

Historic District Commission

April 22, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, April 22, 2021 via Zoom.

Present: Commissioners Jerry Tucker, James Henson, Carol Hauer, Camille Fox, Ed Starr, and Andi Eddlemon

Absent: None

Staff present: Charles Graham, Assistant City Attorney; Jason Thompson, Planning Director; Kim Wallis, Planner; Chrystal Howard, Secretary; and Robert Stroud, Municipal Arborist

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check

Chairwoman Eddlemon opened the meeting, conducted roll call and declared a quorum.

ITEM 1b. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Starr made the motion to approve the March 25, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Tucker seconded the motion and the motion passed (6-0).

Chairwoman Eddlemon provided an explanation for public hearings on Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications and order of business.

Chairwoman Eddlemon stated because of the quasi-judicial format of the hearings, persons wishing to speak and offer evidence are required by North Carolina law to be sworn in or affirmed. Ms. Howard administered the affirmations.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202100101)

- Enrique Lagos
- 501 S. Chester Street
- Renovation of exterior house including installation of new siding, new driveway, replacement of upstairs windows, replacement of window shutters, new rear yard fence, new rear yard pool, new rear deck and stairs, new front porch floor, new exterior front door and removal of two (2) trees.
- New request of driveway gate, fence gate and fence enclosures.

Chairwoman Eddlemon opened the public hearing recognizing Ms. Kim Wallis, Planner for the purpose of staff presentation. Ms. Wallis stated the applicant's name, subject location, and the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) request. She read the findings provided in the staff report on agenda page 2-1 and 2-2. Findings read included deck and backyard fence stain, siding choice, driveway dimensions and design around front yard left tree, two porch lights, shutters, site pool around healthy backyard Magnolia tree, brick walls on each side of the house, windows in general, front elevation, and left side elevation. New requests included new bathroom window and opening, installing left side yard fence section that is perpendicular to house to close in rear yard fence, install new driveway gate, additional right side rear yard section fence and gate parallel to house, and remove three small ornamental trees in right side yard for paver driveway.

Ms. Wallis read an email received from Michelle Bruchan Grossman, 413 S. Chester Street of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Grossman inquired about which side of the house had asbestos. She suggested a safety recommendation to have a window in each room facing the pool to keep an eye on the pool if an emergency arises. Ms. Grossman noted York Chester as a noisy neighborhood on 321, with the exception of people's backyards. She had a concern about the noise level that a pool may generate and requested the use of the tallest privacy fence between properties to improve on noise and visual privacy.

Ms. Wallis read an email received from Dwayne JohnPaoli, 1313 S. York Road of Gastonia, NC. Mr. JohnPaoli is not in the York Chester neighborhood. Mr. JohnPaoli commented that the siding on the house was still available, and if not can be milled. He shared his opinion that the original siding was an important factor to maintain the historic integrity of the house and to change the design of the siding was to change the overall look of the property. Mr. JohnPaoli was concerned about the front porch lights not being in the same design style of the house and not complimenting to the house. He did not favor the existing lighting, which he stated was more appropriate. Mr. JohnPaoli was concerned about the door chosen as not working with the style of the home. He was concerned about the removal of the double windows over the front door and replacing it with one window, and stated this would destroy the look of the front of the house and change the entire look of the house. He

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mentioned salvage yards may have the windows. Mr. JohnPaoli suggested the air vent at the top should have a grate in the glass to break up the solid sheet of glass look.

Commissioner Tucker asked if the two porch lights were for the ceiling of the porch or either side of the front door. Mr. Lagos replied that the lights were for the ceiling. Commissioner Tucker asked if these lights were pendant-hanging lights and Mr. Lagos replied, "Yes". Commissioner Tucker asked what the proposal was for the lighting on either side of the front door and Mr. Lagos replied similar lighting would replace existing lights. Commissioner Starr commented that ceiling mounted lights, flush mounted lighting, would be preferred and appropriate compared to a pendant light. Commissioner Hauer agreed.

Ms. Wallis commented that Chairwoman Eddlemon recapped at the last meeting that the roof, front porch, complete rear elevation, and right side elevation did not need further discussion and was acceptable.

Brief discussion ensued on how to proceed with the meeting and Chairwoman Eddlemon suggested moving forward with discussion on new information presented before making a motion.

