

**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

September 16, 2025

Regular Meeting

6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Chair Sean Dowell called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and asked staff to call the roll.

Troy Moss called the roll:

Present: Sean Dowell, Chair; David Millsaps; Keisha Hadden; Louis Gallien; Abigale Pittman; Christy Lee; Jerry Nix; and Cory Rayborn.

Absent: Terry Hammond, Vice Chair; David Horth; Haley Moloney (unexcused)

The following staff were also present: Leslie Bell, Planning and Development Director; Jason Hardin, Planning and Development Deputy Director; Avery Tew, Senior Planner; Troy Moss, Planning Technician; and Andrea Leslie-Fite, County Attorney.

II. Agenda Amendments

Mr. Nix stated that he was interested in having a discussion at the next meeting in October about the budget. He said he would like an overview of the budget timetable in terms of deliberations and deadlines and what the Commission needs to be aware of in order to submit a particular proposal.

Mr. Bell stated that budget discussions typically start in December, but may start a little earlier this year, possibly in November. Mr. Gallien asked if the Commission members could attend those deliberations in December? Mr. Bell responded that there is typically a meeting with department directors, as well as the Budget Management Department, to kick off development of the budget. There are meetings that are typically scheduled with department directors. Once the County Manager is preparing the recommendations gathered from all the departments, the Commissioners schedule work sessions. There are typically two to four work sessions and they are open to the public. Anyone can also view those online. Public comments are not accepted at the work sessions, but they can be viewed by the public. In terms of the budget preparation itself, those meetings are typically between the department directors, division managers, the County Manager and Assistant County Managers. When the Commissioners receive the recommended budget from the County Manager, then those work sessions are open and will be advertised and noticed. That typically occurs around June. Before that time, the Commissioners will typically have a budget retreat. In the last fiscal year they did two retreats, one in February and one in March or April.

Mr. Nix asked what would be the HPC's process for formally reviewing and commenting on the budget? Mr. Bell stated that the HPC is not charged with putting together a budget. If there is room for it, a particular activity or something the HPC wants considered, then that can be brought up in this meeting, and staff can include that as a recommendation from this HPC to the County Commissioners. For example, if there is a particular conference that HPC does not budget for, but there is interest from the HPC members, then Mr. Bell suggested to provide that information to staff as soon as possible. He would suggest that those types of recommendations should go to staff by the end of October at the latest.

III. Approval of Minutes: August 19, 2025

Chair Dowell read an email from Vice-Chair Hammond suggesting several edits to the minutes. In the "Other Business" section on Page 4, she requested to delete a comment about the type of roof in the discussion about insurance for historic homes. She also wanted to clarify that she had reached out to National Trust Insurance Services (a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation) and was still waiting to hear back from them.

Chair Dowell stated that he had pointed out the need for a period and a new line to staff.

Mr. Rayborn requested a small change on page 2, 4th paragraph, 3rd sentence, to remove a hyphen. He pointed out the same error on page 4.

Ms. Hadden moved to approve the minutes from the August 19, 2025 meeting, as amended, seconded by Mr. Gallien. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Millsaps, Hadden, Gallien, Pittman, Lee, Nix, and Rayborn. Nays: None.)

IV. Rules and Procedures

Since there were no legislative or quasi-judicial hearings for this meeting, Chair Dowell said it was not necessary to discuss the Rules and Procedures in detail.

V. Old Business

Landmark Interior Designations Update

Mr. Hardin stated staff had provided excerpts from North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 160D for the Commission members. He said the County Attorney had planned to discuss this item and may still go over it when she arrives.

Potential America 250 NC Activities and Subcommittee Update

Mr. Hardin stated that at the last meeting, the Commission formed a subcommittee for the purpose of discussing the HPC's potential involvement with the Guilford County America 250 NC Committee. He pointed out that these discussions could occur outside the context of the subcommittee, as long as a quorum of the Commission was not present. He added that, if the Commission would like to disband the subcommittee, that was certainly possible. That would remove the issue of advertising meetings and so forth.

Mr. Gallien moved to disband the subcommittee, seconded by Ms. Pittman. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Millsaps, Hadden, Gallien, Pittman, Lee, Nix, and Rayborn. Nays: None.)

Mr. Gallien asked if the federal government was providing funding for the America 250 NC program. Mr. Bell responded that he was not aware of that, but he would look into it.

Chair Dowell asked if any of the Commission members were interested in attending the Preservation North Carolina Annual Conference in Asheville, October 5th – 7th. He stated that he may attend that conference. Mr. Hardin said that he would check to see if that has already been budgeted for 2025.

Chair Dowell stated that he thought it would be important to have a calendar including things like budget deadlines and board elections.

Mr. Millsaps asked whether the various local historic districts could form their own committee composed of representatives for those districts. Mr. Gallien read a description of the purpose of America 250 NC county committees. Chair Dowell suggested reaching out to Ms. Moloney, who had been appointed to the Guilford County America 250 NC Committee.

Landmark Property Picture Review

Mr. Hardin stated that many old HPC photos had been digitized but still needed to be identified. The HPC members should go through the pictures and identify the landmark featured in each picture.

Ms. Hadden asked how the Commission members should submit comments on the digitized photos. Mr. Moss stated that he would go back into the file and figure out the best way for the HPC members to notify him of any changes they feel are needed on the photos.

