

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
Projects Committee Minutes
Hybrid Meeting
2100 Randolph Road, Charlotte
May 23, 2023
6:35 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.**

Present

Brian Clarke/County/HLC Vice Chair/Survey Committee Chair
Edwin Wilson/City/HLC Treasurer/Projects Committee Chair
Stewart Gray, HLC Historic Preservation Manager
Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Senior Administrative Support Assistant
Leslie Johnson, Deputy County Manager
Susan Hall, Assistant County Attorney

Absent

Robert Barfield/County/HLC Secretary
William Hughes/City/HLC Chair

Note: This hybrid meeting was held virtually through the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform and in-person at the HLC office.

1. Chair's Report: Edwin Wilson

Chair Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted that there will not be a public comment period at this meeting and explained that such periods are reserved for full Commission meetings. He stated that the next Commission meeting will be held on June 12 and explained that the Commission will not be discussing the Torrence-Lytle School until the July 10 meeting. He asked members of the public to email staff with questions.

Chair Wilson announced that the Leeper-Wyatt Store will be preserved through relocation by a couple of local restaurateurs. He noted that this designated landmark was under threat of demolition and stated that this is a favorable outcome.

2. Consideration of Offer to Purchase the Torrence-Lytle School

Chair Wilson stated that staff has met with the team involved with the project and noted that the applicant is attending virtually to share the project.

Dwayne Tutt, applicant, briefly provided his educational and professional background, focusing on his real estate experience.

Tutt explained that Workplace Architecture and Design has developed a conceptual plan for the property, including: revitalizing the school buildings into a STEAM Center and coworking space; using the auditorium for the arts; having a place for tutoring and real estate classes with the intent for an education theme to run through the site; creating a patio seating area and food truck plaza; constructing a mixed-use facility with commercial space on the bottom and residential units above; and allowing space for potential restaurants and retail space on Holbrooks Road.

Tutt emphasized that the presented plans are conceptual, and that community feedback is desired. He explained that he intends for people who live in the community to have services available in the community.

Chair Wilson asked whether the food truck plaza would be hardwired or use generators. Tutt answered that conceptually the food truck would be hardwired.

Paul Meyer, architect with Workplace Architecture and Design, stated that he specializes in facility planning on complex projects, including historic restorations. Meyer noted that community meetings and input will be needed to make this a successful project.

Historic Preservation Manager Gray stated that a quorum is not present tonight. He explained that present Committee members will advise the full Commission at their July meeting on the conceptual plans discussed tonight.

Tutt reiterated his desire to work with the community on this project.

Chair Wilson thanked Tutt for the thoroughness of his presentation.

Gray stated that staff will work with the applicant on gathering public feedback before the July 10 meeting.

3. Update on the Excelsior Club

Gray stated that he, Deputy County Manager Leslie Johnson, and Historic Landmarks Commission Chair William Hughes recently attended a public hearing at the Beatties Ford Road Library. Gray stated that this was an opportunity for Darius Anderson, developer of the Excelsior Club, to update the community on his plans to rehabilitate the property. Gray stated that the parking concerns have been largely resolved due to Anderson purchasing the lot adjacent to the Excelsior Club.

Gray stated that the update provided to the Commission at the May meeting regarding the possible demolition of the entire building was received with surprise. He stated that funding for the project specifically mentions one option being restoration or replication. He asked the Committee if there were concerns about replication. He stated that staff could review Projects Committee meeting minutes to provide the exact language regarding approving replication of this property.

Johnson explained that preservation is likely not possible as the structure is not sound. She noted that much of the interior was gutted to access copper piping. She stated that there has been a commitment for replication and a commitment that the history will be noted. She emphasized that the building cannot be saved in its current state.

Chair Wilson mentioned the unique canopy entrance and stated it would be important for this to be preserved or replicated if preservation is not feasible.

Johnson stated that the agreement was broad and optimistic with preservation in mind. She stated that there was a commitment to preserve the façade through preservation, restoration, or replication. She stated that it would be up to the Commission to determine what should be included in the façade regarding the phased additions.

Gray stated that the latest plan includes replication of the façade and the building's footprint.

Vice Chair Clarke noted that the building is constructed of wood and stated that preserving and retaining the façade of a wood frame construction is possible. He explained that this property is one of three surviving Green Book properties in Charlotte.

Gray stated that the ticket booths at American Legion Memorial Stadium are replicated, as is Tryon Palace in New Bern, which remains an important historic site.

Chair Wilson questioned whether anything remained in the building that could be removed, restored, and utilized. Johnson stated nothing remained.

Chair Wilson questioned if a brief video of the interior of the property would be feasible for the Commission's viewing. Johnson reiterated the property's risk. She stated that she and Darius Anderson would be meeting soon and that Anderson should be ready to share visions of design with the Commission soon.

4. Update on Potential Cooperation With Charlotte Douglas International Airport on Historic Airport Properties

Gray stated that staff and Charlotte Douglas International Airport officials have had ongoing discussions regarding the William Grier House, which was relocated to a property that the airport now owns. He stated that the house is not on a permanent foundation. He stated that the airport is interested in finding a preservation solution for the Douglas House. He noted that the nearby Manse House is not a designated historic landmark but is still a historic property. He explained that this Manse property is large enough to accommodate the relocation of these additional historic properties. He stated that the airport is supportive of historic preservation. He stated that that he will visit the Manse House soon to determine its condition and the feasibility of moving the other houses to this property.

5. Old Business

Chair Wilson stated that he is recused from discussions regarding Mt. Carmel Baptist Church.

Gray explained that the Commission has worked with Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) for several years on the preservation of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, owned by JCSU. He stated that there is an unfortunate update that the building has deteriorated greatly to the point that stabilizing the building may no longer be feasible. He stated that JCSU is now exploring preserving the façade and tower. He stated that staff is working with JCSU officials on this option. He explained that Preservation North Carolina has a covenant on the building. He reminded the Committee that the Commission had committed up to \$1 million for the stabilization project in which the Commission would take ownership of the property with JCSU gradually reacquiring it. He stated that the Commission's financial involvement would no longer be necessary if only the façade were saved.

Vice Chair Clarke reiterated that the Commission was prepared to provide \$1 million to ensure the preservation of this property that was allowed to deteriorate.

Chair Wilson stated his interest in the Commission placing easements on properties as an additional method for the Commission to influence preservation in Mecklenburg County. He stated that the increase in housing costs limits the ability for the Commission to acquire and preserve property. He stated that using the revolving fund to place preservation easements would allow for the preservation of more properties with minimal funds. He stated that the Commission must evolve and proposed using both landmark designation and easements to preserve properties.

Vice Chair Clarke agreed with Chair Wilson that the real estate market has developed so that purchasing and reselling properties through the revolving fund is not feasible. He stated that the Commission needs to be creative with its preservation methods.

Gray stated that the Commission has received an increased number of Certificates of Application for demolitions this fiscal year. He stated that a step could be added to the designation process inquiring about easement donations.

Gray stated that the owner of the Stafford property is not interested in the Commission purchasing the cabin and leaving it on site. Gray stated that the owner has offered to allow someone to buy the cabin to move it off site. Gray stated that Rosedale has expressed interest in the building and noted his hopes for a preservation solution.

6. New Business

Gray stated that the Adventure Club will be doing a bike tour of Plaza Midwood on June 3.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.