

**MINUTES OF THE
GUILFORD COUNTY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
January 15, 2019**

The Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, January 15, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in the Blue Room of the Old Guilford County Courthouse, 301 West Market Street, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Members Present: Benjamin Briggs, Chair; Jane Payne; Steve Johnson; Christian Thoma; David Horth; Dawn Chaney; Terry Hammond; Abigaile Pittman, and Sean Dowell.

Members Absent: Melinda Trevorrow

Staff Present: Matt Talbott, Planning Department.

AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 17, 2018 REGULAR MEETING:

Ms. Payne moved approval of the December 18, 2018 regular meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Ms. Hammond. Mr Horth abstained. The Commission voted 8-0 in favor of the motion.

NEW BUSINESS:

Public Hearing Item

Major Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the Old High Point YMCA, 401 South Main Street, High Point, NC. The request involves exterior alterations and the demolition of the designated interior of building. Owned by Joe Floyd, 1500 Westchester Dr, High Point, NC 27262.

(APPROVED)

Swearing-in of Speakers:

Matt Talbott, Guilford County Planning Department, was sworn as to his testimony in this matter. Also sworn as to his testimony was Peter Freeman, Alex Field, Joe Floyd and Joe Floyd Jr who was speaking in support of the request.

Chairman, Mr Briggs, explains what is designated at the Old YMCA building at 401 S Main St in High Point. He explains that the 1925 rear addition gymnasium's exterior and interior including the indoor swimming pool are locally designated in 1992. They did not designate the rest of the building at that time. Matt Talbott explained that the original applications the Commissioners received did not have the owner's signature but he brought the updated applications with the signature which infers that the

application is complete. Mr. Talbott stated that the COA request is for the interior only. The exterior will remain and states he will let the applicant go into further detail of the request and the design.

Speaking in Support:

Peter Freeman, Freeman Kennett Architects, High Point, North Carolina, is the architect for this project. Mr. Freeman brought his own PowerPoint Presentation which was projected on the screen for the Commissioners and audience to view. He stated the proposed new owner of the building is a national furniture company and would like to purchase this building to enhance downtown High Point. Their intention is to build a state of the art furniture showroom building at this location. The company would employ 20 to 25 full-time employees. The company has a limited timeline and needs prompt decision from the Commission. They have been in contact with the National Parks Service and the State Historical Preservation Office. The building has been on the market for 6 years. It's located in the heart of the furniture showroom district. Its best use would be for a furniture showroom. Mr. Freeman details the history of the Old YMCA building and why it's important to him. He explains that their concept plan intends to highlight the cultural and architectural significance of the building. Since 1992, there's been little access to the designated property. Their design concept would provide access to the public about the history of the building. Their plan would preserve the history of the building while providing the best economical use for this property. They plan to preserve all exterior elements of the building including all facades and the smoke stack. Deteriorated historical features will be repaired. No chemical treatment or sand blasting will be used in cleaning the facades. By using all glass in the new construction, character defining features will be displayed and preserved. It will allow visibility to the structure. There will be an energy efficient gallery and entryway. The focal point of the new addition will be the glass gallery. It will be an area for people to experience the history of the building including artifacts, memorabilia, and images. Mr. proceeded to recap the proposed construction of the building.

Mr. Thoma, asked the applicant if they were considering designated part of the building that fronts S Main St. Mr. Freeman stated at this point in time, they were not considering designating any additional exterior until this proposed COA was determined.

Ms. Hammond wanted clarification on the construction plans on what existing designated interior items will be used in the new construction. Mr. Freeman stated the façade would remain intact. Because it's hard to gain access to the interior, they want to use the trusses from the gymnasium in the proposed gallery and use some of the pool material into a reflecting pool. Ms. Hammond asked what will be constructed in the designated interior. Mr. Freeman stated that without knowing the decision of the Board, they did not know at this time but likely part of the furniture showroom.

Mr. Dowell asked the applicant to go into more detail of the proposed reflecting pool. Mr. Freeman stated that they would use elements of the existing pool into the new reflecting pool because as it sits now, no one can enter the part of the building where the existing pool is. The pool would be 6 inches deep. The new gallery space would tell the story of the building and its relationship to the City.