Starting with siding, Commissioner Hauer asked if the Commission can move to accept what the State office recommended as she was not in favor of either option the applicant presented. Commissioner Hauer stated the siding was a tremendous factor in the look of the house. Discussion ensued on options on making a motion, such as making a motion for each item. Commissioner Hauer made a motion to accept what the SHPO recommended for the siding. Commissioner Henson commented that pricing as the possible reason for the homeowner's decision and Commissioner Hauer commented that pricing was not to be taken into consideration. Commissioner Henson commented on high pricing of wood products, and long term maintenance and durability on hardboard was the best product. He commented that the HardiPlank Fiber Cement Colonial Lap Siding Smooth looked very close to the Cove/Dutch Lap with the exception of spacing. Commissioner Henson shared the consideration of the applicant preserving the house versus walking away. He was not sure if the board was being too tight with the siding even though it falls within the Guidelines. Chairwoman Eddlemon shared that the German siding had a unique character to it and the applicant's choice would be obvious difference. Ms. Wallis noted that SHPO's recommendation was not wood product, but a polyash product. Commissioner Starr asked the applicant his reason for not wanting to use the Cove/Dutch Lap siding. Mr. Lagos replied that the reviews he read was that the siding was not a good material, breaks pretty easy, doesn't last long, and has a lot of maintenance. Mr. Lagos commented that he tried to use something similar to the existing siding, because he could not find the same product. Commissioner Starr asked if the 4" HardiPlank was the smallest and Mr. Lagos replied, "Yes". Mr. Thompson reminded the Commission that they are considering and focusing on the Design Guidelines and the excerpts in the Design Guidelines. Brief discussion ensued on siding in the excerpts from the Design Guidelines and it was determined that existing wood should be repaired or replaced with similar wood siding or fiber cement siding. Commissioner Tucker inquired about repairing the existing wood siding and Mr. Lagos commented that the existing wood siding was in really bad shape, and it would cost a lot of money to try and fix the boards. About four different types of siding were noted on the house. Because the request was comprehensive, discussion ensued on the how to move forward with making a motion to approve with conditions. Attorney Graham's interpretation of Commissioner Hauer's motion was that she was allowing the applicant to replace the siding, but not with what he wants. Therefore, he suggested that the condition would be approving with the condition that he uses the siding chosen by the Commission. Based on the meeting being continued, all the information provided, Mr. Thompson suggested approving or denying the application and let the applicant come back with a new COA. He encouraged being mindful of adding conditions. Attorney Graham added that if the board decides to look at the application to approve or deny, he suggested withdrawing the motion on the floor, consider everything, and then vote. Commissioner Hauer withdrew her motion.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the driveway. Commissioner Tucker commented that this was better than what was presented at the last meeting. He noted that Mr. Lagos addressed the initial concerns about the width of the driveway at the street, and he took into account recommendations by City Arborist. Mr. Thompson suggested is any Commissioner with a strong opinion of approving or denying the request, to make their motion, someone second, discuss and then vote. Commissioner Tucker made a motion to approve the driveway as amended and Commissioner Starr seconded the motion. Confusion occurred regarding Mr. Thompson's recommendation. Mr. Thompson clarified that he recommended a board member to make a motion to approve or deny the entire request, someone second, discuss and then vote. Commissioner Henson made a motion to approve the request as is. There being no second, the motion failed. No motion was made to deny the entire COA request. Chairwoman Eddlemon thanked Mr. Thompson for his help. She commented that the Commission needs to find out the sticking points for approval. Commissioner Tucker and Commissioner Starr agreed with Chairwoman Eddlemon. Commissioner Starr stated he could not approve or deny the whole request at this point. Brief discussion ensued.

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Ms. Wallis asked if everyone was good with the driveway and Commissioners Tucker, Henson, Fox, responded they accept the driveway design as is.

