



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Members Present

Ann Schneider, Chair
Debbie Shoenfeld, Vice Chair
Mac McAtee
Michelle Davidson
Caroline Ruch, Alternate (Sitting)

Staff Present

Sandra Smith, Town Clerk/HPC Staff
Bill Bruce, Planning Director
Michael Thomas, Town Attorney

Members Absent

Ron Simpson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ann Schneider called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. After welcoming attendees and introductions of Commission members and staff, Schneider read a brief statement on the purpose, duties and responsibilities of the Commission.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Debbie Shoenfeld made a **motion** to approve the meeting agenda. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 9, 2014, AND NOVEMBER 12, 2014, REGULAR MEETINGS AND THE DECEMBER 9, 2014, SPECIAL MEETING

Mac McAtee made a **motion** to approve the meeting minutes. **Debbie Shoenfeld** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Council report. Shoenfeld drafted the report last month that was given at the Town Council meeting, and it was presented by McAtee. Shoenfeld volunteered to draft the report for the next month's Council meeting, and Schneider said she would present it, with Davidson serving as backup.

B. COAs approved/reviewed at staff level. Town Clerk Sandra Smith reported that staff had approved a COA for Kevan Combs to remove an old barn on property at 8420 Linville Road.

C. COAs approved but not completed.

None

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

Schneider said the goal of the Commission is to see that any proposed changes are not incongruous with the special character of the Historic District. Since the Commission will be conducting a quasi-judicial evidentiary hearing, it is to be impartial. She said individual opinions should not be expressed, but the Commission should take the evidence presented, apply the standards, make findings of fact and render a decision accordingly. The Commission may approve, disapprove or continue consideration of the COA request, but a decision must be made within 180 days. Schneider asked Commission members to cite the applicable sections of the Historic Design Guidelines in their discussions of the case to help make findings of fact on which to base their decision.

- A. Case #COA-15-01:** Kevan Combs requests a Certificate of Appropriateness for construction of a new, single-family residence. The property is located at 8420 Linville Road, lot 6 in the Barrow Place subdivision, (tax parcel number not yet assigned), Oak Ridge Township, and is zoned RS-40, Historic District Overlay.

Schneider read the property description for the record, and asked Commission members to disclose any conflicts of interest, which would include if they had a fixed opinion about the case; if they had discussions with the applicant or others about the case outside of these proceedings; if they had a close business, family or personal relationship with the applicant; or if they had a financial interest in the outcome of the case. No conflicts were disclosed.

Schneider said she wanted to try a slightly different process tonight. After hearing the staff report by Planning Director Bill Bruce, the applicant would make a presentation, followed by discussion of the eligibility and completeness of the application by the Commission. After that, the Commission would go through Section C. New Construction: Design, Development and Materials and determine any questions they have for the applicant, which would be answered later. The Commission would then do the same with Section B. Existing and New Structures: Site Features and District Character. This would give the Commission time to think about any concerns and give the applicant time to consider responses before being asked to give them.

Schneider asked Bruce if he wanted to add anything to the staff report, which was included in the information packet for the Commission and is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Bruce said the request was for a single-family residence to be built on a site that had been subdivided from an 8-acre tract of farmland. He said he would be glad to answer any questions from the Commission.

Schneider asked that Bruce label the staff reports as such to avoid any possible confusion.

Michelle Davidson asked if the photos of nearby residences that were included in the staff report were the closest ones to the site of the proposed house, and Bruce said yes.

Shoenfeld said she thought it was important to clarify that the removal of some significant trees from the site is part of the COA; she said that was not written on the application, but it would be discussed by the Commission. Schneider agreed, saying that was addressed in the staff report and is part of the COA.

Kevan Combs, James Foreman and Bill Bruce were sworn in by Smith.

Kevan Combs, who had signed the COA application as property owner, stated that the property had been transferred earlier that week to his in-laws, James and Sharon E. Foreman. James Foreman came forward and signed the COA application as the property owner.

