

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Projects Committee Minutes
Virtual Meeting
July 27, 2020
6:00 p.m. – 7:48 p.m.**

Present:

**Ms. Diane Althouse, HLC Treasurer
Ms. Laura Hoover, HLC Secretary
Mr. William Hughes, HLC Vice Chair
Mr. Jeffrey Parsons, HLC Chair
Mr. Edwin Wilson, Projects Committee Chair
Mr. Sandy Carnegie, HLC Attorney
Mr. Jack Thomson, HLC Executive Director
Ms. Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Administrative Assistant
Mr. Peter Wasmer, Project Manager, Mecklenburg County**

Absent:

Visitors:

**Leila Farsiani
Dr. Dan Morrill**

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

1. Chair's Report: Mr. Edwin Wilson

Mr. Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that he will defer to Mr. Thomson to report on the developments of the various projects. Mr. Thomson stated that his Director's Report will be submitted to become part of the official meeting minutes.

2. Update on Projects

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

Mr. Thomson reminded the Committee that the previous interested party has cancelled the contract to purchase due in large part to concerns regarding COVID-19. Mr. Thomson advised that the Commission should now focus on creating a new marketing plan and strategy to find a new buyer.

Mr. Thomson noted that he is aware of two separate prospects that have visited the site and that are exploring potentially redeveloping the site for affordable housing. Mr. Thomson stated that one party is working on a preliminary site plan that will include new vertical development on the site. Mr. Thomson stated that this party is crafting a Letter of Intent,

which the Commission should anticipate receiving soon. Mr. Thomson showed a map of the property and noted that there is a fair amount of open space that lends itself to new construction. Mr. Thomson stated that the other potential party is working with a funder who is experienced with affordable housing projects. Mr. Thomson reiterated that he does not want to rely on potential buyers at this point, but that it is important to be proactive.

Mr. Wilson recommended finding a broker who is dynamic and ready to take on such a large project. Ms. Althouse expressed concerns about managing the expectations of potential buyers regarding tax credits and ensuring potential buyers are realistic in terms of financing. Mr. Thomson stated that one of the current prospects is aware of the current federal tax credits available and has expressed interest in coupling this with historic tax credits. Mr. Carnegie suggested providing tax credit information to interested parties in order to assist them in the process.

Ms. Hoover recommended reaching out to Jonathan Beall, a commercial partner with Red Partners who has worked on similar projects. Mr. Wilson stated his inclination to connect with Mr. Beall soon to start the process of finding a potential buyer.

MR. PARSONS PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. HOOVER THAT THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT AUTHORIZE HLC STAFF TO ENTER INTO A LISTING AGREEMENT WITH A BROKER IN FURTHERANCE OF THE MARKETING AND SALE OF THE TORRENCE LYTLER SCHOOL, 302 HOLBROOKS ROAD, HUNTERSVILLE, N.C. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

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

Mr. Thomson stated that he and Ms. Stuart have been putting together a list of public outlets from which to garner feedback regarding potential plans for the Wallace House. Mr. Thomson stated that the Commission can either work towards sensitively developing the land surrounding the house or place the whole property on the market as one piece. Mr. Thomson stated that he and Mr. Wilson have a site visit scheduled later in the week so that Mr. Wilson can familiarize himself with the property in order to provide professional advice about the next steps.

Mr. Wilson stated that it would be easiest to sell the land as one piece to one homeowner. Ms. Althouse agreed with Mr. Wilson's sentiments and stated it is important to educate neighbors about the history and significance of the house. Mr. Hughes noted the necessity to publicize available historic properties online in order to keep the public apprised of what is currently available.

MS. ALTHOUSE PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. PARSONS THAT THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT MR. THOMSON BE AUTHORIZED TO EMPLOY A BROKER FOR THE SALE OF THE WALLACE HOUSE, 9425 ROBINSON CHURCH ROAD,

CHARLOTTE, N.C., CONTINGENT UPON MR. WILSON'S SITE VISIT TO THE PROPERTY. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

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

Note: Mr. Wilson recused himself from the discussion of this item.

Mr. Thomson stated that Anthony Fox, attorney for Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU), will be organizing an introductory meeting between Mr. Thomson and JCSU's President Armbrister. Mr. Thomson stated that Mr. Fox has noted JCSU's opposition to parts of the stabilization agreement.

Mr. Thomson stated that once both parties reach a consensus on the stabilization agreement that the construction documents will go out to bid and a general contractor can be identified before the Commission goes to the Board of County Commissioners with the stabilization agreement and a request for funds. Mr. Wasmer stated that the timetable for going out to bid is approximately six months and that it would save time if JCSU took on the task of hiring an architect.

Mr. Thomson proposed that he continue to build a relationship with JCSU officials while Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Fox work to rectify differences in the stabilization agreement. The Committee agreed with this recommendation.

d. Excelsior Club, 921 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. Thomson introduced Leila Farsiani, who was recently appointed to her first term on the Commission.

