



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2016 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

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

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Planning Director  
Sandra Smith, Town Clerk

**Members Absent**

Kristin Kubly  
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, then explained the purpose and goals of the Commission, which is to see that any proposed changes are compatible with the special character of the Historic District and the surrounding buildings.

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

**Mac McAtee** made a **motion** to approve the meeting agenda after removing approval of the June 8, 2016 and July 20, 2016 meeting minutes and adding discussion of the October meeting date. **Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Council report.** Schneider volunteered to present the report at the October Town Council meeting, and Shoenfeld volunteered to draft it.

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

A COA was approved for Joseph Lombardo, 2419 Oak Ridge Road, to install a pool and deck, which will not be visible from the road.

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

COAs not completed at this time include Bojangles, the new commercial building at Marketplace shopping center, and the houses in Oak Ridge Plantation and Barrow Place.

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. COA CASE # 16-11:** Pam and Bill Lemmons request approval of a new single-family residence. The property is located at 8418 Linville Road in Oak Ridge Township. The property is Guilford County Tax Parcel #0222375, is zoned RS-40, Historic District Overlay, and is owned by Pam and Bill Lemmons.

Schneider stated that the Design Guidelines are designed to provide recommendations for design aesthetics within the Oak Ridge Historic District and are intentionally broad to allow applicants a broad pathway toward compliance with the goal of making sure approved projects are compatible with the District and the surrounding buildings. Schneider said the Commission would be conducting a quasi-judicial evidentiary hearing, which means each Commission member acts 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. Schneider said 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 explained what constituted a conflict of interest: A fixed opinion; undisclosed ex parte communications with anyone about the case; a close familial, business or other relationship with an affected person; or a financial interest in the outcome of the case. She asked if any Commission members had such a conflict. Commission members Mac McAtee, Debbie Shoenfeld and Caroline Ruch each said they had no conflicts. Schneider said she had none but disclosed that she had a discussion with Planning Director Bill Bruce on the project.

Schneider read the property description, then asked to confirm the eligibility of the project and that the Commission had enough information to make findings of fact and render a decision. Commission members agreed by consensus that they did.

Town Clerk Sandra Smith swore in Planning Director Bill Bruce and Kevan Combs and Tommy Pegram of Combs, Inc.

Pegram said he felt what had been submitted was fairly self-explanatory, and that they had tried to follow the five major design components – scale, balance, rhythm, proportion and order. He said Bill and Pam Lemmons, who own the property, were not at the meeting, but they were very educated about the Design Guidelines and had them in hand at their first meeting. He said this was not an effort, but rather an extension of their personalities. He said he was willing to answer any questions from the Commission.

McAtee asked about the vaulted screened family room that is shown on the plans. Combs said that was a typographical error.

Schneider asked if Pegram had worked with staff on the design of the house. Pegram said he had talked with staff about scheduling and items they felt were missing. He said he understood what the Commission wanted to see after reading the Guidelines. Schneider said it generally helps to talk with staff during the development phase of a building. Combs said that after working with the

Commission on his in-law's house last year, he felt like he was educated on the Guidelines and the building was designed with that in mind.

Ruch asked about the brick size, noting that the plan says they are oversize. Combs said modular is the name of the brick size used on older brick ranch-style homes, but all houses built today use what is known as oversize brick. McAtee asked if bricklayers charge by the brick, and Combs said yes. He added that he did not know of any house built during the last 15 years that used modular brick.

Schneider said she was impressed with the prairie-style windows. She noted that Arts and Crafts style had been mentioned in the narrative submitted, and said she assumed the design had drawn from that. She noted the use of Arts and Crafts style, as well as National Folk and Colonial Revival styles, in the district. She asked if Combs or Pegram had drawn inspiration from any particular home in the district. Combs said he had driven around and looked at various houses, as had Mr. and Mrs. Lemmons. He said there was no specific inspiration, other than that they were trying to balance what the Lemmons want in their home and what they believe the Guidelines require. Schneider pointed out that in addition to the five guiding design principles, the Commission looks at compatibility. She cited section C, item 2 on page 47 of the Guidelines. She also cited the Guidelines on page 48 A.1, which say new construction should be designed for compatibility with the predominant design and siting traditions on the Historic District. She read that adaptations using traditional designs are encouraged and serve as a visual and aesthetic link to existing structures. She said she could see the link to the Arts and Crafts style, but she could see it mostly in the porch area.

Shoenfeld said A.2 on page 48 says to pursue new interpretations of traditional designs that contribute variety to the continuing physical development of Oak Ridge.

Schneider said there are several overriding concepts to be considered other than just the basic design concepts. She said the porch of the house plan submitted shows a lot of Arts and Crafts influence with its columns, stone and the size and scale of windows, but she did not see that influence carrying through the entire structure. She also noted that the porch is recessed. She said typically porches in Arts and Crafts style are dominant, covering a good deal of the front of the structure. She said that a building does not have to be symmetrical to be balanced. She said porches on Arts and Crafts style houses generally protrude from the house.

