

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
September 14, 2020
Virtual Meeting
6:00 p.m. – 8:24 p.m.**

Minutes

Present:

**Ms. Diane Althouse/County/HLC Treasurer
Mr. Robert Barfield/County
Mr. Akadius Berry/County
Mr. Brian Clarke/County/Survey Committee Chair
Ms. Leila Farsiani/City
Ms. Laura Hoover/County/HLC Secretary
Mr. William Hughes/City/ HLC Vice Chair
Ms. Elizabeth Luke/County
Mr. Garrett Nelson/Mayor/Design Review Committee Chair
Mr. Jeffrey Parsons/Mayor/HLC Chair
Mr. Jonathan Schulz/City
Mr. Edwin Wilson/City/Projects Committee Chair
Mr. Jack Thomson, HLC Executive Director
Mr. Stewart Gray, HLC Senior Preservation Planner
Ms. Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Administrative Assistant**

Absent:

Visitors:

**Robert Billings
Kimberley Cole
Gwen Cook
Mac Crisco
Traci Crisco
Elizabeth Funck
Tori Golaszewski
Fey Grayson
Cindy Kochanek
John James
Jim Jordan
Lora Mastrofrancesco
Luke Maybry
Dan Morrill
Len Norman
John Purdie
Anthony Roberts**

Allen Sherrill

Note: This meeting was held virtually through the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Mr. Thomson explained that the Commissioners would conduct official business through a roll call to ensure accurate recording.

1. Consideration of Minutes

MR. WILSON PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. BARFIELD THAT THE MINUTES FOR THE AUGUST 10, 2020, MEETING OF THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION BE APPROVED. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

2. Chair's Report: Jeffrey Parsons

Mr. Parsons welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mr. Parsons noted that Elizabeth Luke was recently appointed to the Commission and asked Ms. Luke to introduce herself. Mr. Parsons asked the Commissioners to check their attendance and let Staff know if there are any questions. Mr. Parsons stated that American singer-songwriter Nina Simone's childhood home in Tryon, N.C., has been preserved and noted that the identification and preservation of the home illustrates the importance of historic preservation.

3. Treasurer's Report: Diane Althouse

At Ms. Althouse's request, Mr. Thomson reviewed the monthly financial report prepared by the Asset and Facility Management Department of Mecklenburg County.

4. Design Review Committee Report: Garrett Nelson

a. Ranson House, 412 S. Old Statesville Road, Huntersville, N.C.

Mr. Gray reviewed the location of the forthcoming roundabout at the intersection of S. Old Statesville Road and Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road and noted that it will affect the designated Ranson House property through the addition of a sidewalk and curb and also by pushing the road farther from the property.

Ms. Luke asked whether the large trees in the front yard will be affected. Mr. Gray reviewed owner concerns regarding the effect of the road work on the tree root systems. Lora Mastrofrancesco, representative of the Town of Huntersville, stated that the Town is working with an arborist to protect the trees. Mr. Nelson stated that the Design Review Committee discussed the protection of vegetation and thanked Ms. Mastrofrancesco for being sensitive on this subject.

Ms. Mastrofrancesco stated that the road construction will take approximately 18-24 months to complete and that the whole time period will not be spent working by the Ranson House parcel. Mr. Nelson emphasized that given the comments from the owners in their letter, the owners are supportive of the project apart from a few concerns.

Ms. Althouse asked whether the historic designation would need to be amended. Mr. Gray stated that this work will not affect the recorded ordinance.

THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE PRESENTED A SECONDED MOTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT APPROVE THE ROAD WIDENING PROJECT AT THE RANSON HOUSE, 412 S. OLD STATESVILLE ROAD, HUNTERSVILLE, N.C., WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS: 1) THAT THE EXACT CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT BE SPECIFIED; 2) THAT THE TOWN OF HUNTERSVILLE WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE OWNERS OF THE RANSON HOUSE TO ENSURE TREE PROTECTION FOR THE DURATION OF THE PROJECT; AND 3) THAT ANY NEEDED VARIATIONS TO THE CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT BE PROPOSED TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION AND THE OWNERS OF THE RANSON HOUSE BEFORE CONSTRUCTION BEGINS. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

b. Freeman House, 201 S. Ames Street, Matthews, N.C.

