

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Survey Committee Minutes
Virtual Meeting
January 26, 2022
6:00 p.m. – 7:56 p.m.**

Present:

Mr. Akadius Berry
Mr. Brian Clarke, Survey Committee Chair/HLC Vice Chair
Mr. John Howard
Ms. Cindy Kochanek
Mr. Jack Thomson, HLC Executive Director
Mr. Stewart Gray, HLC Historic Resources Program Manager
Ms. Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Administrative Assistant
Mr. Tommy Warlick, HLC Consulting Preservation Planner

Absent:

Ms. Elizabeth Luke
Mr. Michael Rogers

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

1. Chair's Report: Brian Clarke

Mr. Clarke stated that he did not have additional items to report.

Note: The Committee agreed to discuss the following item first to allow time for additional Committee members to join the meeting.

2. Report on Condition of Headstones at Steele Creek Cemetery, 7311 Steele Creek Road, Charlotte

Mr. Warlick stated that Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church's Cemetery Committee contacted him last summer to express concerns regarding the conditions of Steele Creek Cemetery. Mr. Warlick reminded the Committee that Steele Creek Presbyterian Church is a designated landmark and is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Warlick explained that the church, except for the cemetery, has been sold to Charlotte Douglas Airport.

Mr. Warlick stated that the church is one of the original Seven Sisters, denoting one of the first seven churches founded in Mecklenburg County, and that many of the largest headstones were designed by the Bigham Shop, which often used soapstone and limestone for their creations. Mr. Warlick showed images contrasting the former and current conditions of several gravestones, illustrating significant deterioration at the cemetery. Mr. Warlick showed maps indicating the

proximity of the cemetery to the airport and noted that soapstone and limestone are particularly susceptible to air pollution.

Note: Mr. Berry joined the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Mr. Warlick showed images of headstones at Gilead ARP Church and Ramah Presbyterian Church in Huntersville to illustrate how these stones have weathered better than those at Steele Creek. Mr. Warlick stated that he has reached out to the Office of State Archaeology and to the City of Charlotte Cemetery Director but has yet to receive assistance. Mr. Warlick noted that other churches have reached out to express concerns over dwindling membership and to discuss how their historic edifices could be preserved. Mr. Warlick stated that the Commission may need to be proactive in these situations.

Mr. Gray stated that the images in Mr. Warlick's presentation do not do justice to the deterioration that has occurred at Steele Creek Cemetery. Mr. Gray noted that the headstones are much more deteriorated than those at comparable cemeteries.

Mr. Clarke stated that he is familiar with Steele Creek Cemetery and over the past several years there has been a marked change in the legibility of the stones, particularly the stones on the eastern part of the property. Mr. Clarke explained that the cemetery contains funerary art that is of national significance as the peak of Presbyterian funeral art in the United States.

Mr. Berry asked if the headstones have become deteriorated due to lack of care, environmental causes, or other factors.

Mr. Gray stated that the three cemeteries visited seem to be well-maintained and noted that there is organic matter on the headstones at each of these cemeteries. Mr. Clarke stated that the grounds at Steele Creek are mowed and reasonably well-maintained.

Mr. Gray noted that since Dr. Patterson, the historian who took the original Steele Creek Cemetery photographs, was able to clean the stones with water and a toothbrush indicates that there was not as much organic matter growing on them as is on their current condition. Mr. Gray stated that the airport should consider the damage being done to the cemetery and investigate if there is a treatment that could be applied to the stones to mitigate the deterioration.

Mr. Warlick stated that in his research he found a protective solution that has been used in Europe and that there are methods for these stones to be protected.

3. Review of Proposed Alterations for Parkwood Avenue ARP Church, 1017 Parkwood Avenue, Charlotte

Mr. Clarke reminded the Committee that it reviewed this property for potential landmark designation at a previous meeting and determined that the stained glass windows that were removed should be returned to the front exterior. Mr. Clarke stated it was agreed that if the developer found a solution to return the stained glass windows to the main façade that the Committee would be in favor of approving the designation of the church. Mr. Clarke noted that the developer has been working with Mr. Gray and Commissioners Robert Barfield and Garrett Nelson on plans to return the windows to the front exterior.

Mr. Gray stated that the motion from the Survey Committee was to recommend designation for the property if the stained glass windows were restored. Mr. Gray stated that the current situation is that the windows have been removed and the locations have been bricked over with an infill of bricks across the façade. Mr. Gray explained that staff worked with the applicant on a proper solution. Mr. Gray stated that the applicant has fulfilled the Committee's conditions and staff would like for the Committee to proceed with the designation recommendation.

Mr. Howard asked about the inset of the stained glass windows. Eid Refaey, applicant, stated that a course of bricks would be removed and that the inset of the windows would maintain the same look as before their removal.

Mr. Clarke stated that although the Commission may have made different architectural decisions on the exterior of the building, the most important thing to consider is that the new owners renovated the building rather than demolishing it.

Ms. Kochanek asked if the windows would be double hung. Mr. Refaey stated that the windows are single hung. Mr. Refaey explained that some of the windows no longer exist due to being destroyed or stolen.