Combs said he had learned a lot in the previous month or so about all the details that the Commission wanted included in the application. He thanked staff for being responsive to his many phone calls on the matter. He said that if he had fallen short on anything, that it was unintentional, but added that he would like to get started building the house for his in-laws. Combs said even though the Design Guidelines can be ambiguous at times, he felt like the five major criteria – scale, balance, rhythm, proportion and order – had been met. As a builder, he said he was used to giving homeowners what they want, but in this case, he had to also present things that were in keeping with the Guidelines. He said he hoped some ambiguous items were negotiable, and asked that the Commission have an open dialogue with him so that he could correct any concerns. He said he was willing to answer any questions the Commission might have.

Schneider asked if the Commission had any concerns about the eligibility and completeness of the application. Commission members said they felt the application was complete, with McAtee saying he was quite impressed with its thoroughness.

Schneider asked the Commission to begin with Section C regarding new construction. She said Combs had addressed the five major criteria of scale, balance, rhythm, proportion and order.

Davidson asked if the house in the third photo of nearby contributing structures was white. Smith responded that it was light gray.

McAtee said the only thing that he felt needed to be discussed in Section C of the Guidelines was from page 53, item 6; the item addresses shutters and says that they should be fitted to the size of the window opening and, wherever possible, hung so that they are operable. McAtee said from the shutter sample that was provided, he thought that would be almost impossible, and Combs agreed. McAtee said shutters were not required, but that he would prefer to see the type of shutter Combs had provided than to see no shutters at all on the house.

Schneider said she thought the Commission had some discretion in the matter. She said she thought the applicant had presented shutters that were large enough to cover the windows if they were closed. She said she appreciated that effort by the applicant because she thought the shutter presented looked more proportional on a house in the Historic District than the type of thin shutters she had on her house.

McAtee said he thought the words "wherever possible" were important because he did not think requiring working shutters was practical.

Davidson said she did not think the Commission should shy away from the issue of shutters because having operable shutters was characteristic of a historic home. She said the Commission could question the applicant about that at the appropriate time.

Caroline Ruch agreed with McAtee that the Commission should have some flexibility regarding the matter because of the words "wherever possible," and that having no shutters would not be in keeping with the character of the district. Schneider said those points could be included in the findings of fact.

Davidson asked if the brick sample was the actual color of the brick; Combs said yes, and that the sample also showed the color of the mortar he planned to use. Schneider noted that the shutter sample, which was gray, was not the color that would be used on the house.

Schneider said she thought the of the house design satisfies the primary design concepts. She said she did have a question about siting, which had to do with the trees on the property. She said it appeared that two of the largest trees on the lot would have to be removed for the septic area, and said she would like to ask the applicant if any thought had been given to shifting the location of the house somewhat so the septic area would also shift and perhaps those trees could be saved. She said she found the proposed materials to be consistent with the Guidelines, and the roofing, as pointed out by Bruce in the staff report, was in compliance. She asked if there were any comments on the windows or doors.

Shoenfeld said she would like to ask about the fact that no handrail was shown on the front porch because one may be required. Schneider asked if a sample of the handrail had been submitted. Combs said that there would be no handrail on the front porch because they planned to keep the elevation below 24 inches – the height at which a handrail is required by the state building code. He said that the wooden columns from the brick piers up would be made of cedar posts and would be stained to match the sample submitted. He said this was the same material that would be used for the posts and handrails on the screened back porch.

Schneider asked if there were other questions on architectural elements and design. Shoenfeld asked if the well would be located within sight of the front of the house. Schneider asked if that was not shown on the site plan. Combs said that he was unable to show the well's exact location because it could not be determined by the county health department until after he received approval from the Commission. He added that showing a location for the well on the site plan would be a misrepresentation. He said the well location would definitely be in the front and the septic would be behind the house and that a well is required to be at least 100 feet from the drainfield. He said wherever the well is sited, he would install a landscape bed with holly bushes in front of the fake rock well cover. He added that the fake rock covers are also required by the Guilford County health department, who no longer allows well houses to be constructed.

Schneider asked if an air conditioning unit was shown somewhere on the plan. Combs said yes, the units would be located behind the garage and were shown on one of the plans he had submitted. Schneider noted that the units would not be visible from the front of the house, so they would not be an issue for the Commission. Schneider said a finding of fact would be that the site plan appears to be in compliance with the section on mechanical and other site systems.