Mr. Gray reviewed the location of the property and noted that the applicant is proposing to relocate the house to an adjacent lot and add two rear wings to the historic house once moved. Mr. Gray noted that this house is endangered and that the current owner does not desire for the house to be on the current property anymore. Mr. Gray stated that the Criscos are related to the builders of the house and are the only party that has presented a preservation proposal to save the house and barn.

Mr. Nelson stated that the Design Review Committee approved the relocation of and addition to the home but was uncomfortable with the scale of the addition. Mac Crisco stated that he has tasked his architect with reworking the addition but does not have plans ready to share. Mr. Crisco explained that he would like to not only receive approval to move the house but also needs to know whether an addition will be approved by the Commission. Mr. Nelson thanked Mr. and Mrs. Crisco for their interest and dedication to saving the house.

Luke Maybry, pastor of the Matthews Presbyterian Church which owns the land where the Freeman House is currently located, stated that when the church bought the house four years ago it did not realize the house was historic. Pastor Maybry stated that he is supportive of the Criscos relocating the house.

THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE PRESENTED A SECONDED MOTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT APPROVE THE RELOCATION OF THE FREEMAN HOUSE, 201 S. AMES STREET, MATTHEWS, N.C., TO MECKLENBURG COUNTY TAX PARCEL 22702446 AND CONCEPTUALLY APPROVE THE PROPOSED PLANS FOR THE ADDITION WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MASSING ON THE SECOND FLOOR. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

c. Charlotte Fire Station #10, 2136 Remount Road, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Gray stated that there are no significant alterations proposed in this project and that the project was well-received by the Design Review Committee. Mr. Gray reviewed the proposed site plan and noted that the gas pumps will be removed so that accessible parking spots can be added in that general location. Ms. Hoover stated that whatever can be repaired in the building will be and that replacements will only happen if necessary.

Bernie Funck stated that he is looking forward to finishing this project and bringing new life into the property.

THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE PRESENTED A SECONDED MOTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT APPROVE PLANS AS PRESENTED FOR THE CHARLOTTE FIRE STATION #10, 2136 REMOUNT ROAD, CHARLOTTE, N.C. THE COMMISSION APPROVED THE MOTION WITH MS. HOOVER ABSTAINING FROM THE VOTE.

d. Cedar Grove, 8229 Gilead Road, Huntersville, N.C.

Mr. Gray noted that this project is being reviewed by the Commission without first being reviewed by the Design Review Committee. Mr. Gray stated that the applicant was not aware that the property is a designated landmark and that permitting did not flag the property as such and, therefore, construction, which has since ceased, had already begun on the project. Mr. Gray stated that the applicant is proposing to install a parking lot, greenway trail, and bridge that will connect to the existing greenway on property adjacent to the historic house. Mr. Gray stated that the parking lot is mostly hidden from the house and that after reviewing the plans, Staff believes that the project is appropriate.

Mr. Parsons stated that he understood that this project was a special circumstance, but that he preferred for design review projects to go through the Design Review Committee before being brought to the full Commission. Mr. Parsons asked how much land is included in the historic designation and Mr. Gray stated that much of the acreage has been removed and that the designation currently consists of four parcels consisting of approximately 30 acres.

Mr. Berry asked about the significance of the property and Mr. Gray stated the property was owned by the prominent Torrance family.

Ms. Althouse stated that the historic land across the street is intended to protect the viewshed of Cedar Grove. Ms. Luke asked if the historic house is a private residence and Mr. Thomson stated it was.

Mr. Gray stated that the impact of the proposed construction would be negligible on the historic house and that the parking lot might be beneficial in that it could allow the construction of trails in which the public could view the house in a manner that is not currently possible. Mr. Thomson stated that he visited the site and is relatively confident

that the viewshed from the front of the house will be protected from the view of the parking lot.

