

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
July 13, 2026
Hybrid Meeting
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 266
6:00 p.m. – 7:28 p.m.**

Minutes

Present

Sekiya Billman/City
Andra Eaves/County
Victoria Grey/County/HLC Treasurer/Property Oversight and Engagement Chair
John Kincheloe/City/Survey Committee Chair
Emily Makas/Mayor
Melanie Reddick/City
Jason Tapp/County
Peter Wasmer/Mayor/HLC Vice Chair
Stewart Gray, HL Director
John Howard, HL Historic Preservation Manager
Tommy Warlick, HL Historic Preservation Specialist
Elizabeth Stuart, HL Senior Administrative Support Assistant
Rachael Brown, HL Intern
Daniel Quan, HL Intern
Hayden Wallace, HL Intern

Absent

Matt Browder/County
Brian Clarke/County
Andrew Dunn/County/HLC Chair
Charlie Miller/City/HLC Projects Secretary

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 HLC June Minutes

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

2. Chair's Report: Peter Wasmer, Vice Chair

a. Intern Introductions

Daniel Quan and Hayden Wallace, Historic Landmarks summer interns, introduced themselves.

b. Committee Appointments

Vice Chair Wasmer read the document provided by Chair Andrew Dunn regarding committee appointments and assignments. In this letter, Chair Dunn established and defined the Historic Cemeteries Committee and dissolved the Property Oversight and Engagement Committee.

c. Upcoming HLC Vacancy

Vice Chair Wasmer stated that the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners will consider Brian Clarke's vacancy and Andra Eaves' reappointment on August 5. He asked for those interested in the vacancy to apply by July 27.

d. Presentation of HLC Recognition Award to Brian Clarke

Vice Chair Wasmer stated that Commissioner Clarke would receive his recognition award for service to the Commission at the August meeting.

3. Public Comment Period

No one signed up to speak.

4. Conceptual Plan Review

a. Edward M. Rozzell House and Land, 11601 Rozzelles Ferry Road, Charlotte

Note: This item was not considered and was tentatively rescheduled for the August meeting.

5. Quasi-Judicial Hearing for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Renfrow Hardware Annex, 156 N. Trade Street, Matthews

Note: Vice Chair Wasmer was recused from this hearing. Commissioner Grey led the hearing in his place.

Landmark Name: Renfrow Commercial Properties (Annex Building)

Landmark Address: 156 N. Trade St.

City State Zip: Matthews, NC 28106

Applicant Name: David Blackley

Item: HLC559 (Application for Demolition filed May 27, 2026)

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, Matthew Williams, David Blackley

Staff presented the findings of fact.

Staff Report and Comments

Renfrow Commercial Properties (Annex Building)
156 N. Trade Street
Matthews, NC 28106
Application for COA HLC559

Landmark Description

The Renfrow Commercial Properties are historically significant for their association with both the early 20th century cotton cultivation economy of Mecklenburg County and the Renfrow family. The building at 156 N. Trade Street in downtown Matthews is a ca. 1900 frame building with a residential addition at rear that was moved to its location after T. J. Renfrow established his store and the first structure incorporated into the Renfrow Commercial Properties location. It first served as the town post office, and postmaster Jacob Flowe constructed a residence in back. Only the exterior is designated. *HLC Survey Report, 9/2022.*

Project Description

The proposal is full demolition of the commercial building.

Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission:

Exhibit A – Context Map

Exhibit B – Existing Conditions

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 italicized and underlined:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible 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. **If rehabilitated, the building could remain a commercial use.**
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. **Original materials in good condition should be preserved for reuse.**
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. **Not applicable.**
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. **Original materials in good condition should be preserved for reuse.**
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. **If the building is not demolished, original features should be repaired. If beyond repair, new features should match historic details.**
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. **Applies if the building is rehabilitated.**
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. **Not applicable.**

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. **Not applicable.**

Findings of Fact

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 Certificate of Appropriateness (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)]. If the HLC fails to issue a COA before November 27, 2026 for the demolition of the Renfrow Commercial Building, 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 November 9, 2026.

Staff Recommendation

Due to the poor condition of the building, a rehabilitation project would most likely result in the structural reconstruction of the building (foundation, flooring, framing, roof) resulting in full demolition. However, preserving the façade should be considered. Staff recommends approving the application for demolition upon determining whether the front façade and a section of the front room can be preserved.

Commissioners' Questions for Staff and Staff Response

Commissioner Reddrick asked if the building's sign is original. Historic Preservation Manager Howard stated that it is not an original feature.

Commissioner Grey asked if the Commission would be involved in plans for the property if this building were demolished. Howard stated that the Commission would retain design review over the site as long as it remained designated as a historic landmark.

