

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg  
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
December 11, 2023  
Hybrid Meeting  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 266  
6:03 p.m. – 9:42 p.m.**

**Draft Minutes**

**Present**

Dontressa Ashford/Mayor  
Robert Barfield/County  
Brian Clarke/County/HLC Chair  
Andra Eaves/County  
Nadine Ford/City/HLC Vice Chair  
Victoria Grey/County/HLC Secretary  
John Kincheloe/City  
Emily Makas/Mayor  
Edwin Wilson/City/Projects Committee Chair  
Stewart Gray, HL Director  
Elizabeth Stuart, HL Senior Administrative Support Assistant  
Tommy Warlick, HL Consulting Preservation Planner  
Edward Yeager, Senior Deputy County Attorney

**Absent**

Akadius Berry/County  
Lesley Carroll/County/HLC Treasurer/Survey Committee 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 October HLC Minutes and November HLC Minutes**

**b. Certificate of Appropriateness Application for the Charlotte Coliseum, 2700 E. Independence Boulevard, Charlotte**

Commissioner Wilson presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Grey that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the consent agenda as presented for the approval of the Historic Landmarks Commission's October 9 and November 13 meeting minutes and the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness application for the Charlotte Coliseum, 2700 E. Independence Boulevard, Charlotte, N.C. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

**2. Chair's Report: Brian Clarke**

Chair Clarke congratulated Commissioner Ashford on the birth of her grandchild. He also announced that William Hughes has rotated off of the Commission due to work conflicts. He encouraged Commissioners to inform interested citizens of this vacancy.

### **3. Public Comment Period**

Chair Clarke stated that the public comment period is for members of the public to speak on matters that are within the purview of the Commission and that are not otherwise covered on the agenda. He encouraged those that did not register to speak to leave a message in the Teams chat box. He noted that public comments are limited to three minutes each.

Roger Ball stated that he registered in case there were questions regarding the J.J. Akers property.

David Gilman stated that he recently created the Wikipedia page for Big Rock Nature Preserve with the primary resource being the Commission's designation report. He thanked staff for offering to locate further sources. He noted the online digital library Wikisource and asked the Commission to consider offering resources to this project.

Mark Jensen thanked Director Gray and Deputy County Manager Leslie Johnson for meeting with the Pottstown community in September. He reminded the Commission that staff assured this community that the Torrence-Lytle School property would be better cared for and that the future use would be in the interest of the community.

### **4. Closed Session to Discuss a Legal Matter**

Commissioner Barfield presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Eaves that the Historic Landmarks Commission convene in closed session. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Barfield presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Kincheloe that the Historic Landmarks Commission reconvene in open session. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

### **5. Quasi-Judicial Hearings**

#### **a. Midwood Elementary School, 1817 Central Avenue, Charlotte**

#### **HEARING ON CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

Owner/Applicant: 1817 Central Avenue LLC  
Subject Property: Midwood Elementary School  
Address: 1817 Central Avenue, Charlotte  
PIN: 09507803

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.

The following persons were sworn in to give testimony at the hearing: Stewart Gray and Pamela Grundy.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

**Staff Report and Comments**  
Midwood Elementary School  
1817 Central Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28205  
Application for COA HLC343

**Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:**

## **Exhibit A – Project description**

Demolition

## **Exhibit B – Map**

## **Exhibit C – Designation Report**

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

- A.** The proposed demolition is incongruous to the HLC STANDARDS.
- B.** The HLC cannot deny a COA for demolition, but it can delay the effective date of the COA for 365 days.
- C.** The HLC must act on a COA application within 180 days of its filing. [NCGS 160D-9-47 (d)] and if the HLC fails to issue a COA before February 6, 2024 for the demolition for the Midwood Elementary School, the owners will be able to proceed without a COA.
- D.** The last regular meeting of the HLC before the 180 day period is over is January 8, 2024, and however unlikely the HLC may not have a quorum at their January 8, 2024 regular meeting.
- E.** HLC Staff has met with the owners of the property and they are willing to discuss options other than full demolition of the historic building.

## **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission vote to issue the COA no later than December 11, 2023. During that delay Staff can work with the applicant and other parties to develop a feasible plan to prevent the demolition of the Midwood Elementary School.

## **Commissioners' Questions for Staff**

Chair Clarke reminded the Commission that due to state statute the effective date of a demolition can be delayed for up to 365 days but cannot be denied.

