

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
July 10, 2023
Hybrid Meeting
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 266
6:00 p.m. – 8:36 p.m.**

Minutes

Present

Victoria Archibald/County
Dontressa Ashford/Mayor
Robert Barfield/County/HLC Secretary (remote)
Akadius Berry/County
Lesley Carroll/County
Brian Clarke/County/HLC Vice Chair/Survey Committee Chair
Andra Eaves/County (remote)
Nadine Ford/City
Emily Makas/Mayor
Edwin Wilson/City/HLC Treasurer
Stewart Gray, HLC Historic Preservation Manager
Elizabeth Stuart, HLC Senior Administrative Support Assistant
Tommy Warlick, HLC Consulting Preservation Planner
Leslie Johnson, Deputy County Manager

Absent

William Hughes/City/HLC Chair

Note: This meeting was held virtually through the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform and in-person at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center.

1. Adoption of the Consent Agenda

a. Approval of June HLC Minutes

Commissioner Wilson presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Ford that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the consent agenda as presented for the approval of the Historic Landmarks Commission's June 12 meeting minutes. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

2. Chair's Report: William Hughes

Note: Brian Clarke served as Chair for this meeting in William Hughes' absence.

Chair Clarke stated that he did not have a report.

3. Public Comment Period (Up to 3 Minutes Per Person)

Chair Clarke stated that this is the period for members of the public to speak to the Commission on matters within the Commission's purview.

Marc Jensen, Regina Bates, Verona Wynn, and Reverend Dora DuBose expressed concerns about Torrence-Lytle School, including the state of the property and how it has been handled by the Commission.

Note: Commissioner Ashford joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

4. Quasi-Judicial Hearings

a. Old Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, 412 Campus Street, Charlotte

HEARING ON CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Owner/Applicant: Johnson C. Smith University
Subject Property: Old Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
Address: 412 Campus Street, Charlotte
PIN: 06901104

The Commissioners affirmed that they do not have any known conflicts of interest which would prevent their participation in this hearing, and that they have not engaged in any ex parte communication which would prevent their participation in this hearing.

Note: Commissioner Wilson recused himself from discussion of Old Mt. Carmel Baptist Church.

The following persons were sworn in to give testimony at the hearing: Stewart Gray, Gordon Douglas, Erna Perkins-Jones, Andrew Tucker.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments
Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church
412 Campus Street, Charlotte
Application for COA HLC323

Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:

Exhibit A – Project description from the application

Demolition of the existing church building while saving the existing major façade facing Campus Street

Exhibit B – Map

Exhibit C - Project Plans

Based upon the information presented in the application, staff offers the following **suggested findings of fact:**

1. Only the sanctuary is included in the designation.
2. The HLC has acknowledged the need to alter a historic property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the property's historic character.
3. The sanctuary is suffering a partial collapse.
4. The City of Charlotte has issued a demolition order for the building as part of their code enforcement process.

5. The City of Charlotte Housing Appeals Board has approved the preservation of the façade as an appropriate approach to address the code violations.

6. The project does not meet HLC Standards 2 and 5, in that original materials and building elements will be demolished.

7. The project mitigates the loss of some original materials and building elements by preserving the sanctuary's gabled façade and the tower, the two most prominent, public and distinctive elements of the building.

Staff Recommendation

Staff suggests that the Commission approve the application with the condition that the applicant fully photographically document the exterior of the building and supply the images to the HLC.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff

Commissioner Makas asked for clarity regarding whether the Commission was considering the demolition of the entire building or approving the preservation of the façade. She also questioned why staff recommended the façade be preserved and not the sanctuary if demolition violates the Standards.

Historic Preservation Manager Gray explained that any change to a historic property has a negative impact on the historic resource. He stated that staff strives to clarify how proposed projects would impact the historic character in findings of fact while also understanding that historic resources must be allowed to change. He explained that the Commission can approve or deny the presented plan and noted that conditions could be added to the approval. He stated that there is an active demolition order on the property and that the applicant would need to take certain steps to proceed with demolition.

Deputy County Manager Leslie Johnson explained that there is a process undertaken to proceed with the demolition order.

Commissioner Barfield stated his uncertainty with the proposal leaving only a freestanding wall.

The Applicants' Comments

Erna Perkins-Jones, Director of Facilities at Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU), stated that the building has deteriorated and explained that JCSU officials are discussing how the site could still be a gathering space for the community.

