

# Historic District Commission

July 22, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman Andi Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 22, 2021 at City Hall in the Council Chamber.

Present: Commissioners Jerry Tucker, Ed Starr, Andi Eddlemon, Carol Hauer, Camille Fox and Josh Hauser

Absent: Commissioner James Henson

Staff present: Quentin McPhatter, Jason Thompson, Kim Wallis, and Chrystal Howard

### **ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check**

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

### **ITEM 1b. Oath of Office**

On Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Gastonia City Council passed a motion reappointing Carol Hauer as an appointed member. The Oath of Office was administered to Ms. Carol Hauer by Ms. Chrystal Howard.

### **ITEM 1c. Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Starr made the motion to approve the June 24, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion and the motion passed (6-0).

### **ITEM 2. Public Comment – Historic District Design Guidelines**

Chairwoman Eddlemon opened the public comment meeting and recognized Kim Wallis, Planner for the purpose of staff presentation. Ms. Wallis stated this meeting was for taking public comment on the Historic District Design Guidelines. Ms. Wallis briefly stated the Design Guidelines provide the Historic District Commission (HDC) and property owners with guidance on appropriate methods for the upkeep and rehabilitation of the City's historic properties. The guidelines also assist in the design of new construction in the historic district, whether these are additions or new buildings. The guidelines do not seek to prevent change because it is inevitable; however, these guidelines are aimed at ensuring that change is appropriate to the Historic District's unique character.

Chairwoman Eddlemon stated that tonight was about receiving commentary from the public.

Chairwoman Eddlemon recognized Ben Pruitt, 710 S. York Street of Gastonia, NC. Mr. Pruitt did not have design guidelines comments, but had some questions for the commission. He inquired about the Planning Commission having the same definition, understanding of the design guidelines and its purpose. Chairwoman Eddlemon replied that the Commission used the same guideline booklet. Mr. Pruitt inquired when the last time the design guidelines were reviewed and amended. Ms. Wallis replied 2017/2018. Mr. Pruitt inquired about the process of amending the design guidelines if not a member of the Commission. Chairwoman Eddlemon stated this meeting was a great example of receiving feedback. Mr. Pruitt inquired how particular areas of a scope of work that may contradict one another are handled. Commissioner Hauser encouraged bringing items to the Commission's attention as part of this process for review and the Commission will try to fix contradictions. Mr. Pruitt shared section A of Masonry as an area to be reviewed and commented that there were gray areas and discretion that has to be used throughout the guidelines. Mr. Pruitt asked how the Commission handle decisions of an approved Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) that may be in direct violation of guidelines. Mr. Thompson explained that guidelines are guidelines and not law, the nature of the historic district enabled by the state legislation is given the discretionary authority to guide the commission, and exceptions to the guidelines can occur. If a member of the public feels something was done incorrectly or was egregiously at odds with the design guidelines, the path for challenging is through the Board of Adjustment. Mr. Pruitt inquired about reviewing the possible antiquated design guidelines. Mr. Thompson replied that the purpose of this process was to have the guidelines reviewed periodically. Mr. Pruitt commented on the guidelines referencing upkeep and preserving, and asked how the HDC police the maintenance that was not compliant to maintain the guidelines. Chairwoman Eddlemon replied that the function of the HDC is not to police. Mr. Hauser shared that the guidelines are used to make decisions on a COA. Regarding the maintenance of structures, Mr. Thompson talked about the ordinance, the general code enforcement function, and demolition by neglect. Commissioner Tucker commented on a Home Owner Association (HOA) who would have the power to require maintaining one's property.

Chairwoman Eddlemon recognized Christine Rutherford, 607 S. York Street of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Rutherford commented on the enforcement of aesthetics and community development has been limited, but was changing. She would like the Historic District, arborist, and utilities department on the same page with tree trimming. She shared that she understood the Historic District was not code

# Historic District Commission

July 22, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

enforcement, but noted there was a speed issue. Regarding the design guidelines, Ms. Rutherford commented on the Historic District having active goals and strategies that the community can get behind, and she encouraged keeping the community of houses with character but allow modernizing. The feedback she has received about the Historic District was that it is not a driving force. Mr. Hauser encouraged the community to bring complaints to the Historic District. Discussion ensued on the new improvement upkeeps and the need to upkeep older homes. Mr. Thompson shared that the duties of the HDC are to review applications for COAs and make decisions based on the ordinance and design guidelines. The HDC also reviews the design guidelines. The HDC does not establish goals or strategies, nor initiate projects for a neighborhood. Commissioner Hauer encouraged Ms. Rutherford to contact a neighborhood association, as this organization would have the role that Ms. Rutherford was talking about. Ms. Hauer thought her ideas would be great for a neighborhood association. Commissioner Tucker stated he will provide Ms. Rutherford with the neighborhood association contact information. Discussion ensued on issues outside the purview of the commission including speeding, reckless driving, traffic study, speed limit reductions and speed humps,

Chairwoman Eddlemon recognized Michele Stephens, 711 S. York Street of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Stephens replied that a lot of her concerns were addressed such as traffic. Ms. Stephens stated she was a realtor and shared her passion for Gastonia. She was disappointed that the house next to her did not get painted. Using Mr. Pruitt's home as an example, she commented on not allowing change as a community, it leaves the neighborhood dated. She was concerned about placing limits. Ms. Stephens was concerned about major interior changes removing the character of the historic home. She was concerned about work being done near trees and the need to preserve trees and not damage them. Using her own situation, Ms. Stephens would like signage to be reviewed and to allow businesses in duplexes to be able to have their own sign. Commissioner Hauer shared the reason of the COA denial at 710 S. York Street. Commissioner Hauer also noted that the commission does not have jurisdiction of the interior of homes. Ms. Stephens was concerned about neighbors' trees that are dying and traffic issues. Commissioner Starr noted that he was the one commissioner who voted against the motion not to allow painting the brick house.

Mr. Thompson stated the Commission will make the decision to what provisions in the Design Guidelines they want to review. A workshop is available to the Commission. Staff will provide information on any guidelines to the HDC for review to help. Mr. Thompson asked Ms. Stephens to contact Planning Department staff for review with zoning regarding signage. For trees or code enforcement issues, Mr. Thompson encouraged the public to contact Planning Department staff.

Commissioner Hauser encouraged the public to contact commissioners on any issues or contradictions with the Historic District Design Guidelines. He mentioned the City arborist as a good resource for tree concerns. Ms. Rutherford was recognized and shared information about a conversation she had on how the health of a tree can affect drainage.

Mr. Pruitt was recognized and he commented on the decision made on his COA request. Brief discussion ensued on an appeal process.

Chairwoman Eddlemon recognized Mary Bach, 516 W. Third Avenue of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Bach requested a contact for a shopping cart left on the corner of Third Avenue and Clay Street. Commissioner Tucker recommended the Sanitation Department and Mr. Thompson recommended the Police Department for theft.

### **ITEM 3. Other Business**

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

### **ITEM 4. Adjournment**

There being no other business, Chairwoman Eddlemon adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

---

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

---

Andi Eddlemon, Chairwoman