



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING  
MAY 11, 2016 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Ann Schneider, Chair  
Debbie Shoenfeld, Vice Chair  
Caroline Ruch  
Mac McAtee  
Kristin Kubly

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Planning Director

**Members Absent**

Paul Woolf, Alternate

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Ann Schneider called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed meeting attendees and introduced Commission members and staff.

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

**Mac McAtee** made a **motion** to approve the meeting agenda after removing approval of the meeting minutes. **Kristin Kubly** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Council report.** Schneider said she attended the last Town Council meeting and reported on the Commission's activities. She was also asked to comment on the historic cabin on the Berrier property, which was up for rezoning. Shoenfeld volunteered to draft the meeting summary and Schneider volunteered to present it at the June 2, 2016 Town Council meeting.

**B. COAs approved/reviewed at staff level.**

None.

**C. COAs approved but not completed.**

Bruce reported that Bojangle's was working out some issues and would likely submit their plan to the Planning & Zoning Board later in the month. In response to a question, Bruce said the office/retail building at Oak Ridge Marketplace would be resubmitting its landscaping plan as well as a COA for signage.

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

**COA-16-05:** Construction of a new single-family residence. The property is located at 8422 Linville Road in Oak Ridge Township, being Guilford County Tax Parcel #0222373, Oak Ridge Township, zoned RS-40, Historic District Overlay Zone. It is owned by Johnson and Lee, LLC.

Schneider stated that the Design Guidelines are designed to provide recommendations for design aesthetics within the Oak Ridge Historic District, and they are intentionally broad to allow applicants a broad pathway toward compliance. The goal of the Commission is to see that any proposed changes are compatible with the special character of the Historic District and surrounding buildings. The Commission would be conducting a quasi-judicial evidentiary hearing, meaning each Commission member is acting as an independent judge. She said Commission members are each tasked with being impartial. She asked Commission members to cite the applicable sections of the Design Guidelines in their deliberations. The Commission should take the evidence presented, apply the standards outlined in the Historic District Design Guidelines, make findings of fact, and render a decision. The Commission may approve, deny or continue consideration of the COA request, but a decision must be made within 180 days of the date the application was submitted.

Schneider then asked about potential conflicts of interest, and each Commission member in turn stated that they had none. She noted that the Commission had reviewed previous COAs for the same subdivision. She asked if the Commission thought the request was within the scope of activities allowed by the Design Guidelines, and if sufficient information had been presented to allow the members to make a decision. McAtee said he believed this was one of most sufficiently executed COA applications ever submitted, and other Commission members agreed. Planning Director Bill Bruce said he had nothing to add to the staff report, but would be glad to answer any technical questions.

Schneider noted that the sides of the house, which are visible from the street, have a very low amount of window coverage. She said when you take into account all the window coverage that can be seen from the street, the window coverage on the entire house is much less than 10 percent. Bruce said that was correct.

Shoenfeld asked if the 10 percent window coverage figure is per elevation, and Bruce said that was how he had reported it in the staff report. She said the front facade has about 11 percent windows, but the sides are nowhere near that amount; Schneider agreed. Shoenfeld said the building does set out further than the ones on each side of it, and the side windows would be viewed from the right of way.

Bruce swore in Rick Lee, the applicant.

Lee introduced himself to the Commission and told the makeup of his company. He said they had submitted the COA application for approval for a pre-sale for a retired couple who is looking for a single-level house. He said much of the design is based on the buyer's desires, but he would be willing to work with the Commission as much as possible. He said he thought the couple would be an asset to Oak Ridge, and that they wanted to live near the park. Lee said he would be happy to answer questions.

McAtee said looking at the page that depicts the garage doors, there are two doors shown, although one has a star by it. He asked if the one with the star was the one being proposed. He said it shows an arched lintel on it, but the garage door does not look like that on the construction drawing. Schneider said she also had an issue with the garage, and they could wrap those items together and discuss them later. She asked if McAtee had any broad concerns, and he said not at this time.