Regarding paint colors, Schneider noted that the staff report had deferred to the Commission. She asked if there were any questions regarding whether the paint and colors were in keeping with the Guidelines. Ruch asked if Combs could clarify the colors that would be used. Shoenfeld asked if everything was the color that was represented in the packet other than the shutter. Combs said yes, and that the shutter would be painted bronze to match the windows, boxing, gutters and pedestrian doors, except for the front door which would be stained a dark, rich color to match the cedar posts. Ruch asked about the garage door, and Combs pointed to a paint chip of the color of the garage door, which would also be a bronze/brown color. Schneider asked if the Commission thought the colors were in keeping with the Design Guidelines, and no Commission members expressed any concerns.

Schneider noted that there were no plans for outbuildings or manufactured housing.

Schneider said the only unanswered question at that point was about the shutter. She asked Combs to explain why he opted to use a decorative shutter as opposed to an operable one. Combs said he did a lot of research on the Internet and with building suppliers, and said that the operable shutters that are installed primarily at the coast for protection against hurricanes are now primarily roll-down, metal shutters. He said it was possible to get operable shutters manufactured, but it was not really feasible and they did not look like the shutters of old. He said it was possible to install shutters with hinges and hardware to make them look like they are operable, but they are still not operable. Combs said he had also visited many of the historic homes listed in the Guidelines, and that while they probably had operable shutters at one time, none of them did now. He asked the Commission to consider granting him a waiver on that point, but that he would do whatever the Commission wanted.

Schneider said she had looked for shutters at one point, and found it difficult to even locate ones that would appear to cover the window. Combs said he had submitted what he felt was the best option aesthetically and was practical, even though it went against the Guidelines. Shoenfeld asked Combs if the shutters were sized appropriately, even though they were not operable, and Combs said yes.

Davidson asked Combs how many shutters were on the front of the house, and Combs said six pairs. He noted the triple windows on the left side of the house under the gable, and said he had tried to put double windows there, but when he tried to add shutters they did not fit between the windows because the wall space was not large enough. He said those were the only windows that would not be covered if the shutters did close, adding that was the best aesthetic design he could come up with.

Schneider said she thought the Commission members were in agreement that there was enough flexibility in the Guidelines that they could find the shutters were in compliance. Town Attorney Michael Thomas said he concurred with the Commission's discussion and tentative finding. He reiterated that the Historic Guidelines exist because they are required by statute, but that they are also to aid the Commission from preventing construction of something incongruous with the special character of the Historic District. While no part of the Guidelines should be categorically disregarded, Thomas said what enables the Commission to approve this design was that their finding was based on prevention of incongruous construction.

Schneider said the Commission's overall finding for this section of the Guidelines was that they had not found anything proposed that was incongruous with the Historic District.

Schneider then asked the Commission to look at Section B, Existing & New Structures: Site Features and District Character of the Guidelines. She again referred to the staff report, and noted that there would be no signage. She thanked the applicant for providing details on the landscaping, and read from the Guidelines, which said typical residential landscaping should be simple, not elaborate, due in part to the rural nature of the District. To ensure landscaping was not incongruous, Schneider referred the Commission to the Design Guidelines, which suggested use of native plant species. She asked if there were any concerns with the landscaping proposed.

Shoenfeld said the Guidelines state that when a significant tree is removed, another tree must be planted to replace it – a stipulation that is above and beyond any other landscaping requirement stated in the Design Guidelines. Shoenfeld said the issue would need to be discussed by the Commission, although she was unsure if all the trees indicated on the site plan would have to be removed.

Schneider suggested the Commission go ahead and discuss the tree removal. She referred to page 37 of the Guidelines, which said mature trees over 8 inches in diameter should be retained and maintained. She acknowledged that every tree could not always be retained; she referred to the septic area and the trees that were to be removed as indicated on the site plan, and asked Combs if there was any "wiggle room" on that issue.

