

MINUTES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
August 09, 2023
City of High Point
Municipal Office Building
City Council Chambers
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Jeremy Fennema, Chair
David Blackman
Janet Catania
Holly Davis
Mary Powell DeLille
Rodney Smith
Brenda Stewart
Brianne Verstat

MEMBERS

ABSENT: John Fitzwater

STAFF

PRESENT: David Fencl, Senior Planner
Gina Lindsey, Administrative Coordinator
Clint Brown, Acting Clerk
Meghan Maguire, City Attorney
Nick Tosco, Counsel to the Board

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Fennema, Chair, determined that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order.

B. Approval of Minutes

1. June 6, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission

Ms. Davis made a motion to approve the June 6, 2023 minutes for the regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission as presented. Mrs. Catania seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a vote of 8-0.

C. Hearing Items

Ms. Cantania disclosed that she had been approached by various neighbors, to which she responded that they would have to refer their questions to Mr. Fencl and that a COA would be needed.

Neighbors of the applicant noted they had concerns they wanted to raise with the Commission and asked what venue would be appropriate for that. Ms. Meghan Maguire, City Attorney, explained that, since they are not subject matter experts or witnesses providing evidence, the best time for them to speak would be after the conclusion of the hearing.

All speakers offering testimony were affirmed.

1. Danielle Bolinsky, 312 Woodrow Avenue CA-23-08

A request to apply limewash to the home's yellow brick wall surfaces.

Mr. David Fencl, Senior Planner, presented CA-23-08. He entered the staff report, photos, map, and application materials into the record. Mr. Fencl recommended denial of the request as outlined in the staff report, as it would not be congruent with the historic district or follow the design standards.

Mr. Fencl stated that this was an after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness as the limewash had already been applied to the home in an attempt to disguise repairs to the masonry.

During the staff report, Mr. Fencl presented the following:

- The first floor of the house was originally yellow brick.
- Poor masonry repairs had been made in the past (mortar colors did not match)
- While limewash does not trap moisture in walls like paint does, it is still opaque and looks similar to paint, which is prohibited by the design guidelines.
- There are other options to mask masonry repairs that would be congruent to the historic district and follow the design guidelines.
- Limewash creates a false historic look.
- The treatment does not maintain the original appearance of the yellow brick of the house.

There were no questions for Mr. Fencl from the Commission.

Ms. Danielle Bolinski, owner of 312 Woodrow Ave., provided testimony regarding the request.

She provided the following statements to the Commission:

- A light application of limewash allows the brick color to come through.
- Limewash is ultimately a temporary treatment as weathering will expose the original brick color over time.
- The limewash was necessary to hide the poor masonry repairs and areas of discoloration on the brick.
- Limewash does not damage brick, however its removal would cause heavy damage to the brick and therefore violate the standards.

Ms. Davis asked the applicant if they knew they needed to apply for a COA and why they had not previously applied.

Ms. Bolinski stated that she was aware of the COA requirements beforehand. However, she explained she was concerned that the Commission would not have enough time to make an informed decision within one meeting, and she had completed extensive research on the limewash treatment. She furthermore expressed concern that the Commission would just assume it was paint and would deny her COA request.

The Commission began deliberation.

Mr. Fennema stated that while the color of brick is not the only characteristic of the home, it is a significant one. He noted that it is important to remember that historic preservation is not just about preventing historic homes from being demolished, but is also about preserving the character of the historic district as a whole. He explained that changing a significant characteristic of a home, such as the color of its bricks, is not in line with the purpose of the Historic Preservation Commission or the design guidelines.

Ms. DeLille agreed with Mr. Fennema's statement. She also expressed concern with the fact that the change had already been made and that the limewash treatment could not be removed without damaging the bricks.

Mr. Blackman noted that prior to the application of the limewash treatment, the brick was already discolored and no longer its original yellow. He questioned whether the limewash treatment caused harm if the gradual fading of the treatment would eventually return to the original color.

Mr. Fennema responded explaining that the case before the Commission was not if the change was aesthetically pleasing, but whether it violated the design standards regarding significant changes of characteristics to the home.

Mr. Fennema called for a motion.

Ms. DeLille made a motion to deny the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

Mr. Fennema then motioned to deny Certificate of Appropriateness 23-08 because it changed the fundamental characteristics of the property, which is the color of the brick. The color change is not congruent with the special character of the district or the design standards. Ms. Davis seconded the motion. The motion to deny Certificate of Appropriateness 23-08 passed by a vote of 8-0.

The hearing was closed.

