

**GUILFORD COUNTY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Carolyn Q. Coleman Conference Room
First Floor, Old Guilford County Courthouse
301 W Market St, Greensboro, NC 27401
January 20, 2026

Regular Meeting**6:00 PM****I. Roll Call**

Chair Sean Dowell called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Troy Moss called the roll of members in attendance:

Present: Sean Dowell, Chair; Abigaile Pittman, Vice Chair; Louis Gallien; David Millsaps; David Horth; Keisha Hadden; Terry Hammond; Cory Rayborn; Haley Moloney; and Jerry Nix

Absent: Christie Lee (unexcused)

The following Guilford County staff members were also present: J. Leslie Bell, Planning and Development Director; Jason Hardin, Planning and Development Deputy Director; Avery Tew, Senior Planner; and Troy Moss, Planner I.

II. Agenda Amendments

None.

III. Approval of Minutes: December 16, 2025

Mr. Millsaps moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2025, meeting, as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hadden. The Commission voted unanimously, 10-0, in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Pittman, Gallien, Millsaps, Horth, Hadden, Hammond, Rayborn, Moloney, Nix. Nays: None.)

IV. Rules and Procedures

Chair Dowell briefly explained the rules and procedures followed by the Historic Preservation Commission. He stated that he would go into further detail on the rules for the Evidentiary Hearing on tonight's agenda when the item is up for consideration.

V. Old Business

A. APPROVAL OF ORDER FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS CASE #25-10-HPC-00008: 101 S MAIN ST, HIGH POINT, NC 27260 (ONE PLAZA CENTER / SHOWPLACE WEST) (APPROVED)

Mr. Bell explained that this item is an Order, or a written form of the decision that the HPC made on this Certificate of Appropriateness application at the December meeting. At that meeting, the HPC approved the Certificate of Appropriateness application, but because this was a quasi-judicial decision, State Law requires that the Commission also adopts a written form of the decision that reflects the Commission's determination. Any time there are absences at the meeting when the decision was made, information about the case is sent out to each member, including meeting recordings and any information provided by the applicant or presented during the meeting. This gives members who were absent at the initial meeting an opportunity to review the case record and information. Members are not required to sign the order if they were not present at the last meeting. However, if any commission members who were not in attendance at the last meeting when the Certificate of Appropriateness was approved, but wish to vote on the item, will be asked if they have reviewed the case record and information in sufficient detail in order to vote. Sending out the case information ahead of time also helps in the event that some of the commission members present at the initial meeting are not present at the meeting where the Order is signed.

Mr. Horth moved to accept and approve the Order, as written. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Pittman. The Commission voted unanimously, 10-0, in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Pittman, Gallien, Millsaps, Horth, Hadden, Hammond, Rayborn, Moloney, Nix. Nays: None.)

At this time, the Order document was passed around to the Commission members to obtain their signatures.

VI. New Business

Evidentiary Hearing(s):

Chair Dowell explained that tonight's agenda includes a Certificate of Appropriateness request, which involves an evidentiary hearing to determine congruity with the special character of the landmark, based on guidance from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. He stated that evidentiary hearings follow quasi-judicial procedure, which means that they are similar to court cases. The Commission has limited discretion and must base its decision on competent, relevant and substantial evidence in the record, applying the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to the facts of the case. Participation in evidentiary hearings is limited. The meeting is open to the public and everyone is welcome to watch. However, only parties with standing have the right to fully participate in evidentiary hearings. Parties with standing may present evidence, call witnesses and make legal arguments. Parties with standing are generally limited to the

applicant, the local government, and individuals who can demonstrate that they will suffer special damages as a result of the decision. Other individuals may serve as witnesses at the discretion of the Commission. General witness testimony should be limited to facts and how they relate to the Secretary of Interior's Standards, not opinions. But for certain topics, the Commission needs to hear opinion testimony from expert witnesses. Individuals providing expert opinion must be qualified as experts and provide the factual evidence upon which they base their expert opinion. He briefly explained the general order that the hearing would follow, including a staff presentation, testimony and argument from the applicant and any other parties with standing, general testimony, rebuttal, deliberation/discussion, and a vote. Decisions on Certificate of Appropriateness requests may be appealed by any party with standing to the Guilford County Board of Adjustment within 30 days of notice of the decision. All witnesses must swear or affirm their testimony.

A. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS CASE #25-10-HPC-00010: 204 E RAILROAD AVENUE, GIBSONVILLE, NC 27249 (FRANCIS MARION SMITH HOUSE) (APPROVED)

At this time, Chair Dowell swore in or affirmed all individuals who intended to speak or provide witness testimony on the Certificate of Appropriateness request on tonight's agenda.

Mr. Hardin pointed out that the staff report that had been included in the Commission members' packets was incorrect. He said that copies of the correct staff report had been distributed at the beginning of the meeting, and he asked that the Commission members take time to review them.

Chair Dowell explained that the parties for this case are entitled to an impartial decision-making process. Commission members may not participate in the hearing if they have fixed opinions about the matter, a financial interest in the outcome or a close relationship with anyone affected by the decision. He asked if any Commission members had partiality to disclose or needed to recuse themselves from this case for these reasons? No one came forward.

Mr. Tew presented the staff report. He stated that this is a Certificate of Appropriateness request for the Francis Marion Smith House, located at 204 East Railroad Avenue in Gibsonville. The request is for the following scope of work:

Construct new 35 ft. x 55 ft. sheet metal building with 12 ft. eave height and approx. 19 ft. ridge height in southwest corner of property; building will have two 10 ft. x 10 ft. roll-up doors and one 36 in. x 80 in. 9-lite walk-in door on front (north) elevation.

Construct new approx. 687 sq. ft. driveway addition connecting to existing driveway southwest of home; new driveway addition will consist of gravel to match existing driveway.

The home was constructed circa 1898. The property was listed on the National Register in 1984 and designated as a local historic landmark in 1982. The landmark report for the property indicates that its significance is derived from: (1) It is the most stylish and impressive home in Gibsonville dating from the town's major growth period of 1890-1910, (2) It is a fine example of a home combining elements of the Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles, and (3) It is notable as one of three houses associated with the Whitsett Institute, a boarding secondary school and junior college in Whitsett.

The property's adopted landmark designation Ordinance included the following: "The house on its 1.349-acre lot."

Mr. Tew said the applicant was proposing to construct the new building in the southwest corner of the property.

Chair Dowell noted that one of the landmark designation requests heard at the last meeting was for the Minneola Manufacturing Mill, which is located nearby to the west of this property.

Mr. Gallien asked about the other two houses associated with the Whitsett Institute. Mr. Nix said the Francis Marion Smith House was the first property designated as a landmark by the Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission. One of the other homes was owned by a professor at the Whitsett Institute. The third home was owned by Dr. Whitsett. The wife of Francis Marion Smith was a relative of the founders of the Whitsett Institute, and also worked as a teacher at the school. The Whitsett Institute was a renowned private educational institution in its time. It closed in about 1917 after a fire.

Ms. Moloney asked what the current color of the existing home is? Chair Dowell responded that the home was currently painted blue.

Chair Dowell asked the applicant to come forward, sign in, and state their name and address for the record.

Brooke McClain, 204 East Railroad Avenue, Gibsonville, NC, is one of the owners. She stated that they have lived in the home for about three years and they love the house. The previous owner, Jim Ezekiel, showed the house to them and explained some of the intricacies. Jim and Susan Ezekiel, as well as previous owners before them, did a lot of work on restoring the home. However, because of circumstances beyond the control of the previous owners, there are still big projects to undertake. For example, the entire foundation has to be mortared with lime mortar, which cannot be left outside. She said this would be a long job and it is necessary to have

a maintenance building to store the mortar. Currently, there are also 34 shutters that are about 8-9 ft. tall that need to be stored in a covered area while they are sanded and repaired. Weather events sometimes cause issues with the windows and other repairs needing to be made. They want to do this work themselves and they enjoy doing it, but the maintenance building is necessary for them to be able to keep the home in good condition.

Stephen McClain, 204 East Railroad Avenue, Gibsonville, NC, is the other owner of the property. He stated that there are bricks coming off of the chimney and it is starting to collapse. He needs to hire a company to do the work on the chimney, but a lot of the other work on the house he is able to do himself, and he needs an area to work. Hiring professionals to do all of the work would never allow him to recoup those costs. The wrap-around porch is also going to have to be redone. The storm windows also need work.

Mr. Gallien asked whether the proposed storage building would be permanent? Mr. McClain responded that he does not believe anything is truly permanent, but it would last for his lifetime. The storage building they are proposing would not require any maintenance for perhaps 100 years.

Ms. Moloney asked if the color of the proposed storage building would match the paint color on the existing home? Ms. McClain responded that it would. The paint color on the home, Sherwin Williams "Dress Blues," was chosen with regard to the historic color palette, and the new structure would match.