Combs said he had spent a good deal of time with county personnel before he even recorded the plat because he had to ensure that there was sufficient perkable soil for the septic area to obtain an improvement permit from Guilford County. He said they had staked out the lot lines in the subdivision, staked "generic box" outlines for the houses and dug perc holes. He explained how the county checked the depth of the soil, the saprolite, and then they assign that soil a load rate, which indicates how quickly that soil will disperse moisture in the septic field. He said that depends on the lineal footage of the septic tank lines, the depth of the soil and the soil type or load rate. In most 3-4 bedroom homes and depending upon the soil type, the length of a septic field can vary up to 100 feet, Combs said. Although he said he had been blessed with good soil on these lots, that factor does not mean the entire lot percs. He explained that at one time, the front of the property had been farmed, which

means it was plowed and storms may have washed the topsoil away and caused the soil underneath to be compacted so that it is not perkable now.

Combs said for those reasons, the septic areas of the houses in this subdivision would likely not have the septic fields in front of the house because most of that was the land that had been tilled and plowed and there was not 36 inches of perkable soil there. Because most of the good soil was at the back of the property in the wooded area, that was likely where the septic would need to be located. Combs said that did not mean that none of the land near the front would perc, but that it was not as good as what was located at the back of the subdivision. He said that it was up to the sole discretion of Heath Ward of the Guilford County health department where he wanted the septic field located.

Combs said initially he had staked off an area about 60 feet from the right of way where the house would be located, but had then moved it back about an additional 20 feet. He said he had done that because in learning about the Historic District, he had determined that the Commission did not want to see all the houses in the subdivision in a straight line. Combs said he had moved this house back so that Johnson & Lee, the firm that had purchased the remainder of the lots in the subdivision from him, would have some leeway in case they needed to move a house on either side of this one forward due to the area required for septic.

Combs said on lot 6, where he planned to construct the proposed house, the drainfield starts at the wood line. He pointed the area out on the site map. Combs said once a building permit has been obtained, he would have to do a layout, which was why he could not definitively say which trees would be removed. He said neither he nor Foreman wanted to remove any trees that they were not required to, and that any trees 10 feet from the property line would definitely remain because a tail line cannot be installed any closer than 10 feet to a property line. Combs also said a tree's feeder roots were generally about the same distance around the circumference of the tree as the canopy, and that it is possible to kill a tree without cutting it down by cutting into the root system. He said he was well aware of that fact, but until they knew exactly where the septic lines would go, they had tried to show the worst case scenario as far as tree removal on the site plan.

Schneider and Davidson said the information on septic had been very helpful, and Davidson asked for clarification that the trees that might have to be removed were the ones numbered 504 through 509 on the site plan. Schneider said yes, and that there were three oaks and two sweetgums. She said the information on the tree roots was also helpful.

McAtee asked if it was appropriate to discuss item C under General Guidelines. Schneider read the item from the Guidelines, which says, "Replace lost mature trees and shrubs with similar plantings." McAtee said he wanted to make sure Combs was aware that if he removes a mature tree, he must plant another tree somewhere on the property. Combs said he was aware of the requirement, adding that he was just not sure of the number yet. McAtee reiterated that the Guidelines stipulate that similar plantings are required and that if a pine tree is removed, an evergreen should replace it; if a deciduous tree is removed, it should be replaced by another deciduous tree; if a tree that grows 60 feet tall is removed, it would not be replaced

by one that grows to a height of 10 feet. Combs said he understood, but that a tree would not be planted back in the same location; McAtee said that was understood, and that it just needed to be planted somewhere on the property. McAtee said regardless of the number of trees that are removed, they must be replaced by the same number. Combs said that would be done and that a tree survey had been done on the property, which would make it easy.

Regarding the tree replacement, Thomas noted that placing them anywhere on the lot could interfere with the premise of preserving the open space feel currently on the front of the property along the road. He asked if the Commission had any guidance on where the trees should be planted, saying he had raised the issue due to conversation about open fields. McAtee said he understood the open area and the look of a hay field on the front portion of the property, but said the houses across the road and along that stretch of road all have trees in front of them and the older houses have substantial trees in front of them.

Ruch said they were discussing four or maybe five trees, and even if they were planted in the current open area of the lot, that would in no way constitute a forest-effect on the open space. Thomas said he just wanted Combs to know if the COA is approved, then he has to replace the trees.

