



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING  
AUGUST 13, 2014 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Ann Schneider, Chair  
Ron Simpson  
Mac McAtee  
Michelle Ungurait  
Caroline Ruch, Alternate (Sitting)  
Cara Townsend, Alternate (Not sitting)

**Staff Present**

Sandra Smith, Town Clerk/HPC Staff  
Bill Bruce, Planning Director  
Bruce Oakley, Town Manager

**Members Absent**

Debbie Shoenfeld, Vice Chair

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

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

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

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

**3. APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 14, 2014, MEETING AND APRIL 15, 2014, CLOSED SESSION**

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

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Request for COA:** JPC Monroe, LLC, requests a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Lowes Foods store at Oak Ridge Commons shopping center. The property is located at 2205-B Oak Ridge Road, Tax Parcel 0166224, Oak Ridge Township, and is zoned CU-SC (Conditional Use-Shopping Center).

Schneider asked if any Commission members had any conflict of interest regarding the case, which could include having a fixed opinion; having ex parte communications with anyone about the case; or having a close family, business or financial interest in the project. McAtee disclosed that he had visited the site but had not discussed the case with anyone. Michelle Ungurait said she was a customer and was a big fan of the Lowes Foods to Go service; Schneider said probably all the Commission members had shopped at Lowes, but said that was OK as long as they could separate their feelings about the store from the case in order to render an

impartial decision. Schneider said she had met with Ruch, who was recently appointed to the Commission, but that their conversation had centered on the process, but not how it should be applied to this project. Ruch said she had no conflicts, and Ron Simpson said he was also a customer and had visited the site. He disclosed that he had a conversation with staff about the project; he also said he serves on the Planning & Zoning Board, which would also be discussing the project, but that he could render an impartial decision.

Will Spencer, project architect, and Philip Cooke of PJC Monroe, who owns the shopping center, were sworn in by Town Clerk Sandra Smith.

Spencer said that Lowes Foods had hired him to be the architect at the Oak Ridge and several other area stores. He said Lowes Foods stores had recently been renovated in Clemmons and Lewisville, and stores in Bermuda Run and several others in the Triangle area were also currently being renovated or were slated for it. Spencer said that several years ago, Lowes had hired a consultant, who advised them to rebrand the company, and changes were now being made to reinforce that new brand. He showed the Commission photos of the Clemmons and other stores, which he said would represent the intent for the Oak Ridge store. He said the idea for the new look was a farm-to-table or barn look, and that he had incorporated wooded trusses made from reclaimed wood in the design. He also showed the Commission photos of the inside of some stores to show the type of renovations proposed for the interior of the store.

Spencer said Lowes also felt they needed additional interior space, and had hired him to expand the Oak Ridge store and reinforce the new brand. He said Oak Ridge Commons was a beautiful shopping center, but that it had none of the look that was being incorporated at other stores. He said he and Cooke had met with Eric Bradley, who had originally designed Oak Ridge Commons, who said the red brick used in the shopping center needed to remain. Spencer said the changes he felt were most appropriate to incorporate the new brand were the wooden trusses and the use of reclaimed wood. He explained that the material behind the trusses was reclaimed barn wood, and said that the new Lowes Foods logo would also be incorporated in a new sign on the building.

Schneider asked if Commission members thought any information was missing from the COA application. McAtee said he understood the roof would be altered and he did not see any samples of shingles; Spencer said the intent was to match the existing shingles. McAtee also pointed out that Spencer had signed the COA application, and that it should be signed by the property owner. Cooke said the application had been filled out by Spencer with his permission.

Schneider said she was looking for more detailed information on the signage. Spencer said the signs were generally green and white, and that he would go through the sign permitting process with the Planning Director. He explained the new logo, and said he understood signs in the shopping center were required to be white. He showed the Commission an example of the sign which had been done in green, but said in this case it would be white. Spencer added that the sides of the sign would be aluminum and the front acrylic, and that it would be internally illuminated.

Schneider asked if the current signs in the shopping center were illuminated from inside; Cooke said no, that they are backlit. Spencer said every municipality has its own sign regulations, and that Lowes would comply with the size, type of letters, color required, etc. Schneider said the Commission would also need the specific dimensions of the sign since it is in the historic district. Spencer said all specifications would be submitted to the landlord first, to ensure that all development restrictions are met, and then to the regulatory body for approval. Once under construction, the current sign would be removed and sometimes a banner is put up, although he understood banners could only be up for a short duration in the Town.

