

# Minutes

## HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Dec. 4, 2024

Board Meeting Room of Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St.



Present: Vice Chair Hannah Peele and members G. Miller, Mathew Palmer and Sara Riek

Absent: Chair Will Senner and member Bruce Spencer

Staff: Planner Joseph Hoffheimer and Town Attorney Bob Hornik

#### 1. Call to order, roll call, and confirmation of quorum

Vice Chair Hannah Peele called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. She called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

#### 2. Commission's mission statement

Peele read the statement.

#### 3. Agenda changes

Planner Joseph Hoffheimer recommended that Item 5C be moved to the front of the agenda.

#### 5. New business

- C. Demolition by Neglect Complaint: 217 S. Occoneechee St.  
Evaluate if the structure(s) in the southwest corner of the parcel may be undergoing demolition by neglect (9864850633).

Due to this item's significance, Hoffheimer and Town Attorney Bob Hornik recommended that this item be continued at the January meeting to allow more commissioners to be present for the discussion. Member Sara Riek said she will not be present at the January meeting, but it was agreed that tabling the item would provide an opportunity for fewer potential overall absences.

Motion: Member G. Miller moved to continue Item 5C to the January regular meeting. Member Mathew Palmer seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

#### 4. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on Nov. 6, 2024.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the minutes from the regular meeting on Nov. 6, 2024, with corrections. Riek seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Corrections: P. 5, paragraph 2: Change second sentence to "Miller said he was concerned about the congruity of removing the latticework between the new columns."

## 5. New business

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness Application: 143 W. Margaret Lane  
Add wheelchair ramp and enclose crawlspace at rear accessory structure (PIN 9084750842).

Peele opened the public hearing and asked whether there were any conflicts of interest or bias among the commissioners. All commissioners disclosed that they had visited the site in preparation for reviewing the application. No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

Hoffheimer was sworn in. Michael Edwards, the property owner, was sworn in to speak on behalf of the application.

Hoffheimer introduced the application by presenting the staff report. He noted that the inventory information, application materials, and applicable design standards would be entered into the record as evidence. He provided the staff comments:

- The design standards do not directly address raised foundations or crawlspaces. However, the compatibility matrix allows brick and concrete block for foundations, and horizontal wooden louvers are allowed on a case-by-case basis to screen items below a raised front porch. The compatibility matrix also allows wood siding but does not allow plywood.
- The applicant has since proposed covering the plywood with lattice and painting both dark green, suggesting it might be more congruent with the character of the district than what was originally proposed.
- The outbuilding is being moved a few feet into the lot to correct a zoning nonconformity. Staff have determined that the move is strictly a zoning concern and does not require Historic District Commission review. The outbuilding is before the commission solely due to the proposed exterior changes.

Edwards explained that he wants to put plumbing and gas under the crawlspace and is interested in following best practices to enclose it. He said ideally the panels would be removable to provide access, but he is flexible in terms of how it gets enclosed. He referenced a suggestion from neighbor Cathleen Turner, Regional Director of Preservation North Carolina, to try to make it less visible to the eye. To that end, he said he is willing to cover the plywood or extend the clapboard siding down to the ground. Edwards explained that the area in question is not visible from the street, but it can be seen from the parking deck if one were to look for it.

Edwards said the wheelchair ramp is to be made out of decking material to match the existing stairs.

Edwards explained that the structure will be moved 79 inches to the north, reusing nine of the existing piers and adding three new piers.

Edwards said the latticework will be the diagonal latticework typically used for gardening. He said it will be painted wood applied over the plywood, with the latticework and plywood painted the same color.

There was discussion of the requirement that a project come before the Historic District Commission if it involves enclosing the crawlspace or adding a ramp. Hoffheimer clarified that design standards for minor works only allow stairs and steps, but not ramps.

There was agreement among the commissioners that the ramp meets the design standards for Accessibility and Life Safety and that it is minimally visible, discreetly sited, and does not compromise the

architectural integrity of the existing structure. It was also agreed that the ramp is compatible with the scale of the existing structure.

Edwards explained that the ramp will not reach the parking area, only into the yard.

Peele closed the public hearing.

There was agreement among the commissioners that the proposed work is not incongruous with the character of the Historic District. There was agreement that the switch from plywood to wood latticework or clapboard to enclose the crawlspace makes the materials less incongruous based on the fact that those materials are listed as appropriate in the compatibility matrix.

Motion: Riek moved to find as fact that the 143 W. Margaret Lane application is not incongruous with the overall character of the Historic District and complies with all relevant standards of evaluation based on the commission's discussion of the application and the standards of evaluation in Section 3.12.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance because the plans are consistent with the Historic District Design Standards: Accessibility and Life Safety. Palmer seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion: Riek moved to approve the application with conditions. Miller seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Conditions: The crawlspace will be enclosed with clapboard or wood lattice.

- B. Certificate of Appropriateness Application: 219 N. Hassel St.  
Add new screened porch in front of existing side garage (9864874481).

Peele opened the public hearing and asked whether there were any conflicts of interest or bias among the commissioners. All commissioners disclosed that they had visited the site in preparation for reviewing the application. No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

David Cates, the presenter for the project, and Morgan Potts, the property owner, were sworn in to speak on behalf of the application. Nettie Lassiter was sworn in to provide public testimony.

Hoffheimer introduced the application by presenting the staff report. He noted that the inventory information, application materials, and applicable design standards would be entered into the record as evidence. He provided the staff comments:

- The garage is original to the house, but the current wood garage door was added in 2017.
- Staff are not aware of any screened porches in front of former garages in the district, but this is also completely removable and subordinate to the primary structure.