Kubly said she also had an issue with the garage, which is also noted in the staff report, because the Guidelines say garages should face away from the street. She said it looked like there was a garage facing the street and well as one on the side. She also noted the front parking, which is mentioned in the Design Guidelines. Schneider said that was also noted in the staff report, and said her concern was that the garage was a prominent feature, something that seemed incongruous with the Guidelines.

McAtee said this house sits closer to the road than the other houses currently there, so he felt that it would be very visible by those coming down Linville Road. Ruch said she did not see it that way. She said there is a two-car garage that faces the side, and an additional one-car garage that faces the front. She said she understood McAtee's point about the driveway being exposed in front of the garage entrance on the drawing provided. She said she was unsure whether the main part of the driveway was exposed, or if it was like a typical entrance into a garage. She said there would be some part of exposed driveway in any design. Schneider said she didn't think they had a problem with the driveway being exposed, but she could not think of any precedent for having a third garage facing the street. Ruch said she understood about the garage door, but she thought the Commission was also talking about the parking at the front of the house.

Schneider asked if there were any other overarching details or items of concern. Shoenfeld said the Design Guidelines under architectural elements say consideration should be given to "the scale of the architectural elements and details of an individual building façade in relation to each other, as well as to the scale of the overall building to its neighbors." She said her concern was that the doors and windows were human scale, but the roof heights don't necessarily play a part in that. She said Lee's narrative discussed the ceiling heights inside the house, but scale also referred to architectural details. She said the Guidelines say that smaller houses successfully avoid suggesting miniature scale by keeping doors, windows and porch columns comparable in size to larger surroundings. She said the houses beside this one have very nice-sized porches on the front, but this house appears to have a five-to six-foot recessed entry. She said that balance is also a consideration here because the Guidelines say balance is achieved when the point of focus is in the correct location. She said the point of focus on this home appears to be the garage, because it juts out in front. She said it is what people will see, and that is not typical in the Historic District and is incongruous with it. She said because of its location and size, the garage appears to be the focal point more than the front entry.

Shoenfeld also discussed proportion, saying the problem she sees is that this house is similar to one of the other homes that Johnson & Lee built. She said the pitch of the roof is nice and it is not an issue, but when you have a single-story home with a

roof pitched that high, it is an issue unless you add three to five feet of foundation in front to make the front of the house appear larger. She said in the narrative, it says the roof height would be an average of 16 feet 10 inches when considering the two front gables. It also says the maximum roof height would be 15 feet, making the roof height about 10 percent less than the structure height. Shoenfeld said the issue is that you cannot just go by the two gable ends, because they make up about 27½ feet of a 73-foot-wide home. She said Lee was comparing the roof height to the front elevation of the building, but in this case she did not think that was applicable because the gables create 45½ feet of building width that is not 16 feet high.

Ruch said Shoenfeld seemed to have several issues with scale, and Shoenfeld agreed. Shoenfeld referred to page 50, item 2, of the Guidelines, which says principal buildings should gradually, not abruptly, change from one to two stories. She said in this case, the building is lower in height than both of its neighbors.

Schneider said it seemed like Commission members were touching on context, primary design concepts, and overall design compatibility. She referred the Commission back to the March 2015 meeting when Lee presented COAs for the last two houses built in Barrow Place. She said the Commission is looking to builders, regardless of designer, to dig in and look at the Historic District in a different way. She said the previous homes proposed by Lee incorporated details from other homes in the District, but the details were not drawn from a particular style, such as Colonial, bungalow, or neo-Classical. She said the Commission was hoping to see more variety and expression of various styles of architecture. In many ways, she said, it was irrelevant what the future owner wants on the inside because the Commission's only concern was the exterior and its compatibility with the Historic District. She told Lee what he had presented was a fine home, but it did not seem to have any particular compatibility with the District. She said there were some problems with the primary design concepts, but that the house really had little style with regard to architectural detail. As such, she said she thought the house would stand out and would not be visually or aesthetically compatible in the Historic District.