Mr. Thomson stated that developers for the Excelsior Club have been soliciting for architects that represent the African American community. Mr. Thomson stated that once the design work begins, the Commission will work with the designer to craft easement language for the preservation of the façade.

Mr. Wilson recommended that the Committee members review the Beatties Ford Road study recently presented to the Survey Committee. Mr. Thomson noted that while the study is largely finished, parts of it are still being refined.

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

Mr. Thomson stated that he has been in discussions with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the Charlotte Douglas International Airport undergoing an environmental impact study. Mr. Thomson explained that the airport is required to undertake a full study of its impact on surrounding historic resources due to licensing from the FAA. Mr. Thomson stated that this means that the airport can no longer unilaterally demolish historic structures until this study is complete. Mr. Thomson stated that the Commission would have consulting party status on this study and that he has provided the information of other preservation groups to the airport for their potential inclusion.

Mr. Thomson stated that this study could give the Commission leverage in determining the future of the Douglas House. Ms. Althouse asked if the house could be moved to a different parcel of land. Mr. Thomson stated that it could be relocated onto surplus land that the airport may be willing to donate. Mr. Thomson stated that he would keep the Committee updated as the study progresses.

Note: Ms. Althouse left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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

Mr. Thomson stated that City of Charlotte Code Enforcement has contacted Staff regarding the condition of this property. Mr. Thomson stated that the property owner has reported that he is striving to improve the property. Mr. Thomson stated that he informed the Code Enforcement officials that the property is an important historic resource and is currently on the Commission's Study List of Potential Historic Landmarks. Mr. Wasmer asked Mr. Thomson to clarify whether he was contacted by an employee of the City of Charlotte's Code Enforcement department or whether it was an employee of Mecklenburg County's Land Use and Environmental Services (LUESA) agency. Mr. Thomson stated that he would confirm and notify Mr. Wasmer.

Mr. Parsons questioned whether the Commission is still interested in placing the property on a potential purchase list if it became available for purchase. Mr. Wilson stated that this inquiry would need to be asked to the full Commission but that he believes interest is still strong. Mr. Wilson reminded the Committee that the house has been damaged by a fire and is currently uninhabitable. Mr. Wilson noted the ambiguity with the number of heirs on the property's chain of title and recommended performing a title search to resolve discrepancies. Mr. Thomson cautioned the Committee against being overly eager with potentially purchasing this property and recommended taking a supportive role in gathering community input.

g. Mayes House, 435 E. Morehead Street, Charlotte, N.C.

Dr. Morrill stated that Preserve Mecklenburg (PMI) has consulted with house movers who have estimated that moving the house to a new parcel located to the southwest of the house's current location and building a new foundation would cost approximately \$269,000. Dr. Morrill noted that it is cost prohibitive to move the house to a new parcel identified on West Boulevard due to the logistics of safely moving the house. Dr. Morrill stated that Mr. Wyatt has placed the property on the market and that PMI is awaiting Mr. Wyatt's decision regarding if the house can stay on site or whether it must be moved offsite.

Dr. Morrill asked if, depending upon whether Mr. Wyatt will allow the house to be moved and if he will donate the house and the land on which the house would sit, the Commission is interested in funding the move of the house. Mr. Wilson stated his belief that the house will not be saved if it is not moved offsite. Mr. Parsons stated that he would be interested in working with PMI to save the house and would need to know more about the costs

involved. Mr. Parsons asked Dr. Morrill to convey to PMI that the Commission is interested in participating in a preservation solution. Mr. Thomson stated that he would like to discuss the matter further with Mr. Wilson and Dr. Morrill and the members of PMI.

3. Old Business

There was no old business.

4. New Business

a. Washam House and Lands, 15735 Davidson-Concord Road, Davidson, N.C.

Mr. Thomson stated that the larger parcel surrounding the Washam House is under contract for purchase by a conservation buyer. Mr. Thomson noted that the Washam House is on a smaller, separate parcel. Mr. Thomson stated that Staff has consulted the potential buyer and discussed the rehabilitation of the house and the potential to conserve the land. Mr. Thomson informed the Committee that the buyer may come before the full Commission to discuss the restoration of the house and the potential to place it on the market.

b. Dr. Craven House, 103 N. Old Statesville Road, Huntersville, N.C.

Mr. Thomson stated that this property is currently owned by the Town of Huntersville and is located where the local greenway will connect to Old Statesville Road. Mr. Thomson stated that Staff put together a Request for Proposal for the redevelopment of the property and the preservation of the house, but that the Town Council has decided to make the property available to anyone who is interested in buying and relocating the house.

MR. WILSON PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. PARSONS THAT THE MEETING OF THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE ADJOURN. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.