

**GUILFORD COUNTY  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes  
Regular Meeting – May 20, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.  
Carolyn Q. Coleman Conference Room  
First Floor, Old Guilford County Courthouse  
301 W. Market St., Greensboro, N.C. 27401**

**A. Roll Call**

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

Troy Moss called the roll:

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

**Absent:** None

The following staff were also present: Leslie Bell, Planning and Development Director; Avery Tew, Senior Planner; Troy Moss, Planning Technician; Matthew Mason, Chief Deputy County Attorney.

Chair Dowell introduced Ms. Lee and Ms. Moloney as the newest members of the Commission. He added that the purpose of today's meeting was to address members' questions and concerns.

**B. Agenda Amendments**

None

**C. Approval of Minutes: March 18, 2025**

Mr. Rayborn pointed out that on page 5, section "G" under Other Business, the second paragraph should be added to the end of the first paragraph to improve the logical flow.

Vice-Chair Hammond moved to approve the minutes from the March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025 meeting, as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Millsaps. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Dowell, Hammond, Horth, Millsaps, Rayborn, Pittman, Nix, Hadden, Gallien, Lee and Moloney. Nays: None.)

**D. Rules and Procedures**

Since there were no legislative hearings for this meeting and no one from the public was present, Chair Dowell noted that it was not necessary to go over the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

**E. Old Business**

Mr. Bell stated that an email was sent out by Mr. Tew on May 13<sup>th</sup> that provided an update on the Certificate of Appropriateness case for the Bumpass-Troy House at 114 S. Mendenhall Street. There was a long-standing practice with the City of Greensboro that major Certificates of Appropriateness for landmark properties within a local historic district would only need approval from the Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission. After consultation and communication between the County Attorney's office and the City Attorney's office, it was deemed most appropriate for the City of Greensboro's HPC to handle those cases. The case for the Bumpass-Troy House is scheduled to be heard by the City HPC on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Dowell asked for clarification on whether this meant that the Guilford County HPC effectively lost jurisdiction over landmark properties within local historic districts. Mr. Bell said the County would continue to work with the City of Greensboro and the City of High Point to find the best way to implement these processes.

Mr. Nix confirmed that there was an agreement between the City of Greensboro's HPC and the Guilford County HPC that the County HPC would take precedence over the City HPC for landmark properties within local historic districts. He said that this makes sense because local historic districts only cover the exterior of the property and the land, whereas landmark designation covers the land, the exterior and interior, if it has been designated. Landmark designation also gives up to a 50% tax deferral. The applicants want a fast turnaround for decisions because they have carpenters lined up and other things they want to do. If they have to jump from one Commission to the other, that takes up a lot of their time, maybe three or four months. During that time period, there could be a lot of damage to the building. He said the County HPC has the right to be over the City HPC because the County HPC was formed by Guilford County and included all the different municipalities that wanted to participate at that time. He said that if the process was too burdensome, some property owners would request to withdraw landmark designation for their properties.

Chair Dowell added that landmarks are a handful of especially historic properties, and that this should take precedence over local historic districts, which often cover hundreds of properties.

Ms. Moloney pointed out that the Commission had to be able to review proposed changes to designated interior features of landmark properties, which would not be covered by historic districts.

Chair Dowell mentioned that the landmark properties in the County are significant for various reasons, such as being associated with an important individual. He said some landmarks are located within National Register districts, while others are not.

Mr. Tew clarified that the matter at hand would only come into play when landmarks were located within local historic districts, not National Register districts. There are three local historic districts in the City of Greensboro and four in the City of High Point. Any landmark properties located within these cities but outside of their historic districts would still fall under the jurisdiction of the County HPC.

Chair Dowell asked about the distinction between local historic districts and National Register districts? Mr. Tew said local historic districts are designated by the local government, whereas National Register districts are reviewed and designated by the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service. Local historic districts also offer regulatory protections such as requiring Certificates of Appropriateness for development, while National Register districts are largely nominal.

Ms. Pittman pointed out that the design standards for local historic districts within the City of High Point vary, and some, for example, do not cover anything in the back yard. She said they also do not affect property taxes.

Mr. Tew said applications for Certificates of Appropriateness in local historic districts are reviewed for congruity with the special character of the district, whereas Certificates of Appropriateness for landmarks are reviewed for congruity with the special character of the landmark itself.

Ms. Moloney asked if a historic district property that was designated as a landmark would then be under the jurisdiction of the City HPC or County HPC? Mr. Tew replied that the landmark designation would be reviewed by the County HPC, but for the purpose of Certificate of Appropriateness review, the property would remain under the jurisdiction of the City HPC. Counsel Mason said the ordinance that created the County HPC lays out that Certificates of Appropriateness for properties within historic districts should go to the historic district HPC – in this case, the City HPC – regardless of whether the property is a landmark.

Chair Dowell pointed out that many past cases came before the County HPC without approval from the City HPC.

Mr. Bell added that, when cases come before the County HPC without first being reviewed by the City HPC, it requires the County HPC to be familiar with the City's historic district design standards. He said there had been conversations with City of Greensboro and City of High Point staff to figure out how to move forward.

Ms. Hadden asked why the existing processes could not remain in place? Mr. Bell said this created difficulties with the County HPC needing to review projects for conformance with the City's and the County's standards.

Chair Dowell asked if the County could require documentation of City approval prior to submission of an application? Mr. Bell said the County would work with other jurisdictions to find a process that works, while respecting the requirements of the ordinance. He said he was not prepared to give a final answer on how things would move forward.

Mr. Nix said it sounded like landmark properties within historic districts would need to first go to the City HPC for approval, then come to the County HPC for final approval. Mr. Bell said that would be one option for how to move forward.