Ms. Wallis transitioned discussion to the porch lights. Commissioner Tucker stated that the pendants would not be the right style and should be flush, and he was fine with the porch lights on either side of each door if replaced with similar. Commissioner Hauer agreed with Commissioner Tucker and was fine with any additional lighting flush mounted or not visible from street. For this application request, Chairwoman Eddlemon clarified that the Commission was denying the pendant light proposed, and the two lights needs to be flush mounted. All commissioners responded that they were in favor of Chairwoman Eddlemon's clarification.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the shutters. All Commissioners accepted the shutter design as shown.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the windows and started with the attic louver vent. Commissioner Fox referenced Mr. JohnPaoli's letter and liked his idea of breaking up the glass, not a solid sheet of glass in the louver portion, to match better with the rest of the windows. Commissioners Starr and Henson agreed. Commissioner Hauer liked the louvers, but was willing to go with Commissioner Fox's recommendation. Commissioner Tucker understood the need for needing lighting and agreed with Commissioner Fox's recommendation.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the second story front elevation and began with the request to replace two windows with one large window. Commissioner Hauer was not in favor of the one window change as it significantly changed the whole look of the house. Commissioner Fox agreed with Commissioner Hauer. Commissioner Starr agreed with Commissioner Hauer and noted that he understood the reason for wanting to change the window for the interior two-story entry, but did not understand why the applicant could not have a window like what was there now. He felt the proposed window was too contemporary and modern for the house and it changed the character of the façade. Regarding interior, Commissioner Starr felt the double window would be appropriate. Chairwoman Eddlemon agreed. Commissioner Henson was not in favor of either window. He suggested the large window have a thicker board in the middle, vertical and horizontal, to give the appearance of a frame and two windows side by side. Mr. Lagos was not sure if it was possible to place a board in the middle on the outside. Commissioner Henson commented that the large window as is was not approvable. Mr. Lagos stated the windows would be the same; even the window in the middle would look the same as the other window having same size panes. Commissioner Fox requested clarification that the windowpanes were not square but rectangular and linear as the current windows show. Mr. Lagos replied that it would be the same as the windows on the house. The windowpane would not be checkerboard in appearance. Mr. Lagos reminded the Commission that the large window would not have shutters. Commissioner Fox commented that the shutters were discussed at the last meeting and not applicable for this location. Brief discussion ensued that the window in the picture was not exactly to scale, the panes sizes were rectangular and not square. Commissioner Tucker asked Mr. Lagos if he could use two exact windows being replaced, such as the one on the right, and install them together to maintain replicating the original appearance. Mr. Lagos replied that is what the window would look like and Home Depot recommended the window having the same measurement of the two windows. Commissioner Hauer asked for clarification that the lower horizontal mullion would not be in the window and there would be some sort of board between the panes to give the appearance of two windows from the outside rather than one large window. After reviewing a photo, Commissioner Hauer noted the existing windows were 4-over-4, eight pane windows changing her thought. She was okay if a board was vertical in the middle to give the appearance of two windows. Mr. Lagos stated he could do that.

With the Commission in agreement with the window condition, Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the back deck. Chairwoman Eddlemon asked the Commissioners if they were good with the back deck as proposed. All the Commissioners stated they were in favor.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the pool. All the Commissioners stated they were okay with the pool. Commissioner Tucker noted he hated to lose the healthy Magnolia trees but understood that Mr. Lagos looked into residing the pool to save trees and it was not possible.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the fence. Ms. Wallis read the key element of design for the fence on agenda page 2-2. Ms. Wallis displayed the deck and backyard fence stain. Brief discussion ensued on fence color as a dark walnut stain and the fence height as six feet. Chairwoman Eddlemon asked the Commission if they were good with the fence color and fence as proposed. She commented that an additional request was to add the sides to close the fence in. All the Commissioners stated they approved as proposed.

