

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Projects Committee Minutes
2100 Randolph Road, Charlotte, N.C.
November 12, 2019
6:01 p.m. – 7:42 p.m.**

Present:

**Ms. Diane Althouse, HLC Treasurer
Mr. William Hughes, HLC Secretary
Mr. Jeffrey Parsons, HLC Chair
Mr. Edwin Wilson, Projects Committee Chair
Mr. Sandy Carnegie, HLC Attorney (by telephone)
Dr. Dan L. Morrill, HLC Consulting Director
Ms. Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Administrative Assistant
Mr. Peter Wasmer, HLC Project Manager**

Absent:

Mr. Nathan Clark, HLC Vice Chair

Visitors:

None

1. Chair's Report: Edwin Wilson

Mr. Wilson recognized Dr. Morrill for his commitment to the success of the Historic Landmarks Commission. Mr. Wilson also thanked Dr. Morrill for his leadership and guidance as Mr. Wilson has navigated his role as Chair of the Projects Committee.

Mr. Wilson stated that he would appreciate input from the Committee members regarding where the Committee should focus its attention. Mr. Wilson noted that the Historic Landmarks Commission has recently been asked to participate in several costly preservation projects and he wants the Committee members to be aware of what is involved when undertaking a new project.

Mr. Parsons stated that he would like for the Historic Landmarks Commission to hold a retreat to discuss, among other items, the function of the Commission's Revolving Fund. Mr. Parsons stated that this should occur after Jack Thomson is acclimated as the new Director of the Historic Landmarks Commission.

The Committee agreed that having a variety of preservation tools, including Options to Purchase, greatly assists the Historic Landmarks Commission in being successful in preserving properties that it may not have been able to otherwise.

2. Director's Report: Dan Morrill

Dr. Morrill reviewed the status of the Revolving Fund. Dr. Morrill noted that he has received feedback from Leslie Johnson, Assistant County Manager, that the Historic Landmarks Commission will need to demonstrate its effectiveness of being good stewards of public money if the Commission desires for increased funding of the Revolving Fund. Mr. Wasmer stated that the County's process of determining the budget for the next fiscal year typically begins in January.

3. Update on Projects

Dr. Morrill noted that he and Mr. Wasmer were not presenting any recommendations to the Committee.

a. Wallace House Property, 9425 Robinson Church Road, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill reviewed the following information:

Property purchased September 2019.

Previous owners under six month lease.

Total Expenditures to Date: \$454,509

Current expenses only include yard maintenance.

The property is currently not listed for sale.

Dr. Morrill asked the following questions:

Should the Commission solicit public input regarding future use?

Should the property (approximately 10 acres) be offered for sale in its entirety or subdivided?

When should the property be listed for sale?

Dr. Morrill stated that the HLC has already voted to place the property on the market and sell it as one parcel. Dr. Morrill stated that he approached the Park and Recreation Department regarding plans for the property but was informed that the property would not be part of the Department's plans for that section of the city.

Ms. Althouse stated that the Commission could consider having a charrette, similar to one held at Ingleside in 2018, to show the house and property. Mr. Wilson stated that the property should not be listed until it is determined whether the property will be subdivided.

MR. PARSONS PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. HUGHES THAT THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS

COMMISSION THAT IT EXPLORE ENTERING INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH A DEVELOPER AND INVESTIGATE SUBDIVIDING A PORTION OF THE LAND AROUND THE WALLACE HOUSE, 9425 ROBINSON CHURCH ROAD, CHARLOTTE, N.C., WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE HOUSE AND A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE LAND CONTIGUOUS AROUND THE HOUSE WILL BE PRESERVED. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

b. Torrence Lytle School, 302 Holbrooks Road, Huntersville, N.C.

Dr. Morrill reviewed the following information:

Property acquired in 2007 from Mecklenburg County for \$1.

County mandated that the original 1938 school building must be preserved.

HLC secured the listing of the property in the National Register of Historic Places. Tax credits are only available if all buildings are preserved.

HLC has listed the property for sale on three occasions, but none has resulted in a successful sell.

No offers are currently on the table.

The property is currently not listed for sale.

Total Expenditures to Date: \$454,599 (includes removal of asbestos)

Mecklenburg County is spending over \$2 million to renovate the former gymnasium for the Torrence Lytle School.

The HLC has voted (if all efforts to sell the property are unsuccessful) to demolish all buildings except the original 1938 school building, to renovate the original school building, and then to offer the property for sale.

Dr. Morrill stated that Nathan Clark enlisted the assistance of Laurel Street Developers in securing an evaluation of the property, which stated that the primary value is in the land, not the buildings. Dr. Morrill stated that Nate Bowman, a major developer in the Huntersville area, is building a new development directly across the street from the Waymer Center, and that this will help in the continuing revitalization of the area.

Dr. Morrill asked the following questions:

Should the HLC move forward with the approved demolition of the cafeteria building and the two circa 1950 buildings attached to both ends of the original building?

What impact, if any, does the renovation of the former gymnasium have on the prospects for sale of the Torrence Lytle School?