Schneider added that she thought it was inappropriate for the garage door to face the front and be the main design concept, because this is a smaller home. McAtee said there was also nothing on the landscape plan that could perhaps lessen that. Shoenfeld clarified that she had been talking about the two-car garage; she said the one-car garage is incongruous with the Guidelines because it faces the front. She said the focal point of a house in the Historic District should not be the garage.

Ruch added that the garage seemed even more predominant because the house is so much closer to the road than the others. She said that also disrupts the rhythm and balance of the neighborhood, and that the large garage detracts from the home's entrance. She pointed out in the Guidelines, which say architectural elements and details are of paramount importance. Schneider agreed, also reading from page 53 of the Guidelines, which said elements and details "may include porch trim, cornice designs, chimney shapes, shutters, window trim, and door paneling." It also says new construction should employ some of the details found on similar contributing structures in the Historic District. The Guidelines also say porches and entrances should be embellished with details that reinforce the architectural style of the

structure; Schneider said her problem was that she couldn't determine any particular style, other than the house is a nice, modern, brick home that would fit in many neighborhoods in Oak Ridge.

McAtee said he also had a problem with the way the garages were applied to the house.

Lee said he assumed the Commission was looking at the front elevation of the house, and a garage entrance is not seen from there, other than the one-car garage, which is set back at the back of the house. He said the parking is on the right side of the house would be identical to what is at every other house in the subdivision, and that it is not in front of the house. Lee said he had gotten the impression that the Commission did not want the houses to be in a straight row, and Schneider agreed. He said this one is pulled forward about eight feet from the one directly to the left. Schneider said this house is 48 feet from the road, and Shoenfeld added that one house to the side of this one is 71 feet from the road and the one on the other side is 87 feet back. Lee asked where those numbers came from, and Bruce said they were from the plot plans submitted by Lee the previous March.

Commie Johnson, Lee's business partner, said the house could be pushed back, but that meant more trees would have to be removed. He said that was another thing they had considered. Shoenfeld said even if pushed back, the focal point – the massive garage in front that is not typical in or congruous with the Historic District and that has no architectural details – is still in front of the house. Johnson said he begged to differ, because there is arched brick over the windows, which is typical in the Historic District, there are elliptical windows similar to what is in Town Hall, and there is an elliptical vent.

Ruch said she thought what was lacking was probably shutters and a significant porch and front entrance. She said the garage is large and the front entry is recessed, she thought Shoenfeld was saying that you don't see the front entrance to the house as much as you see the front of the garage. She noted the shake siding detail, and Lee said it was cement siding, but if required he could install cedar. Ruch said that was a great architectural detail as seen in the District. She said old designs implemented in new ways are encouraged, but she thought Schneider was saying this looked more like a generic, new design.

Schneider said she thought the Guidelines were saying that it is not about taking architectural details and throwing them up on a house. The Commission was pushing for the applicant to choose a Craftsman bungalow or some other style of house consistent with the Design Guidelines, and then have the applicant tell them where the inspiration for the style comes from. She said elliptical windows and brick, even with the addition of shake siding, are not enough to meet the Design Guidelines. She said the front-facing garage and the entrance to the house are a problem. Schneider added that there are a lot of smaller structures in the Historic District from which to draw inspiration.

Lee asked about the height of the façade as it relates to the height of the roof. He said there is a minimum of three feet of foundation that will be added to any house in this area, along with another foot of floor joists. He said those and other elements,

such as ceiling joists, will make the height of the house much larger than it appears in the drawings and more in line with the roof height. Schneider said it was not about numbers, but more about the overall visual impact of the house.

