



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING  
OCTOBER 10, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

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

**Staff Present**

Sandra Smith, Town Clerk/HPC Staff

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Steven Lantz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

CrossFit Oak Ridge, who was requesting a revised COA as continued from the Commission's September 12, 2012, meeting, asked permission to continue its case for a week because principals were unable to attend the meeting.

**Debbie Shoenfeld** made a **motion** to continue discussion of CrossFit's revised COA to a special call meeting to be held October 17, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. at Oak Ridge Town Hall. **Ann Schneider** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

After discussion, **Ann Schneider** made a **motion** to remove the Historic Signs Update from the meeting agenda because that would be covered under the Historic Inventory report. **Shoenfeld** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

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

**3. APPROVE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2012**

Ron Simpson asked if the remaining unresolved items regarding CrossFit's COA were available on a list. Lantz said he understood that was to have been done and delivered to CrossFit after the September 12, 2012 meeting; Sandra Smith confirmed that had been done by staff. McAtee asked that a copy be sent to Commission members, and other Commission members agreed. Smith said she would email a copy of the COA CrossFit prepared after the September 12, 2012, meeting to HPC members; the document shows items that were approved and those that still need to be addressed.

**Ann Schneider** made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2012, meeting. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

#### 4. OLD BUSINESS

- Report to Town Council

Jim Kinneman gave the report to Town Council at the October 4 meeting. Although three Council members had attended the HPC's September meeting, Kinneman said he emphasized that the Commission appreciated the Council's support. He also tried to emphasize that HPC was not looking to deny requests – particularly the one for signage at Oak Ridge Elementary School. The request was something the Commission had not seen before, and the Commission urged them to come back with options rather than simply give up.

Lantz offered to give the report at the November 8, 2012, Town Council meeting, which would cover HPC's October 10 and October 17 meetings; Simpson agreed to be his backup should Lantz be unable to attend. Schneider volunteered to draft the report.

- Budget Update

Smith reported that out of the Commission's annual budget of \$6,000, about \$30 has been spent to purchase a book and map for the Historic Inventory; that leaves approximately \$5,970.

Smith also announced that while looking through some old HPC paperwork, she found a receipt from Sewah Studios, the company that supplies historic markers, which indicated HPC had paid for a sign in 2008 that was never received. Sewah Studios was contacted and the transaction was confirmed; Sewah said it would not be able to honor the 2008 pricing now, but the Town has a credit for \$1,585.

Shoenfeld asked if Smith would start including specific budget figures in HPC's meeting agenda.

- Historic Inventory

Schneider reported that the subcommittee of she, Shoenfeld, Pitz and Smith had been formed and had met twice. The subcommittee decided that its goal was to take information gathered during the Historic Inventory process and use it to move toward a 5-year plan for Historic Markers.

The group proposed basic criteria for the process, which Shoenfeld read aloud and which included the following:

Have HPC staff review properties in the existing Historic Architectural Inventory and in Guilford County and state inventories and identify 25-30 properties that may be deserving of a historic marker and that meet the following criteria:

- At least 75-100 years old
- Sites with extant structures, although other features such as cemeteries, etc., may contribute to the significance of the structure
- High level of architectural, historical or cultural significance
- Significance of the site and/or structure has warranted previous research or documentation

- Accessible or visible from a frequented road
- Not already marked by a state, county, or town marker

Smith presented a packet of 19 possible historic marker candidates that included photos of the properties and information such as who built/lived in the home, when it was built, architectural styles/elements, what makes it significant to the community, etc. She had applied the criteria as established by the subcommittee to each property.

Schneider suggested another item that be added to the criteria list is that the property be reasonably well maintained, saying it would not be a good idea to install a marker at a property that is in such disarray that it could fall down. Shoenfeld said she felt that similar criteria might be applied to erecting a marker at Ai Church; although efforts are being made to restore the church, there is still much to be done and she didn't feel it would be appropriate to erect a marker yet. Smith said in researching criteria for historic markers from other places, several had indicated that a property should never be recognized with a marker for the sake of trying to preserve it. Smith said it could be argued, because there were graves at Ai that dated back to the 1700s, that it was the site that was historic and not the structure itself. Kinneman compared that situation to the marker erected recognizing the old fire station, which no longer exists. Simpson said he didn't feel it would hurt to wait and mark the Ai property later when the restoration efforts were further along.