Commissioner Reddrick asked if the exterior and site were included in the designation. Howard stated that they were included.

Applicant Comments

David Blackley, property owner, explained that two general contractors examined the building and were reluctant to work on it.

Matthew Williams showed additional images of the building's existing condition. He explained that the building is in a very high traffic area and noted that the Matthews Community Farmers' Market is held to the immediate south of the building. He stated his concern that adjacent historic properties will be damaged if this building fails.

Williams stated that a previous effort to preserve the façade with a cable attachment to the adjacent building was relatively successful. He explained that efforts to stabilize the building from underneath have not worked and detailed how the foundation continues to shift. He stated that two licensed general contractors visited the building and advised that rehabilitation is not feasible due to safety concerns for workers and the public.

Williams stated that this space would be incorporated into the Renfrow Hardware operations if demolition were approved. He stated that white picket fencing complementing the existing style is proposed for the N. Trade Street elevation and that black chain link fencing is proposed for the elevation bordering the farmers' market.

Commissioners' Questions for Applicant and Applicant Response

Commissioner Grey asked about the planned use of the site. Williams stated that it will be used as storage for plants.

Commissioner Reddrick asked how old the main hardware store is. Williams stated that it was built ca. 1900.

Commissioner Makas asked how long David Blackley has owned this property. Blackley stated that he has owned the property since 2010. Commissioner Makas asked if Blackley was responsible for previous stabilization attempts. Blackley confirmed that this was correct.

Commissioner Reddrick asked if the main hardware store has seen the same challenges as the annex building. Blackley stated that the store is in good shape. Williams explained that the annex building was moved shortly after it was built.

Commissioner Makas asked if preserving the façade for the streetscape view was considered. Williams stated that the front façade is held up by the foundation. He stated that contractors have not been willing to go under the building for renovation.

Commissioner Reddrick asked about the condition of existing windows and whether they contained original glass. Blackley stated that the windows have shifted and are not worth saving. He stated that most of the windows have been replaced.

Commissioner Grey asked if there would be any effort to reclaim materials. Blackley stated that an effort would be made to reclaim materials. He explained that people have already expressed interest in some of the materials.

Director Gray stated that the historic brick hardware store is likely the most important element of this designation of a large complex.

Commissioner Grey asked if white picket fencing would be placed along the front of the building. Blackley stated that this is correct. Williams stated that black chain link fencing is proposed along the side of the building.

Public Comments

There were no public comments in support of or opposition to this project.

Commissioners' Comments

There were no additional comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Makas presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission accept the staff report as a finding of fact. Commissioner Reddrick seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Commissioner Makas presented a motion that the Historic Landmarks Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the Renfrow Hardware Annex Building, 156 N. Trade Street, Matthews, N.C., with no delay in the issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness. Commissioner Reddrick seconded the motion.

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

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

6. Survey Committee Report: John Kincheloe

Commissioner Kincheloe stated that the Survey Committee met in June to consider one designation report and additions to the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks.

a. Consideration of the Designation Report for the Fowler Building, 1447 S. Tryon Street, Charlotte

Historic Preservation Specialist Warlick stated that this ca. 1922 industrial building stands at the intersection of S. Tryon Street and W. Summit Street. He stated that it was

a regional distribution center for the Hajoca company for approximately 35 years. He stated that the building is also significant as one of the last known extant commercial buildings designed by Louis Asbury, Sr. He described the front portion of the building that was primarily used to showcase bathroom products. He noted the unique terracotta tiles used in the interior of the building that were semi-fireproof, which responded to national concerns about warehouse fires during this period, and capable of bearing the weight of the plumbing fixtures stored in the warehouse.

The Survey Committee presented a seconded motion to the Historic Landmarks Commission that it process the Fowler Building, 1447 S. Tryon Street, Charlotte, N.C., for historic landmark designation, including the exterior and the specified interior elements of the building, including reinforced concrete and hollow tile floor deck structure, brick exterior walls, and concrete window sills, and the entirety of the associated tax parcel. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

b. These Properties Were Added to the Study List of Prospective Historic Landmarks:

i. Hodges House, 255 Ridgewood Avenue, Charlotte

Warlick stated that staff recently visited this site. He stated that staff is researching the history of the house and noted the various construction methods used.

Commissioner Kincheloe asked if the property owners have made any additions to the house. Warlick stated that the owners have not made many physical additions besides enclosing a porch.

Gray stated that the owners have agreed to place an easement on the property as part of the designation package.

ii. Gaston-LeGrand House, 424 N. Poplar Street, Charlotte

Warlick explained that this house was moved on its lot to face N. Poplar Street when the lot was subdivided ca. 1909. He stated that the house remains on its original property. He stated that the house is currently being restored.

