



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Chair David Schwartz
Vice-Chair Sean Murphy
Madhu Beriwal
Josh Gurlitz

Duncan Lascelles
Nancy McCormick
Angela Stiefbold

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

6:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

Virtual Meeting Notification

Board members will attend and participate in this meeting remotely, through internet access, and will not physically attend. The Town will not provide a physical location for viewing the meeting.

The public is invited to attend the Zoom webinar directly online or by phone. Register for this webinar: [URL](#) After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar in listen-only mode. Phone: 301-715-8592, Meeting ID: ###-####-####

Opening

Roll Call

Staff present: Anya Grahn, Liaison to Commission, Becky McDonnell, Liaison to Commission, Brian Ferrell, Counsel to Commission

Present 7 - Chair David Schwartz, Deputy Vice-Chair Sean Murphy, Madhu Beriwal, Josh Gurlitz, Duncan Lascelles, Nancy McCormick, and Vice-Chair Angela Stiefbold

Secretary reads procedures into the record

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Schwartz, seconded by Stiefbold, to amend the agenda to move Historic District Commission (HDC) candidate interviews from Item #7 to Item #2 on the agenda. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Announcements

Petitions

Approval of Minutes

1. August 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes

[\[20-0589\]](#)

Stiefbold proposed a change to the minutes to reflect that she did not have concerns about windows at 306 Ransom Street, only about the dormers and roof. She also asked to remove the reference to a classic Chapel Hill portico in the description of the discussion for 723 Gimghoul Road.

A motion was made by Gurlitz, seconded by Murphy, to approve the meeting minutes as amended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Historic District Commission Candidate Interviews

7. Historic District Commission Candidate Interviews

[\[20-0481\]](#)

Candidates Anne Perl de Pal and Rick Smith introduced themselves to the Commission and explained their experience and interest in Chapel Hill's architecture, preservation, and history. Chair Schwartz moved to take action on the applications at the end of the meeting.

Election of Commission Officers

Election of Chair

Schwartz reviewed the roles of vice chair and deputy vice chair.

Murphy nominated Schwartz as Chair. A motion was made by Lascelles, seconded by Gurlitz, to elect Schwartz to serve as Chair. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Election of Vice Chair

The Commission discussed whether Murphy was eligible to remain as vice chair. Staff clarified that the Land Use Management Ordinance had been updated and did not allow officers to serve more than two consecutive terms in a position. Murphy had served two consecutive terms as Vice Chair.

A motion was made by Schwartz, seconded by Lascelles, to elect Stiefbold to serve as Vice Chair. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Election of Deputy Vice Chair

A motion was made by Lascelles, seconded by McCormick, to elect Murphy to serve as Deputy Vice Chair. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Consent Agenda

2. 508 Boundary Street

[\[20-0590\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn explained that this application proposed to install a new horizontally-oriented rectangular window on the west side elevation that would

not be visible from the street.

A motion was made by Murphy, seconded by Lascelles, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

3. 205 Wilson Street

[\[20-0591\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn explained that the application proposed to install a new safety railing adjacent to a parking lot in the backyard. The railing would match an existing railing and address a safety concern where there was a change of grade.

A motion was made by Murphy, seconded by Lascelles, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Old Business

4. 306 Ransom Street

[\[20-0487\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn explained that this was the last opportunity for the commission to take action on the application. She described the applicant's proposal to add a rear addition, rebuild the historic roof form with a different height and pitch, construct dormers on the front and rear elevations, and add French doors to the rear elevation.

Chair Schwartz discussed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the federal standard for historic preservation, the State Historic Preservation Office's Commissioner Handbook's recommendations for managing change and preserving historic integrity, and the local Design Guidelines. He asked the commission to discuss how the proposal complied with these standards.

Commissioner Gurlitz explained that the design as presented at the last meeting deemphasized the visibility of the two front dormers as they aligned with the front windows on the main level. The increased roof pitch was immaterial. While it was not the original roof, it could have been.

Commissioner Stiefbold expressed her concerns for preserving the historic character, fabric, and feel of the district. She stated that while the proposal was an attractive solution, the commission should not base its decision on appearance. She discussed the importance of the original roof line and form as part of the historic structure. She referenced page 55 of the Design Guidelines that emphasized minimizing damage to historic buildings and the loss of historic fabric. She stressed that rebuilding the roof involved removing

the entire historic roof and losing its historic framing and construction. She explained that if the commission were regulating design in the historic district, it needed to be based on the historic fabric and historic street views of the houses. She worried that the proposed changes did not protect the historic fabric of the building.

Commissioner Murphy found that the house had a lower profile than others on the street. He discussed the need for historic buildings to function for future generations and found that the additional height would allow living space on the second floor. He described the mix of houses in the neighborhood, many of which had maintained their original Craftsman-inspired front porches with dormers on the facade. He recognized that the character of the home would change by constructing two new dormers on the facade, but found that it would not diminish the character of the historic district overall. He found the proposal complied with Design Guideline #9 on page 37 as the guideline stated that new roof features should not be introduced if they compromised the architectural integrity of the building, and he did not believe the dormers diminished the character or compromised the integrity of the existing house.