Schneider suggested future uses, preservation and ongoing care be added to the criteria. Shoenfeld said the hope was to approve a 5-year plan and erect at least two markers per year, so a decision on Ai did not need to be made immediately.

Schneider said she thought the first step would be to whittle the list down to 10-12 properties that might be recognized with a marker. She suggested plotting out a plan in terms of priority and timing. Schneider said perhaps a map be created so that Commission members would have a visual to refer to, and said geographic spread might also be something that should be considered as well as variety regarding types of property being recognized. Lantz agreed that all markers shouldn't be installed along the same road and in a row like Burma Shave signs.

Smith suggested that there be flexibility in the 5-year plan; just because a property might be on the priority list doesn't mean that it might be replaced by another property later that is deemed more worthy of recognition at that time. Lantz said there might be opportunity for properties to move up the list if the owner or others were willing to pay for the marker. Schneider said property owners might also have additional historical documentation that could cause their properties to move up on the list.

Lantz said from his experience on the Commission, markers for three properties could be approved by the Commission at that night's meeting and – after going through the process of getting property owner approval, determining the wording on the sign, ordering the sign and having it installed – it will be difficult to finish during the current fiscal year. Smith urged the Commission to verify wording on the sign for accuracy and to make sure documentation supports claims on the signage.

Lantz also suggested not pre-paying for signs, as was done in the past, although he said he thought it was fine to lock in a price.

Schneider said the process was part of the whole Historic Architectural Inventory process and, when completed, the next step might be to identify properties using broader criteria (e.g., at least 50 years old, etc.). The intent is to get a handle on all the historic properties in the town and determine how that information could be used in the future – perhaps to be published, used in an online publication, added to the Town website, etc.

After additional discussion, Schneider said the subcommittee will plan to meet before the November HPC meeting, and the Commission will discuss the properties on the list prepared by staff in November. Shoenfeld suggested all HPC members study the list and accompanying information prepared by Smith and perhaps be ready to discuss which 10 properties each member thinks should get a marker at the next meeting.

- Review of Guidelines for final corrections  
Schneider said the CrossFit COA had been a learning experience and perhaps other items within the Guidelines should be changed or clarified. Kinneman said his concern was that the Commission's proposed changes to the Guidelines could continue forever; he said he thought the goal was to clean up the Guidelines, and he felt that should be done and approved by the Town Council before undertaking additional changes. Schneider said one of the HPC's stated goals was to identify gaps based on lessons learned from past COA requests. Lantz agreed that lessons had been learned recently, but that additional holes or issues that need to be strengthened could be identified later. He said that part of the Commission's outreach goal is to educate people that the Guidelines exist, and he thought the current changes should be completed and approved and then notify owners of more prominent properties who had used the Guidelines in the past (e.g., the owners of Oak Ridge Commons, Oak Ridge Military Academy, CrossFit) that changes had been made.

McAtee asked if that wasn't what the Town Council had been told was being done to the Guidelines, and Schneider said the stated goal had been to update the Guidelines, increase clarity and correct gaps. Shoenfeld said the Council had been told recently that the Guidelines were not really being changed, just cleaned up.

Schneider said she thought it was a problem that it never says in the Guidelines that if you receive a COA and then changes are made, that you may have to apply for a new COA. Lantz said rather than changing the Guidelines, he thought the language on the COA Application needs to be changed to say: "Any alterations after approval require a revised COA."

As a past Council member, Kinneman again said he thought changes should be presented to the Council in chunks; if too much is incorporated at one time, sometimes Council might not approve the entire project because they have issues with a certain aspect. Kinneman advised asking for the Council's approval on various portions of the project separately.

Ann Pitz said when applying for any type of municipal review, applicants generally have to sign a document; there is nowhere on the application that says the applicant understands must adhere to the Historic Guidelines, she said. Again, Kinneman suggested “closing the door” on the current suggested changes before working on other issues.

