

Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
January 12, 2026
Hybrid Meeting
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 266
6:01 p.m. – 8:23 p.m.

Draft Minutes

Present

Matt Browder/County
Andrew Dunn/County/HLC Secretary
Victoria Grey/County/HLC Treasurer/Property Oversight and Engagement Chair
John Kincheloe/City
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

Christina Benton/City/Survey Committee Chair
Brian Clarke/County/HLC Vice Chair
Andra Eaves/County

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 December HLC Minutes

Commissioner Grey presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Dunn that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the consent agenda as presented for the approval of the Historic Landmarks Commission's December 8 meeting minutes. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

2. Chair's Report: Melanie Reddrick

a. Quorum Discussion: Attendance Policy Review

Chair Reddrick reviewed the attendance policy and noted the importance of having a quorum of members at meetings to conduct business.

b. New Commissioner Introduction

Chair Reddrick welcomed Matt Browder to the Commission. The Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

3. Public Comment Period

Alan Hall stated that he attended the Commission's November meeting and reaffirmed his commitment to purchase the Kelly Alexander House. He stated his interest in purchasing the home as a private residence that would also be opened to the public.

4. Quasi-Judicial Hearing Process: Stewart Gray

Director Gray informed the Commission that any decision made in a quasi-judicial hearing must be based on the findings of fact. He explained that if a Commissioner has a strong feeling about the presented project that it should be worked into a legal finding of fact and discussed. He stated that the Commission must be careful to not approve something that is not in the findings of fact.

5. Quasi-Judicial Hearing for a Certificate of Appropriateness Application for the Fidler House, 21112 Catawba Avenue, Cornelius

Owner/Applicant: Jonathan Hutchinson
Subject Property: Fidler House
Address: 21112 Catawba Avenue, Cornelius
PIN: 00520102

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 Archer, Phil Martelly, Jonathan Hutchinson.

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments
Fidler House
21112 Catawba Avenue
Cornelius, NC 28031
Application for COA HLC527

Landmark Description

The Fidler House was constructed around 1919 by W.C. Fidler, a local farmer. Mr. Fidler used wood from the farm to build the house for himself and as a wood craftsman, he also made coffins. He was also a blacksmith, made shoes and worked for Puckett's Grocery on Catawba Avenue.

The house is a one and one-half story craftsman style bungalow, it was originally a one-story house. The house was built upon red brick pillars, wood siding, and a large cross gable dormer with 4 over 1 windows. The first level has 2 over 2 windows on the front and side elevations. The dormer was added in the 1930s, creating the half-story. The garage was constructed in 1988. The house is now used as a music school. *Town of Cornelius designation report, 2007.*

Project Description

The proposed project is a second-story addition that would double the square footage of the building southward. The width of the footprint of the building will not increase. The increased footprint will require the removal of the existing garage/storage building located south of the subject building. The new addition will include increasing the conditioned space of both floors and adding a covered rear porch entry on the south elevation. The dimensions of the rear/south porch are approximately 6'-4" x 21'-0". The overall dimensions of the addition are approximately 34'-4" x 38'-10". The height of the addition will remain lower than the highest roof section of the existing. Proposed materials include unpainted brick foundation and lap siding to match the existing. All new windows and doors will be wood or aluminum clad wood with insulated glazing and molded muntins patterned to match existing. The scope of the addition will also include improving the insulation of the existing exterior walls, repair or replacement of existing siding, and completing needed repairs to the floor structure to improve the building's structural integrity. The project also includes a new parking lot and wheelchair ramp.

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. **The current use is an existing business. The proposal retains a majority of the original structure. The rear one-story addition would be removed to accommodate the new addition.**

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.

Character defining elements on the front and side elevations would not be altered (original windows, front dormer, eave brackets, materials). Rear dormer elevation windows would be removed.

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.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved. **The front dormer that was added in the 1930s would remain. The detached garage was constructed in 1988 and does not possess historic significance.**

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved. **The chimneys, front porch and columns, roof details, and front and side windows would remain.**

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. **Original materials (wood siding, flooring) will be repaired or replaced where needed.**

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. **Surface cleaning would be done in a sensitive manner.**

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

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 addition would add significant square footage to the building. However, it is not taller or wider than the original building. New additions**

should be recognizable and differentiated from the original building by methods such as material change, offsetting wall planes, roof massing, and fenestration pattern or rhythm.