Combs noted the shape of the lot and showed on the site plan showed where the septic field is located. He said they did not want to clear any more trees than necessary from the property, and the septic had been backed up as far as it could without doing that. Combs said he felt like they were trying to fit 50 pounds into a 40-pound bag. If said if they move the front of the house forward, they still have to meet the minimum setbacks from Linville Road.

Shoenfeld said she felt like the house had a little bit of Craftsman influence, but other than those details, it looks like a house that could be seen in a subdivision anywhere. Combs said they did add details around the porch area as much as possible, but they did not want to add so many details that the house appeared gaudy. He said there was not much more that could be fit onto the house without it

appearing out of place. Shoenfeld said she was not asking Combs to fit even the porch across the front of the house. She said she was saying to take some of the Craftsman architectural details and add them along the entire front elevation. For example, she said he might use stone along the front under the windows.

Combs said all the brick is offset, and that the front of the house does not look flat. Schneider asked about the soldier trim, and Combs said it was added because it gives the house dimension. Shoenfeld said that was not really a Craftsman detail, and Schneider agreed, saying Arts and Crafts style houses were not generally brick. Combs said they had added the soldier trim and other details to give the structure more character.

Ruch said she was going to suggest using corbels. She said corbels are often used under the peaks of eaves in Arts and Crafts homes, and that it is the decorative woodworking that is a big part of Arts and Crafts architecture. Shoenfeld also suggested windbracing, but Combs said the house had a shallow overhang and that there would make it difficult to incorporate corbels, exposed beams or other details in the gable.

Schneider said the Guidelines specifically say inspiration should be drawn from existing homes and that new interpretations are possible, but whatever is used has to be cohesive. She said she thought the Commission was suggesting that Combs take the Arts and Crafts influence further. She said had thought about windbracing as well. Combs said he was also trying to make the design fit into the property owners' budget. He said they had spent a good deal of time on the design. Schneider said she could tell.

Pegram said the architectural details may seem concentrated on one area of the house, but that everything on the house had been thought out. He said the Lemmonses did not want superfluous details. He said they were trying to satisfy the Guidelines, the fact that the property owner did not want to be overly ornate, and the budget. He said it was not an Arts and Crafts style house, but was a collective that contained those elements.

Ruch said the Design Guidelines do not say a design must be verbatim of a historical design, but that the pieces used have to be harmonious. She said just because design elements on a house are eclectic does not mean they are harmonious. Pegram said when the Lemmonses came to them and asked them to build the house, they had the Guidelines in hand. He said they felt like the details are harmonious, and nothing is overstated.

Ruch said she appreciated that. She said the center of the house seems to depict a particular style, but the sides of it look more like a brick ranch. She said if you cover the center of the house, it does not look particularly historical because the rest of the house does not have details of any particular style of architecture.

Shoenfeld said the dormer over the center of the porch does not particularly look like an Arts and Crafts design.

Schneider asked Combs and Pegram if they would be willing to consider extending some of the architectural details to other parts of the house. She said there were many ways to achieve that, including window trim, gable trim or a cornice. She said she was suggesting it might be possible to make the house more compatible with the Historic District if some type of details was added, such as perhaps fly bracing. She said a lot of Craftsman houses have a central dormer, but they don't usually go all the way down to the top of the porch. She described the sides of the former as being more vertical.

Combs said they had played around with that, but found that the dormer would be higher than the ridgepole. He approached the dais and showed Commission members details he had considered and how they might be incorporated into the design. Combs said the Lemmonses did not want to go against the wishes of the Commission, but that they had given him a budget to stay within.

To summarize the conversation, Schneider said it was not the Commission's job or place to design the project, nor did it want it to appear that it was overstepping its bounds. She said sometimes the Commission tells an applicant there needs to be more architectural details related to the style, and the applicant asks for examples. She said sometimes it is good for the Commission to give the applicant specifics. Combs said he wanted the Commission's input, and he thanked them. Schneider said more dialogue could occur at staff level before the design is submitted. She said the Commission had talked about many details, including treatment to the eaves, the design of the dormer and perhaps the use of stone, although that would not show as much once the landscaping matures. She said she loved the window coverage on the front of the house, but that overall the window coverage was a little low – particularly on the sides of the house, which are visible from the road. She said perhaps more of a statement window could be incorporated, but McAtee said he did not think it would fit in the area Schneider suggested.

Combs said he had tried to get more windows incorporated into the design and that was why he had put the windows he had on the dormers.

Bruce said he thought the comment about stone not being seen that much was a good one. He said when the landscaping matures, it will provide interest to the entire front of the house.

Combs said he had included the offsets on the front of the house to prevent having a long, flat wall. He said he was trying to make everything fit into a relatively small house, and he thought the Commission would be impressed that he was not trying to build a "McMansion." Schneider said she did appreciate that.

