

Historic District Commission

June 25, 2020

Minutes

Chairman William Blackwelder called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 25, 2020 via Conference Call.

Present: Commissioners Jerry Tucker, Andi Eddlemon, William Blackwelder (Chair), Ed Starr, Carol Hauer and Clark Simon

Absent: Dick Ruhlman

Staff present: Charles Graham, Assistant City Attorney; Joe Gates, Zoning Administrator; Kim Wallis, Planner; Chrystal Howard, Secretary; and Robert Stroud, Municipal Arborist

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check

Chairman Blackwelder opened the meeting, conducted roll call and declared a quorum.

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

Chairman Blackwelder 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, and asked all speakers to come forward. Speakers were sworn in by Ms. Howard.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # 9517)

- First ARP/John Connor
- 317 S Chester Street
- Requests approval on landscaping plan illustrating additional areas of landscaping around church parking area as required by COA conditional approval for HD9505.

Chairman Blackwelder opened the public hearing recognizing 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 summarized the property description, displayed the zoning map, and read the findings. Ms. Wallis displayed and explained the new landscaping plan. She read key elements of the plan as presented in the agenda.

Commissioner Simon appreciated Mr. Connor incorporating items discussed, preserving and contributing to the beautification of the Historic District, and implementing the proposed plan. He continued that this plan will be beautiful and thanked Mr. Connor. Commissioner Starr agreed based his observation of the plan, and he continued that the plan achieved the suggested landscaping. Commissioner Tucker also agreed and thanked Mr. Connor. Chairperson Blackwelder agreed and told Mr. Connor that he did a very good job, it will be beautiful in the end and he should be proud. Mr. Connor replied that they were extremely proud and it is a work in progress. He continued that when the weather allows and with proper time of planting, the project will look good and will be well maintained.

Commissioner Simon made a motion to approve the request as submitted based on the revised plan from the May 28th meeting requests and Mr. Tucker seconded the motion. The motion was approved (6-0).

Mr. Connor thanked the Commission and Ms. Wallis for all the work they have done. Mr. Connor stated they look forward to serving the community.

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # 9518)

- Christopher Blalock
- 1304 Jackson Road
- Requests removal of large oak in rear yard

Chairman Blackwelder opened the public hearing recognizing 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 displayed the zoning map and read the property description. She displayed a front view of the house. Ms. Wallis read the findings as presented in the agenda. She displayed photos of the tree. Ms. Wallis finished her presentation by reading the excerpts from the Design Guidelines and Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Historic District Commission

June 25, 2020

Minutes

Chairman Blackwelder asked if the roots of the tree caused any structural problem. Mr. Stroud replied that there was no structural problem due to tree roots. Mr. Stroud encouraged the applicant to consider using the carport as a way to protect their vehicles from any falling limbs. He continued that the tree was healthy, has a good shape to it, and has English ivy growing on it but not a health concern. Chairman Blackwelder asked Mr. Stroud if he saw anything of caution. Mr. Stroud did not see anything of caution. He said that the tree was approximately fifteen to eighteen feet away from the home and twelve to fifteen feet away from the carport. Mr. Stroud encouraged tree pruning as regular property management to the applicant, because the applicant was concerned about falling limbs.

Commissioner Tucker inquired about the size of the tree limbs that fell on the roof. Mr. Stroud replied that the limbs were small, but the applicant was concerned about larger limbs falling. He commented that the limbs on the tree he saw looked very healthy. Commissioner Tucker shared that he drove by the property and it was a very nice tree. Mr. Stroud noted another large tree in the front yard that has considerable damage to it and no comment was made on the grass other than tenacity. Brief discussion ensued on prep work for grass, clover as an alternative option, and reasons not to have a tree removed.

Based on Mr. Stroud's analysis, various online visuals, and not foreseeing an imminent threat, Commissioner Simon stated it was premature to make a decision to allow removal of the tree. Based on shade and natural progression of a tree losing limbs, he was not in favor of removing the tree. Commissioner Eddlemon commented on having the tree pruned and maintained if tree limbs falling were a concern. Commissioner Hauer reminded the Commission to be careful of what they set as a precedent and shared her concerns. She noted that if it is the Commission's decision on preserving healthy trees, each individual has a responsibility to maintain and protect one's self. Commissioner Hauer was not in favor of removing the tree at this time. Chairman Blackwelder and Commissioner Starr agreed with Commissioner Hauer.

Based on the photos and Mr. Stroud's report, Commissioner Starr stated the tree was a maintenance issue and the removal of the tree was unnecessary and inappropriate.

Discussion ensued on another tree, as well as, another shed on the property that did not pertain to the COA request.

Commissioner Eddlemon commented on the distance of the tree from the house and carport and encouraged pruning the tree to avoid the structures from being hit from any future limbs and also increase safety.

Chairman Blackwelder asked Mr. Stroud if he encouraged a tree trimming and Mr. Stroud commented that older trees need a haircut (trim) or they will drop limbs. He noted that this tree was a very nice, healthy, specimen tree.

Regarding trees coming forward, Commissioner Tucker stated he defers to Mr. Stroud in terms of his report and his judgement. Commissioner Simon agreed with Commissioner Tucker, complimented Mr. Stroud as an invaluable asset, gave closing remarks, and also agreed that the tree should not be removed. Commissioner Tucker agreed with Commissioner Simon. Mr. Stroud thanked both Commissioners. Chairman Blackwelder commented on valuing Mr. Stroud's opinions and thanked Mr. Stroud for his help with the Historic District Commission.

Commissioner Eddlemon made the motion to deny the request and Commissioner Simon seconded the motion. After clarification on how to vote on a motion denying a request, the motion to deny the request was approved 6-0.

ITEM 4. Other Business

Subcommittee Meeting Tonight, if Needed:

Ms. Wallis stated a subcommittee meeting is needed.

Terms Expired:

Ms. Wallis mentioned Chairman Blackwelder and Commissioner Simon terms have expired and this was their last meeting. She thanked them for their tremendous service as Commissioners, shared her appreciation and wished them luck in the future. Chairman Blackwelder wished the Commission and staff well and Commissioner Simon thanked Ms. Wallis. Farewells were shared.

Historic District Commission

June 25, 2020

Minutes

Councilwoman Stepp thanked Chairman Blackwelder and Commissioner Simon for their leadership, commitment, and service in the community. She announced that both Commissioners will serve in other capacities, Commissioner Simon will serve on the Stormwater Commission and Chairman Blackwelder will serve on the Board of Adjustment. Councilwoman Stepp thanked the remaining Commissioners for their service. She noted that Commissioner Eddlemon will be the new Chairperson, Vice-Chairman Starr will remain, and Commissioner Tucker was reappointed for another term. Councilwoman Stepp reminded the Commission that she was available if needed.

ITEM 5. Adjournment

There being no other business, Chairman Blackwelder adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

Andi Eddlemon, Chairperson