Gordon Douglas, architectural designer with Neighboring Concepts, stated that full stabilization of the building was evaluated with the consensus to proceed with stabilizing the front façade.

Andrew Tucker, Vice President of Hux Contracting, explained that selective demolition would be performed so that the rear of the building is demolished and the front stabilized. He explained that the building is unsafe. He stated that if the proposal is approved that demolition would begin once the permit was issued.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicants

Commissioner Berry asked how JCSU would commemorate the building's historic aspects.

Perkins-Jones stated that the brick announcement board would be preserved as a designated marker. She stated that of the two renderings, the preferred option is the one with only the tower

and gable, without the wall attached. She stated that the area behind the façade would be cleared and could be used as event space for JCSU.

Chair Clarke asked why the option without the wall was preferred. Perkins-Jones stated that this option would provide better use of the site.

Chair Clarke asked if anything would be behind the wall. Perkins-Jones stated that it would be a wall with bracing. She stated that JCSU officials were open to either perspective presented.

Douglas stated that deliberation with a structural engineer occurred after this presentation was submitted. He stated that the structural engineer recommended the option without the wall since the stabilization of the wall could create liability for JCSU.

Chair Clarke explained that the church was gifted to JCSU in the 1970s and remains an incredibly important structure for Charlotte's African American community. He reminded the applicants that the Commission agreed to lend funds to JCSU to stabilize the entire church so that it could then be renovated.

Perkins-Jones stated that within the past three years, JCSU enclosed and temporarily stabilized the building but that it continued to deteriorate as costs increased.

Tucker stated that it would cost approximately \$1.4 million to demolish the non-designated sections of the building and stabilize the original portion.

Chair Clarke stated that JCSU granted a preservation easement on this property to Preservation North Carolina (PNC), which required JCSU to maintain the building. He asked whether PNC has approved of this plan.

Gray stated that PNC has approved of the proposed plans.

Public Comments

There were no public comments in support of or opposition to the application.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioners asked for clarification regarding stabilization funding for this property. Gray answered that the estimate for the stabilization was originally \$850,000, which then escalated once quotes from contractors were received. Gray emphasized that the building is in a state of collapse and noted that the original quote could have reflected less deterioration.

Commissioner Archibald asked why the four walls cannot be saved. Gray stated that there is not much integrity remaining except for the front façade and tower. He explained that the City of Charlotte Housing Appeals Board responded positively to this application. He stated that any type of project except for a façade preservation would exceed any budget previously considered by the Commission.

Commissioner Berry asked about the timeline for potential demolition through the City of Charlotte. Gray stated that the Housing Appeals Board has a monthly hearing regarding this property, which indicates urgency.

Gray stated that both options presented are acceptable to staff. He explained that staff would work with the applicant on details if either option were approved.

Commissioner Makas presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by HLC staff with the addition of a finding stating that

there is a Preservation North Carolina (PNC) easement on the property and that PNC has reviewed and approved the project. Commissioner Ashford seconded the motion.

Once made, there was no more discussion of the motion.

The motion was approved with all in attendance voting in favor.

Commissioner Ford presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions: only Option A be approved, which is the option that includes the façade, the tower, and the perpendicular choir wall with two windows; that the applicant salvage any historic material that can be reused; that the applicant fully photographically document the exterior of the building and supply the images to the Commission; and that the applicant begin work as quickly as feasible.

Once made, there was no more discussion of the motion.

The motion was approved with Commissioners Berry and Clarke voting in opposition.

b. Atherton Mill House, 2005 Cleveland Avenue, Charlotte

Chair Clarke moved to defer this hearing to the September 11 meeting due to outdated documents from 2015 submitted.

Chair Clarke presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Archibald that the Historic Landmarks Commission defer consideration of the Certificate of Appropriateness application for the demolition of the Atherton Mill House, 2005 Cleveland Avenue, Charlotte, N.C., to the Commission's September 11 meeting and instruct staff to communicate with the applicant and other relevant interested parties to find a solution to have the application withdrawn. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

c. Nebel Knitting Mill Annex, 127 W. Worthington Avenue, Charlotte

Note: This item was deferred.

5. Survey Committee Report: Brian Clarke

a. Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, 801 E. 8th Street, Charlotte

Chair Clarke stated that this house was originally located in a historically African American section of First Ward prior to being moved due to urban renewal litigation in the 1970s.

