

Minutes

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Aug. 6, 2025

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



Present: Chair Will Senner and members G. Miller, Sara Riek, Bill Warren and Daniel Widis

Absent: Vice Chair Hannah Peele

Staff: Planner Joseph Hoffheimer and Town Attorney Bob Hornik

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

Chair Will Senner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Commission's mission statement

Senner read the statement.

3. Agenda changes

There were no changes to the agenda.

4. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from special meeting on July 16, 2025.

Motion: Member G. Miller moved to approve the minutes from the special meeting on July 16, 2025, as submitted. Member Sara Riek seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

5. Written decision review and approval

Written decision from special meeting on July 16, 2025.

Motion: Miller moved to approve the written decision from the special meeting on July 16, 2025, as submitted. Riek seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

6. New business

A. Certificate of Appropriateness Application: 326 N. Cameron St.

Add rear second story shed dormer and replace greenhouse with screened porch (PIN 9874185204).

Senner opened the public hearing. He asked if there were any conflicts of interest or bias among the commissioners. None were disclosed. All commissioners disclosed that they had visited the site in preparation for reviewing the application.

Planner Joseph Hoffheimer was sworn in. David Cates 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 greenhouse proposed to be replaced dates to 2010 and is not historic.
- The interior brick chimney proposed to be removed is likely historic. The commission has recently allowed the removal of similar brick chimneys in two other locations.
- No standards directly address skylight removal, but the Roofs and Sustainability and Energy Retrofit standards encourage installing new skylights on non-character-defining elevations. They are not typically encouraged on street-facing elevations.
- The Porches, Entrances, and Balconies standards do not directly address the construction of new porches, so staff encourage using the Additions to Residential Buildings standards for the proposed screened porch.

The commissioners expressed appreciation for the thorough application. They reviewed the front elevation. The skylight and chimney removal were discussed. Both were determined to be not character-defining elements. The chimney was observed to be a secondary chimney, and less character-defining than the chimney on the side of the house. Cates explained that the chimney is not currently in use and is very similar to other chimneys the commission has approved removal of.

Cates confirmed the side porch will be sited on the same footprint as the greenhouse. He clarified that the columns on the side porch will be wood. He also clarified that the doors drawn on the front of the side porch are screen doors toward the back of the porch as the viewer looks through it.

The commissioners reviewed the left elevation. Cates said the ceiling inside the dormer is just barely measuring seven feet high, which is why the pitch of the dormer roof is shallow. He said a similarly shallow rear porch roof on East Queen Street was approved by the commission, and that the shelter over the top of Paynter Law office also has a low pitch. It was observed that the pitch seems similar to the 216 S. Occoneechee St. example provided. It was noted that the property in question is a corner lot, so it is more visible from the street. The commissioners agreed that the proposed slope and ridgeline could be viewed as sub-optimal in relation to the design standards and the character of the district, but not necessarily incongruous. Cates referred to the rear box addition at the corner of West Tryon Street and Wake Street, which also has a roof with a low pitch.

There was discussion of the ridgeline of the addition meeting the existing ridgeline of the house. There was discussion of the difference in application of the design standards between a gabled ridgeline on an addition and a descending slope of a shed dormer.

The commissioners reviewed the rear elevation.

The commissioners reviewed the right elevation. Cates said the roof will be metal because the pitch of the porch roof, which he believed to be around 2:12, is too shallow to be considered appropriate for shingles.

Cates confirmed there will be no new hardscapes.

Cates confirmed that the porch will extend above the roofline of the main building, though the existing greenhouse to be replaced currently reaches below the roofline. He said he does not know how the greenhouse is attached, but any damage to existing materials would be replaced in-kind. He confirmed no new vinyl will be introduced.

Cates said the existing house has three different styles of window, and all the windows behind the screen of the porch will remain.

Cates said the site is fairly clear, and no trees will be affected.

Senner summarized the commissioners' discussion: The commissioners did not find the proposed work to be incongruent with the historic district. The skylight and chimney are not character-defining elements of the front facade. The greenhouse to be removed was not historic, and the proposed porch is in the same footprint and is consistent with the design standards for Additions to Residential Buildings and has compatible materials. The dormer is not incongruent with the historic district.

Senner closed the public hearing.

Motion: Riek moved to find as fact that the 326 N Cameron St. application is in keeping 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: Masonry; Exterior Walls; Porches, Entrances, and Balconies; Sustainability and Energy Retrofit; and Additions to Residential Buildings. Miller seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

Motion: Member Daniel Widis moved to approve the application as submitted. Miller seconded.

Vote: 5-0.

B. Certificate of Appropriateness Application: 311 W. Orange St.
New construction house (PIN 9864883297).

No one was present to speak on behalf of the application. The commissioners decided to review the application and compile questions for the applicant for future discussion.

Senner opened the public hearing and asked whether there were any conflicts of interest or bias among the commissioners. None were disclosed. All commissioners disclosed that they had visited the site in preparation for reviewing 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 site plan appears to indicate that four trees with diameters over 24 inches will be removed for construction of the house, and one will be removed for the septic drain field. Some of those trees are in the public right-of-way but were indicated on the site plan. The applicant can propose to remove those for this review, and after that they would go to the Public Space and Sustainability Division, who would approve the removal if the proposed removal had received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission. Staff are not aware of any recent new construction for which that many trees of that size were removed.
- The design standards prohibit painting historic brick but do not restrict painting new brick.
- The approximately 30-foot height of the roof is taller than the roofs of the adjacent houses on West Orange Street and to the south on West Union Street. The new house at 320 B W. Orange

St. that the commission recently approved has a similar roof height but is set back further from the street.

