

OIL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 24, 2009, 1 pm
Oil Museum of Canada

Present: Robert Tremain (Chair), Dave Posliff, Charles Fairbank, Robert Cochrane, Christine Poland, Connie Bell, John Dickson, Ruth Kernohan, Betty Lou Snetselaar.

Regrets: Duncan McTavish, Gordon Perry, Martin Dillon, Mary-Pat Gleeson, Charles Fisher, April James, Dawn Marie Gates, Terrie Dewsbury.

Also present: Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Ltd., Wendy Shearer, Harry Shnider, MHBC Planning and Peter Stewart, George Robb Architect.

NOTE: Action items are shown in **bold** type.

Robert T. called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm, and welcomed those in attendance.

Dave P. agreed to act as Recording Secretary for this meeting.

1. Previous Minutes
The December 15, 2008 minutes were reviewed. No errors or omissions were noted.
2. Review of Action Items from December 15, 2008 minutes:

Charles Fairbank re: naming of the project. Robert T. spoke to the overall scope of the project and suggested that the name or the plaque tie us into a higher level of claims. Committee members had no further suggestions.

Tamara was to pass material along to Wendy. Wendy feels she did receive some material, but perhaps not all, and will follow up directly with Tamara.

Oil Springs was to forward the map from their office wall to the consulting team. Christine P. noted the map is too large to email or forward copies, but will look into ways to reproduce. Dave P. suggested that the City of Sarnia may have a large format scanner, or we might be able to use equipment in the County Planning Department's office which handles large format photocopying.

Christine P. noted that the map is old and in poor condition with tape etc. on it. . John Dickson suggested a company in Mitton Village.
Dave P. will do further research, as this map, and possibly others, would be very helpful for the consultants.

Robert T. suggested that there may be many other maps/resources that we should try to look after and reproduce, possibly through student help.

Robert T. was to speak to Darlene Coke regarding public news releases. This is on the agenda for a separate discussion later in the meeting.

No further progress has been made on the sub-committee to deal with plaque wording.

There were no other comments from the Committee.

3. Report from Study Team

Wendy S. noted that the consulting team has been busy since last the last Steering Committee meeting, although they have not had much opportunity for site/field work due to weather and snow. They have been doing background research, document reviews etc.

The team has three suggestions for proposed heritage district boundaries to review with committee today, and is asking for the Committee's input on the options. She will return to that discussion following the reports from the other study team members.

Christopher A. gave an overview of his work to date. This work begins with a "land use history" showing physical and natural settings of the Oil Heritage district over time.

He has come up with a number of "working headings" for inclusion in the Study. They are as follows:

- Physical/Natural setting
- History before oil
- OS to 1865
- OS 1865-1914
- Transportation
- Development away from Oil/Timber/Agriculture
- OS after 1914
- Character of OS today

Christopher reviewed early surveys, lot patterns and other information for the historic oil field areas and the Village as a whole.

Harry S. gave a brief overview of his initial review of the major planning documents applying to the area and of fairly recent census data.

The population is relatively stable, with small declines in Oil Springs and Enniskillen, while Petrolia has gained about 7% in population.

He reviewed the planning framework, including the Provincial Policy Statement, and noted that there is limited development activity in Enniskillen and Oil Springs, while there is more activity in Petrolia, particularly in the downtown area. Harry will probably be looking for more information on development activity, especially, within the Petrolia area.

Petrolia's façade improvement programs for the downtown area were noted.

Wendy S. reviewed 3 options for potential boundaries of a future Oil Heritage Conservation District and options for determining them.

1. As defined by the Oil Springs Pool

The first option is an area defined by the underground storage pool for the historic field. This is supportable and understandable to people, but the challenge is that it is not visible and is not tied to surface features, property ownership or lot lines. She noted that the designating by-law is eventually registered on title so this approach could make that difficult to deal with.

2. Primary Oil Springs area, with Potential "secondary" heritage areas

This area would include the historic oil field and most of the built-up area of Oil Springs as the "primary" area, with Petrolia, Oil City, Oil Heritage Rd, Plank Rd., and Wyoming as "secondary" areas. Additional specific or primary districts could be identified within these secondary areas in future, with planning policies developed to guide activities.