Schneider suggested asking Smith to format the final document. Shoenfeld said there were additional items that needed to be looked at. She said some items are listed in Guidelines under Section A - Changes to Building Exteriors that are also applicable under Section C - New Construction Guidelines, but that are not included in Section C. For example, in Section A the Guidelines say exposed plywood siding (which she compared to T1-11) should not be used, but that is not stated in Section C. Schneider asked if that is because the material might be appropriate to use on a new structure but not a historic one, and Shoenfeld said she didn't think it would be appropriate on either type of structure. She also talked about the use of synthetic trims and siding as stated in Section A, but that are not under the new construction section in Section C.

Lantz asked whether that step was missed in the original document, or is new construction thought of differently. Shoenfeld said to her, synthetic materials mean vinyl trim and vinyl or aluminum siding, but not necessarily a product like Hardie Board. Schneider said she thought some of those concerns would be addressed if the appendices were moved up within the document. Instead of saying vinyl siding is not allowed, the Commission could instead say that vinyl siding is not consistent with materials used in the Historic District.

Lantz said he saw no issue with having the Town Council approve the changes proposed thus far, then HPC immediately going back and considering additional changes. Shoenfeld said she thought the goal of the Guidelines was to be able to look at specific sections, e.g., new construction or rehabilitating a historic structure, to see what materials are allowed. Lantz suggested possibly having a single section that applies to siding – whether it is on a new or historic building.

Lantz said he felt updates to the Guidelines might never be finished because new issues would continue to arise. Kinneman said now there are many manmade materials that would look much like the original and last for a long time.

Shoenfeld said the proposed changes to the Guidelines made it much more usable than it was previously. Kinneman suggested the Commission “take the win” by having Council approve the document with the proposed changes now, then continue to look at other issues later.

Schneider said she would send out the executive summary which lists the minor edits and revisions made for clarity or accessibility, and includes three areas where there were content changes: pruning standards; and the statement that other structures or features not specifically addressed must be consistent with the characteristics of the Historic District, thereby creating a “catchall” section for things like cell towers that didn't seem to fit anywhere else. (The other change was to delete the Guilford County Development Ordinance, Article IX from the appendices, since it is redundant to the Town ordinance).

Lantz asked if the intention was to get approval by the Commission via email and then try to get the document in front of the Town Council at the November 8 meeting; Schneider said that would require HPC signing off on the final formatting, approving the memo to Council, and then allowing Council time to review the document before being asked to approve it. Lantz said that would probably mean the document would not be considered for approval by the Town Council until the Council's December meeting. Kinneman said the Council would likely want to have the Town Attorney, Town Manager and perhaps the Town Planner review the document as well. Schneider said perhaps HPC could invite those reviewing the document to submit questions; she added that she would like to be at the Council meeting when the issue is discussed.

Shoenfeld pointed out that on page 16 where the Guidelines reference Article 4.12 of the Guilford County Development Ordinance, it does not state that the ordinance can be found in Appendix IV; Schneider said that item could be double-checked, and small changes like spelling errors would not need to come back before the Commission. Simpson confirmed that the intent is to get the proposed revised Guidelines to the Council before its November 8 meeting, but that the Commission was not expecting any action at that time. Lantz agreed, saying HPC would ask for action from Council at its December meeting.

Schneider asked if a formal vote needed to be taken, and Lantz said he didn't think so. Schneider reiterated that she would send out the executive summary to HPC members; she said if anyone has issues, to let her know – otherwise she would assume the executive summary and Guidelines revisions were OK.

Lantz said he would like for the HPC to empower the subcommittee of Schneider and Shoenfeld to make changes where needed; anyone who wants to contribute or serve on the subcommittee can do so. No HPC members voice opposition to Lantz's suggestion.

## 5. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

## 6. UPDATES

- Communications Outreach (Ann)  
In response to a question from Lantz, Schneider said no Northwest Observer ads are planned at this point. HPC has discussed possibly repeating the ad that ran previously, asking for information, documents, photos, etc., on historic properties in the town. Smith said a few responses had been received to the previous ad.

Schneider said she thought there were at least four ads in the Northwest Observer that had been paid for. She suggested perhaps doing a series of ads regarding the new Historic Guidelines once they have been approved.

Shoenfeld said she also thought residents would be interested in knowing where Historic Markers are going to be erected once that is decided.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Ann Schneider** made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. **Ron Simpson** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

  
Sandra B. Smith, Town Clerk

  
Steven Lantz, Chair