Lee said he could not find anything in the Guidelines that says a garage door cannot face the front of a house. He said the buyers want more of a workshop, so he would be willing to replace that door with double doors, which would eliminate the forward-facing garage door. Schneider said Lee would still need to explain what type of architectural style that element related to. She said on page 50, item C.2. has to do with rhythm, which is about variation. She again said this was a very plain, simple house, and that plain is monotonous. She referred to several homes and their styles located in the District.

Lee said he heard a comment about shutters, and he thought the last time he brought a house design before the Commission, he understood shutters were somewhat of an issue if they are not operable and do not appear to cover the entire window. He said he would be glad to add shutters, but he understood that would not address the issue with the garage. Shoenfeld said she thought when Ruch mentioned shutters that she was just mentioned a design element and was not saying they needed here. Shoenfeld said the main point was to consider an architectural style and use details to support that. Schneider agreed, saying the details do not make the style – you have to have the style first.

Schneider said she did not think the front setback was an issue. She said the Guidelines say no parking in front of a house, and garages generally mean parking. Ruch said because it was set back, she did not find the single-car garage as problematic as the double garage which juts out in front of the house. Lee came forward and showed the Commission the floor plan of the house and explained it.

Lee said he thought he understood what the Commission was saying, but there were plenty of simple homes in the Historic District. He mentioned Roger Howerton's house, and Schneider pointed out that Howerton's was not a contributing structure. Schneider said Lee needed to look at the more historic homes in the district. Schneider mentioned several homes in the Historic District, and Ruch mentioned the Redmon house beside the park, which employs more Craftsman-like details. Bruce added that new materials, such as cement siding, could be appropriate to incorporate.

Lee said the height of the house he proposed is comparable to the one on lot 6, which is next door. He said that is a one-story house. Shoenfeld said this is about a 26-foot tall house, and the ones on either side are 32 feet and 34 feet. She said Lee's house could be the same height or step down somewhat, but it should not drop off dramatically.

Ruch pointed out that there are brick and rock Craftsman houses in the District.

Shoenfeld asked the Commission what it thought about the roof height of the house and whether 8 feet would be an abrupt change from the other houses. McAtee said if the architectural details of the house were more in keeping with the Historic District Design Guidelines, that would not bother him. Ruch agreed.

Schneider talked about the height and setback of the house, but also mentioned the materials. She said they should be varied from the nearby houses, and it would take some convincing if every house proposed is brick. She said there is a different expectation for materials in the Historic District.

After additional discussion, the Commission decided by consensus that the height of the house was probably OK because the front setback would make it appear taller than the others nearby. That would also save trees in the back of the house.

Johnson said one of the reasons they proposed the garage in front was so there would be variety from the other houses in the development. He said trying to please the Commission felt like a moving target. Schneider encouraged them to work with Bruce, who could offer a lot of feedback. She said they should start with a specific style, but not duplicate it.

Lee said he thought the Commission was saying it would not approve a brick house. He said as a builder, it is almost impossible to sell a house that is not brick because buyers do not want that. Ruch said she thought they would appreciate seeing other materials along with brick. Johnson asked about stone, and Schneider that was possible. Schneider reiterated that she thought every house in the subdivision should not be brick. She said brick is fine, but not all brick. Shoenfeld said adding in the shake siding was a nice architectural detail. She encouraged emphasizing an architectural detail of the house, but not the garage. Schneider said they need to decide what style they are trying to replicate.

Lee said he understood the location of the garage was a problem, and a front porch could be added. Schneider encouraged him to look at other houses in the District and to select an architectural style. She said it does not have to be a house with a porch, although many of the smaller houses in the district do have porches. Ruch said the front door of Lee's house was hidden, and Kubly said moving the garage would be very helpful.