3. Heritage Area by Lot boundary

This option covers properties rather than areas on a property as in Option 1 above. It generally still corresponds with pool boundary, but is rounded out or in to correspond with lot lines/property boundaries. It includes most residential areas and commercial areas within the Village. It captures areas in production and can be fine tuned.

Committee members were asked for input or questions.

Ruth K. asked for clarification on the boundaries for the Oil Springs area in #3 vs. #2. It is the same.

Charles F. felt there were some areas within the pool area that have ceased production and have no particular heritage landscape other than farming. There are no more oil wells on some of these areas.

Wendy S. noted that a conservation district may include areas with no surviving physical resources if those areas have societal, historical or contextual values. In this case, those areas were part of the story of the area.

Robert T. asked if this proposed area should cast a broader net at this point and then be narrowed down.

Wendy S. and Christopher A. agreed and noted that their 3 proposals have already cast that broad net and are now looking to narrow down based on feedback received.

Dave P. asked what the benefit would be to designating the residential areas of OS, as there are large numbers of houses and buildings that are of no direct historical value i.e., they may have been built in the last 20 years.

Wendy S. said those areas have a connection to the historic oil field areas through original lot patterns etc. which have been retained. We may not care what happens within the lot i.e. with houses themselves, but we may care about changes to lot patterns for example. Guidelines can be written to provide exemptions, so that not every change or building permit requires detailed reviews under the management plan.

Christine P. agreed and felt that a designation that included all residential and commercial areas and required a review of building permits etc. could be hard to manage and place unnecessary constraints on development activity.

Ruth K. asked if the original lot patterns can still be seen in Oil Springs and elsewhere.

Dave P. explained that they can be seen in places, and that the original survey descriptions remain in the legal descriptions of properties.

Robert C. suggested using generally proposal #2 so that the secondary areas such as Petrolia are included (for political acceptance) but exclude the bulk of the built up area of OS except maybe the old core area. Including beyond that could be an administrative “nightmare”.

Wendy S. reiterated that those areas are still important due to lotting patterns and could contribute to the overall story of the community through their associative and contextual values. They could prove to be important in our quest for broader designations and recognition.

Robert T. suggested using the term “associated” areas, rather than “secondary”, to gain further political acceptance in the course of the project.

Wendy S. asked if those areas should include Wyoming, and the committee generally felt that Wyoming should be included as part of the broader net.

Peter Stewart

Peter Stewart reviewed his background work in Petrolia, including early survey plans and historic neighbourhoods. There is consistency in lot patterns and sizes, and streetscapes. More field work will establish built resources in these various neighbourhoods. There was discussion regarding the location of the “Pithole” neighbourhood. Charles F. noted that it was located farther north than is shown on Mr. Stewart’s map, near what is now Discovery Line.

There are excellent commercial blocks and landmarks in the central commercial district.

He noted that Petrolia would like to proceed with a Heritage Conservation District for Crescent Park.

In terms of moving ahead, **Wendy suggested that they would refine their maps and circulate the PowerPoint deck to**

Committee members for further feedback on potential areas and other ideas. The Committee agreed that would be a good idea.

There was a discussion regarding a public meeting/open house to be held in Oil Springs. Wendy would like to aim for a May meeting. Christine P. suggested they could host it at the Oil Springs Youth Centre. **Christine will book the facility once a date is determined.**

4. Communications Plan

Robert T. gave brief overview of the Plan, which was put together by Darlene Coke and had been distributed to Committee before the meeting.

There were no concerns, and Betty Lou felt it was very comprehensive and broad.

5. OHD Bibliography

Robert T. felt that it was very important to bring all documents and resources together and make them accessible. We need to maximize the potential of the tools we have available to us, particularly technological tools.

He suggested posting the PowerPoint presentation to our site. Dave Posliff will look after getting that done.

6. Next meeting

It was suggested that the Committee meet again in early May to review updates from the consultants and to prepare for the upcoming public meeting. Dates will be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35.