Schneider said she thought a lot of the rural landscape that the Commission was interested in preserving once the zoning was changed from agricultural to residential had more to do with maintaining the tree line. McAtee said a newly planted tree would do better in the open than it would in a shaded, tree-canopied area. Shoenfeld said she thought the Commission was in agreement that the replacement trees could be planted anywhere on the lot, and Combs said OK. McAtee reiterated that was in order to keep the lot congruent with other properties in the Historic District.

Schneider then moved to the section on residential driveways and parking and said the proposed plan was not incongruous with other structures in the District and adhered to the Design Guidelines because the driveway and garage were on the side of the house. Shoenfeld asked if the driveway was going to be made of colored or stamped concrete; Combs said no, it would be regular finished concrete and pavers. Schneider asked that if that fact could be added to the findings.

Ruch noted that the driveway side of the house would be seen by vehicles traveling down Linville Road, and asked why Combs did not do some type of landscaping there since it was very open and visible. Combs responded that as they complete the proposed house and as Johnson & Lee establishes whether there are any drainage issues where the adjoining lot meets this one, they will determine what can and cannot be done there to tie the two yards together. Ruch pointed to an area on the aerial map, and Combs said at the property line between lots 6 and 7, the area just off the sidewalk dips down; Combs said he and Johnson & Lee would work together to make sure water continues to properly drain in that area.

Ruch asked again if any landscaping would be done in that area to screen the driveway, and Combs said that was up to the Commission. Schneider asked Ruch to explain her concern. Ruch said she was trying to prevent the area from looking like a

pattern of driveway-house, driveway-house, and that sometimes landscaping can help break up that pattern. Combs said once a house is built on lot 7, the view of the driveway at this house will not be a prominent.

Schneider said the section on fencing and walls was not applicable.

Regarding lighting, Schneider said she thought there had been some questions, but the applicant had supplied information on that. She asked if there were any questions about the appropriateness of the lighting. Shoenfeld said she just wanted to confirm that there would be no additional lighting except entrance lights or low-level security lighting at the residence. Combs said there would be no pylon lights – only floodlights that might be on a motion detector sensor to light the front sidewalk and garage for security reasons and some sconce lighting on the house, which was decorative and would provide some illumination.

Davidson confirmed that the cut sheets provided for the Commission were the actual fixtures that would be used, and Combs said yes, adding that he had even included a cut sheet on the light bulb that would be used.

McAtee asked if all the electrical service and utilities would be located underground, and Combs said yes. McAtee asked if there would be any utility poles, and Combs said no. He added that Duke Energy would come out and set the transformers as they apply for power and that it would be underground – unless the Duke Energy engineer changes his mind, because he has no power over that. McAtee said that was understood.

Schneider said it sounded as if the lighting proposed was consistent with other residential properties in the Historic District and the immediate area and that it meets the Guidelines, as does the location of the utilities.

McAtee asked to discuss the well. He said there was a technique in which the well casing is cut off below ground level, a hanger is installed on the inside of the casing, the plastic pipe that goes down hangs on the side of that pipe, and a cement tile is added and cement cap is put over the top. Combs said that was called a submergible well, and that they are no longer allowed and the casing has to be a specified height out of the ground because of the possibility of groundwater contamination. McAtee asked if the fake rock well cover had to be installed no matter what, and Combs said yes. McAtee said he had learned something and thanked Combs for the information.

Schneider said if there was no additional discussion, the Commission would move on to findings of fact, but first asked Thomas if the Commission was following the proper order. Thomas said yes, and added that the staff report, which was tendered to the Commission, was basically the same level of authority as those submitted to the Town Council, and it is there for the guidance of the Commission. He said the Commission could use the staff report or not, could adopt it or not, or could adopt it in part and make its own findings beyond it. Schneider asked if the Commission could use the staff report in its findings of fact, and Thomas said yes, and reiterated that it could be used in whole or in part as a way of the Commission getting to its decision. Doing so would prevent the board from having to specifically state every item if the board's consensus is that they agree with items in the staff report, and

they could highlight other items in their findings of fact, which would lead to the conclusion of whether it was appropriate to grant the COA, Thomas said.