- The roof pitches for both street-facing gables are relatively narrow in comparison to most roof pitches in the historic district.
- The application describes the design as reminiscent of houses from the early 1900s. The Historic District Commission is tasked with evaluating the proposal's compatibility with the historic district rather than what general era the design is intended to evoke.
- There are scattered examples of street-facing garages in the historic district, but staff are not aware of any existing garages that extend in front of the front line of the house or comprise as much of the front elevation as the proposed design does.
- Any railing materials and light fixtures can be confirmed with staff later in the process.

Hoffheimer said staff had discussions with the applicant about the removal of the trees, the design of the garage, and the overall application requirements. Senner expressed his strong encouragement that the applicants attend the next meeting ready to address how the items in the staff's comments are consistent with the design standards and congruent with the district, especially the tree removal, the garage, and the pitch and height of the roof and roof elements.

There was discussion of the house's proposed foundation and its setback compared to nearby houses. It was generally agreed that the setback is fairly consistent with neighboring houses.

The commissioners reviewed the site plan. The commissioners noted the absence of materials listed for the new walk from the drive to the house. Hoffheimer confirmed that the shed on the site plan is existing. The commissioners observed that the drive may fit between the 24-inch elm and 40-inch oak without removing either one and wondered why the applicant did not take that approach.

There was discussion of the recent history of the ownership and plans for the zoning of the lot.

It was observed that the plans are missing a materials listing for the garage door. There were questions about the intent of the screened porch being marked as "optional."

The commissioners said they would like to see as much supporting evidence as possible to show that this architectural style and design is congruent with the district. They also said that they would like to see how these plans are congruent without trying to imitate a home of an earlier era. The commissioners had concerns about the curve and pitch of the roof. They said they would like to see clear thought and strategy for how the house and driveway could be sited to minimize disruption to the site in terms of trees and grading.

The commissioners reviewed the front elevation. They had concerns about the prominence of the garage and its compatibility with the district. The commissioners also had concerns about the difference in material between the brick front facade and lap siding for the rest of the house. They said they would like to see evidence that the use of a different material on the front facade from the rest of the house is not incongruous with the rest of the district.

Victoria Matheson, a neighbor, was sworn in to provide public comment. She expressed concern about the removal of the trees and its impact on stormwater drainage in the neighborhood.

The commissioners discussed the potential need for grading the site to build the house on a flat foundation as rendered. They requested that a grading plan be submitted and the elevations be drawn as accurately as possible with regard to the slope of the site.

There was discussion of the septic drain field. Hoffheimer said that the applicant is building a septic system because the site is over 100 feet away from a sewer line. It was noted that the trees within the septic field are not indicated for removal on the site plan, but the commissioners speculated that they would have to be removed for that purpose. Town attorney Bob Hornik clarified that because the site is over a certain distance from the sewer line, connection to the town's sewer system is not required for this site, though it is possible. He added that if the site were to connect to the town sewer, a pump would be required. Hoffheimer noted that many of these changes could fall under New Construction of Primary Residential Buildings Standards 2-5.

There was additional discussion about clearing the site and its congruity with the district. There was mention that some removal of trees has been allowed in the past when there has been no alternative way to develop a site. Hoffheimer said that other houses of similar designs in the district avoided tree removal and that there have not been many houses of styles similar to this one that involved significant amounts of tree removal and site disturbance.

There was further discussion of stormwater. Hoffheimer said there was a letter from the Stormwater and Environmental Services Division evaluating the site and its relationship to a stream at the bottom of the hill. Hornik added that the site has previously been evaluated by planning and utilities staff.

There was discussion about the process for communicating questions to the applicant and strong encouragement for the applicant to attend the September meeting.

Motion: Senner moved to continue the application to the September meeting. Member Bill Warren seconded.
Vote: 5-0.

7. Certified Local Government (CLG) training update

Hoffheimer gave an update about upcoming in-person Certified Local Government trainings.

8. General updates

Hoffheimer informed the commissioners about recent inquiries regarding temporary utilitarian fencing and light-gauge wire fencing being used in the district. There was discussion of the updated ordinary maintenance fencing standards.

There was discussion of a vacant seat on the commission.

Town Attorney Bob Hornik informed the commission that the applicants for the after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness that was approved with conditions at 117 N. Wake St. have filed an appeal with the North Carolina Superior Court.

Hoffheimer gave an update on the property at 207 W. Corbin St., the owners of which had purchased the property not knowing its accessory dwelling unit was in violation of the design standards. He said the vinyl windows have been replaced with aluminum-clad wood, and the property now has a Certificate of Occupancy.

9. Adjournment

Senner adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m. without a vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph Hoffheimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" written in a slightly larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hoffheimer".

Joseph Hoffheimer
Planner
Staff support to the Historic District Commission

Approved: September 3, 2025