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.

Staff Recommendation

The proposal meets the Standards for height, width, and materials. However, the new addition directly behind the original building is coplanar and the rhythm of the side elevation is disrupted by the rear dormer over the porch. The twin side gable roofs and wall planes are flush with the original building making it difficult to differentiate new construction from the original side elevations.

Staff does not recommend approval, *as submitted*, due to conflicts with Standard 9 as noted.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff

Commissioner Dunn asked whether Historic Preservation Manager Howard had any comments related to Standard 10. Howard stated that the windows from the dormers that are proposed to be removed could be reinstalled if the addition were removed. Gray explained that Standard 10 was not relevant since this proposal does not affect three sides of the building. He noted that the rear of the building does not have a lot of significance. He explained that the building could be reasonably restored if the addition were removed.

Commissioner Wasmer asked if the interior was included in the designation. Howard stated the designation includes the exterior.

Commissioner Browder asked whether Commissioners could comment on changes that the applicant could make that would make the proposed plan more appropriate. Howard stated that feedback is useful but noted that the Commission should not design the project for the applicant. Gray explained that the documents submitted by the architect are what the Commission should consider when deciding. He stated that the Commission should review the presented plan and determine whether the included information is adequate and appropriate based on the Standards.

Commissioner Miller noted that the first and second sentence in Standard 9 are incompatible and asked if the addition should be a completely different design. Howard stated that additions can be differentiated through a variety of ways, such as materials used, offsetting, and fenestration patterns. Gray explained that differentiation versus compatibility is a challenge due to the variety of properties designated as historic landmarks. He stated that a balanced approach that preserves the historic character of a property is important. He stated that adaptive reuse is a good way to preserve historic properties if the historic character of the property is not negatively affected.

Applicant Comments

Phil Martelly, property owner, stated that he supports the presented design. He stated that the addition could be removed without affecting the historic building. He stated that the plan is for the rear of the building to be used as the new entrance. He explained that, prior to his ownership, the building was not maintained. He stated that his intent is to increase the building's size and make sure it is up to current standards.

Jonathan Hutchinson, architect, explained that there is a lot of intentionality in the design. He stated that the historic house does not have a lot of head room. He stated that there is no breezeway for distinction due to the owner's desire to maximize use of the space.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicant

Commissioner Miller asked about the existing jog in the façade as shown in exhibit A1.3. He also asked about plans for the siding considering there is no sheathing present.

Commissioner Browder asked if the applicant planned to remove the siding from the entire existing structure.

Commissioner Dunn stated his focus on the need to differentiate old versus new. He asked why new plans were not differentiated from the old.

Applicant Response

Hutchinson referred to the existing jog in exhibit A1.4. He stated that he created a jog in the back in the new plan.

Hutchinson stated that the siding will need to be removed to install the sheathing. He stated that lap siding will be installed around the entire structure.

Martelly stated that the plan could be changed to include shingles on the addition to differentiate from the original.

Hutchinson stated that siding will be removed from the existing structure to make the building uniformed. He stated that the siding will be reused if possible.

Martelly stated that the siding is largely unusable since it was not protected. He stated that the roof was repaired prior to his ownership.

Hutchinson stated that the intent was to marry the needs of the client and the aesthetics as required for the Commission. He stated that he expected that the plans addressed the need for differentiation since it is noticeable where the addition begins from the side view. He stated that the extensive addition to the second floor was challenging to differentiate due to the headspace needed. He stated that the area would need to be redesigned to ensure differentiation.

Martelly stated his uncertainty with Standard 9. He stated that the intent is to maintain the original look and feel of the home. He stated that he is unsure about having a rear addition that appears more modern than the front. He reiterated his support of the presented plans.

Public Comments

Michael Archer, neighboring property owner, stated that he is not opposed to the applicant's concept, but expressed concern with the east elevation that does not maintain the historic character of the property. He asked if a separate, detached building could be an option. He encouraged the applicant to reconsider a detached building.