Gray stated that the house dates to 1877 and noted that there are not many houses in Fourth Ward that date back that far.

7. Designation Updates

a. Dilworth Methodist Church South, 1829 Cleveland Avenue, Charlotte

b. Foard House, 7410 Shady Lane, Charlotte

Warlick stated that these properties were designated as historic landmarks by Charlotte City Council on June 22. He stated that the owner of the Foard House is interested in placing an easement on that property.

8. Projects Updates

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

Howard stated that he has reached out to Mecklenburg Commissioner Griffin and is awaiting a response.

Gray stated that Commissioner Makas will make a presentation to Commissioner Griffin when he is available.

b. Edgewood Farm, 11132 Eastfield Road, Huntersville

Gray stated that a party has expressed interest in this property.

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

Gray stated that proposals for the redevelopment of this property were received in May. He stated that he and Howard reviewed and ranked the proposals and sent them to Deputy County Manager Leslie Johnson for feedback, which was recently received.

Gray stated that staff has scheduled a meeting with the Commission officers for July 20 to discuss the final ranking of the proposals. He stated that eight proposals were received and explained that the most feasible proposals will go to the local community for a community meeting and feedback before being considered by the full Commission.

Commissioner Wasmer asked for clarification that the proposals that are shortlisted will be considered by the community. Gray stated that this was correct.

9. Revolving Fund Financial Report: Victoria Grey

Commissioner Grey stated that the revolving fund balance is approximately \$4 million.

10. Community Outreach Updates

a. Fall Events

Warlick stated that the Historic Bookmarks Book Club will meet on September 17 at Wing Haven to discuss *Becoming Elizabeth Lawrence: Discovered Letters of a Southern Gardener* edited by Emily Herring Wilson. He stated that the book club meeting will be followed by a guided twilight tour of Elizabeth Lawrence's garden.

Warlick stated that he, Gray, and Brandon Lunsford, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Historian, will be participating in Wing Haven's fall and winter speaker series.

Gray stated that the department received a grant from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office for a window workshop. He stated that the workshops will be on November 7 and November 14 and may be held at the Torrence-Lytle School. He stated that the workshops are intended for anyone in Mecklenburg County who would like more information on how to maintain older windows. He stated that a professional window restoration company may lead the workshops.

Warlick stated that staff is not hosting a headstone cleaning event this fall. He stated that the Matthews Heritage Museum will host a headstone cleaning event at Historic Matthews Cemetery in the fall.

Howard stated that the department received a grant from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office for a structural analysis of the tower at the Palmer Fire School. He stated that Terracon will be performing the analysis. He stated that the analysis may start this month and conclude in the fall.

11. Historic Landmarks Staff Report

a. Update on Elizabeth Lawrence House and Garden "Statewide Significance" Designation

Warlick stated that he and Intern Rachael Brown collaborated on the application for this designation, which was submitted to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office on June 30. He reminded the Commissioners that properties designated as significant statewide are protected from demolition unless the owner can prove extreme hardship or permanent deprivation of all beneficial use of the property. He stated that the Wing Haven Foundation is excited about this designation. He stated that staff is discussing potential statewide significance designations with representatives from Hopewell Presbyterian Church and Palmer Fire School.

b. Former Oleen's Bar, 1831 South Boulevard, Charlotte

Gray stated that Commissioner Browder facilitated a discussion with the property owner who was not currently interested in landmark designation. He stated that it might be as powerful to have a marker placed that tells the story of the site. He stated that staff will focus its efforts on this. He stated that staff is also considering a marker for the demolished Scorpio Lounge site on Freedom Drive.

Gray stated that language has been finalized for the Elmwood Pinewood Cemetery marker that was funded by the department. He thanked Commissioner Tapp and Historic Elmwood Pinewood Inc. for assistance with this marker.

c. Designated Historic Landmarks Google Map

Intern Daniel Quan stated that he has been adding links from the department's new property-specific webpages to each property on the designated historic landmarks Google Map layer.

12. Old Business

Commissioner Tapp asked for an update on the Court Arcade. Gray stated that he talked to the developers and worked out a deal to preserve the front of the building. He stated that after the developers agreed to this, staff received notice that the whole building would be demolished. He stated that he has not received a response from the developers.

Commissioner Makas stated that the canopy on the Kennedy Building, which is the oldest building on the University of North Carolina at Charlotte campus, was removed this summer. Gray stated that he reached out to the Chancellor's Office to explore a preservation solution. He stated that the office explained that there was no feasible preservation solution available. He stated that the office was considering rebuilding the canopy off of the building. He stated that he would send this communication to the full Commission for awareness. He stated that it would not be difficult to recreate the front in a sustainable manner.

13. New Business

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.