Mr. Fennema then announced that he would give the applicant's neighbors a chance to address the Commission.

Mr. Jeff Grubb, owner of 310 Woodrow Ave., and Ms. Wendy Burchette, owner of 315 Woodrow Ave., expressed some concerns regarding the request by Ms. Bolinski and with the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. Grubb said he felt like the limewash treatment on 312 Woodrow was an improvement to the home that highlighted its architectural details. He also expressed concern that the Commission appears to be a rubber stamp board for city staff and noted that the board had only chosen not to follow the city staff's recommendation once since 2016 per his inspection of the minutes available online. Mr. Grubb stated there is a lack of transparency between the Commission and the homeowners living in the city's local historic districts and enforcement of (the historic design guidelines) are not consistent or equitable.

Ms. Burchette noted similar concerns. She said that the camaraderie of neighborhood is being eroded due to neighbors feeling the need to report each other's violations. She also questioned if the city had the authority to send employees onto private property unannounced, which she felt created security concerns for the residents. In addition, Ms. Burchette expressed a need for neighborhood meetings to allow the residents in the district to express their concerns to the Commission.

Mr. Fennema responded to the transparency concerns by explaining that appointment information, term dates, and meeting minutes were all accessible to the public. He also stated that the reason the determinations made by the Commission consistently align with the staff findings is since the standards are clearly written, resulting in little room for misinterpretation. He requested that the members of the neighborhood email him with any specific concerns or suggestions.

D. New Business

1. Request for Evaluation and Recommendation for Approval of Historic Marker to recognize the Village of Florence.

Mr. Fencl provided an overview of the criteria for a historic marker and noted that the application meets the minimum evaluation criteria and relevant evaluation criteria of the Historic Marker Policy.

The following people spoke in favor of the request:

- Mr. Benjamin Briggs, President of Preservation North Carolina, 1753 Penny Rd.

Mr. Benjamin Briggs, owner of 1753 Penny Road, president and CEO of Preservation North Carolina, and President of the High Point Preservation Society spoke in support of the request. He noted the unique history of the Village of Florence that was founded by abolitionists who opposed slavery and the confederacy and was the site of the Florence Female Academy. After the civil war, the mixed-race community included members of Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church. The Gardener and Hill Store at the crossroads was considered the best on this side of Greensboro. In 1875, Julius A. Richardson established a buggy shop that was joined by the Briggs Brothers Buggy Shop in 1881. A school for black students was established in Florence in the 1880s, and around 1912 a larger school was re-established near Turner Chapel and the Florence Memorial Masonic Lodge #719 as a Rosenwald School. Today, only two of the original houses remain standing in addition to the Florence Female Academy.

Ms. DeLille made a motion to recommend approval of the historical marker as presented by staff. Ms. Catania seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 8-0.

E. Announcements

1. Update on Washington Historical Overlay District

Mr. Fencl informed the Commission that the request to establish the Washington Historical Overlay District will be heard by the Planning and Zoning Commission at its meeting on September 26, 2023.

2. Historic District Guidelines

Mr. Fencl mentioned that the state has changed the official term from “guidelines” to “standards” when referencing the current historic district design guidelines. This terminology change reflects that these are actual standards and is not merely a guidance document. Mr. Fencl also asked the Commission if any members would be interested in serving on a working committee to discuss potential updates to those standards.

Commissioners Smith, Davis, Fennema, Catania, Stewart and Blackmon all expressed interest.

3. Training Opportunities

Mr. FencI informed the Commission of upcoming training opportunities, including one in Mount Airy on August 31 and one in Sanford on September 25. Mr. FencI encouraged any interested members to attend.

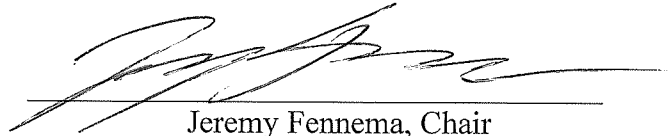
After the conclusion of announcements by staff, Mr. Len Hilliard, owner of 209 Woodrow Ave who will present his COA request at the Commission's next meeting, expressed the need to ensure homeowners in the historic districts are informed of the special requirements involved with homeownership within the district. Mr. Hilliard asked the Commission if it could set aside some time at the next meeting to hear concerns from homeowners in the districts.

Mr. Fennema replied that while a forum like that would be an important thing for the Commission to consider in the future, the next meeting's agenda would not be the appropriate place to have such a forum.

F. Adjournment

Ms. Davis made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Catania seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.



Jeremy Fennema, Chair

11 OCT 2023

Date