## **Applicant Comments**

John Floyd, the attorney representing the property owner, stated that his client does not intend to offer any additional substantive testimony at this point. He explained that options for relocation are limited due to the size of the buildings.

## **Commissioners' Questions for Applicants**

Commissioner Ashford questioned the future use of the property. Chair Clarke stated that the applicant previously testified that future plans have not been determined.

## **Public Comments**

Dr. Pamela Grundy stated that she is a historian who lives in Plaza Midwood near the Midwood School. She explained that the building has been used for community groups since ceasing its use as a school. She stated her concern regarding losing a historic building that has served as a focal point of the community.

## **Applicant Response**

Floyd made no additional comments.

## **Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Barfield presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by Historic Landmarks staff. Commissioner Grey 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 Ashford presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the demolition of the Midwood Elementary School, 1817 Central Avenue, Charlotte, N.C., with the effective date of the COA delayed for 365 days and direct HL staff to work with the applicant on appropriate preservation strategies. Commissioner Eaves seconded the motion.

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

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

### **b. William Grier House, 8120 Robbie Circle, Charlotte**

#### **HEARING ON CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

Owner/Applicant: City of Charlotte  
Subject Property: William Grier House  
Address: 8120 Robbie Circle, Charlotte  
PIN: 14111156

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.

The following persons were sworn in to give testimony at the hearing: Stewart Gray, Stuart Hair, and Kevin Hennessey.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

#### **Staff Report and Comments**

William Grier House  
8120 Robbie Circle  
Charlotte, NC 28278  
Application for COA HLC352

#### **Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:**

**Exhibit A** – Project description - Demolition

**Exhibit B** – Map

**Exhibit C** – Designation Report

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

**A.** The proposed demolition is incongruous to the HLC STANDARDS.

**B.** The HLC cannot deny a COA for demolition, but it can delay the effective date

of the COA for 365 days.

**C.** The HLC must act on a COA application within 180 days of its filing. [NCGS 160D-9-47 (d)] and if the HLC fails to issue a COA before February 27, 2024 for the demolition for the William Grier House, the owners will be able to proceed without a COA.

**D.** The last regular meeting of the HLC before the 180 day period is over is February 12, 2024, and however unlikely the HLC may not have a quorum at their February 12, 2024 regular meeting.

**E.** HLC Staff and Chairperson Clarke have met with the owners of the property, the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and there are ongoing discussion about moving the house to a new location.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission vote to issue the COA no later than January 8, 2024. During that delay Staff can work with the applicant to develop a feasible plan to prevent the demolition of the William Grier House.

### **Commissioners' Questions for Staff**

Chair Clarke explained that the Grier House was originally located near its current location. He stated that the house has never had a foundation added to its current location.

### **Applicant Comments**

Stuart Hair, representative of Charlotte Douglas International Airport, explained that the airport purchased the house in 2014 and is now following up on projects that should have been handled earlier.

Kevin Hennessey, representative of Charlotte Douglas International Airport, stated that the condition of the house is unsafe.

### **Commissioners' Questions for Applicant**

Commissioner Kincheloe asked why the City of Charlotte owns land far from the airport.

### **Applicant Response**

Hair explained that the airport was directed to acquire the property as part of an environmental process undertaken when the airport was expanded in 2000.

Chair Clarke stated that the long range plan includes industrial development south of the airport. Hair stated that the airport is required to buy residential land because it is incompatible with aeronautical development. He explained that when the airport acquires properties, it is required to demolish residences and ensure that the land is used in a compatible manner.

### **Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

### **Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Barfield stated that there are two more scheduled meetings before the deadline for the application for this Certificate of Appropriateness. Gray explained that this hearing is being

continued from the last meeting due to a lack of a quorum at that meeting. He stated that the Commission could vote tonight or delay to the January 8, 2024, meeting.

The Commission discussed the nearby properties owned by the airport.

Commissioner Wilson asked about the proposed plan to relocate this house to ensure its preservation. Gray stated that the plan did not proceed and noted that he received a letter from the airport stating that this plan would not be pursued at that location. Gray stated that the house could be relocated to a different location. Commissioner Wilson stated that he would be in favor of not delaying the effective date of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the entire 365 days if the airport would discuss relocation.

