

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Projects Committee Minutes
Virtual Meeting
July 28, 2021
6:05 p.m. – 7:26 p.m.**

Present:

**Ms. Diane Althouse
Mr. William Hughes, HLC Chair
Mr. Jeffrey Parsons, Projects Committee Chair
Mr. Edwin Wilson, HLC Treasurer
Mr. Jack Thomson, HLC Executive Director
Ms. Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Administrative Assistant**

Absent:

**Mr. Robert Barfield, HLC Secretary
Mr. Brian Clarke, HLC Vice Chair and Survey Committee Chair**

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

1. Chair's Report: Jeffrey Parsons

Mr. Parsons welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that a quorum was present.

2. Update on Streetcar #85 Lease

Mr. Thomson stated that Streetcar #85 and Car #1 are currently in possession of the non-profit organization Lakewood Trolley and are in a storage facility associated with Savona Mill, which is in the process of being redeveloped. Mr. Thomson reminded the Committee that in June 2018, Lakewood Trolley signed an agreement with the Historic Landmarks Commission to lease Streetcar #85. Mr. Thomson stated that Lakewood Trolley's intent was to bring trolley service to Charlotte's West End and there was an expectation that the streetcar would be in use within 18 months of the signing.

Mr. Thomson stated that in May 2021, the board of Lakewood Trolley authorized Frank Bragg to negotiate with Belmont Trolley, a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring trolley service in Gaston County, regarding allowing the two cars to be put into service in Belmont. Mr. Thomson explained that Belmont has a good section of track and is well on its way to having a trolley barn. Mr. Thomson stated that the Commission should anticipate receiving a request to consider a new lease agreement with Belmont Trolley to put the trolleys in service in Belmont.

Mr. Parsons expressed concern about the damages clause being triggered if the lease with Lakewood Trolley is terminated. Mr. Thomson stated that the damages clause may be a non-issue and that the lease with Belmont Trolley should be an entirely new lease. Mr. Thomson noted that details would need to be worked out but that the streetcars could come back to Charlotte if Belmont procured its own rolling stock.

Dr. Dan Morrill explained the history of the streetcars and stated that streetcars were fundamental to the urban history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mr. Parsons asked for Dr. Morrill's opinion regarding transferring the streetcars to Gaston County. Dr. Morrill stated that there is opportunity and enthusiasm for the streetcars in Belmont that is not currently matched in Mecklenburg County. Dr. Morrill stated that it is better to have the cars operational rather than sitting in a storage facility.

Frank Bragg stated that he visited Belmont to survey the storage and tracks. Mr. Bragg agreed with Dr. Morrill that his preference would be for the streetcars to stay in Mecklenburg County, but noted his belief that this is the best opportunity for the streetcars to return to service.

Ms. Althouse asked about the timeline for the streetcars to become operational. Dr. Morrill and Mr. Bragg stated that the cars would be operational as quickly as is safely possible. Dr. Morrill noted that the key factor to the success of the streetcars is the enthusiasm of the Belmont residents.

The Committee members agreed that the streetcars will be highly visible from their location in downtown Belmont and that the process to relocate them and make them operational should proceed.

MS. ALTHOUSE PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. HUGHES THAT THE PROJECTS COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT ENTER INTO LEASE NEGOTIATIONS WITH BELMONT TROLLEY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING STREETCAR #85 BY LEASE WITH THE INTENT TO MAKE IT OPERATIONAL WITHIN THE TOWN OF BELMONT. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

3. General Update on Revolving Fund Properties

a. Wallace House, 9425 Robinson Church Road, Charlotte

Mr. Thomson stated that Elizabeth Grillo, realtor, has been engaged to represent this property. Mr. Thomson stated that repair work is ongoing and will be finished before a photographer documents the property for marketing purposes.

b. Torrence Lytle School, 302 Holbrooks Road, Huntersville

Mr. Thomson stated that Anthony Lindsey, commercial real estate agent, will be representing this property. Mr. Thomson stated that Mr. Lindsey has ideas about how to successfully market the property and that this will be beneficial to the Commission particularly in trying to meet the expectations of the immediate community around the site.

Ms. Althouse asked about the likelihood of the Commission recouping the resources it has invested in the Wallace House. Mr. Thomson stated that Ms. Grillo advised the Commission to manage its expectations regarding selling the property. Mr. Thomson stated that it may be tough to enter the market with a 10 acre parcel that has restrictions placed on it. Mr. Thomson noted that the appraisal that was ordered for the property did not consider the restrictions that may devalue the property to some degree.

Mr. Thomson stated that he received communication from Kristi Harpst with information on a potential demolition threat in Wilmore and that he will investigate further.

Mr. Parsons asked about the status of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church. Mr. Thomson stated that there is no update. Mr. Thomson stated that he will reach out to Myrick Howard at Preservation North Carolina, which holds a preservation easement on the property, as an incentive to move forward. Mr. Thomson stated that he has developed a stronger relationship with Mecklenburg County's legal department but is searching for outside legal representation to focus on real estate transactions.

Mr. Parsons stated that the next Projects Committee meeting should be devoted to setting goals regarding what the Committee would like to accomplish during this fiscal year. Mr. Thomson stated that he and Mr. Parsons will meet to discuss the scheduling of the Committee for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Dr. Morrill requested that the Committee discuss how Preserve Mecklenburg should approach the acquisition of easements on designated historic landmarks. Dr. Morrill explained that there should be a process that Preserve Mecklenburg can follow if it is approached by an owner of a historic landmark regarding an easement.

Mr. Parsons stated that it is a good idea to have a discussion and that this may lead the Commission and Preserve Mecklenburg to discuss further opportunities to work together and ensure that easements are complementary. Mr. Parsons stated that historic resources will be lost if preservation organizations are competitive.

Mr. Thomson stated that there should be a well-defined process for how preservation organizations communicate. Mr. Thomson stated that establishing expectations would be prudent but that it may be challenging to have a level of solicitation of the same owners, some of which may be more receptive to non-governmental organizations and vice versa.

Ms. Althouse stated that easements are strategic and she cautioned against the Commission becoming overwhelmed with easements that may never be referenced. Ms. Althouse stated that the owner should be content with the easement placed and that this is the only way to truly protect a building in perpetuity.

Mr. Wilson stated his uncertainty that it is appropriate for the Projects Committee to take on a campaign regarding easements. Mr. Wilson noted that there will be a directional shift due to the cost of real estate in the market and that the Commission has to decide how it can continue to make an impact in this type of environment.

Mr. Hughes stated that this conversation deserves further attention and that the Commission will need to get creative in order to continue preserving properties.

4. Old Business

There was no old business.

5. New Business

There was no new business.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.