

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
March 10, 2025
Hybrid Meeting
2100 Randolph Road, Charlotte
6:03 p.m. – 8:40 p.m.**

Minutes

Present

Dontressa Ashford/Mayor/Survey Committee Chair (remote)
Robert Barfield/County/HLC Vice Chair
Christina Benton/City
Lesley Carroll/County/HLC Treasurer
Brian Clarke/County/HLC Chair
Andrew Dunn/County
Andra Eaves/County
Victoria Grey/County/HLC Secretary/Community Outreach Committee Chair
John Kincheloe/City
Emily Makas/Mayor (remote)
Charlie Miller/City
Melanie Reddrick/City
Stewart Gray, HL Director
John Howard, HL Historic Preservation Manager
Tommy Warlick, HL Historic Preservation Specialist
Elizabeth Stuart, HL Senior Administrative Support Assistant

Absent

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

1. Adoption of the Consent Agenda

a. Approval of February HLC Minutes

Vice Chair Barfield 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 February 10 meeting minutes. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

2. Chair's Report: Brian Clarke

Chair Clarke welcomed Commissioner Christina Benton to her first meeting. Commissioner Benton introduced herself.

a. Steele Creek Presbyterian Church Easement

Chair Clarke stated that the project to preserve the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church and cemetery and the Douglas House and redevelop the surrounding land closed on February 28.

Director Gray thanked Chair Clarke, Assistant County Attorney Susan Hall, and Historic Preservation Specialist Warlick for lending their expertise to the review of project documents.

Chair Clarke stated that Commissioner Dunn recently asked if the Commission has a strategic plan. He stated that the Commission used to have some strategic initiatives and explained that time will be set aside at an upcoming meeting for the Commission to discuss areas of focus.

3. Public Comment Period

No members of the public registered to speak.

4. Quasi-Judicial Hearings

a. Davidson School Gymnasium, 251 South Street, Davidson

Owner/Applicant: Town of Davidson
Subject Property: Davidson School Gymnasium
Address: 251 South Street, Davidson
PIN: 00701319

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: John Howard, Stewart Gray, Rusty Miller, and Doug Wright.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments

Davidson School Gymnasium
251 South Street
Davidson, NC 28036
Application for COA HLC480

Project Description

1. Renovation and repair of the existing gymnasium building. The interior will be fully renovated to upgrade finishes and repair/replace damaged materials. The surrounding site will be regraded to return to original grade and provide access around the building.

Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:

Exhibit A – Map

Exhibit B – Existing Conditions

Exhibit C – Proposed Plans

The HLC has acknowledged the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the property's historic character.

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

1. The proposed project meets HLC standards 1-7 and 9-10.

Staff Recommendation

Staff suggests that the Commission approve the application as presented, or with conditions.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff

There were no questions for staff.

Applicant Comments

There were no comments from the applicant.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicant

Commissioner Dunn asked about the building's history.

Vice Chair Barfield asked for more information on plans for the windows and the roof.

Commissioner Dunn asked whether the town has plans for history displays for the public.

Applicant Response

Rusty Miller stated that this building was part of the Davidson School campus. He explained that it was repurposed into a town and community center a few years ago by the Town of Davidson. He stated that it is not currently in use and is planned to be a recreation center for the town.

Miller stated that the upper windows have more damage than the lower windows. He stated that the windows will be repaired when feasible or replaced to match the existing.

Miller explained that the roof was replaced approximately 10-15 years ago and that the roof will be replaced with insulation added underneath. He stated that the shingles will be similar to those currently present.

Gray stated that there is a public history display in the main campus building.

Miller stated that the building has incurred major water damage and explained that the plan is to bring the site's grade down to its original position to mitigate future damage.

Miller explained that most of the interior's surface is covered in lead paint. He stated that the building will be made safe before opened to the public.

Public Comments

Gray read a message from Marion Sekerak, 320 Cathy Street, Davidson, who urged the Commission and applicant to consider the negative impact of bright lighting on the history of the character of the building and the neighborhood.

Miller responded that the only additional exterior lighting will be what is required for security purposes.

Commissioners' Comments

The Commission had no further comments.

Commissioner Dunn presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by Historic Landmarks staff. Commissioner Eaves seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Vice Chair Barfield presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the Davidson School Gymnasium, 251 South Street, Davidson, N.C. Commissioner Carroll seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

b. Cornelius Agriculture Building, 19623 School Street, Cornelius

Owner/Applicant: Cornelius History Museum
Subject Property: Cornelius Agriculture Building
Address: 19623 School Street, Cornelius

PIN: 00520141

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: Paul Newton, David Hodson, Joe Humphrey, John Howard, and Stewart Gray.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments
Cornelius Agriculture Building
19623 School Street
Cornelius, NC 28031
Application for COA HLC482

Project Description

1. Renovation and addition to the Cornelius High School Agriculture Building for the Cornelius History Museum. Exterior will remain mostly unchanged, while constructing an addition on the south elevation to incorporate a new elevator, ADA restrooms, and main entrance to the building. Windows will be replaced, and some previously infilled windows openings may be reopened.

Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:

Exhibit A – Map

Exhibit B – Existing Conditions

Exhibit C – Proposed Plans

The HLC has acknowledged the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the property's historic character. Based upon the information presented in the application, staff offers the following suggested applicable **findings of fact**:

1. The proposed project meets HLC standards 1-7 and 9-10.

Staff Recommendation

Staff suggests that the Commission approve the application as presented, or with conditions.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff

Commissioner Dunn asked whether the building is currently in use.

Historic Preservation Manager Howard stated that it is not currently being used but that it is in good condition.

Applicant Comments

Paul Newton, director of Cornelius Museum, thanked the Commission for helping to secure this property. He explained that the building needed to be code compliant and that his group did not want to use the limited space inside for restrooms and elevators. He stated that the proposed addition on the rear of the building would be pushed away from the building so that it is clearly separated. He stated that his goals are to make the building and addition operationally appropriate and architecturally appealing.

Joe Humphrey, architect, stated that the project is in an early schematic phase and explained that the concept is to have the addition be its own piece.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicant

Chair Clarke asked about bricked in window openings and whether they will be reopened. He stated that it would be preferable to reopen the windows on the original front elevation as much as possible.

Vice Chair Barfield asked for clarity about the scope of work and what the Commission is being asked to approve.

Commissioner Reddrick asked if the interior is part of the designation and questioned the state of its condition.

Applicant Response

Humphrey stated that it has not yet been determined if the windows will be reopened. He acknowledged the advantage of opening the windows but explained that museums do not typically have windows. He stated that he would bring a plan to reopen windows to the Commission later if his group decides to reopen them. He stated that he is looking for feedback that this project is going in the right direction.

Gray clarified that the presented plans are a schematic approval of the addition and noted that more details would be presented later as the rehabilitation of the building narrows. He stated that windows do not have to function as windows and could become a façade element that is not visible from the interior.

David Hodson described the enthusiasm of residents who have memories associated with this building. He stated that the intent is to draw people in while also maintaining integrity.

Howard explained that changing windows from being bricked in back to their original condition could be approved by staff if the Commission agreed.

Newton explained that the building's interior remains reminiscent of an education building with two large spaces on the upper and lower levels. He stated that the building needs to be made safe and clean for its intended operations, which is still being determined. He stated that his team is looking for approval of the addition so the architect can continue with the design.

Public Comments

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

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioners expressed their support of the design of the addition.

Howard explained that final plans will need to be reviewed and approved before this project receives a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Chair Clarke stated that the consensus of the Commission is to support conceptual approval of the addition.

Newton stated that he is comfortable with proceeding with the project as presented if the Commission is supportive. He stated that he will provide a more detailed plan to the Commission when it is ready.

Vice Chair Barfield presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by Historic Landmarks staff. Commissioner Eaves seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Carroll presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the schematic plan for the addition at Cornelius Agriculture Building, 19623 School Street, Cornelius, N.C., and direct the applicant to work with staff on the restoration of the façade and windows and provide updated plans to the Commission at a time that is appropriate for final approval. Commissioner Grey seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

5. Community Outreach Committee Report: Victoria Grey

Commissioner Grey explained that staff has planned several events for the rest of the calendar year and encouraged Commissioners to attend.

6. Survey Committee Report: Dontressa Ashford

Commissioner Ashford stated that the Survey Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 26 at 6pm.

Warlick stated that the headstone restoration event on April 26 will be held at Settlers' Cemetery, which has many headstones damaged from Hurricane Helene. He stated that Historic Elmwood Pinewood, Inc., is in the process of raising funds to repair this damage and explained that this event will be good publicity for this endeavor.

7. Revolving Fund Financial Report: Stewart Gray

Gray stated that the revolving fund has \$4.7 million available after funds for the Edgewood Farm and Torrence-Lytle School projects are considered.

Chair Clarke stated that he has asked Gray to provide him and Vice Chair Barfield the County's guidelines for the revolving fund.

8. Historic Landmarks Staff Report

a. Department Strategic Plan

Gray stated that the Historic Landmarks department developed an updated strategic plan that will go public in July. He stated that he will email the draft to the Commission for consideration before the Commission discusses their own strategic plan.

b. Torrence-Lytle School Update

Gray stated that the contract for the contractor has been submitted and that the work should be permitted soon.

c. Property Owner Postcards

Howard stated that staff is working with Public Information on informational postcards to be mailed to property owners regularly.

Chair Clarke explained that the Commission holds preservation easements on 54 of the County's 380 designated historic landmarks and asked for different language to be used for those.

Commissioner Benton asked if these sites are monitored. Gray stated that they should be monitored. He explained that zoning holds are placed on every designated property to ensure that someone is not able to pull a permit for a demolition or alteration without staff being informed.

d. Updates to Historic Landmarks Office

Howard stated that the office will be updated to make it ADA compliant.

Vice Chair Barfield asked about having an ADA compliant parking spot. Gray stated that changes will be reviewed by the Commission.

e. School of Government Training – April 30

Gray encouraged those interested in attending this training to inform staff.

f. Alexander Farm Tenant House, Cornelius

Gray stated that he reached out to the planning director in Cornelius and explained that the town has discussed the potential development with the owner. He stated that the town is optimistic that the development will proceed and that the restoration requirements for the Tenant House will be enforced as part of the project.

9. Closed Session to Consider a Real Estate Matter

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

The Commission motioned to reconvene in open session by unanimous consent.

10. Old Business

Chair Clarke provided an update on the status of the Cooper Log House.

11. New Business

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.