Dr. Dan Morrill stated that Preserve Mecklenburg has a one-year assignable, exclusive option to purchase Cedar Grove and one acre surrounding it. Dr. Morrill asked what effect the placement of the proposed parking lot will have on future widening of Gilead Road. Robert Billings, Project Manager for Mecklenburg County's Asset and Facility Management department, stated that he has discussed this with NCDOT and that there are plans to widen the road in the future and that the design of the parking lot will not affect the road widening. Gwen Cook, Park Planner for Mecklenburg County's Park and Recreation department, stated that there is room for Gilead Road to be widened toward the parking lot.

MS. HOOVER PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MS. ALTHOUSE THAT THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION APPROVE THE PRESENTED PLANS FOR CEDAR GROVE, 8229 GILEAD ROAD, HUNTERSVILLE, N.C., WITH THE CONDITION THAT HLC STAFF MUST APPROVE THE DESIGN OF SIGNAGE AND THE ENTRANCE GATE. THE COMMISSION APPROVED THE MOTION WITH MR. NELSON AND MR. WILSON VOTING IN OPPOSITION.

5. Survey Committee Report: Brian Clarke

a. Johnson Sherrill Farmhouse, 21525 Shearer Road, Davidson, N.C.

Mr. Gray stated that the farmhouse was a common architectural type that was once abundant in Mecklenburg County. Mr. Gray stated that the house is significant due to it being a rare surviving farmhouse with good integrity.

Allen Sherrill, property owner, stated that the house was his grandmother's homeplace and that the intent is for the house to remain in the family.

THE SURVEY COMMITTEE PRESENTED A SECONDED MOTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT PROCESS THE JOHNSON SHERRILL FARMHOUSE, 21525 SHEARER ROAD, DAVIDSON, N.C., INCLUDING THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF THE HOUSE AND THE LAND AS SHOWN IN THE DESIGNATION REPORT FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

b. F.M. Simmons House, 625 Hermitage Court, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Clarke stated that this property was the home of the developer of Hermitage Court. Mr. Thomson stated that Hermitage Court is included in the National Register for Myers Park. Mr. Gray reviewed the statement of significance and stated the house is architecturally significant.

Jim Jordan, property owner, thanked the Commission and Staff for its assistance through the designation process.

THE SURVEY COMMITTEE PRESENTED A SECONDED MOTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT PROCESS THE F.M. SIMMONS HOUSE, 625 HERMITAGE COURT, CHARLOTTE, N.C., INCLUDING THE EXTERIOR OF THE HOUSE AND THE OUTBUILDINGS AND LAND AS SHOWN IN THE DESIGNATION REPORT FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

c. Brooklyn YMCA Building, 416 E. 3rd Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Clarke stated that this building is one of four surviving buildings from the Brooklyn neighborhood. Mr. Thomson reminded the Commission that it previously funded a Designation Report for the property. Mr. Thomson stated that the property owner requested that consideration of historic landmark designation by the Survey Committee be deferred, which was honored. Mr. Thomson stated that the Committee directed Staff to engage in a conversation regarding implications of designation with the owner.

Mr. Thomson stated that he briefly spoke with the property owner earlier in the day about the implications of designation but was not able to discuss design review implications. Mr. Thomson stated that the owner did not seem apprehensive about having the property designated as a historic landmark. Mr. Thomson stated that he believes the owner would benefit greatly of a better understanding of what the implications are in terms of design review control over alterations to the exterior of the building. Mr. Thomson noted that he shared with the property owner a remark by the consultant who produced the Designation Report that this site is one of the most important remaining civil rights sites in Mecklenburg County.

Mr. Thomson reviewed the statement of significance for the property. Mr. Thomson recommended that the Commission consider advancing the processing of the Designation Report while also giving Staff two weeks to further discuss the implications of historic landmark designation with the property owner. Mr. Clarke explained that the Survey Committee did not vote on a motion in order to provide Staff time to discuss the designation process with the property owner.

MR. CLARKE PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. HUGHES THAT THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION PROCESS THE BROOKLYN YMCA BUILDING, 416 E. 3RD STREET, CHARLOTTE, N.C., INCLUDING THE EXTERIOR OF THE BUILDING AND THE LAND ON WHICH THE BUILDING SITS FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION AND THAT THE PROCESSING BE DELAYED FOR TWO WEEKS IN ORDER FOR HLC STAFF TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS REGARDING HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION IMPLICATIONS WITH THE PROPERTY OWNER. THE COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

Mr. Wilson asked whether the processing of the building as a historic landmark would be cancelled if the owner states his opposition to designation. Mr. Thomson stated the processing would not be cancelled and that the two-week period is an opportunity to educate the property owner on the benefits of historic landmark designation.

