



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
JANUARY 9, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Members Present

Steven Lantz, Chair
Debbie Shoenfeld, Vice Chair
Mac McAtee
Ron Simpson
Ann Schneider
Ann Pitz, Alternate (Not sitting)

Staff Present

Sandra Smith, Town Clerk/HPC Staff

Members Absent

Jim Kinneman, Alternate

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Steven Lantz called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

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

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2012, MEETING

Debbie Shoenfeld made a **motion** to approve the December 12, 2012, meeting minutes. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

4. NEW BUSINESS

- **Request for Tree Removal COA.** Carolyn C. Brown, 8417 Linville Road, Oak Ridge, NC 27310. Guilford County tax parcel number 0166242. Zoning classification AG.

Sandra Smith disclosed that Carolyn Brown was her mother and that she assisted her with the application.

Brown said the trees were willow oaks located behind her house. Although she hated to lose the shade, Brown said the trees were planted too close to the house and were causing problems with the foundation, walkway and roof discoloration; She thought it best to have them removed before they got any larger.

McAtee said there was a provision in the Historic Guidelines for replacing trees. He asked Brown if she would have any problem planting two trees of a similar species on her property, and she said no. Simpson asked Brown if she had consulted a tree specialist who advised that the trees be removed, and she said yes. Shoenfeld asked

if any other trees or landscaping would be damaged or removed as a result of the tree removal; Brown said the tree specialist had a method of cutting the trees down a piece at a time and there should be no destruction of anything around them. The trees would be made into mulch, which Brown said she would keep.

Mac McAtee made a **motion** to approve the COA for removal of two willow oak trees behind the home of Carolyn Brown, 8417 Linville Road, Oak Ridge, NC, with the condition that two trees of a similar species be planted on the property. **Ann Schneider** seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously (5-0).

- **Election of chair and vice chair.** Lantz said his term was expiring and it was his intention not to seek reappointment to the board at this time since he had served on Town committees for several years. Lantz reported that Pearse Edwards, an alternate on HPC, had also recently resigned. He opened the floor for nominations.

Debbie Shoenfeld made a **motion** to nominate Ann Schneider as chair. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Mac McAtee made a **motion** to nominate Debbie Shoenfeld as vice chair. **Ann Schneider** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

- **Budget preparation.** Smith reported that it was time to start working on the Commission's budget request for the upcoming year. A formal budget request needs to be submitted to Town Manager Bruce Oakley soon after the Commission's February 13 meeting.

Simpson asked if the Commission was planning to spend the money allocated in this fiscal year's budget, and Shoenfeld said yes. Schneider suggested discussing the matter briefly now, and then she and Shoenfeld would draft a budget proposal and email it to HPC members; the matter could be voted on at the next HPC meeting.

Schneider said the Historic Marker subcommittee wanted to request enough money for three markers next year, since they planned to complete the process for three markers this fiscal year. Shoenfeld said she had requested updated prices from Sewah Studios, where the Town had purchased Historic Markers in the past.

Schneider said the Commission may also want to include some money for training as well as funds to support the documentation for additional historic research. Lantz said he felt it was always good to go in with a higher budget request figure because it will likely be reduced. Simpson said he just didn't want the figure to be so high that the Council thought the Commission was "out of touch." Schneider suggested also including money for continued communication outreach. Lantz said he and Shoenfeld received an email recently from a woman looking for information on her family. Although the Commission didn't really get involved with genealogy, perhaps at some point the Commission might want to explore not just the history of structures, but the history of people who lived in the Town.

McAtee said there had also been discussion in the past about setting up a display case in Town Hall, which could include artifacts and relics found in the area. The genealogy project might be part of that, he said. Simpson asked if HPC would be going outside its boundaries, and Lantz said the Commission's focus is on the Historic Guidelines, but in a broader sense it is about preserving history. Shoenfeld said in a recent conversation with the mayor, she gathered that the Council wanted HPC to primarily focus on the Guidelines, but it also wants the Historic Marker project to move forward. Lantz said perhaps even the infrastructure and procedures for a Town archive could be set up, even if it is not actively worked on now.