Should the HLC prepare the Torrence Lytle School for listing for sale?

Ms. Althouse stated that an issue with the location of the Torrence Lytle School is that stores and hospitals are not located nearby, so it would be difficult to find funding to repurpose the school into senior housing. Mr. Hughes stated that he was concerned about the optics of the Historic Landmarks Commission demolishing any part of the school. Ms. Althouse stated that when Jack Thomson begins as the Director of the Historic Landmarks Commission, it would be good if he could meet with County officials regarding the current and future status of this property.

MR. PARSONS PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MS. ALTHOUSE THAT THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT NOT MOVE FORWARD WITH THE COMMISSION'S PREVIOUS APPROVAL FOR THE DEMOLITION OF ALL BUILDINGS EXCEPT THE ORIGINAL BUILDING AT THE TORRENCE LYTLE SCHOOL, 302 HOLBROOKS ROAD, HUNTERSVILLE, N.C., SO THAT CONSIDERATION OF OTHER OPTIONS CAN OCCUR AFTER DECEMBER 9, 2019, WHEN JACK THOMSON WILL BECOME THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

c. John Douglas House, 7601 Christie Lane, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that Staff is preparing the materials necessary to submit a Request for Board Action to secure County Commission approval for an option to purchase the property. This will include a structural inspection and an appraisal, both of which have been scheduled. Dr. Morrill reported that the airport has been approached in the past about possible purchase but has responded that it was not interested in purchasing the property due to the fact that it is a historic landmark. Dr. Morrill will attempt to suggest ways in which the airport could use the property and retain the house.

d. Victor Shaw House, 2400 Mecklenburg Avenue, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that Preserve Mecklenburg will assign its option to purchase the Victor Shaw House to Terranova, LLC, a developer headquartered in Greenville, S.C. The assignment will occur on or before December 1, 2019. Preservation easements will be placed on the Victor Shaw House to assure its preservation in perpetuity. Arrangements are underway to have the HLC be the holder of the easements and to administer them. The HLC will retain its design review powers over the Victor Shaw House. It is contemplated that the ordinance for the Victor Shaw House will be amended to exclude portions of the current historic landmark.

Dr. Morrill stated that the two houses in front of the Shaw House would be under the jurisdiction of the Historic Landmarks Commission and that this portion of the property cannot be further subdivided. Dr. Morrill noted that the houses in the back of the property would be controlled by a Homeowner Association and not the Commission.

Mr. Parsons asked for clarification regarding who will administer preservation easements and Mr. Carnegie stated that the Historic Landmarks Commission would be responsible. Mr. Carnegie stated that Preserve Mecklenburg has asked him to provide its attorney

language for the preservation easements, which will be the same language that the Historic Landmarks Commission has previously used.

e. John Mayes House, 435 E. Morehead Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that the owner of the John Mayes House has expressed an interest in discussing preservation strategies for the house, which is a designated historic landmark. Staff and members of the Projects Committee are scheduled to meet with the owner on November 13 to initiate substantive discussions.

f. Arthur Samuel Grier House, 421 Montrose Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that the Arthur Samuel Grier House was the home of the family that was responsible for the development of the Grier Heights neighborhood. The owner has decided that he wishes to sell the house and there is some interest among the local citizenry to have the HLC acquire and restore the house. Dr. Morrill stated that his recommendation is that initially the Commission should approach the owner about the possibility of securing an option to purchase.

Dr. Morrill stated that a fire occurred at this location and that damage to the house would need to be assessed. The Committee agreed that this is a property it is interested in pursuing.

4. Old Business

There was no old business.

5. New Business

a. Pentes Property, 6510 Sharon Hills Road, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that the location of this house is considered prime real estate. Dr. Morrill stated that the family does not want the property to be developed and that the family would be open to considering preservation easements or an Option to Purchase. Dr. Morrill stated that the property would need to be processed for historic landmark designation and that a relationship between the Commission and the family would need to be established to start this process. The Committee agreed that this is a property it is interested in pursuing.

Dr. Morrill stated that Johnson C. Smith University met with the City of Charlotte earlier in the day and that the City is aware of the potential involvement of the Historic Landmarks Commission in the stabilization of the Former Mt. Carmel Baptist Church.

Ms. Althouse stated that she would like for the Commission to discuss preservation easements with the owners of current historic landmarks. Ms. Althouse stated that she would like for the Commission to be more proactive in identifying potential projects.

Mr. Parsons stated that the Excelsior Club is under contract again. Dr. Morrill stated that the potential buyer is working on a plan for the property.

Dr. Morrill stated that at one time the Elizabeth neighborhood in Charlotte was a local historic district. Dr. Morrill stated that there is a new effort to have this neighborhood reinstated as a local historic district. Mr. Hughes stated that the neighborhood in which he lives has almost completed the necessary procedures to become a local historic district.

Mr. Hughes stated that he recently spoke with J'Tanya Adams regarding the status of the Former Wesley Heights Methodist Church. The building is currently under contract with a due diligence period that ends in December 2019. If the scheduled closing of the property does not occur, there will be additional efforts made to find a preservation solution for the property.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.