Commissioner McCormick agreed with Commissioner Stiefbold. She found that the proposed addition created by rebuilding the roof were a significant change in terms of scale in both raising the roof line and adding dormers. While other houses in the neighborhood had dormers, they were larger in scale. She referenced Design Guideline #9 on page 5 that emphasized protecting the property and its environment. She found that raising the roof and dormers were significant changes to the size, scale, and proportion of the existing building that were not congruous with other buildings in the vicinity and did not comply with the Design Guidelines.

Commissioner Beriwal spoke to the different size of buildings in the districts. She pointed out that proportionally, this application's increase in square footage seemed to be a considerable change; however, she did not think the commission should base their decision on the proportion of the size of the new addition to the size of the existing house.

Chair Schwartz explained that the guidance from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as well as the Design Guidelines did not support the addition of dormers or the modification of the roof form. He cited Specific Guideline #9 under Roofs that discouraged introducing new dormers. He found that dormers were a much more prominent addition to the roof than the other

examples listed in that specific guideline.

Counsel Brian Ferrell reviewed the role of the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) standards for congruity and the Design Guidelines in informing the commission's decisions. He informed the commission that the ultimate question of congruity is taken from the entire context of the historic district as a whole as opposed to a narrow application of any design guideline. The commission discussed preserving the integrity of the district and the congruity standards. They reviewed the National Register nomination to understand the site's architectural significance.

Chair Schwartz moved to invite comment from the applicant and any parties wishing to speak on the item. The motion failed with the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Chair David Schwartz, Madhu Beriwal, and Vice-Chair Angela Stiefbold

Nay: 4 - Deputy Vice-Chair Sean Murphy, Josh Gurlitz, Duncan Lascelles, and Nancy McCormick

A motion was made by Murphy, seconded by Lascelles, to approve the application as submitted with the revised plans submitted on July 24, 2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 4 - Deputy Vice-Chair Sean Murphy, Madhu Beriwal, Josh Gurlitz, and Duncan Lascelles

Nay: 3 - Chair David Schwartz, Nancy McCormick, and Vice-Chair Angela Stiefbold

New Business

5. 707 Gimghoul Road

[\[20-0592\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn explained that the applicant was returning to amend an approved Certificate of Appropriateness. The applicant was requesting modifications to the location of HVAC units as well as site design.

Ben Johnson, applicant, described the proposed modifications that entailed relocating a HVAC unit and adding a HVAC unit, removing a proposed trash receptacle, enclosing a rear porch and removing its exterior stairs, and modifying to the proposed hardscapes. The commission discussed the placement of the trash bins along Evergreen Lane, a private street.

A motion was made by Murphy, seconded by Beriwal, to approve the application. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

6. 500 North Street

[\[20-0593\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn explained that this was an after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness application for the construction of a stone swale to address storm water drainage.

Tony Whitaker, engineer for the project, presented images of the constructed drainage swale on the site and photos taken of the site. He described how after a heavy rain, several inches of water would accumulate in the backyard against the house's brick foundation, adjacent to the gas meter, and even seep through the crawlspace door. He explained how the swale had been designed to protect the house as well as existing trees and vegetation. Whitaker and the commission discussed how landscaping would be introduced later to help the curvilinear stone swale to blend into the landscape, the maintenance of the swale, and the history of flooding on the site.

A motion was made by Murphy, seconded by Stiefbold to approve the application. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Historic District Commission Candidate Interviews

Historic District Commission Candidate Interviews

[\[20-0481\]](#)

The commission discussed the two existing vacancies and the qualifications of the candidates and their experience.

A motion was made by Schwartz, seconded by Murphy, to forward a positive recommendation to the Town Council for the appointment of Anne Perl de Pal. The motion carried with the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair David Schwartz, Deputy Vice-Chair Sean Murphy, Madhu Beriwal, Josh Gurlitz, Nancy McCormick, and Vice-Chair Angela Stiefbold

Abstain: 1 - Duncan Lascelles

A motion was made by Schwartz, seconded by Murphy, to forward a positive recommendation to the Town Council for the appointment of Cathy Brigham. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Historic District Commission Training

Secretary of the Interior's Standards & Legal Training[\[20-0633\]](#)

Staff liaison Grahn provided training on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. She discussed the history of the standard's development, the four standards of historic preservation, and their application. She reviewed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the seven aspects of integrity, and how they related to local design guidelines.

Counsel Brian Ferrell described the powers of the Historic Preservation Commission as authorized by state statute and the LUMO. He and the commission reviewed the powers in LUMO 8.4.6 and discussed how these duties have been carried out in the past.

Adjournment

Next Meeting - October 13, 2020

Order of Consideration of Agenda Items:

1. Staff Presentation
2. Applicant's Presentation
3. Public Comment
4. Board Discussion
5. Motion
6. Restatement of Motion by Chair
7. Vote
8. Announcement of Vote by Chair

Public Charge: The Advisory Body pledges its respect to the public. The Body asks the public to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous manner, both with the Body and with fellow members of the public. Should any member of the Body or any member of the public fail to observe this charge at any time, the Chair will ask the offending person to leave the meeting until that individual regains personal control. Should decorum fail to be restored, the Chair will recess the meeting until a genuine commitment to this public charge is observed.

Unless otherwise noted, please contact the Planning Department at 919-968-2728; planning@townofchapelhill.org for more information on the above referenced applications.

See the Advisory Boards page <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/boards> for background information on this Board.