Johnson asked why they had to wait 30 days to find out the design was rejected. Bruce said when the plan was submitted, he was told it was a pre-sale and this design was what the buyers wanted. He said he could not predict the Commission's opinion. Johnson asked if they could get some idea on whether a plan would be approved, and Bruce said yes, although he was never asked that question in this case. Johnson said it was cumbersome to submit a plan 30 days ahead and then have it rejected, and have to wait to get on the next meeting schedule. Bruce said he would be willing to accept a plan for this house as a resubmittal, and asked Johnson and Lee to be in touch with him about when they could turn something back in and he would try to be flexible.

Shoenfeld said the size of the building should be considered if it is going to be located to near the street, and McAtee said he would like to see the number of windows addressed.

McAtee directed the Commission to the landscaping plan. He said there appears to be a curved sidewalk in the front, but that it does not go to the front door and there

are holly trees planted in front of the front entryway. Shoenfeld agreed that mistakes were made. McAtee also said bushes were planted in front of the front steps.

Schneider called for findings of fact, and they were outlined by the Commission.

**Mac McAtee** made a **motion** to adopt the findings of fact as outlined previously, including the staff report and the following:

- Parking should be located behind houses or as unobtrusively as possible in side yards (page 40, section C, item 2)
- The front-facing garage door is not consistent with the Design Guidelines because of its prominence (page 41, section C in the Design Guidelines)
- The proposed plan seemed to have issues with the primary design concepts, particularly rhythm and scale (pages 46, section A, and 47, section C)
- The design was not compatible with the predominant designs in the Historic District and was not a new interpretation of a traditional design (page 48, section A, items 1 and 2)
- Regarding building shape and massing, each building should have its own sense of identity and character (page 50, section C, item 2)
- The front entrance was not the most prominent feature (page 52, section G, item 2)
- The design was not compatible with the architectural elements and details in the District (page 52, section H, items 1 and 2)

**Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

**Debbie Shoenfeld** made a **motion** to deny Certificate of Appropriateness 16-05 to allow for construction of a new single-family residence located at 8422 Linville Road in Oak Ridge Township, Guilford County Tax Parcel #0222373, zoned RS-40, Historic District Overlay Zone, and owned by Johnson and Lee, LLC. The scope of work is as described in the COA application dated April 23, 2016 by Bill Bruce, and as described in the applicant's presentation and responses to the Historic Preservation Commission at its meeting on May 16, 2016, using drawings, materials, samples and colors as presented to the Commission. The findings of fact include the staff report and the previous references to the Guidelines. **Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

## 5. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES

### A. 2015-16 budget updates.

The 2015-16 budget update was included in the packet, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

### B. 2016-17 budget proposal.

Schneider encouraged Commission members to attend the Town Council meeting on June 2 and support the proposed budget, which includes the Commission budget request.

### C. Historic inventory/Markers.

Ai Church marker dedication ceremony was held in April and was a great success. Text for a marker to commemorate the historically open land at the park is underway. Schneider said she is still hopeful about putting a marker to commemorate the historic macadam road in the future, although the property owner is not interested at this time.

**D. Communications outreach.**

Schneider said the Northwest Observer had expressed interest in writing an article on the Berrier cabin, and Kubly was doing research on it. She said there had been some interest in relocating the cabin, and she had spoken to the developer, nearby neighbors, Guilford County and Preservation NC about it.

**E. Display case.**

No report

**F. Grant program.**

Schneider said four grant applications had been received, and all were good applications. She hoped there would be even more interest next year. The subcommittee was scheduled to meet with the outside review panel the following week to go over the applications and get their input on the applications submitted and the program in general.

**G. Training.**

No report

**6. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

None

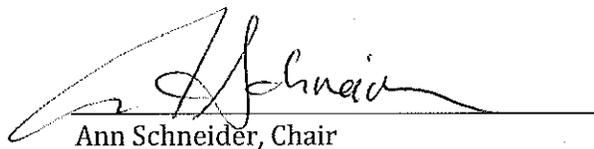
**7. ADJOURNMENT**

**Debbie Shoenfeld** made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m. **Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, NCCMC, CMC, Town Clerk



Ann Schneider, Chair