Ungurait said she would like to discuss the Guidelines regarding using wood shakes or shingles. Ruch requested a materials list for all changes to the building, including the windows.

Simpson asked if the windows would be identical to what is currently installed in the store. Spencer said yes, in terms of style and reflectivity. He added that the mullions, jams and seals are all aluminum, the same as what is currently in the store.

In response to questions, Spencer said the windows and shingles would match what is currently on the building as closely as possible, given that they might be weathered or aged somewhat. Schneider asked for samples of the window materials including the glass and aluminum. Spencer said he had already alerted the sign company that specific renderings showing exact dimensions of the sign must be submitted.

Ungurait asked if other Commission members had questions about the Historic District Guidelines regarding the use of wood shakes or shingles. She read from the Guidelines which say, "It is not appropriate to use wood shakes, shingles, or other coverings on walls that are incongruous with the design of the building," and "It is not appropriate to use exposed sheets of plywood or similar materials." Spencer said plywood was actually pieces of wood that are glued together, and what the plan showed was reclaimed barn wood.

Schneider asked for comments on the congruity of the proposed changes – particularly the new facade that would jut out from the building – with the existing structure and the conformance with the Historic District Guidelines.

McAtee said he was struggling with gables being installed on the front of the building to replace the brick arches. When considering the entire shopping center, McAtee said you can see what the Guidelines describe as rhythm; he added that he didn't know of anywhere in the area where there were heavy timbered trusses and columns. He said he didn't think using that type of construction to cover up brick arches would fit the overall theme of the area. Schneider reiterated that McAtee was talking about the overall design concept of rhythm, and regarding congruity, she noted that the Guidelines say that additions to buildings typically need to be in conformance with the design of the existing structure. McAtee also referred to the Guidelines, which say exterior walls, siding and trim should "retain and preserve the original shape, form, height, materials and details of exterior walls, with attention to

details such as bays, cornices, arches, brackets, door and window surrounds and other character-defining elements." He also read from the Guidelines which say applicants should "match replacement materials with original wall materials in size, shape, texture, pattern and color," and that substitute materials should only be used as a last resort. He said he did not believe the submitted plan conforms to those Guidelines.

Regarding rhythm and the repetition of a particular look throughout the shopping center, which currently has a Neo-classical design, Ruch questioned how consistent that look would be if a barn-style gable were added at Lowes Foods. She asked if the gables were going to cover the existing arches, or if the arches were going to be removed. She added that the timber posts do not really go with the columns that are repeated throughout the shopping center. McAtee added that the plan shows that the timber columns would be square, and that all the other columns in the shopping center are round.

McAtee asked about the roof of the drive-thru that will project from the building, and whether the proposed pitch was in keeping with Historic District Guidelines. He said it appeared the pitch of the roof was nowhere near the 8-in-12 pitch specified in the Guidelines. Spencer said that particular section of roof had a 3-in-12 pitch.

Schneider said she assumed Ruch was referring to the section of the binder that refers specifically to Oak Ridge Commons. That section says: "It is extremely important to note that one of the major goals of these guidelines is to ensure compatibility with the historically significant Oak Ridge Military Academy located across Highway 68 from the development. With that in mind, we would encourage any prospective tenant's design team to visit the site and strive to design a structure that will be architecturally compatible and complementary to the existing Oak Ridge Military Academy buildings." She added that she understood the dilemma of trying to get a new corporate identity and melding it with an existing building in an established Historic District.

Simpson said he shared other Commission members' concerns about the barn-like appearance on the proposed plan, and said that he knew of no other wood like that on any other structure in Oak Ridge. While he understood the intent, he said that Spencer was dealing with an existing building in an existing shopping center, and that the desires of Spencer's clients do not fit the Guidelines.

Spencer said he wished representatives from Lowes Foods could have attended the meeting, but that he would convey the Board's sentiments back to them. He said he thought he understood the Board's comments about the use of wood on the building.

Ruch asked Spencer again about the arches, and he said they would remain in place but be covered when looking at the building from the exterior. Ruch asked if the store entrance and exit would be moved to where the gables were to be built, and Spencer said yes.

Schneider asked if the proposed roof structure was being added simply to accommodate the new logo or if it had a purpose. Spencer said he thought the

building lacked a center point, and that portion of the building was just being proposed as a decorative element and it would not include space occupied by the store.