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Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the left side elevation. Ms. Wallis briefly summarized the requests for the left side house elevation as provided in the staff report on agenda page 2-1 and 2-2. Commissioner Hauer was okay with the bathroom window but not in favor of shortening the doors. Mr. Lagos commented that the reason for shortening the doors was to make a bedroom and having French doors in a bedroom was not right to him. He wanted to install new windows similar to the second floor windows or cut the doors a little bit, so it does not look like doors in the Master bedroom. Commissioner Hauer stated she liked the symmetry of the doubles being the same length. Commissioner Hauer was not in favor of the bathroom window, but preferred the bathroom window versus shortening the double doors. Chairwoman Eddlemon agreed with Commissioner Hauer. She commented that if the driveway was approved, the area will be wide open, referring to visibility. Chairwoman Eddlemon stated she understood the applicant's concern. Chairwoman Eddlemon was not in favor of the proposed change, as it did not fit with the style of the house. However, she was willing to comprise like Commissioner Hauer to allow the bathroom window. Commissioner Hauer reiterated she was not a fan of the small window, and added that it was not as significant of a marring as shortening the middle door. Commissioner Starr agreed with Commissioner Hauer. Commissioner Fox asked if the transom existed above the middle door. Ms. Wallis replied that it was there but hidden by trees. Brief discussion ensued on the function of the French door. Commissioner Fox noted that the middle window was already different with the transom above it and she did not have a problem with it looking different. Brief discussion ensued on the different sizes. Commissioner Tucker commented that his initial thought was having all the same length. He suggested shrubbery that reached to the bottom of a short window to make it less noticeable. Commissioner Tucker preferred a shortened window and not a bathroom. It was determined that the board was not in agreement with all the elements proposed.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the front door. Ms. Wallis stated the door will be black and not brown as shown. Chairwoman Eddlemon commented that the two sidelights will be absorbed by the second door and the transom will remain. Commissioner Hauer was not in favor of the door change, because it looked brand new on an old house and was not in keeping with the historic nature. Commissioner Tucker stated he liked the door and in black especially in light of the original proposal. Commissioner Fox was okay with the new door with the window remaining above. She commented that it would look better than the existing door. Commissioner Starr did not have a problem with the door if the transom remained. Commissioner Henson was okay with the door.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the trees. Chairwoman Eddlemon asked the Commissioners if they were good with the trees. All the Commissioners stated they were good with the request.

Chairwoman Eddlemon transitioned discussion to the gate for the driveway and the wooden gate. Chairwoman Eddlemon stated she liked the gate especially with the neighbor having something similar and was in favor of the request. All the Commissioners stated they were in favor.

Chairwoman Eddlemon asked Attorney Graham for his assistance with the motion. His understanding was to approve the application with the conditions that the siding would be the SHPO recommended siding, front porch lights would be flush mounted, lights by door be replaced with similar, large window on the second story in the front have a fenestration to look like a double window as it is now, fenestration on the window in the attic to break it up and not be a solid piece of glass, and left elevation the bathroom window be rejected and require the replacement windows be the same length as the current French doors. He suggested making a motion and if someone did not agree, they can vote in opposition. Referring to the left side elevation, Attorney Graham reiterated that some board members wanted the replacement windows to be the same length as the French doors and the same for the bathroom window as some were okay and some wanted to reject. Commissioner Tucker inquired about the right and rear elevations and Chairwoman Eddlemon stated these were approved at the last meeting.

Attorney Graham suggested a motion that the Commission approves the application with conditions:

1. Being that the replacement siding be the SHPO recommended siding,
2. Being that the ceiling porch lights be flush mounted and the two front porch lights on each side of the door either be retained or replaced with something similar,
3. Being that the large center window on the second floor of the front elevation be broken up with fenestrations on the outside to make it look like the double window that is there now as near as possible,
4. Being that the attic window glass be broken up with fenestrations to create panes,
5. Being that the French door on the left side of the house, the replacement window for the French door in the center of the left side of the house, maintain the length of the current French door,
6. Being that there be no small bathroom window put on the left elevation of the house.

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Commissioner Hauer moved to adopt the motion and Commissioner Starr seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed (6-0).

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PCA202100141)

- John “Ben” Pruitt
- 710 S. York Street
- To paint exterior house and trim white

Chairwoman Eddlemon opened the public hearing recognizing Ms. Kim Wallis, Planner for the purpose of staff presentation. Ms. Wallis stated the applicant’s name, subject location, and the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) request. Ms. Wallis briefly read the property description and findings provided in the staff report on agenda page 3-1. She displayed the zoning map. She noted that on April 13, 2021 a subcommittee reviewed this application and moved it to be heard at the next Historic District Commission (HDC) meeting. Ms. Wallis displayed images of the house. She read the key elements provided in the staff report and displayed pictures the applicant took of the brick showing damage and weather damage. Ms. Wallis thoroughly read the applicant’s letter while displaying his photos provided in the agenda on pages 3-9 through 3-11. Ms. Wallis began reading an email from Brett Sturm, MSHP, Restoration Specialist with the State Historic Preservation Office provided in agenda page 3-3 and 3-4. In the middle of point number 3, the Commission noted they had read the message and suggested to staff to move forward with their presentation. Ms. Wallis transitioned and briefly reviewed the excerpts from the Design Guidelines provided in the staff report.