Cates explained that the garage is more of a storage space than an actual garage for a car, as there is a wall inside that would prevent a vehicle from entering the structure. Hoffheimer added that he has not seen any current or historic photos of cars being parked in the garage, but that the opening in the structure has been in existence in some form since 1946.

Cates said that he worked on a similar project at 312 W. Tryon St. to convert a carport to a screened porch, which was left off of the list of examples of similar projects in the application.

Cates introduced the proposal and said he and the property owner wanted to match the pitch of the roof of the existing storage building and match the materials used. He said the material on the front is currently vinyl, but they are proposing to switch to Hardie board. He said the space where the door currently is would be replaced with three windows and a full screen glass door. He said the flooring material is concrete and will not be changing.

The commissioners expressed appreciation for the examples of side front porches from around the Historic District that were included in the application. Cates added that 312 W. Tryon St. is an example where the space was converted only partially to a porch. He said the back portion was converted to heated space, and the front portion to a screened porch.

The commissioners reviewed the site plan. Cates said that the topography of the site leads the structure to sit low, since there is a seven-foot embankment beside the garage.

Cates confirmed that the last window on the main portion of the house will remain even though it will be enclosed by the porch.

Cates confirmed that more brick will be required to fill in the front of the structure. He said the brick will be easy to match, and that the trickier part will be getting the mortar to match. He added that all the new brick will be inside the screened porch and will not be visible from the street.

Miller asked about the design decision for the windows and door, noting that they do not match well with the double-hung windows in the main section of the building. Cates indicated the large picture window in the front of the house and the storm door next to it, which have a similar appearance to the proposed door, which is a full glass pane. He added that the door will sit behind a wood screen door. He further added that that section of the structure sits on the north side of the house, so it does not receive much direct light and will be in shade. Miller said he felt the window does not look congruous with the rest of the house, despite the existence of the picture window.

There was discussion of the origin of the picture window. Hoffheimer referred to the inventory, which says that the "picture window . . . replaces a pair of original windows, but retains the original opening." He added that if the window has been there for long enough, it takes on its own historical significance. He said there is no reference to the exact date the window was installed, but that when the inventory was updated, there were not enough changes to detract from its historical significance to warrant being removed from the National Register. Cates added that picture windows are not out of character with this vintage of building.

Peele referred to Doors Standard 8, which indicates against altering original door openings. She asked how the original opening will be retained. Cates proposed using Hardie lap siding as infill rather than brick in that space to retain the historic opening. He said that might be better from a design standpoint, and it would eliminate the need to match the brick and mortar. Palmer mentioned he saw both sides of the issue and asked Potts whether he was amenable to using lap siding instead of brick in that spot. Potts confirmed that he was.

Cates confirmed that the window and door would be on the left side of the original opening and windows to the right side of the opening, with the windows going all the way to the edge.

There was discussion of including the lap siding as a condition of the commission's approval of the application.

The commissioners expressed appreciation for the clear and organized application and efforts made to abide by the design standards. Potts said he hopes the project will enhance the character of the home and its relationship to the neighborhood. Cates mentioned that in designing the addition he tried to balance the long roof that currently exists on the structure. Peel remarked that the addition stays nicely subordinate to the main house.

There was discussion of the symmetry on the right elevation. Cates explained that the dimensions were contingent on the window. The placement of the existing window determined the depth of the addition because he did not want to obscure the window.

Cates noted that only two views of the house are impacted by this project.

Cates clarified the distance noted on the north side of the site plan, which shows that the structure is set 7 1/2 inches in from the 20-foot setback line.

Lassiter provided public testimony. She said she and her husband Jamie are neighbors living at 302 W. Queen St., directly across from the property under review. She said that she appreciates the way the porch is proposed to sit in front of the garage door, and that it is a welcome sight to look at. She expressed that she has no concerns about the project.

Peele closed the public hearing.

Peele summarized the commissioners' discussion, saying that the commission found that the proposed change is not incongruous with the character of the district, with the condition that the infill will be lap siding instead of the proposed brick indicated in the application.

Motion: Riek moved to find as fact that the 219 N. Hassel St. application is not incongruous with the overall character of the Historic District and complies with all relevant standards of evaluation based on the commission's discussion of the application and the standards of evaluation in Section 3.12.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance because the plans are consistent with the Historic District Design Standards: Windows; Doors; Porches, Entrances, and Balconies; Outbuildings and Garages; and Additions to Residential Buildings. Palmer seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the application with conditions. Palmer seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Conditions: The space on the east side of the storage building that is currently wood will become lap siding. The applicant has agreed to this change to the application.

C. Demolition by Neglect Complaint: 217 S. Occoneechee St.

Evaluate if the structure(s) in the southwest corner of the parcel may be undergoing demolition by neglect (9864850633).

This item was discussed after Item 3.

## 6. Adopt 2025 regular meeting schedule

Hoffheimer presented the dates of the 2025 regular meeting schedule and noted modified dates. There were no conflicts raised except from Riek, who will be absent for the first few meetings of the year.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the 2025 regular meeting schedule. Riek seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

#### **7. Historic Preservation Awards**

Hoffheimer recommended tabling this item to the January meeting when a larger portion of the board might be in attendance.

#### **8. General Updates**

Hoffheimer said the town board is scheduled to vote on a candidate to fill the vacant commissioner seat on Monday, Dec. 9.

Hoffheimer mentioned that a sign at a church on North Churton Street was painted recently. Staff met with the people at the church, who were able to remove the paint and return it to its normal color.

#### **9. Adjournment**

Peele adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m. without a vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Hoffheimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Hoffheimer", which is written in a larger, more expansive cursive style.

Joseph Hoffheimer  
Planner  
Staff support to the Historic District Commission

Approved: January 15, 2025