Ms. Moloney asked if any historic trees or other elements like a well would be affected by the placement of the proposed structure? Ms. McClain responded that a Certificate of Appropriateness had already been issued by staff for removal of several deteriorated cedar trees in the area.

Mr. Millsaps asked how far away the proposed structure would be from the house? Mr. McClain responded that he had not measured the distance, but he estimated that it would be around 150-175 ft. away from the house.

Mr. Gallien asked if the structure would be visible from the street? Mr. McClain responded that there was a row of maple trees that would help block visibility of the structure. He stated that it may be visible from some angles.

Mr. Gallien said it sounded like the structure would be far enough from the house that it would not be a sudden contrast. Ms. Moloney added that it looked like the structure would be mostly surrounded by trees. Chair Dowell pointed out that the only direct view from the street would be by looking straight down the driveway.

Mr. Millsaps asked if the proposed structure would be steel framed? Mr. McClain responded that it would be framed with steel tubing.

Mr. Nix said that the placement of the proposed structure behind the existing home helped reduce its visual impact.

Mr. Nix asked how far the proposed building would be from the rear property line? Mr. McClain responded that it would be 35 ft. from the rear property line and 40 ft. from the western property line.

Mr. Nix said the distance between the proposed structure and the existing home would help differentiate the two. Mr. Gallien agreed that the distance would help create a clear contrast.

Ms. Moloney asked what the roof material would be on the proposed structure? Mr. McClain responded that it would be a metal roof.

Mr. Horth asked whether the landmark designation included the lot itself or just the existing home? Mr. Nix responded that the entire lot was included.

Ms. Moloney asked whether the property owners had considered any alternative roof designs for the proposed structure? Mr. McClain responded that his intent was to keep the design of the structure basic while matching the color of the existing home. He wanted the proposed structure to be as low-maintenance as possible.

Mr. Millsaps stated that part of him felt that a hip roof would be more appropriate than the gable roof that was being proposed. Ms. Moloney agreed, but added that the overhang on the proposed structure helped somewhat.

Ms. Moloney asked if the proposed structure would be placed on a concrete pad? Mr. McClain confirmed that it would.

Mr. Nix stated that the proposed structure would feature horizontal metal siding, mirroring the appearance of the weatherboard siding on the existing home.

Vice Chair Pittman stated that she thought it was appropriate to allow concessions to the needs of modern life, including the need for storage.

Ms. Moloney pointed out that one of the documents included with the application showed a different building configuration than the rest of the application. She asked which configuration was correct? Mr. McClain said the correct version was the symmetrical configuration with a central walk-in door flanked on either side by roll-up doors. Ms. Moloney said she thought that design better mimicked the style of the existing home.

Chair Dowell stated that the Commission must decide whether this request meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. He noted that the 1984 National Register nomination indicated that the property owner at that time had erected two new outbuildings: a gazebo constructed from salvaged materials

dating to the turn of the century and a second well house. The 1984 nomination also indicated that little remained of the lot's original landscaping, and that a brick walkway was laid out in the front yard by the owner at that time to replicate a historic walkway that had existed in that location.

Chair Dowell stated that the Commission had previously accepted reconstruction of elements of an accessory structure because it was not visible from the public right-of-way. Mr. Millsaps pointed out that the present case was concerning all new construction, as opposed to reconstruction of elements of an existing structure. Chair Dowell added that the Commission had previously permitted the relocation of a historic garage and additions to it, because the structure was not visible from the street. Mr. Gallien said that that case was for an existing structure, whereas the present case was for a completely new structure. Ms. Hadden mentioned that in the case that Chair Dowell was referencing, the accessory structure was being relocated from a less visible location to a more visible one.

Ms. Moloney asked how large the existing home on the property was? Mr. Nix responded that it was about 4,500 sq. ft. Mr. McClain agreed.

Chair Dowell stated that he brought up the previous examples to explain that there was precedent for allowing changes that make a property more livable, as long as scale, massing, height, setbacks, and proportions are compatible with the historic structure.

Ms. Moloney said she thought that the request met Standards 9 and 10 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation because the proposed structure would be compatible with the scale of the existing home and would be differentiated through material, but would still mimic the existing home's key features. She also thought that the applicants' intended use of the structure to maintain the existing home was worth taking into consideration.