Chair Clarke stated that the house was built around 1825 and was designated as a landmark in 1978. He stated that the interior details are excellent and noted that it remains a fabulous house although it has been neglected. Gray explained that preservation options remain and stated that perhaps Preservation North Carolina could assist in the relocation.

Commissioner Wilson presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by Historic Landmarks staff. Commissioner Barfield 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 Wilson presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the demolition of the William Grier House, 8120 Robbie Circle, Charlotte, N.C., with the effective date of the COA delayed for 365 days and instruct HL staff to continue discussions with the Charlotte Douglas International Airport on preservation strategies focused on the relocation of the house. Commissioner Eaves seconded the motion.

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

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

## **6. Consideration of Charlotte City Council Annual Report**

Senior Administrative Support Assistant Stuart detailed the annual report to be submitted to Charlotte City Council.

Commissioner Makas presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Grey that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the 2023 annual report to be submitted to Charlotte City Council. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Gray explained that as staffing increases, he will be able to focus on strategic planning and how the Commission can better detail accomplishments.

## **7. Financial Report: Stewart Gray**

Gray reported that improvements to Torrence-Lytle School have been funded.

**Note:** Vice Chair Ford left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

## **8. Community Outreach Committee Report: Victoria Grey**

Commissioner Grey stated that this Committee met last month and determined its focus should be on additional Adventure Club outings including bike tours, as well as a lecture series and expanded social media outreach. She stated that the Committee would meet again in January.

## **9. Survey Committee Report: Lesley Carroll**

### **a. Thompson-Anderson House, 858 Concord Road, Davidson**

Warlick stated that Susan Mayer prepared this designation report as part of a collaborative effort with the Town of Davidson to share the funding of reports. He provided the history of this property and stated that the current owners are proud of the house and eager to see it protected as a landmark.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion recommending that the Historic Landmarks Commission process the Thompson-Anderson House, 858 Concord Road, Davidson, N.C., for historic landmark designation including the interior and exterior of the house and the property associated with tax parcel 00729301. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

### **b. Consideration of the Designation Report for the Steele Creek Manse, 7728 Steele Creek Road, Charlotte**

Chair Clarke explained that this property is owned by the Charlotte Douglas International Airport. He stated that discussions regarding the preservation of this property have been held but noted his understanding that the airport's intent is to demolish the property soon. He stated that this property was added to the Study List at the last Survey Committee meeting.

Warlick stated that this is the manse of the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church and explained that it and other structures sit on a 17-acre parcel of land. He stated that there is a potential cemetery on the property that has yet to be located.

Gray explained that this property is where staff was hopeful could be the relocation area for other nearby endangered historic properties. He stated that the manse is in immediate danger of being demolished and explained that if the Commission votes to begin processing the property for landmark designation that demolition would be delayed for 180 days.

Chair Clarke stated that this property has been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. He stated that it is not unprecedented for the Commission to recommend landmark designation over the owner's objection. Gray explained that it is typically more productive to work with people interested in preservation.

Stuart Hair explained that the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church never pursued landmark designation of the manse.

Commissioner Makas asked about the designation process. Gray stated that if the Commission votes to begin processing the property for landmark designation tonight that staff will attempt to get this issue before City Council soon.

Commissioner Ashford presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Eaves that the Historic Landmarks Commission process the Steele Creek Manse, 7728 Steele Creek Road, Charlotte, N.C., for historic landmark designation, including the exterior of the house and the associated tax parcel and additional structures on the property including headstones. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Gray stated that the property owner will be notified of the public hearing for the Charlotte City Council. He explained that the objective is to present this to Charlotte City Council within 180 days.

**The following item is for informational purposes only and does not need further action:**

**c. The Survey Committee added the following properties to the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks:**

**i. Steele Creek Manse**

**ii. Spratt-Grier Farm**

**iii. Smith-Richter House, 1030 Huntington Park Drive, Charlotte**

**iv. Camp Oak**

Gray stated that he has contacted Liz Morrell with the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation department to do a site visit.

**v. J.J. Akers House, 6501 Sardis Road, Charlotte**

Gray stated that staff has heard from residents concerned that this resource is threatened.

Chair Clarke described that this stone Tudor manor was designed by Louis Asbury, Sr., and is located on a 6.5-acre parcel. He stated that the house has been listed for sale and noted that Providence Day School plans to purchase the property to create an athletic complex. He stated that this is an original structure in this part of the County and explained that the community is hopeful for a resolution that includes the preservation of the house.