Document Review “Who Is HPC?”

Chair Dowell stated that he had created a document explaining the general role of the HPC. He had asked for any suggestions from Commission members on improvements to the document.

Mr. Bell added that it is correct on the website but in the first bullet there are two jurisdictions, Whitsett and Oak Ridge, that were added. Mr. Hardin stated that staff have begun reviewing the document. Staff is waiting for the Commission members to make their comments before they make their final comments.

At this point, County Attorney Leslie-Fite arrived for the remainder of the meeting.

Review Landmark Application

Ms. Lee asked if the application will explain how and why someone would need to apply for listing on the National Register, and if there is a benefit from being listed on the National Register? Chair Dowell responded that the State Historic Preservation Office was available to answer any questions on those topics, and people can contact them for any help they need.

Ms. Hadden suggested that a link to the State Historic Preservation Office should be put on the County's website. Mr. Bell stated that staff would look into it and see about adding it to the website if it was not already present.

Landmark Interior Designations

Mr. Nix stated that he was one of the first Commissioners on this Commission and the original application did not specify "interior". They wanted the best properties within Guilford County, so they were interested in the interior and exterior of the properties. They had to have pictures taken of the interior and exterior to be included and all of these properties were intended to have both the interior and exterior designated. He said that the law had changed at some point and that older designations should be grandfathered into having the entire interior designated.

Attorney Leslie-Fite stated that the law on the books in those days specified that landmark designations should have called out specific interior features to be designated. The fact that it didn't is problematic as it relates to enforcement, because even as you go back and look at the legislative history, the law required that specific interior features should be designated, even back to the formation of the Guilford County HPC. In terms of how this issue can be addressed now, she thinks there may be an opportunity to engage in some sort of methodical engagement with some of the older properties to see what can be done moving forward. Specific interior features should have been captured in the landmark designation ordinances and they were not. The way forward is to try to engage with property owners on their consent for review of certain interior features.

Chair Dowell stated that he had spoken with the Greensboro HPC and they do not review internal features. However, he said his understanding was that landmarks in Greensboro's historic districts were now being reviewed exclusively by the Greensboro HPC.

Mr. Bell stated that a previous Deputy County Attorney, Matt Mason, had conferred with the Greensboro City attorney and his opinion was that work on a landmark property within a municipality's local historic districts should be reviewed by the municipality's HPC. The City attorney agreed. Mr. Bell said that if that happens, then there needed to be a chain of communication so that the County can update their landmark property file if the City HPC approves a COA for a landmark property.

Chair Dowell reiterated that the City of Greensboro's HPC was not set up to make decisions on internal features.

Attorney Leslie-Fite said it may be prudent for the Commissions to create some sort of working group where they talk about that process change, and get it to a point where the respective governing bodies can approve that process. From her standpoint, there have been a lot of changes in staff and personnel and this is an opportunity to revisit the conversation. She added that she applauds the Commission for thinking about where the gaps lie and how they can address some of that.

Ms. Pittman stated that she has been concerned on more than one occasion when reviewing proposed work within a municipality because she did not have their zoning regulations in front of her for reference. She said the Commission could not approve something that is going to violate the municipality's ordinance.

She feels the members need something to refer to even if it is just a staff comment that says the regulations that affect each item, like the setbacks, for example, to know whether it is even possible to do that project. Mr. Tew added that it was not within the Commission's purview to ensure that projects comply with a municipality's zoning ordinances.

Mr. Bell stated that it may be a matter of putting some procedures in place so that zoning officials may provide something akin to a report that will address the zoning, and that could be included in the packets so the members would have that available.

Landmark Tax Deduction Discussion

In response to a question from Ms. Hadden, Mr. Hardin stated that tax deferral calculations are done by certified appraisers. He said he was still working on getting information on how these calculations were made from the County Tax Department.

VI. New Business

None

VII. Other Business

Annexed Landmarks Discussion

Mr. Hardin stated that he has been in touch with Jamie Lawson, the Planning Director for the City of Burlington, to talk about the Gibson House that was annexed. Staff is going to work with Burlington and figure out how management of this landmark is going to be handled, maybe with an agreement if the City is amenable to one.

Attorney Leslie-Fite stated that there will have to be conversations with jurisdictions about landmark properties within municipalities that do not currently participate in the Guilford County HPC, and that in order to continue the HPC's enforcement authority over these properties, it would require updates to Guilford County's Code of Ordinances that would acknowledge that the designations would continue forward. There would have to be a mechanism whereby other jurisdictions would enter into an interlocal agreement with the County.

2026 Historic Preservation Commission Schedule

Mr. Gallien moved to approve the HPC 2026 Meeting Schedule, seconded by Ms. Pittman. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Millsaps, Hadden, Gallien, Pittman, Lee, Nix, and Rayborn. Nays: None.)

Chair Dowell stated that the Commission is probably going to lose David Horth, whose term was ending.

Chair Dowell thanked everyone for their attendance at today's meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Commission, Ms. Hadden made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Millsaps. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Millsaps, Hadden, Gallien, Pittman, Lee, Nix, and Rayborn. Nays: None.). The meeting ended at 7:47 p.m.