Mr. Gallien asked for clarification on how Standard 9 applied to the proposed structure. Ms. Moloney responded that the proposed structure would be symmetrical, which matches the layout of the existing home. The siding style also matches the siding on the existing home. She added that the large size of the existing home would keep the proposed accessory structure visually subordinate. Additionally, the overhang of the roof on the proposed structure partially mimics the hip roof on the existing home.

Mr. Gallien felt that it would be more appropriate for the proposed structure to more closely mimic the architectural style of the existing home. Ms. Moloney pointed out that that may prevent differentiation between the existing historic structure and the new construction. Mr. Gallien agreed.

Mr. Millsaps reiterated that the proposed structure's distance from the existing home would help differentiate it. Ms. Moloney added that the color of the proposed

structure would match the existing home, so the new structure would not stand out too much visually.

Ms. Hadden said she thought the proposed structure was very large. She questioned the need for the structure to be 1,925 sq. ft., the size of a three bedroom house. She was also concerned about the amount of the property that would be covered with impervious surface.

Ms. Moloney asked how much space was needed for a workshop? Mr. McClain responded that he would need about 2,000 sq. ft. Ms. Moloney asked how the structure would be used? Mr. McClain confirmed that part of the building would be used for storage and part would be used as a workshop, with tables and tools.

Mr. Gallien asked if the proposed structure would be used as a garage, once the home projects were completed? Mr. McClain responded that he did not see an end date for the work that needed to be done on the home.

Ms. Moloney pointed out that serious home projects require large tools and equipment, which could necessitate a large structure.

Mr. Millsaps said that, as a professional builder, he felt the size of the structure was realistic for the applicants' stated purposes. He added that the location and architectural design of the structure mitigated its large size.

Chair Dowell stated that the driveway portion of the request did not appear to present any issues. This project would not affect any historic landscape elements, it would not block visibility, and it would be located to the rear of the existing home, so he thought it would not negatively impact the integrity of the landmark or its historic elements.

Ms. Moloney moved that, based upon the staff report, testimony, and evidence presented at this hearing, the Commission make the following findings of fact:

1. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are met by the proposed work.
2. The proposed structure is compatible with the scale of the existing home and is differentiated from the existing historic elements.
3. The proposed structure follows the design features of the existing historic home, including symmetrical door placement, horizontal siding, roof lines, and color.
4. The proposed structure will be less visible from the public right-of-way due to its placement behind the existing home.
5. The proposed driveway addition would not affect any historic landscape elements and would be located to the rear of the existing home.

Based upon the foregoing findings of fact, Ms. Moloney moved that the Commission approve Certificate of Appropriateness Case #25-10-HPC-00010, a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to complete the following work on the subject property, identified as the Francis Marion Smith House, located at 204 E Railroad Ave, Gibsonville, NC 27249, being Guilford County Tax Parcel #102338:

Construct new 35 ft. x 55 ft. sheet metal building with 12 ft. eave height and approx. 19 ft. ridge height in southwest corner of property; building will have two 10 ft. x 10 ft. roll-up doors and one 36 in. x 80 in. 9-lite walk-in door on front (north) elevation.

Construct new approx. 687 sq. ft. driveway addition connecting to existing driveway southwest of home; new driveway addition will consist of gravel to match existing driveway.

The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Pittman. The Commission voted unanimously, 10-0, in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Pittman, Gallien, Millsaps, Horth, Hadden, Hammond, Rayborn, Moloney, Nix. Nays: None.)

VII. Other Business

Mr. Horth stated that this would be his last meeting. His term had ended in April 2025 and he had decided to continue serving until a replacement was appointed, but there had been a delay with appointing a replacement. Chair Dowell thanked Mr. Horth for his many years of service and the time he has offered. Mr. Tew stated that he was going to make a certificate of appreciation to present to Mr. Horth for his service. Mr. Horth stated that he would come to the next meeting.

VIII. Staff Updates

A. Landmark Index Project Update

Mr. Hardin stated that 14 properties have been completed for the landmark index project, so far. Staff is working on a tracker that will be included in the packet for the next meeting to show the progress being made. The Commission members can also directly access the document to see the progress for themselves. Mr. Hardin requested that the Commission members provide input on the architectural style of the landmarks.

Chair Dowell asked if the Commission's request for funding to attend the Preservation NC conference in High Point in 2026 had been approved? Mr. Hardin stated that the budget is still in development. The budget retreat is scheduled for the end of this month, where County Commissioners will discuss their budget priorities. The Commissioners will likely not vote on approval of the budget until May or June.