MR. BERRY PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. HOWARD THAT THE SURVEY COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT PROCESS THE EXTERIOR OF THE PARKWOOD AVENUE A.R.P. CHURCH BUILDING, 1017 PARKWOOD AVENUE, CHARLOTTE, FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

4. Consideration of Designation Report on the E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers and Monuments

Mr. Clarke stated that many of these markers are located near roads and would benefit from the protection that comes with landmark designation.

Mr. Warlick reminded the Committee that the markers were approved for landmark designation by the Committee and full Commission back in 2018 but the designation process never proceeded. Mr. Warlick stated that one difference in the current recommendation for designation is that the stone wall surrounding the Davidson family cemetery at Rural Hill and the stone markers at Hopewell Presbyterian Church are not included due to the staff determination that these structures are already protected through the designation of these properties. Mr. Warlick stated that another difference in the current recommendation is the inclusion of the Battle of McIntyre's Farm Monument. Mr. Warlick noted that this monument is unique in that it is a single boulder rather than a structure built of stacked stones. Mr. Warlick stated that the final difference in the current recommendation is that varying degrees of land surrounding the markers have been included to provide additional protection.

Mr. Gray explained that the radii will extend into right of ways, which should offer protection from roadwork.

MS. KOCHANEK PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. BERRY THAT THE SURVEY COMMITTEE RECOMMEND TO THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION THAT IT PROCESS THE E. L. BAXTER DAVIDSON HISTORIC MARKERS AND MONUMENTS WITH THE PROTECTED RADII AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

5. Consideration of Placement on the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks

a. Renfrow Commercial Properties

Mr. Thomson showed current images of the properties and indicated the adjacent parcels that are already designated and the parcels that are included in the Matthews National Register District. Mr. Thomson stated that all of the proposed properties are owned by the proprietor of the Renfrow Hardware Store, which is a designated landmark. Mr. Thomson stated that the owner appears to be sincere about helping to create a sustainable and authentic future for the Town of Matthews.

MS. KOCHANEK PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. BERRY THAT THE SURVEY COMMITTEE PLACE THE RENFROW COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, MATTHEWS, ON THE STUDY LIST OF PROSPECTIVE HISTORIC LANDMARKS. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

b. White Company Truck Manufacturing Facility

Mr. Warlick stated that this property was brought to staff's attention in November after a reporter from Charlotte Magazine reached out for the backstory of the new Resident Culture Brewery location. Mr. Warlick provided a brief history of the property and stated that staff is interested in learning more about this property.

MS. KOCHANEK PRESENTED A MOTION SECONDED BY MR. BERRY THAT THE SURVEY COMMITTEE PLACE THE WHITE COMPANY TRUCK MANUFACTURING FACILITY, 332 W. BLAND STREET, CHARLOTTE, ON THE STUDY LIST OF PROSPECTIVE HISTORIC LANDMARKS. THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION.

6. Review of Rosenwald Schools

Mr. Gray stated that in a previous meeting William Hughes asked about the condition of the remaining Rosenwald Schools. Mr. Gray stated that staff found a relatively comprehensive survey from 1987, which it annotated slightly. Mr. Gray noted that a big finding is that Henderson Grove is surviving and although remodeled into a home, its architectural form has been preserved to an extent that it would be eligible for designation.

7. Staff Report: Jack Thomson and Stewart Gray

a. Update on Huntersville School #2 (Rosenwald)

Mr. Gray showed the 1925 metes and bounds of the property. Mr. Gray stated that community members believe that the land directly to the west of the school is lot #1 from the deed and that staff can with certainty state that this is not the lot to the west but the lot by Dellwood Street. Mr. Gray stated that the 1930 deed aligns with the neighboring properties that are described in the deed. Mr. Gray explained that staff now understands what land was historically associated with the school and that it was important for staff to understand the evolution of the property before going to Huntersville's Town Board to proceed with designation.

b. Update on Thrift Mill Village Survey

Mr. Thomson stated that staff needs volunteers to continue working on this survey.

c. Uptown Charlotte Sears Building

Mr. Thomson stated that this building is currently known as the Hal Marshall Building and has been found eligible for listing on the National Register. Mr. Thomson stated that staff will research if there is a redevelopment plan for this site and noted that there may be an opportunity to be proactive in this situation.

d. Update on Sinister Wisdom, 3116 Country Club Drive, Charlotte

Mr. Gray reported that the property owners are supportive of staff proceeding with the production of a designation report. Mr. Gray stated that staff will return to the Committee with more information once a consultant is identified.

e. Dedication of the Ervin Building, 4037 E. Independence Blvd, Charlotte

Mr. Thomson stated that the groundbreaking occurred on January 25 and that several elected officials attended. Mr. Thomson stated this will be a great project and that he spoke with members of the press to encourage the idea that preservation can be economically viable.

f. Survey Committee Outing

Mr. Thomson stated that a modest inaugural outing to a historic site is planned for Saturday, February 19.

Mr. Gray stated that staff hopes to offer regular outings to historic sites as opportunities to interact with the public.

8. Old Business

There was no old business.

9. New Business

Mr. Thomson stated that at a future meeting staff will bring forth the architectural survey for the City of Charlotte that was completed in 2016-17 to engage the Committee's efforts in evaluating the survey.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.