Consulting Preservation Planner Warlick briefly reviewed the house's history and noted the importance of Dr. Rudolph Wyche, a physician and Civil Rights activist who owned the house from 1934 until 1960. He stated that the house may be more significant for where it originally stood than where it is now. He explained that this house was one of 10 that was relocated rather than demolished. He noted that this house is the only one of this group that survives.

Chair Clarke encouraged the Commission to read the full designation report. He stated that Dr. Wyche's daughter provided family photographs of the house before it was moved.

Commissioner Berry asked if the daughter brought this house to staff's attention. Gray stated that the house was on staff's radar for a while and that staff finally had the resources to proceed.

Note: William Hughes joined the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Commissioner Makas asked if the designation of the exterior of the house would include the addition. Warlick stated that the addition is historic from 1950.

Commissioner Makas asked about the significance of the families included in the house's name. Gray stated that the Dobson family was acquainted with Ms. Wyche and that the McCoy family purchased the house in its new location.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion recommending that the Historic Landmarks Commission process the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, 801 E. 8th Street, Charlotte, N.C., for historic landmark designation including the exterior of the house and associated tax parcel. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

b. Funderburk House, 201 W. Charles Street, Matthews

Chair Clarke stated that this house was designated as a historic landmark in 2011. He noted that the interior of the house was not included at the time and that the owner is now seeking to add the interior to the designation.

Gray reiterated that when this property was designated in 2011, only the exterior of the house and outbuildings and associated land were included. He explained that the interior of the house was not designated due to a decision by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office stating that the house would be ineligible to receive tax credits if the interior was included. Gray explained that best practice has evolved and that loss of integrity should not preclude a property being protected. Gray showed interior photographs, which demonstrated that much of the historic architecture was preserved and that the interior does have the requisite character to be designated.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion recommending that the Historic Landmarks Commission work with the Town of Matthews to amend the registered ordinance for the Funderburk House, 201 W. Charles Street, Matthews, N.C., to include the interior of the house. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

c. Tour of the Savona Mill, 528 South Turner Avenue, Charlotte

Chair Clarke stated that the next meeting of the Survey Committee will be held at the Savona Mill on July 26 at 6pm with a tour held prior at 5pm. He explained that the property is on the National Register and is being redeveloped. He stated that the owners are now interested in local designation. He stated that the Survey Committee did not act on the designation report because it needs to be updated.

Warlick stated that the site is an active construction site. He explained that the designation report does not indicate that the property is being adaptively reused.

d. Update on Abernethy House, 7040 Pleasant Grove Road, Charlotte

Chair Clarke stated that the Commission voted at the May meeting to recommend to Charlotte City Council that this house be designated as a historic landmark. He stated that the Commission should reiterate the previous vote to recommend that the Abernethy House, including the exterior of the house and land associated with the tax parcel, be designated as a landmark.

Commissioner Carroll presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Wilson that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend to Charlotte City Council that the Abernethy House, 7040 Pleasant Grove Road, Charlotte, N.C., including the exterior of the house and the land associated with the tax parcel, be designated as a historic landmark. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

6. Financial Report: Edwin Wilson

Commissioner Wilson stated that the revolving fund currently consists of \$7 million. He stated that staff will meet with the Executive Committee to determine the best use for these funds.

7. Election of Officers

Chair Clarke stated that the County's new fiscal year began on July 1, which is when officers are elected. He stated that a Nominating Committee will be named to recommend officers. He asked anyone interested in serving on this committee to let staff know. Gray stated that the current officers will serve until new officers are elected.

8. HLC Staff Report

a. Certified Local Government Training in Waxhaw on Thursday, August 10

Gray stated that to maintain certification as a Certified Local Government, two Commissioners and one staff member need to attend a training event each year. He stated that the Commission has been invited to attend training in Waxhaw and that staff would provide additional details.

b. Holly Bend Tours at 12pm and 1pm on Saturday, July 15

Gray encouraged the Commission to attend the Holly Bend tours on July 15.

9. Old Business

There was no old business.

10. New Business

Chair Clarke stated that Josh Shope has resigned from the Commission. He asked the Commission to share the vacancy with anyone interested.

Chair Clarke presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Ashford that the meeting of the Historic Landmarks Commission adjourn. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.