Gray stated that staff unsuccessfully reached out to the headmaster but that parents of students who attend this school contacted the headmaster who stated that the school is under contact to purchase the property and who explained that the outcome of the property is the decision of the Board of Trustees and the Board's Properties Committee. Gray stated that this property is well-suited for adaptive reuse, particularly due to the size of the building and the amount of developable land around the house.

Chair Clarke questioned whether anyone has asked the Commission to prepare a designation report on the property. Gray stated no, but noted that staff has the resources to quickly produce a report. He explained that staff has to balance resources and commitments but could produce a designation report through either a consultant or Consulting Preservation Planner Warlick if directed by the Commission.

Wilson clarified that the ask is to direct staff to undertake the production of a designation report. He stated his belief that this would be a good thing to do, especially due to the amount of public engagement, which the Commission should consider.

Gray stated that he heard the consensus of the Commission and will direct resources towards the production of a designation report for the Akers House.

**vi. Sydenham B. Alexander, Jr. House, 250 Cherokee Road, Charlotte**

**vii. Mary Rose and William Alexander Davis, Jr. House, 140 Lynbrook Drive, Davidson**

**viii. Delburg Mill House, 225 Armour Street, Davidson**

**ix. SVM Historical Consulting Presentation**



Chair Clarke stated that this presentation includes many Modernist houses, which are often threatened.

Chair Clarke stated that the Survey Committee recommended adding these properties to the Study List and authorized staff to work with Susan Mayer to ensure applicable property details are included.

Dan Morrill with Preserve Mecklenburg explained that the organization had an assignable option on the J.J. Akers House for a year. He stated that Preserve Mecklenburg met with Providence Day School during this time and made the school aware that it would have to accept a preservation agreement on the property if purchase was pursued while Preserve Mecklenburg held the assignable option. He explained that Preserve Mecklenburg never received a letter of intent from the school.

Chair Clarke stated that the objective is to have a designation report to consider at the Commission's January meeting.

## **10. Projects Committee Report: Edwin Wilson**

### **a. Roof Repair for Torrence-Lytle School, 302 Holbrooks Road, Huntersville**

Commissioner Wilson stated that this is a follow up on a commitment that staff made to the community around the school.

Commissioner Ashford asked about the survey process. Gray stated that the survey should be ready by January.

The Projects Committee presented a seconded motion recommending that the Historic Landmarks Commission authorize Historic Landmarks staff to spend approximately \$100,000 for roof repairs to the 1937 original building at the Torrence-Lytle School, 302 Holbrooks Road, Huntersville, N.C., with the understanding that approval from the Executive Committee is required for final bid approval. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

### **b. Closed Session to Discuss a Real Estate Item**

Commissioner Wilson presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Barfield that the Historic Landmarks Commission convene in closed session. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Wilson presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Ashford that the Historic Landmarks Commission reconvene in open session. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

## **11. Historic Landmarks Staff Report**

Stuart noted the success of the recent holiday party and thanked those who attended.

## **12. Old Business**

There was no old business.

## **13. New Business**

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

**The following comments were left in the Microsoft Teams chat:**

[12/11 6:07 PM] Pamela Grundy (Guest)

Speakers on the Midwood school will speak during the hearing, not the public comment period, is that correct?

[12/11 6:07 PM] Warlick, Tommy

Yes. That is correct.

[12/11 6:08 PM] Pamela Grundy (Guest)

Thanks

[12/11 6:22 PM] Pamela Grundy (Guest)

Any idea how long the closed session is likely to last?

[12/11 6:24 PM] BRIAN CLARKE

I'm not sure Ms. Grundy. I'd guess 15 to 30 min.

S Gardner (Guest)

12/11 7:38 PM

Is there an African American burial ground on the property?

How does this house affect the airport? by mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

12/11 7:38 PM

The family owned 29 enslaved people by S Gardner (Guest)

S Gardner (Guest)

12/11 7:38 PM

It is shared... by mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

12/11 7:44 PM

S Gardner (Guest)12/11/2023, 7:38 PM

Is there an African American burial ground on the property?

Not that anyone is aware of. It is possible. That is something I have been working on personally.

Thank you Dan! by mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

mhoppa@uncc.edu (Guest)

12/11 9:04 PM