

Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
November 10, 2025
Hybrid Meeting
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 266
6:02 p.m. – 8:33 p.m.

Minutes

Present

Christina Benton/City/Survey Committee Chair
Andra Eaves/County
Victoria Grey/County/HLC Treasurer/Property Oversight and Engagement Chair
Emily Makas/Mayor
Charlie Miller/City
Melanie Reddrick/City/HLC Chair
Jason Tapp/County
Peter Wasmer/Mayor
Stewart Gray, HL Director
John Howard, HL Historic Preservation Manager
Tommy Warlick, HL Historic Preservation Specialist
Elizabeth Stuart, HL Senior Administrative Support Assistant

Absent

Brian Clarke/County/HLC Vice Chair
Andrew Dunn/County/HLC Secretary
John Kincheloe/City

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

b. Certificate of Appropriateness Application for Latta Place, 5225 Sample Road, Huntersville

Commissioner Tapp presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Eaves that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the consent agenda as presented for the approval of the Historic Landmarks Commission's October 13 meeting minutes and the Certificate of Appropriateness application for Latta Place, 5225 Sample Road, Huntersville, N.C. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

2. Chair's Report: Melanie Reddrick

a. FY2027 Advisory Board Budget Priorities

Note: This item was discussed after 2b.

Chair Reddrick stated that this is an annual survey to measure board priorities for the next fiscal year. She asked Commissioners to email her with priorities they would like to have considered by December 1. Director Gray shared former Chair Brian Clarke's submission from last year.

b. New Commissioner Introduction: Peter Wasmer

Chair Reddrick introduced Peter Wasmer, who was recently appointed to the Commission. Chair Reddrick stated that Lesley Carroll resigned from the Commission and asked Commissioners to share the application details with those that may be interested. Chair Reddrick stated that Vice Chair Brian Clarke would not be attending tonight's meeting due to a family emergency and asked for thoughts for his family.

3. Public Comment Period

No one signed up to speak.

4. Public Hearing

a. Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, 2128 Senior Drive, Charlotte

Commissioner Tapp presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Grey that the Historic Landmarks Commission open a public hearing for the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, 2128 Senior Drive, Charlotte, N.C. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Historic Preservation Specialist Warlick reminded the Commission that they previously recommended proceeding with the landmark designation of this property. He stated that this was the house of Kelly Alexander, a civil rights leader and second-generation president of what is believed to be the longest-running African American business in Mecklenburg County, the Alexander Funeral Home. He stated that this was one of the homes of four civil rights leaders that was attacked in 1965 in acts of domestic terrorism.

Alan Hall stated that he spoke to Mr. Alexander recently and discovered that the County is in the process of buying this home. He stated that he is interested in the house and would like to have it opened to the public as well. Gray requested that Hall email staff with details of his interest. He stated that Charlotte City Council will have a public hearing on November 24 for additional comments.

Commissioner Eaves presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Tapp that the Historic Landmarks Commission close the public hearing. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

5. Certificate of Appropriateness Application Quasi-Judicial Hearing for the Excelsior Club, 921 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte

Owner/Applicant: Shawn Kennedy
Subject Property: Excelsior Club
Address: 921 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte
PIN: 06906621

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, Michael Dunning, Tim Sittema, Shawn Kennedy, Christina Bruce, Dr. Dan Morrill

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments

The Excelsior Club
921 Beatties Ford Road
Charlotte, NC 28216
Application for COA HLC522

Landmark Description

The Excelsior Club, located on Beatties Ford Road about one-half mile north of the main entrance to Johnson C. Smith University, was for many years the leading private black social club in the Southeast, and one of the largest of its kind on the East Coast. In addition to its importance as the only social club for black professionals in the area, it also became a political focal point of the city and county for both black and white candidates for office, and a meeting place for boosters of Johnson C. Smith University. Started in 1944 in a house built in the 1910s, the club took on its present appearance in the early 1950s.

The original owner, "Jimmie" McKee (1913-1985), was a leading black philanthropist, political activist, and businessman in Charlotte. The Excelsior Club has enjoyed the reputation as being among the most influential social institutions in the black community of Charlotte. The Excelsior Club attained architectural appointments in 1952 which make it perhaps the finest example of the Art Moderne style in Mecklenburg County after its conversion from a Four-Square single-family house. *HLC Survey Report, 8/1985.*

Project Description

The proposed project would have two phases:

1. Demolition of the historic Excelsior Club building.
2. New construction of a 'quasi-replica' Excelsior Club building. The proposed building is not an exact replication; however, it features a replication of some prominent design details from the

Club including Art Moderne styling, stucco exterior, glass block windows, and Art Deco style entry.