Counsel Mason added that the requirements of the ordinance were clear that Certificates of Appropriateness for properties located within local historic districts should be reviewed by the historic district HPC. He said he wanted to clarify that the HPC's authority in reviewing Certificate of Appropriateness requests was to apply the standards they had adopted. If an applicant demonstrates that they have met the standards, the Commission's role is to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness, and if they did not, then the Commission's role is to deny. It is not the Commission's authority to try to assess whether another jurisdiction's standards or ordinances have been met.

Ms. Moloney asked if it would be helpful to have a task force so the different HPCs could communicate. Mr. Bell said that would be considered, but he could not commit to a particular course of action at this point, because there may be other ideas.

Ms. Maloney asked if it would be helpful to have a sub-committee or task force to have the HPCs communicating so they are better able to understand how things are going to be covered. Leslie Bell stated that all of the above would be considered.

Mr. Gallien mentioned that, at some point, he would like to have a discussion about the City and County HPCs merging.

## **F. New Business**

None

## **G. Other Business**

Chair Dowell stated that there had been discussion about setting clear expectations for the process and for the owners of landmark properties. He hopes to acknowledge and educate landmark property owners. Annual compliance letters, “selling your home” letters, and “you could have a historic home” letters are ways to better educate owners on what they have. He pointed out that compliance letters had not been sent out in some time. These letters are very informative and provide pertinent information to owners and realtors selling these homes.

Ms. Moloney said she thought these were very important informational tools to help people that own historic properties. There is a new grouping of housing types that have become eligible for tax credits. A lot of people don’t realize that they are considered historic and homes built before 1975 are now considered historic. She would like to see a Guilford County historic property owner’s guide so that people have resources to refer to, like how to become a landmark. Mr. Bell stated that some of that information is currently available on the County website.

Mr. Nix pointed out that some of these houses have gone through several owners since their designation and the new owners may not be aware of the standards, and ordinances that may relate to their property. He stated that all of the landmark properties need to have a letter sent to them as soon as possible, so that irreparable mistakes are not made. Mr. Bell stated that there is a new system where an applicant is notified when they come in to pull a permit that the property is a landmark. Mr. Nix said the problem was when someone performs work without a permit.

Chair Dowell suggested that these letters be put on the website as a PDF, so owners can download them for review.

Vice-Chair Hammond stated that there used to be staff that would ride around and view historic houses to determine whether they are in compliance. Mr. Bell stated that, unlike some other jurisdictions, the County does not have dedicated historic preservation staff. Planning and Development Department staff provide support to the HPC as one of many duties. The department is also subject to budgetary limitations as far as hiring new staff.

Ms. Moloney suggested that the HPC members could drive around their own areas and make notes on properties that are not in compliance. Counsel Mason cautioned that, if members should endeavor to do that, they should be cautious and not trespass on someone’s property. Property owners must be notified in writing that someone would be visiting their property. Vice-Chair Hammond

stated that she has recently looked at the GIS map, looking at properties and there are oblique photos of the properties that may be helpful.

Chair Dowell stated that one of the many resources is the GIS map, which includes a layer for historic properties. He suggested that members should look at it and make sure the information is correct. If it is not, they should let staff know so the information can be updated on the website. He asked staff to talk a little more about the GIS map.

Mr. Moss demonstrated how to use the GIS map to view inventoried historic properties and landmarks.

Mr. Nix pointed out that there are several properties on the GIS map that have incorrect photographs, and possibly also wrong addresses because the house was moved to another location. Chair Dowell asked that, when these errors are noticed, the member should get in touch with staff to make the necessary corrections.

Chair Dowell mentioned that there are opportunities for classes or training where the County may pay for HPC members to attend. He said it was important to continue to educate yourself whenever there is an opportunity.

Vice-Chair Hammond raised the possibility of creating specific design standards rather than utilizing the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Chair Dowell said that the landmark properties in the County were so different, he did not know how someone could develop design standards that would apply to all of these disparate properties. Ms. Moloney pointed out that historic districts generally have design standards that regulate conformance with the district, whereas landmarks usually are subject to the Secretary of the Interior's standards to allow flexibility.

Chair Dowell stated that he has been talking with staff about HPC expansion to towns not currently represented. Mr. Bell said that the Board of County Commissioners would have to authorize. Chair Dowell stated that he would attend one of their meetings and make this request.

Mr. Gallien raised the idea of the HPC being included in the County budget. He asked if there was a budget for the Commission? Mr. Bell responded that there is a budget for certain components for this Commission, just like for any of the other Boards. For example, professional development and training. If they know that there is something coming up for the next fiscal year, that budget can go up or down. If there is money for professional development and it is not all spent, then when it comes to review of that budget, then it is at the discretion of what is needed to make that budget balance. There are monies for professional services, such as the court reporter that summarizes the minutes each month, and monies for printing. If there is a particular project that would take County funds to do,

they can include that as a request in the budget and it may or may not be approved. The County Manager does hold budget workshops prior to developing the budget to try to glean what the Commissioners' priorities may be, to be funded in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Gallien stated that he feels that the HPC needs to be more proactive in their presence at those budget sessions. Mr. Bell said he would forward information on when those meetings would be held for this year. Counsel Mason pointed out that these meetings do not typically include a public comment period, and while there may be interesting information, it may not be an opportunity to make their concerns known. He suggested that they speak with their County Commissioner. Another good resource is the Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, as she has the ear of the County Commissioners and knows about some of the opportunities that may exist by way of scheduled meetings that are coming up. It would probably be helpful for the Commission members to pull together their ideas and translate those ideas into cost estimates, so that they can be more concrete. That way, Planning staff can also be informed of what the Commission wants to do and what sort of funding may be needed, so that they can see if that can be included in the department's budget request.

#### **H. Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

**Next Scheduled Meeting – June 17, 2025**