Applicant Response

Martelly stated that having a detached building is not realistic. He reiterated his desire to place an addition on the historic house.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Wasmer asked about the new materials proposed for the addition. Hutchinson stated that he is proposing to match the historic home's materials. He stated that Martelly mentioned shingle siding, which would provide the needed distinction. He stated that the second story would be a challenge to delineate a line between new and old materials.

Commissioner Makas presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the proposed findings of fact as presented by the Historic Landmarks staff with an amendment to the staff comment on Standard 6 to reflect that materials are being replaced and not repaired. Commissioner Dunn seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Dunn stated that he did not hear testimony that would differ from staff's conclusion that the plan as presented fails the test of Standard 9.

Commissioner Dunn presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission deny the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the Fidler House, 21112 Catawba Avenue, Cornelius, N.C. Commissioner Wasmer seconded the motion.

Commissioner Makas agreed with Commissioner Dunn's assessment. She stated that plans should be sympathetic without mimicking the historic property.

Martelly asked if this hearing could be continued to next month.

Commissioner Dunn stated that the plans would need to be significantly different and expressed his preference to hear the plans as a new submission.

Commissioner Makas stated that she is more concerned with the massing with the repeated gable than the siding. She stated that a total redesign may not be necessary.

Commissioner Browder stated that it seemed unfair to the petitioner to not make them aware of these design issues beforehand.

Gray stated that the applicant had the opportunity to work with staff on the design. He stated that Howard gave them advice about potential problems and noted that no changes were made.

Commissioners Makas, Dunn, and Miller expressed concern over the duplication of the two gables and explained that the plans lack differentiation and detailed elements.

Chair Reddrick asked if there could be a way to connect the addition while also having a small amount of space or a clear connection to ensure the addition does not present as being built at the same time as the historic building.

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

6. Survey Committee Report: Christina Benton

a. Consideration of the Designation Report for the Faires Farm Silos, 9520 Faires Farm Road, Charlotte

Historic Preservation Manager Warlick stated that the Survey Committee met in December to consider this designation report and two Study List properties.

Warlick stated that these silos are the last two structures associated with the Faires Farm property, a 330-acre mid-20th century farm. He stated that the silos are close to the main University of North Carolina at Charlotte campus entrance and are now surrounded by housing developments.

Warlick stated that the silos are on the property of the Iglesia Fuente De Vida Eterna, whose pastor is supportive of protecting the silos. He explained that staff is not recommending the designation of the entire tax parcel to provide the church the opportunity to expand.

Commissioner Dunn stated an interest in sharing the silos' story with the public after the silos are designated as historic landmarks. He asked if the condition of the silos will be assessed. Warlick stated that residents of the surrounding neighborhoods were the ones that brought the silos to staff's attention. He stated that the church may not have the financial resources to assist with a condition assessment. He stated that the church is researching grants to help fund work on the silos. He stated that the church is also considering how to use the silos, including having a farmer's market on the site.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion to the Historic Landmarks Commission that it process the Faires Farm Silos, 9520 Faires Farm Road, Charlotte, N.C., for historic landmark designation, including the exterior of each of the two structures, as well as a twenty-five (25)

foot radius of the land immediately surrounding each structure, measured in each direction from the exterior surface of each structure. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

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

i. Fowler Building, 1447 S. Tryon Street, Charlotte

Warlick stated that this building was built in 1922 during Charlotte's post-WWI expansion. He stated that it was used for plumbing supplies by one of the nation's oldest plumbing companies. He showed images of the interior fire-resistant terracotta ceiling tiles, which he explained were unique to this type of building. He stated that the property owner intends to turn the building into a boutique hotel.

ii. Two Wells Fargo – Jefferson-First Union Plaza, 300 S. College Street, Charlotte

Gray stated that this building consists of 32 stories and was built in the 1970s. He stated that the building is an artifact of the incredible development of the banking industry in Charlotte in the early 1970s, which radically changed Uptown.

7. Designation Updates

Warlick stated that the Blair House will be considered by Charlotte City Council on February 23 for potential landmark designation. He stated that the designation process for Charlotte Fire Station #8 has been paused so that staff can answer recent questions from members of the Charlotte Fire Department.