McAtee asked if the Commission could accept the staff report and then state further findings of fact if they conflict or take precedence over the staff report, and Thomas said yes. McAtee asked if the Commission could accept parts of the staff report and strike out others, and Thomas said yes.

Davidson asked about the sections of the report that defer to the Commission, and asked if they needed to include findings of fact on those, and Thomas said yes.

Schoenfeld asked if the Commission was agreeable to accepting the staff report as part of the findings of fact and add their own findings of fact which would override the staff report, or if they would prefer to come up with their own findings of fact. Schneider asked if there were any findings that were in conflict with the staff report. Davidson said she thought they only needed findings of fact in the few areas where the staff report defers to the Commission, such as regarding the shutters.

Shoenfeld summarized the findings of fact as follows:

- The staff report is to be included.
- The shutters are congruent with those found in the Historic District and the design satisfies the design concepts.
- The materials are consistent with those found in the Historic District.
- No handrails are required.
- The well will be located on the front of the site, with the exact location to be determined; it will be screened with landscaping.
- The site plan is in compliance with Section C of the Design Guidelines.
- The paint color is congruent with the Historic District.
- Lost mature trees will be replaced by the applicant and can be planted anywhere on the lot.
- The driveway will be concrete.
- The lighting and location of utilities are consistent with the Design Guidelines.

McAtee asked to add that the landscaping around the well will be deferred to staff for approval. He said he thought that landscaping should be approved, but the Commission did not need to approve it. Schneider said she thought that was more of a condition of the COA than a finding of fact. McAtee said he just did not want it to be forgotten.

Davidson asked about the finding of fact regarding the shutter. Shoenfeld said the finding she stated was that the shutters are congruent with the Historic District, but said she could add something about them being properly proportioned if the Commission desired. Davidson asked if anything should be added regarding why the shutters are inoperable, and the Commission's consensus was no.

McAtee asked to clarify whether Foreman, who is now the applicant, had granted Combs authorization to speak for him; Combs said yes.

Conversation then ensued on the finding of fact regarding the shutters. Shoenfeld said the finding said that the shutters are congruent with the Historic District and the Guidelines. Davidson disagreed with the use of the word "congruent," and Schneider agreed with Davidson, saying it is not possible to be congruent with the entire district. Thomas agreed, saying using a double negative would seem to mean the same as "congruent," but the legislature wrote the law differently. Thomas said he thought the legislature was trying to respect property rights as much as possible while enhancing historic preservation. He added that he did not believe the Commission was required to find that construction in the Historic District was congruous, just that it was not incongruous. He said it was OK for the Commission to say something was congruous, but the ultimate conclusion was that a COA should be granted based on the standard set forth by the legislature and was that they not allow incongruous construction.

Shoenfeld asked if the motion regarding the COA had to state the findings of fact again, and Thomas said no because they had already been stated, so long as all Commission members agreed that they understand what they were voting on and that the standard is satisfied.

Shoenfeld asked to clarify the finding of fact regarding the shutters:

- The shutters are in compliance with the Guidelines and the Historic District.

Mac McAtee made a **motion** that the COA be accepted based on the stated findings of fact with the condition that the landscaping for the well be approved by staff. Thomas suggested the Commission make two motions to ensure that the record is crystal clear – the first to adopt the findings of fact, and the second on the motion. McAtee volunteered to withdraw the motion, but Schneider asked to table the motion for a moment and called for a motion on the findings of fact.

Caroline Ruch made a **motion** to accept the findings of fact as stated by Shoenfeld. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Debbie Shoenfeld seconded the motion to grant the COA with the condition stated, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

B. Consideration of Paul Woolf for HPC Alternate

Schneider thanked Woolf for applying to serve on the Commission, and asked if he had had an opportunity to read over the Design Guidelines. Woolf said he had not read them recently, but was familiar with them because he had to come before the Commission for a COA several years ago. Schneider said the Commission had tried to make the Guidelines a little more user friendly since then, but said the Guidelines and the underlying ordinances are what the Commission's decisions are based on. She asked if Woolf had any questions for Commission members and he said no, but that he looked forward to working with them.