Schneider asked the Board for comments regarding conformance of the center roof structure. McAtee said he had no real issue with it; although there is nothing else like it in the shopping center, he said he did not find anything in the Design Guidelines that would prevent such a structure. Ungurait asked if it would be made of brick; Spencer said yes, and that the eave and shingle material would be the same as on the rest of the building. Ungurait asked if efforts would be made to use the same brick, and Spencer said yes. He asked if he should bring a brick sample to the next meeting, and Board members said yes.

Ungurait asked about the addition of second-story windows on the right side of the building. Spencer explained that the area is currently in the area where the frozen yogurt shop is now located. He said Lowes plans to expand the building slightly in both the front and the back, and that the front section will jut out slightly and become the grocery cart storage area. That area is currently the sidewalk area under the canopy, Spencer said.

Schneider asked Board members their opinions on that part of the addition, and whether they find it incongruous with the Guidelines. McAtee said he thought the top row of windows was incongruous because there are no others like that in the shopping center and he thought they look out of place.

Ruch said she didn't think that section of the building was an issue because the brick and windows used would match the existing style of the shopping center. She added that she was not sure if the top row of windows presented any type of obstacle. Ruch asked if Lowes Foods had a copy of the Historic District Guidelines, since conformance to the Guidelines in order to keep the historical feel of the area was required.

Simpson said he also thought the highest row of windows was inconsistent. He asked again if the intention of the windows was to match the existing windows, and Spencer said yes, in both form and shape.

Schneider said she wanted to play devil's advocate, and that the windows in the expansion are the same as the others in the building, although they do extend higher than on the existing structure, so there is both consistency and inconsistency. Although the Guidelines clearly apply to additions on historic structures, they also apply to additions on more contemporary structures in the Historic District. Although it says additions are appropriate if they are compatible with the existing structure, there are also times when you can differentiate, Schneider said. She said when building an addition, there are times when differentiation is needed to show that the addition is new. She said she could see in the photo of the Lowes Foods in Clemmons that windows are really important; while a greenhouse/barn type of structure would not work in the Historic District, she asked if the additional rows of windows proposed were a reasonable accommodation. She said it could be argued that the anchor tenant in a shopping center might want a more distinctive architectural look and feel than the remainder of the tenants, and she did not have

as much of a problem with the upper row of windows as some other Commission members had.

Spencer said an architect from Florida had designed the Clemmons store, and that the purpose of all the windows on the front of that store was to reinforce the greenhouse concept. To representatives of Lowes Foods, adding the additional windows helps to reinforce the new brand, Spencer said.

Simpson asked if it was possible for the applicant to withdraw the plan and resubmit it; Town Manager Bruce Oakley said he thought that at any point, the Board could ask the applicant to make changes and resubmit the plan.

Simpson asked if Spencer was requesting that the front of the store be brought out so that it is flush with the arches; Spencer said no. He explained that the front of the store would remain where it is currently, other than the area in front of the shops on the right side of the building. He explained what he thought the Commission wanted to see if the plan is resubmitted, and said compromises are required at each store where the renovations are made.

Ungurait asked for the Commission members' comments on adding the covered area over the Lowes Foods to Go area. Spencer said the pick-up area for customers who use that service is currently in the parking lot, and that Lowes Foods would like to bring the area up to the door of the building and cover it. Since the Commission had expressed concern about the wood, he said the covered area could be created with brick columns and with a steeper roof covered with shingles. Ungurait asked if the Commission was OK with having a drive-thru in that area.

Simpson asked Cooke if a fire lane is located in front of Lowes Foods and whether it could be covered up by the Lowes Foods to Go area. Cooke said the "no parking" area was put it at the shopping center at the request of the fire department to keep people from parking there. He added that his opinion was that getting rid of a portion of it would not deter the fire department from getting access to the shopping center in case of emergency, but he deferred the question to Bruce. Bruce said the fire code required a 20-foot wide access aisle so two fire trucks could pass each other; as long as that is maintained, he said he thought the fire code requirement would be met.

Ruch asked about how adding the Lowes Foods to Go area would affect traffic in the area, but said she was not sure which entity should approve that. Cooke said he believed those issues would be addressed at the site plan review by the Planning & Zoning Board. Oakley added that the fire marshal's office and several other entities would also have to review the plan.