The applicant is requesting the Commission to: 1) Approve the demolition application, 2) Waive the 365-day stay of demolition, and 3) Approve the new building.

Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:

Exhibit A – Context Map

Exhibit B – Existing Conditions

Exhibit C – Proposed Plans

Staff Comments

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 under the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Based upon the information presented in the application, staff offers the following applicable findings of fact with staff comments in bold and italicized:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
Given the existing condition of the building the proposed project is full demolition of the historic building and construction of a new building for similar uses (Community events, community activity space, and entertainment).
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided. *The project is full demolition of the historic building with a new building similar in size on the property. Reusing part of parts of the original building is planned.*
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken. *The proposed building is not an exact replication; however, it replicates some exterior design details from the historic building including Art Moderne roof details and massing, stucco exterior, glass block windows, and Art Deco style entry.*

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved. *Not applicable.*
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved. *The applicant proposes to preserve the Art Deco front entry. There are not distinctive interior features remaining.*
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence. *The applicant's Property Condition Assessment shows considerable damage to the exterior and interior.*
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. *Not applicable.*
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken. *Not applicable.*
9. New additions, alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. *The building and property are designated historic landmarks. The Commission shall consider whether the new construction project (building and site plan) contributes to the historic significance of the site and neighborhood in its size, scale, massing, materials and design.*
10. Alterations, new additions, and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired. *The building and property are designated historic landmarks. The Commission shall consider whether the new construction project (building and site plan) contributes to the historic significance of the property and neighborhood.*

Staff Recommendation

Due to the condition of the historic building, safety concerns, and overall exterior appearance, staff recommends the application to be approved with conditions to be determined by the Commission, if necessary. The new building is not a replica but takes design cues from the Excelsior Club building and is comparable in its size, scale, massing, materials, and design. Staff also recommends that the building should not be demolished until County building permits are issued.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff

Chair Reddrick asked whether the Commission would approve final plans or just conceptual plans. Historic Preservation Manager Howard stated that any changes would be considered by the Commission. Chair Reddrick reminded the Commission that they are only considering changes to the historic building.

Commissioner Grey asked if any original elements would be saved. Howard stated that the applicants have indicated that they will save the entrance. Gray stated that the hood is an original feature but that the awning is not. Commissioner Grey asked if the awning could be preserved. Howard stated that the applicants are not considering saving the awning. He explained that the awning is in the setback and could not be preserved as it currently is.

Commissioner Makas asked whether the façade can be preserved and incorporated into the new plans. Howard stated that this was the intent in the beginning but is no longer included. Gray explained that he visited the site recently with Brett Sturm from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office and noted that the condition of the building is the result of not being occupied in years plus deferred maintenance beforehand. He stated that pictures do not adequately show how precarious the building's condition is. He stated that the building's current condition is a result of a combination of it being an old house without an architectural plan that staff is aware of plus concrete block up against wooden siding that was not maintained.

Applicant Comments

Shawn Kennedy, Founder of Kennedy Property & Development, stated that his group took this project on nine months ago with a lens of how the building could be best preserved and honored. He stated that the building needs to be demolished for safety reasons. He stated that the intent is to bring the site back with honor and energy. He stated that the public has been supportive of the new plans for the site.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicant and Applicant Response

Commissioner Tapp asked about the building's purpose once it is finished. Kennedy stated that it will be a community resource that would include a restaurant and a place to honor the arts. He stated that the intent is to honor the history of the Excelsior Club and include a space to have safe political conversations. He stated that there will be a meeting room upstairs for community meetings to be held free of charge.

Tim Sittema, Managing Partner of Crosland Southeast, stated that the group originally wanted to preserve the building. He explained that the institution can be preserved even though the building cannot be saved. He stated that there will also be a space for a living history museum honoring those instrumental in the building's history. Kennedy stated that many community members have expressed a willingness to donate to this living history museum to tell the story of the Excelsior Club.

Kennedy explained how Jimmie McKee emulated the ideas he saw while working in white country clubs to create a safe space for Black people.

