison Verdun-Morris to have an ID badge made.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wright announced that Juneteenth event will be held by Citizen United on June 14, 2024.

12. **Create material development for Juneteenth subcommittee consisting of Kapas, Ballantine, and Chambliss.**

Motion made by Kapas, Seconded by Chambliss. Passed unanimously.

13. **Host a Historical Commission table at the Juneteenth event.**

Motion made by Kapas, Seconded by Ballantine. Passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

by Chair Scott at 8:22 p.m.