Ms. Wallis read an email received from Dwayne JohnPaoli, 1313 S. York Road of Gastonia, NC. Mr. JohnPaoli is not in the York Chester neighborhood. Mr. JohnPaoli mentioned that first time historic homeowners may not understand the importance of preserving the original design and beauty of homes. He shared that painting the brick on this home would destroy the historic integrity of the house, and it will have a negative impact on the house. He shared that the brick house needs tuck-pointing. He complimented the new owners on the beautiful job done so far. He encouraged everyone to work together to keep the historic communities intact and thanked the Commissioners for their time.

Ms. Wallis read an email received from Susan Williams, 706 S. York Street of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Williams is responding to the letter regarding painting the exterior. Her comment was based on the brick and not the trim. Ms. Williams appreciated the improvements the neighbors have done to their property. She stated that she could not support the request to alter the exterior by painting the brick white. Ms. Williams noted feeling strongly about following the guidelines and keep properties intact. She noted that the property was the home of Gov. Gregg Cherry, which made the place even more important to honor its heritage. Ms. Williams urged Mr. Pruitt to reconsider his request and asked the Commissioners to vote according to the Historic District guidelines.

Commissioner Starr asked about the contradiction to what the applicant said about painting Trenton Mill and Mr. Sturm’s email.

Mr. John “Ben” Pruitt, 710 S. York Street was recognized. Mr. Pruitt stated that Brett had not seen his house, had not walked the elevations, had not seen the work that needs to be done, and had not seen the discrepancies with color variations and types of mortars. He shared methods of removing the existing paint to expose it on the interior at Trenton Mill. Sandblasting and crushed walnut shells were too aggressive. Mr. Pruitt tried dry ice and baking soda. The issue for his house was trying to get things to match. Mr. Pruitt added that where he cannot match, he would paint. Mr. Pruitt stated he tried to crush and wash the house with masonry cleaner, Prosoco Sure Clean product, to tell him what the mortar would look like. He commented that the pictures show large portions where it has black mortar and portions with original lime based black mortar that have to be replaced to preserve the legacy of the historic structure and the structural integrity of the house. Jams have shifted and moved on the east and north east side of the house because of water getting in. Mr. Pruitt explained that he was not saying that the paint would provide a water or vapor barrier. He stated that he would make the necessary repairs to the tuck-pointing and brick that needs tuck and repointing on several elevations. Mr. Pruitt commented that when he does this, his house would look like a checkerboard with black mortar and very light colored mortar as shown in the pictures. He stated his request to do a full tuck-pointing of the house so all the mortar looks the same will cost \$81,000. He commented on homes in the southeast that are painted and brick. Mr. Pruitt stated he wants to repair what needs to be repaired, paint to fix and maintain the structure and integrity of the house to keep water from getting in, and then apply a finish coat. He noted that he understands it will need to be maintained, and that he did not understand why SHPO was worried about the maintenance of what he is asking to do. He commented that paint will make everything uniform and does provide additional protection and is a barrier between UV, thermal and moisture, and the brick.

Brief discussion ensued on interior and exterior work at the Trenton Mill and it was determined that the discussion needed to stay focused on the property in the application and not Trenton Mill.

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Commissioner Hauer made a motion to deny the request to paint based on the SHPO recommendations. Commissioner Hauer commented that she was aware that the Commission had approved painting brick in the past, but were learning more about what helps restore and she felt comfortable with their opinion on this. Commissioner Henson seconded the motion. Commissioner Tucker agreed with the motion to deny. Commissioner Henson was also for denying the request based on the guidelines. Commissioner Starr did not agree with denying it and was in favor of painting even though it was in contraction to the guidelines. Commissioner Hauer agreed to deny the request. Commissioner Fox agreed to deny the request. Chairwoman Eddlemon agreed to deny the request. Therefore, the motion to deny passed (5-1 Starr).

ITEM 4. Other Business

Subcommittee Meeting Tonight, if Needed: A subcommittee meeting was needed. Commissioners' Eddlemon, Tucker and Hauer stated they would participate.

Ms. Wallis shared that Dick Ruhlman resigned as Commissioner and City Council appointed new member, Joshua Hauser who will start in May.

ITEM 5. Adjournment

There being no other business, Chairwoman Eddlemon adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

Andi Eddlemon, Chairwoman