Commissioner Miller asked about the timeline. Sittema stated that the intent is to move forward quickly, assuming a positive outcome at this meeting. He stated that pre-approval meetings have been held already. He stated that final drawings are needed. He stated that the group has had a lot of community engagement and stated that there may be one more formal community meeting held. He stated that he anticipates closing on the land purchase before mid-year 2026 with demolition beginning in fall 2026. He stated that construction would then proceed immediately with opening potentially at the end of 2027. He stated that the group's intent is to own this long-term. He stated that the restaurant and other businesses need to be sustainable so this will be a legacy that serves the community for decades.

Public Comments

Dr. Dan Morrill asked the Commission to vote to delay the demolition of the building for 365 days. He reminded the Commission that they do not have the power to deny the demolition of a property and must approve with or without a delay. He stated that it is important that the building be replicated as to the presence of the street since that is significant. He provided examples of houses in Colonial Williamsburg that were replicated in the 1920s with drawings. He stated that the Commission's charge is to preserve the historic building. He asked that demolition be delayed so that negotiations can continue between staff and the applicant. He stated that it is essential that the streetscape be preserved. He stated that the Commission should also consider placing an easement on the building that is built at this site to retain an ability for input and control on the building.

Sittema responded that a delay of 12 months would ensure further decay of the building and would eliminate his group's ability to complete this deal since the group does not have the right to extend their contract for 12 months.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Wasmer noted the loss of the two-story front with the trellis across the front. He asked for the applicant to consider mass and the importance of how the building sits on the corner.

Commissioner Benton noted the difference in the new building's appearance versus the original. She asked if more effort could be put into maintaining the original look.

Sittema stated that he must think about sustainability and how to attract customers to this property. He stated that a natural resource of this site is its view of uptown. He stated that having a rooftop element will help make the business viable. He stated a willingness to consider how to soften the view of the upper level.

Commissioner Grey asked if there is a way to make elements of the parapet darker to stand out.

Michael Dunning, architect, stated that there are ways the group can mitigate color and tone to make it more expressive while remaining in line with original key elements.

Commissioner Tapp noted the modern look of the signage and asked the applicants to reconsider the design.

Commissioner Makas commended the applicants for preserving aspects of the original building and recommended increasing the visibility of the second story.

Chair Reddrick asked if the second story mass is set back further in the current design than in the historic photographs. Dunning stated it is very close to the original. He stated that the façade is the same width and a little taller.

Commissioner Miller stated his support of the presented plans and noted his comfort in proceeding with the project without delaying the demolition of the building.

Commissioner Makas asked about the status of the designated landmark if the building is demolished and a new building is constructed. Gray explained that the land will remain designated and that the Commission will retain design review control. He explained that the plans can be approved as presented or with conditions.

Sittema explained that his group is under contract to purchase the property with a deadline before the end of the year to put down non-refundable money. He stated that his group will not be able to proceed with this deal without full project approval from the Commission.

Commissioner Miller reiterated to the Commission that people have asked about the status of this property for years. He stated his reassurance in hearing the applicants speak. He stated it is the Commission's responsibility to not block projects while still ensuring properties are preserved.

Gray acknowledged two letters of support from Historic West End Partners and Historic Washington Heights Neighborhood and noted that these are not part of the findings of fact.

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

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Tapp presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the demolition application for the Excelsior Club, 921 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, N.C. Commissioner Grey seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Tapp presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission waive the 365-day stay of demolition for the Excelsior Club, 921 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, N.C., and approve building plans as presented. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

6. Survey Committee Report: Christina Benton

a. Consideration of the Designation Report for Charlotte Fire Station #8, 1201 The Plaza, Charlotte

Warlick described the architectural significance of this property. He stated that the building opened in 1949 and was unique in that it was not built in the modernist architectural design that was popular among fire stations built post-WWII in Mecklenburg County. He explained that the fire station's Colonial Revival design was selected to keep with the style of the surrounding Plaza Midwood neighborhood. He stated that this is the only active fire station designed by Steve Marsh.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion to the Historic Landmarks Commission that it process the Charlotte Fire Station #8, 1201 The Plaza, Charlotte, N.C., for historic landmark designation, including the exterior of the fire station and the associated tax parcel. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Note: Commissioner Eaves left the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

b. Consideration of Designation Report Amendment for the William and Nell Freeman House, 145 S. Ames Street, Matthews