Ms. Chaney asked if all the windows will be restored. Mr. Freeman stated they would preserve all windows as much as possible on all facades.

Ms. Hammond asked if the loading dock will be integrated into the lower story portion of the new addition. Mr. Freeman stated that it will be a part of the proposal.

Joe Floyd of High Point, the current owner of the building, gave testimony in support of the request. Mr. Floyd spoke about his time and history growing up with the YMCA. Mr. Floyd also coached basketball at the YMCA. He then became a lawyer and started practicing law in High Point. He stated that in 1991, the YMCA was scheduled to be torn down by the City. He petitioned the City not to tear it

down. He then proceeded to buy the building to restore it. When he bought it, the building was filled with garbage and refuse. Once he cleaned up the building, he petitioned for it to be on the local historic designated list as a landmark property. He's been practicing law in the building since. Although he had fond memories of the Old YMCA, he now believed the best use for this building is for a furniture showroom for the economic benefit of the City. It's surrounded by furniture showrooms and it would fit in perfectly with the area if the COA is approved.

Joe Floyd Jr of Greensboro gave testimony in support of the request. Mr. Floyd Jr, stated that initially he did not want his father to buy the building in 1991. He said that the building is an eyesore to the City. He believes the proposal will be an asset to the City.

Alex Field of High Point spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Field stated that buyer was making an enormous effort to retain the historic significance of the building and is in favor of the request.

There was no one in opposition that gave testimony.

There being no other speakers, Chair Briggs closed the public hearing.

Discussion:

Mr. Thoma stated that this COA request is too broad. Mr. Thoma didn't like the carte blanche of the demolition of the interior. He would be more in support if we can be assured that the Main St façade remain but since it's not designated, they cannot.

Ms. Pittman stated that she liked the fact that they will be using elements of the interior to be integrated in the exterior design. She stated that the building and site needs a solution. She was inside the building in 1992 when she worked for High Point's Planning Staff. She agreed that they will need to de-designated the interior if this COA is granted but is unclear what their role would be in that process.

Mr. Briggs stated the closest case he could think of is Market Square of the Trade Show Area where some of the features of an old building was preserved in the new construction of a building that was not designated.

Mr. Horth stated that he was in favor of the request because of the display of the historic features of the building and that the interior would need to be de-designated.

Mr. Thoma asked if the building was sold again, would the new owner be required to maintain the new display gallery area being proposed. Mr. Briggs said since this new construction would not be designated, then they would not be required unless the new owner applied for any new designation.

Mr. Briggs stated that Mr. Talbott contacted the State's Preservation Office and brought documents on the process of de-designation.

Mr. Thoma stated that this would be the de-designation of the interior only and the exterior would remain designated.

Mr. Briggs asked Mr. Freeman back to the podium to help clarify the request and what they need from the Board so they could move forward.

Mr. Freeman stated that they would like to receive permission that lets them demolish the interior and keep the exterior façade. Also, an addition of glass to preserve the cultural memory of the building and public access would be added.

Emily Gallimore of High Point was sworn in to speak. She is a lawyer representing the applicant. She clarifies that the request is to grant a COA to demolish the interior and to keep the exterior façade. They intend to honor the history of the building.

Motion:

Ms. Hammond moved to approve the Major Certificate of Appropriateness for the Old YMCA Building, 401 South Main Street, High Point, North Carolina. The COA is specifically referencing the demolition of the designated interior subject to the de-designation of the interior, the designated exterior to be preserved, designated interior spaces and uses to be recognized in the new design through signage and/or displays, and submittal of final plans to staff for record keeping. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thoma. The Commission voted 9-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Briggs, Payne, Horth, Hammond, Thoma, Chaney, Pittman, Johnson, Dowell. Nays: None.)

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING:

The next scheduled meeting of the Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission is February 19, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further discussions before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin Briggs, Chairman
Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission
BB/sm:jd