Schneider said one of the reasons the Historic Marker project has taken off is because Smith has gotten involved and moved it forward. In order to do the type project being discussed, someone who is "gung ho" needs to explore the topic. Shoenfeld said a procedure for how historic items are accepted and what will be done with them is needed. Lantz said if that is not a direction the Commission wants to move, it needs to be made clear. Schneider said a Historic Preservation Commission was very different from a Historical Society. Schneider asked if someone was willing to look at display cases and prices; McAtee said he had preliminary discussions with Oakley in the past, and Oakley had indicated there might be money in the Town budget to purchase a display cabinet. Oakley had also explored the possibility of an existing display case that a government agency was no longer using, but had been unable to find anything at that time.

Shoenfeld said putting the display in the Mayor's office/conference room would limit the number of people who might see it; she added that she thought the display case should be located in the Town Hall lobby.

Regarding training/educational opportunities to be added to the budget, Lantz said he had attended a class on quasi-judicial proceedings and found it very informative. Smith said she and Simpson had attended a training session put on by the state in 2012 which was very reasonably priced. Simpson agreed that some of the presentations on architecture and the way the state developed had been extremely interesting.

McAtee said his research indicated a nice locked display cabinet would cost in the range of \$1,700 to \$2,500 plus freight charges. He suggested the item not be included in next year's HPC budget request until it was determined whether that money might be found in the Town's budget for the current year.

Schneider said she would email draft budget figures to the Commission; the budget request could be discussed and voted on at the February meeting.

5. OLD BUSINESS

- **Report to Town Council.** Ann Pitz said she had given the report on HPC's activities at the last Town Council meeting, and Council members had no questions. She said afterwards she, Shoenfeld and Schneider had met with Mayor Combs and discussed the progress made on the Historic Marker project.

Schneider volunteered to give the report at the Feb. 7 Town Council meeting since the Historic Marker subcommittee (made up of she, Shoenfeld, Pitz and Smith) would be there to report on the Historic Marker project.

6. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

7. UPDATES

- **Duke Energy tree trimming.**

Lantz said trimming of the feeder lines had been done by Duke Energy, but the trimming around the main lines had not. He reported that Mayor Combs had sent a letter to Duke Energy officials on the heels of a similar action by Greensboro's mayor. Duke Energy contracts with Asplundh for its tree trimming, and the concern is with the amount of trimming because it is only done every 7-10 years. Lantz said he had spoken to with Billy McMillan of Asplundh and Davis Montgomery of Duke Energy. Montgomery is interested in making sure that all involved understand exactly what, how and when trimming will be done so that everyone is as comfortable as possible with the process. Lantz said McMillan says Asplundh follows the ANSI 300 pruning guidelines that HPC has adopted for the Historic District; those standards prevent them from doing a stub cut on a tree. A meeting was scheduled the following day (January 10) at 2 p.m. at Town Hall with Town officials and staff, Duke Energy and Asplundh representatives; Lantz said he and Schneider also planned to attend as HPC representatives.

Simpson asked if the town had received complaints from citizens, and Shoenfeld and Lantz said there had been a complaint made at the Town Council meeting. Smith said that was the only complaint the Town has received of which she was aware. Shoenfeld said she thought most people believed there was not really anything they could do.

Lantz said a crepe myrtle at the end of his driveway was topped; he was told by an Asplundh employee that ANSI 300 standards are followed for most types of plants, but not all of them including crepe myrtles and Bradford pears. Lantz said he wanted to clarify that with Duke Energy employees so that answers can be provided when questions come up; he gave the illustration of the Bank of Oak Ridge's trees that were topped, and that bank representatives might ask why Duke Energy can top trees and they cannot. Lantz said he wanted to get Asplundh on the record saying how different species of trees will be treated.

Schneider asked if the complaint the Town has received has to do with Leland cypress trees in Oak Ridge Plantation, and Smith said yes. Because the trees were growing into the power lines, they would essentially be topped. Lantz said HPC had adopted ANSI 300 standards, which say deep pruning and topping of trees are bad for the overall health of them, especially when they are in a dormant state. Lantz said the discussion would be the same in 10 years when Duke Energy has trees in the area trimmed again.

McAtee said Oak Ridge Plantation should cut down the trees and plant something that will only grow to about 10 feet tall. Lantz said that was one option; another was to provide individual homeowners with information on how to maintain their trees using professional services so that the aggressive topping or deep pruning is limited. Lantz said that would not help in this case, but might in the future. He also said the information might not be helpful because of the cost that would be involved to the property owners in having the trees periodically trimmed away from the power lines.