8. Project Updates

a. Listing Agreement for Edgewood Farm, 11132 Eastfield Road, Huntersville

Gray stated that this property was purchased by the Commission in December. He stated that utilities have been transferred and are active. He stated that Lake Norman Realty has submitted a listing agreement for the Commission to consider. He reminded the Commission that Abigail Jennings, President of Lake Norman Realty, was originally interested in purchasing the property as part of the Pioneer Springs Community School. He stated that Jennings remains interested in finding a good preservation solution for the property.

Commissioner Dunn presented a motion seconded by Commissioner Wasmer that the Historic Landmarks Commission empower Chair Melanie Reddrick to sign the presented listing agreement for Edgewood Farm, 11132 Eastfield Road, Huntersville, N.C., with Lake Norman Realty. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

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

Howard stated that this property closed on Thursday, January 8. He mentioned Alan Hall, who spoke to the Commission during the Public Comment Period, and reminded the Commission that Hall is a History and Civics teacher at West Charlotte High School. He stated that staff will present an update to the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) soon. He thanked Commissioner Miller for assisting with construction work quotes.

Gray stated that staff needs to update the BOCC on the status of the house since the BOCC approved the purchase and indicated an interest in being involved in its use.

Commissioner Makas stated that she would prefer for the house to have a public component rather than remaining a single-family home.

c. Torrence-Lytle School, 13900 Holbrooks Road, Huntersville

Howard stated that staff has almost finished a Request for Proposals (RFP) for this property, which would be ready to issue by the end of the month. Gray stated that this is an open RFP that will be distributed widely.

d. Douglas House, 7403 Steele Creek Road, Charlotte

Gray reminded the Commission that this property was considered for demolition by the property owner. He stated that the Commission denied the demolition request. He explained that the redevelopment of the former Steele Creek Presbyterian Church site included a requirement for the developer to provide a site for the Douglas House. He stated that the house was relocated and explained that the Commission agreed to secure the house while site construction is occurring. He stated that there are funds from the City of Charlotte available in the department budget for general preservation work for this project.

e. Stafford Cabin, Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte

Gray stated that this is the last extant dwelling built specifically as a slave cabin. He stated that it has suffered a lot of deterioration in its current location. He stated that the house has been disassembled and will be erected next to a replica cabin at Latta Place by Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation department.

9. Community Outreach Updates

a. Historic Bookmarks Book Club Meeting: February 26

Warlick stated that the first Historic Bookmarks Book Club meeting of the year will be held on February 26 and will focus on the oral history *Like a Family*. He stated that this book was written by six historians in the early 1970s and is about mill villages across the Piedmont. He stated that Director Stewart Gray will lead the discussion.

Warlick stated that the Adventure Club will return to Historic Matthews Cemetery on April 18 to continue work begun at the Fall headstone cleaning.

Warlick stated that staff is planning a history themed trivia night at Heist Brewery on May 20.

10. Revolving Fund Financial Report: Stewart Gray

Gray stated that the Commission's Rules of Procedure state that the Treasurer is responsible for presenting the revolving fund balance every month.

Commissioner Grey stated that the revolving fund has a \$4 million balance.

11. Historic Landmarks Staff Report

a. New Commissioner Training

Gray stated that he will schedule new Commissioner training soon. He stated that this training will be open to the full Commission.

b. BOCC Advisory Board Annual Report Presentation: February 17

Gray stated that Chair Reddrick will be responsible for presenting the Commission's annual report to the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners on February 17.

12. Old Business

There was no old business.

13. New Business

Howard stated that staff's thoughts are with Commissioner Eaves on the recent passing of her sister.

Commissioner Kincheloe asked about the proposed data center at 725 E. Trade Street, Charlotte. Gray stated that he is unsure of its status. He stated that he previously met with officials from the company and suggested incorporating the Court Arcade façade. He stated that employees at the Land Use and Environmental Services Agency (LUESA) confirmed a demolition permit was filed but that the data center company has not provided additional information needed for the permit. He explained that there are no protections on the building and noted that the data center is allowed by right to be built. Commissioner Makas asked if staff could send a letter on behalf of the Commission supporting the preservation of the building. Gray stated that he would send a letter and explained that the company is aware that the Commission is interested in working with them on preserving the building.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.