Ungurait said the Guidelines say to avoid attaching greenhouses, solariums and the like on principal elements of a contributing structure, and that they should be kept as unobtrusive as possible by placing them to the rear of the original building or screening them from the street. Oakley said he did not think Lowes would be considered a contributing structure, but that interpretation was left up to the Board. Schneider said she thought the key was that they need to conform with the overall design and reinforce the architectural detail of the existing structure. She referred to

the section of the Guidelines on porches, entrances, balconies and other outdoor structures, and said she could not find anything to say the addition was not appropriate. She said if this were the kind of drive-thru where, say, six cars might line up, that might be an issue for another Board or Commission to address. She added that she thought HPC's concern should be more about things such as balance and rhythm. McAtee said the store offers a service, but there is no real practical place to put it.

Schneider reviewed the following findings of fact as discussed by the Commission:

- The gables, as designed, are inconsistent with the primary design concepts and with the Guidelines as well as the Oak Ridge Commons guidelines.
- The roof pitch of the drive-thru is inconsistent with the Guidelines.
- The materials and style of the façade are both inconsistent with the Guidelines.
- Several elements that are required as part of the application are missing, including:
  - Property owner's signature
  - Shingle sample
  - Signage details
  - Window framing
  - Window materials
  - Brick sample

McAtee added that it should be included that the Board is not approving or rejecting the sign until complete details have been presented.

Cooke asked if separate COAs could be issued for the building and the sign. Oakley said he thought a COA has already been issued for signage at the shopping center, and as long as the tenants meet those specifications, a separate signage COA is not required. Cooke said they will go through the sign permitting process as required. Spencer said he would add a note on the drawings submitted for the next meeting that the sign must be approved per the sign permit process and that the sign must conform to the guidelines for the shopping center.

**Mac McAtee** made a **motion** that the applicants take the information given to them during the meeting and resubmit the plan, which will be continued to the next regular HPC meeting. **Ron Simpson** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

## **B. Proposed Land Use Plan update process**

Bruce presented a proposed timeline (which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes) that had been approved by the Town Council. The committee would be made up of members of various Town Boards and Commissions as well as a good cross representation of citizens and members of the business community, building/real estate industry and farming/agriculture community.

Schneider asked the impetus for updating the plan now. Bruce said it was a good idea to update such a plan every five years or so. Oak Ridge's Land Use Plan was adopted in 2002, and has only had some minor revisions since then. He said the Town hasn't taken an in-depth look at the plan in some time.

Schneider asked if the Town Council wanted HPC to nominate someone to serve on the committee, and Bruce said yes. Simpson said he had already volunteered for the committee as a representative of the Planning & Zoning Board, on which he also serves. Schneider said she was interested in serving, but she would like to ask Debbie Shoenfeld if she wanted to. McAtee also said he would be interested in being on the committee if no one else wanted to. Simpson asked if it would be OK for the chairman to appoint someone to be the HPC representative after she has talked to Shoenfeld, and Oakley said yes.

**Michelle Ungurait** made a **motion** that the HPC chairman appoint someone to serve as the Commission representative on the Land Use Plan Update committee. **Ron Simpson** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Council report**

Simpson said he could probably give the report at the next Town Council meeting, and Ungurait said she could do it if Simpson was unavailable. Ungurait said she would draft the report, and Simpson or she would present it.

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

None

**C. COAs approved but not completed**

**ORMA addition to Holt Hall.** Smith said she had spoken to President Dan Nobles, who said he would work on completing the COA so it could be closed out.

**6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES**

**A. 2013-14 Budget report (Sandra)**

Smith presented the final 2013-14 budget, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

**B. 2014-15 Budget update (Sandra)**

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

**C. Historic inventory/Markers (Subcommittee)**

Three new markers had just been received, and Schneider invited HPC members to look at the markers following the meeting. Regarding a spelling error on one of the

markers, the Commission requested Smith or Shoenfeld contact the company or see if it could be corrected or reconstructed.

**D. Communications outreach (Ann)**

No report

**E. Display case (Subcommittee)**

McAtee and Smith had created the first display in the new display case on Lake Carolina, which was located near Oak Ridge Military Academy. Smith said new displays will be created every 4-6 months. If HPC members would like to help with the displays or have ideas for new displays, please contact Smith or McAtee.

Schneider suggested a display on Oak Ridge Military Academy might be nice in 2014, since the school is celebrating the centennial of two important buildings - Alumni Hall and Linville Chapel.

**7. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

George McClellan commended the Commission for the job they are doing and thanked them for their service.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mac McAtee** made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. **Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, Town Clerk



Ann Schneider, Chair