Gray showed a map depicting the original and current locations of the Freeman House. He stated that the house was endangered at its original location. He explained that descendants of the Freemans worked with the Commission to relocate and restore the house. He stated that the ordinance needs to be amended to remove the designation from the original tax parcel to the current tax parcel. Warlick explained that the two adjoining lots used to be a single lot, so historically the house is still sitting on family land.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion to the Historic Landmarks Commission that it begin the process of amending the designation ordinance for the William and Nell Freeman House, 145 S. Ames Street, Matthews, N.C., to include the 0.513 acres of land in Tax Parcel Number 22702446, and to remove the historic designation for Tax Parcel Number 22702445. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

c. Consideration of Amending the Designation Report for the Liddell-McNinch House, 511 N. Church Street, Charlotte

Gray stated that staff is working on an addendum for this property that will be attached to the existing designation report. He explained that the current designation only includes the exterior of the house. He stated that the property owners are receiving almost no tax deferral, which puts the property in danger. He stated that staff will amend the designation report to include the tax parcel and the interior of the house and will bring the amended designation report to the Commission for consideration at a future meeting. The Commission was supportive of this effort.

d. The Following Properties Were Added to the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks by the Survey Committee:

Warlick briefly reviewed the properties that were added to the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks:

- i. **Hood House, 5401 Matthews-Mint Hill Road, Mint Hill**
- ii. **Cherry Neighborhood Park, 501 S. Torrence Street, Charlotte**
- iii. **Boyd House, 350 Crestdale Road, Matthews**
- iv. **Judge Shirley Fulton House, 608 Walnut Avenue, Charlotte**
- v. **Former Charlotte Fire Department Shop, 618 W. 28th Street, Charlotte**
- vi. **Charlotte Fire Department Health and Safety Division & Fire Investigations Building, 1517 N. Graham Street, Charlotte**
- vii. **Charlotte Fire Department Logistics Building, 1501 N. Graham Street, Charlotte**
- viii. **Former Dilworth Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1829 Cleveland Avenue, Charlotte**

7. Designation Updates

a. Designation of the Davidson Baptist Church, 307 Armour Street, Davidson

Gray stated that this property was designated as a historic landmark by the Davidson Town Board of Commissioners in October.

8. Consideration of a Preservation Easement for the Sloan-Porter House, 10124 Walkers Ferry Road, Charlotte

Gray stated that this house is owned by Vice Chair Brian Clarke, who reached out to staff regarding donating an easement to protect the house in perpetuity. The Commission supported staff working with Vice Chair Clarke on an easement to consider at a future meeting.

9. Projects Updates

Note: Item 9a was the final item discussed at the meeting.

a. Closed Session for Edgewood Farm, 11124 Eastfield Road, Huntersville

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

The Commission motioned to reconvene in open session by consensus.

b. Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, 2128 Senior Drive, Charlotte

Howard stated that the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners voted at their November 5 meeting to allow the Commission to purchase this house. He stated that staff is now waiting on documentation from the Finance department to provide to the owners. He stated that the house might be designated as a historic landmark this month and that closing may occur in January 2026.

c. Stafford Cabin, Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte

Gray stated that staff continues to work on the relocation of this cabin.

10. Community Outreach Updates

a. A History of Bryant Park Event

Howard stated that he and Park and Recreation Historian Brandon Lunsford held a walking tour of Bryant Park last month. He stated that there was strong engagement from the participants.

b. Carolina Theatre Tour

Howard stated that staff and Commissioners attended a behind-the-scenes tour of the Carolina Theatre in October.

11. Revolving Fund Financial Report: Stewart Gray

Gray stated that the revolving fund balance is currently \$5 million. He stated that the commitment to purchase the Alexander House for \$350,000 and the potential purchase of the Edgewood Farmhouse will affect the balance.

12. Historic Landmarks Staff Report

a. HLC Holiday Party: December 11

Senior Administrative Support Assistant Stuart stated that the Commission's holiday party will be held on December 11 at the Tipsy Pickle, which is part of the designated landmark Camp North End.

b. Outreach Events for Calendar Year 2026

Stuart stated that she and Warlick will meet soon with the department's Public Information Officer to discuss outreach events for 2026.

13. Old Business

There was no old business.

14. New Business

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.