Davidson asked Woolf why he was interested in serving, and he said he had always had a penchant for historic homes, although the one he owns in here is the most modern of them, having lived in a 16th century farmhouse in England and another 17th century structure. He said it was nice to live in a "modern" district, and that he

and his wife had purchased the Jesse Benbow house, which they have owned for about 10 years. He added that they understood the trials and tribulations of owning a historic house, something they had always had a passion for.

Schneider said she thought it would be good to have someone on the Commission who is dealing daily with the issues of living in a historic home.

Mac McAtee made a **motion** to recommend that the Town Council appoint Paul Woolf to the Commission. **Debbie Shoefeld** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

C. **Proposals for 2015-16 Budget**

Schneider said she based the draft budget request for the Commission on last year's budget. Schneider added that she had a history of working with foundations and obtaining grants, and she had long had pet idea that the HPC might begin a very small grant fund that it could use to provide assistance to property owners who have historic properties in Oak Ridge or in the Historic District. The grant could focus on helping property owners do appropriate work, hire a conservation architect, or investigate problems such as why rot or water damage is occurring. Schneider said she thought such a grant would have a big goodwill impact. The Commission itself would not decide which projects would get money, but it would enlist outside experts, who will normally review such applications for a nominal honorarium. The Commission would need to create criteria, set an application deadline, and publicize the program. The grants could start out small – perhaps \$2,000 or less – and the Commission could ask for perhaps \$3,000 in the first year to get the program started. Schneider discussed other details that might be included, and said the Commission would need legal help setting up the program and could require the property owner to provide matching funds and fill out reports to ensure that the work was done. Schneider suggested the grants be awarded to individuals and not nonprofit organizations.

Thomas said it might be better to frame the program as a reimbursement grant to encourage property owners to get the work done. He said the discussion was timely as the Town was just gearing up for the annual budget cycle. He said the Commission might propose a pilot program to begin with to experiment and show its effectiveness and then build onto the program from there.

Schneider said as more historic markers are installed, the number requested could be decreased to perhaps one a year in the future, and perhaps the money that would have been spent on markers could go into the grant program. The Commission discussed other possible ideas and criteria for the program.

Thomas said that the Town is fiscally conservative, and although the Commission is proposing giving money away, the justification is that the Historic District is an overlay zoning and the grants might offset the additional costs of living in the District. He said such activities by an HPC are allowed by statute.

Commission members seemed favorable to the idea. Smith volunteered to put out a request on the Historic Preservation listserv to find out details about what other

municipalities are offering in the way of grants and their criteria. Schneider said she would draft a proposal and email it to HPC members and staff for input, and then perhaps contact the mayor or members of the Town Council about the grant program.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES

A. 2014-15 Budget update

Smith presented the 2014-15 budget, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

B. Historic inventory/Markers

Schneider proposed the marker subcommittee meet and discuss the next historic markers to be purchased. She added that she had not heard from Oak Ridge Military Academy about a date for the installation of the marker at Linville Chapel.

Shoenfeld said she had exchanged emails with Doug Nodine (president of Preservation Oak Ridge) about Ai Church. Nodine had said the outside of the building is complete except for landscaping, and they are beginning to work on the inside of the structure. Shoenfeld said she wondered if it would be best to wait until the work on the structure is complete before installing the historic marker so attendees could see the inside of the building. Schneider said she wondered if installing the marker sooner might encourage additional donations to help complete the renovation.

C. Communications outreach

Schneider said the Commission would plan to run the spring remodeling ad and additional newspaper ads when historic markers are dedicated.

D. Display case

Smith reported that the subcommittee was waiting for an article on Lake Carolina to run in the Northwest Observer before changing the display.

E. Land Use Plan Update

Schneider reported that the committee is still going through the education process. At the previous meeting, a local developer had talked about the mutual benefits of open space, and the committee also discussed connectivity and transportation.

7. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

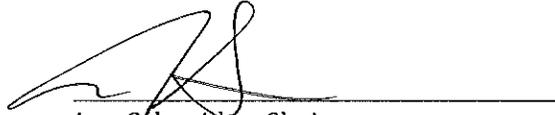
8. **ADJOURNMENT**

Debbie Shoenfeld made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, CMC, Town Clerk



Ann Schneider, Chair