Ms. Moloney asked about America 250 NC activities? Mr. Hardin stated that the staff is still working with GIS on developing routes for a walking/driving tour of historic properties. He said that those routes would be brought before the Commission at a later date.

Mr. Nix asked whether staff had received any applications? Mr. Tew responded that they had received one landmark designation application. The report had been forwarded to the State Historic Preservation Office for their required review period.

IX. Commissioner Updates

Mr. Nix said that some time ago a Quonset hut had been constructed without a Certificate of Appropriateness on the property of the Simeon Wagoner House. This was discovered and the property owner came in for a Certificate of Appropriateness for after-the-fact approval. The Commission decided that it could be allowed if they painted it a dark color to blend it visually and hide it. Shrubbery would also be planted to further hide it and camouflage it. They had also added a second story to an existing one-story addition on the side of the house, and painted it a light brown. The house is constructed out of brick. When you go by the property now, the second story stands out as almost white and the shrubs were never planted. The house was sold and the new owners do not know anything about this. Mr. Nix wanted to know what should be done now? Chair Dowell pointed out that a Certificate of Appropriateness is valid for one year from the date of approval. If the work has not begun during that time or is discontinued for one year, then the Certificate of Appropriateness expires.

Mr. Hardin asked when the Quonset hut had been constructed? Mr. Nix responded that it was at least before the Covid-19 pandemic. He said that the property owners had not painted the structure or planted the shrubs to help hide the structure. Mr. Hardin stated that staff would look into the issue and keep the Commission updated.

Chair Dowell asked if staff had any updates on the situation with the City of Burlington and the Gibson House? Mr. Hardin responded that he did not have an update at this time and is still working on getting in contact with the City of Burlington.

Mr. Gallien stated that he is concerned that the Commission is not meeting its responsibilities, as outlined in North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 160D. One that he is particularly concerned about is addressing the preservation of historic structures in the county. He asked why there is not a list of endangered historic structures? Mr. Hardin responded that the last historic resource inventory was completed in about 2018 or 2019. He said that Certified Local Government Grant applications are open for this year, and that is one of the avenues that staff has looked at for potential funding for doing an updated historic resource inventory.

Mr. Gallien asked the other Commission members if they thought that finding out what properties are endangered should be one of their main priorities? He asked what the

Commission should do moving forward? Ms. Moloney responded that the first step is being aware of endangered historic properties.

Ms. Moloney stated that each Commission member should try to be aware of the status of historic properties in their area. Ms. Hammond added that it is sometimes difficult to tell the status of properties that are not visible from the street.

Chair Dowell suggested using the information in the OneDrive folder to learn about the properties closest to each member. He said it was important for the Commission to start thinking about goals for 2027. The final time to submit requests for funding would be in October 2026 for the next fiscal year. He asked the Commission members to talk to their County Commissioners and increase their public outreach. He pointed out that there is a public comment period during meetings of the Board of County Commissioners.

Mr. Nix said that in the past, the Commission had a relationship with every fire department in the County where an opportunity was presented for salvaging architectural materials before properties were burned.

Ms. Pittman stated that she had sent an email to the High Point City Clerk about the America 250 NC time capsule. Ms. Maloney stated that the City was participating in the Committee. She had asked them to get something to her by the middle of March. Chair Dowell said that he had also reached out to the Mayor of Gibsonville to collect a letter to be placed in the time capsule. Ms. Pittman added that she is now a member of the High Point Preservation Society. There is a small house at the Springfield Friends Church in High Point that is in need of repairs. The High Point Preservation Society bought it and they are going to sell it to somebody who can restore it.

Ms. Pittman also brought up the issue of the gas pipeline going through Oak Ridge. Ms. Hammond stated that a group had fought against the pipeline, but it had been approved by the federal and state governments. Chair Dowell asked if the pipeline would impact any historic properties? Ms. Hammond responded that the Charles Benbow House, as well as schools, churches, and cemeteries were in the potential impact radius of the pipeline. Ms. Pittman referenced a newspaper article that discussed the pipeline being routed through cemeteries. Ms. Moloney stated that cemeteries are federally protected.

Ms. Moloney stated that there would be an update on the America 250 NC Committee at the next meeting. The ceremony for the time capsule event would be April 18, 2026.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Commission, Chair Dowell adjourned the meeting by acclamation at 8:05 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission is scheduled for February 17, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the McAdoo Room, located on the third floor of the Truist Building, 201 W Market St, Greensboro, NC 27401.