6. Projects Committee Report: Edwin Wilson

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

Mr. Thomson stated that a Letter of Intent from a prospective buyer has been received. Mr. Thomson noted that Sandy Carnegie, attorney, has questions about information provided in the letter. Mr. Thomson stated that he has a meeting scheduled for September 15 with two additional commercial realtors.

b. Wallace House, 9425 Robinson Church Road, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Thomson stated that landscape cleanup has begun on the property. Mr. Thomson stated that Peter Wasmer, Project Manager for Mecklenburg County's Asset and Facility Management department, has been assisting in handling improvements that were identified in the home inspection.

c. Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 412 Campus Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Thomson stated that Mr. Carnegie has been engaged in conversations with the attorney for Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) on points of concern within the stabilization agreement. Mr. Thomson stated that Self-Help Credit Union is a known entity in the preservation field and has expressed interest in discussing the rehabilitation of the site with JCSU.

d. Douglas House, 7601 Christie Lane, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Thomson stated that the Charlotte Douglas International Airport has shown an interest in owning the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church property, which is where the Douglas House is located, due to it being in the direct flight path of the airport. Mr. Thomson stated that he had a productive discussion with real estate staff at the airport regarding potentially moving the Douglas House onto surplus land which the airport owns and does not intend to develop. Mr. Thomson stated that the airport will soon put out a request for information from the community seeking adaptive reuse ideas for Steele Creek Presbyterian Church, which is an indicator that the airport wants to keep the historic property intact.

Mr. Thomson stated that the Cooper Log House is an important building from the late 1700s located near the airport and that Mr. Clarke will be meeting with the owner to discuss how the Commission might be involved in the preservation of the property. Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Clarke for reaching out to the owner.

e. Shotgun House A and B, 715 E. 7th Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Thomson reminded the Commission that it approved the relocation of the houses to a different site and that Mr. Barfield, Ms. Hoover, and Mr. Nelson were authorized to work with Staff on the final approval of the renovations of the houses. Mr. Thomson stated that the land where the houses will be relocated has been purchased by the West Side Community Land Trust. Mr. Thomson stated that Staff has reached out to the Land Trust regarding the renovation design of the houses but has not yet received a response.

f. Cole Manufacturing Plant, 1318 Central Avenue, Charlotte, N.C.

Ms. Hoover stated that the land where the Cole Manufacturing Plant is located is scheduled to be redeveloped and that the two historic buildings will be preserved. Mr. Thomson stated that this is a great example of the impact Commissioners can have through outreach and advocacy.

7. Executive Committee Report: Jeff Parsons

Mr. Parsons stated that the Executive Committee discussed plans for the upcoming Commission retreat, which will occur early in 2021, barring further COVID-19 restrictions. Mr. Parsons stated that one topic of discussion will be the quasi-judicial process. Mr. Parsons noted that the Commissioners need to undergo training to understand how to conduct quasi-judicial business. Mr. Parsons stated that the Commission will also discuss education initiatives for owners of historic homes.

8. Staff Report: Jack Thomson and Stewart Gray

Mr. Thomson stated that he had nothing further to report. Mr. Gray noted that Ms. Farsiani is the only Commissioner to have completed the Certified Local Government (CLG) training and stated at least one more Commissioner needed to complete the training so that the Commission would retain its CLG status. Mr. Gray stated that he would send the training information to interested Commissioners.

9. Old Business

There was no old business.

10. New Business

Mr. Norman stated that he was attending the meeting as a representative of the Charlotte Museum of History's Preservation Committee. Mr. Norman stated that the upcoming Mad About Modern Tour will be virtual. Mr. Norman noted that the Museum and the Commission are jointly sponsoring a virtual preservation seminar series in October. Mr. Norman encouraged the Commissioners to register to attend the series.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.