Ann Pitz said it was great that Duke Energy and Asplundh representatives are meeting with the Town, but asked if the Town really had any say in the matter. Lantz said he understood it did not because the trees are in the right of way of the power system. He added that he wanted to emphasize to those involved that there are trees to be trimmed that will need extra care; as an example, he gave 100-year-old oak tree in his front yard.

Shoenfeld said she would prefer to see Duke Energy shape a tree somewhat after making a large cut; Lantz said the company contracts to get the trees away from the power lines and that is all the workers are going to do. Shoenfeld and Pitz said they would prefer to see a tree taken all the way down as opposed to a big cut out of the middle.

Schneider asked about burying power lines underground; Lantz said he understood it was quite costly. Shoenfeld added that it was also more difficult to repair problems with underground lines, and that burying lines underground could also kill existing trees if their roots were cut in the process.

Lantz said it would be good to get a good, clear understanding of what Duke Energy planned to do and how they would treat specific types of trees. That information would be good to have should property owners ask why Duke Energy can do deep pruning and they cannot.

Schneider pointed out that the tree trimming is a safety and service issue, which is different from what HPC considers in its reviews. Smith said Duke Energy has a handout that tells about planting trees under power lines and which species can be located there.

Lantz said affected homeowners were alerted by Duke Energy that tree trimming was going to be done on their property, and that the resident in Oak Ridge Plantation who had complained was likely taken aback; although property owners want to see trees be as large and magnificent as possible, they also want power.

Schneider said the trees along N.C. 150 in Oak Ridge Plantation were likely planted as a screen. Lantz said HPC would not be able to stop Duke Energy from trimming the trees, but they would get a better understanding of what would be done. He said Asplundh had done a good job of cleaning up debris.

- **Budget Update.** Smith presented the budget, saying no funds were spent in the previous month, leaving a balance of \$5,967.97. The Commission still has a credit of \$1,585 from Sewah Studios for a Historic Marker paid for but never ordered.

Schneider said she would get the amount of the credit with the Northwest Observer so it could be added to the monthly budget update.

- **Communications Outreach.** Schneider said there were no real outreach efforts being planned at this time except what is related to the historic markers; she suggested the Commission consider running the same "Plan to do spring remodeling?" ad as was run in the Northwest Observer in 2012.
- **Historic Inventory/Markers.** Schneider said during the subcommittee meeting with Mayor Combs, he had suggested something short and easy to read be presented to the Town Council. The document the subcommittee had prepared, which is incorporated by reference, pointed out the HPC would be using the second set of criteria established by the subcommittee to prioritize the properties which would receive historic markers. Plans were to perhaps mark the Old Mill, Robert Stafford house and St. James AME Church in the first year. Although the Old Mill does have a marker that was placed by a former owner, it is not very visible and there still seems to be a great purpose to placing a marker there. Different locations on the property were discussed, but safety was also a concern.

McAtee asked why the Council had previously been against marking the boundaries of the Historic District; Smith said her understanding was that Council members had felt like there were so many properties worthy of individual markers and wanted to see that done first. Schneider also said money for that project was also not in the Commission's budget at the time, and Shoenfeld agreed and said that it was an expensive project.

Schneider said the subcommittee had also agreed that less information should be inscribed on the markers so that they were easier to read. She added that additional information on each marked property could be added to the Town website. Lantz said each marker could also be added to the social media site Four Square; he said it might be fun as well to find the longitude and latitude of each marker to be used by people who do geocaching. Smith said there is actually a roadside historic marker website and that someone had put some of the Oak Ridge markers on it.

Schneider said the proposed Five-Year Plan to be presented to the Council will also include a color map showing where the markers would be located in the Town and in relation to the Historic District. Schneider said the Mayor had said the Council does not need to vote on the plan; that would allow HPC to change the order of priority if circumstances changed regarding a property and to reassess the plan every year.

Simpson asked if there is generally a ceremony regarding the marker, and Lantz said yes; the Commission generally holds a dedication and property owners, their guests and the public are invited. Shoenfeld said the date of such dedications should be

included in the Northwest Observer. Schneider reiterated that HPC wants to spend the money for the signs in this years' budget before the fiscal year ended. The Commission's consensus was to move forward with presenting the Five-Year Plan to Council.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Ann Schneider made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m. **Ron Simpson** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, Town Clerk



Ann Schneider, Chair