Combs said he hated that he could not call Commission members to discuss the plan. He said some things could not be done because of the budget or because they do not work with the house plan.

Schneider asked if Bruce had any additional comments, and Bruce said no. Schneider said the staff report noted that the window coverage on the sides of the house was less than 10 percent. Bruce said he had talked with Pegram about that, but understood it was hard to include more windows with this particular plan

because it affected the interior of the house. Regarding the side of the house that contains the garage, Shoenfeld commented that the window lights in the garage door could be counted and would increase the percentage of window coverage.

Combs approached the dais. He showed the Commission how the property owners wanted another door into the bedroom, but he had explained to them how there was not room.

Shoenfeld said in designing a house, the builder needs to work with clients. She said elements like windows need to be considered when the floor plan is being laid out. Combs said he had tried to do that, but it was more difficult when a large house was not being built.

Shoenfeld pointed out things she said needed to be considered when constructing a house. She said on page 51 in the Design Guidelines under roofing, it says it is not appropriate as a rule to construct roofs more than one-half the height of the building. She said the way to get around that by putting in the dormer, which Combs had done and which makes the height of the roof acceptable. She also read from the Guidelines which say it is not appropriate to construct high-pitched roofs without dormer windows characteristic of that roof style. Shoenfeld also referred to page 52, item G.10 regarding windows and doors, which says to ensure that dormers suit the style of the building and roof form to which they are attached, and Combs said they had done that. Shoenfeld said they had talked about using this type of dormer because of the way the ceiling was designed, but said this was not really a Craftsman dormer. She said those were things to think about. Combs said they had tried to make the dormer be within 2 inches of the same pitches as the rest of the roofline. She said she was not sure the dormer suited the style of building or roof form, and Combs said he interpreted "roof form" to mean pitch. Shoenfeld said they had already discussed windows.

Shoenfeld referred to the section of the Guidelines on mechanical systems, and asked if the air conditioning unit would be in the back of the house. Combs said he could place them there. Pegram said Bruce had asked him that question. He said he told Bruce that because of the location of the back porch, he would like to place it around the corner of the house and screen it with landscaping. Shoenfeld asked if all units would be located in that area, and Combs said potentially there would only be one.

Shoenfeld asked about the location of the well. Combs said the well had already been drilled. He said the sale of the property had been contingent on drilling the well and getting ample water. Schneider said the landscaping plan did not show a landscaping bed or bushes to screen the well. She said that could be a condition on the COA. She said she had no problem with the landscaping plan.

Ruch said the height of the house was shown to be 22 feet. She asked if the topography was going to make it look taller. Combs said the lot was a little higher than the one next door, and the crawl space would probably be 4 feet tall on the low side of the house.

Ruch also asked about the front setback. Combs said the house would probably be about 15 feet further from the road than the house next door. He said he remembered the conversation with the Commission when he was designing the subdivision, and that the houses had intentionally been placed at different distances from the road so they did not line up perfectly.

McAtee asked if the location of the septic field had been approved, or if it was possible the county would ask them to move it one direction or another. Combs said that should not happen, because he had stayed within the building envelope that had previously been approved.

Shoenfeld asked if the Commission was going to request that a drawing be resubmitted, showing the addition of corbels and flybracing. Schneider suggested the Commission consider making approval of the COA contingent upon submittal of a drawing showing the addition of architectural details across the entire front of the house. She said the Commission could either approve the drawing by email or come view it at Town Hall. Combs said he could likely get the changes made within a day or two.

Schneider encouraged Combs to try to think of ways to increase the window coverage, but she could see that the sides of the house were fairly well screened and she understood that the front window could not be changed. She said she did not think that needed to be a condition. She said one condition on the COA could be that the well would be screened by plantings. She added that she did not think the Commission needed to see those drawings. Combs said that was no problem. She asked if the Commission was ready to consider findings of fact.

**Ann Schneider** made a **motion** to adopt the following findings of fact:

- To accept the staff report.
- To note some concern about compliance with the Design Guidelines on page 48 under General Guidelines, items 1 and 2; page 47, section C under New Construction, items 1 and 2; and page 52, section H regarding architectural details.
- To note some concern about the window coverage on the sides of the structure, but it was determined that given the low visibility by other homes and plantings that the issue was not a concern to the Commission.
- To note that the mechanical systems will be located on the rear of the side yard of the house.
- To make it a condition that the air conditioning unit be screened with plantings.

**Caroline Ruch** seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

**Debbie Shoenfeld** made a **motion** to approve COA-16-11 to allow for construction a new, single-family residence located at 8418 Linville Road in Oak Ridge Township, Guilford County Tax Parcel #0222375, zoned RS-40, Historic District Overlay Zone, owned by Bill and Pam Lemmons. The scope of the work is to be as described in the COA application dated August 19, 2016, and as described in the applicant's presentation and responses to the Historic Preservation Commission during its meeting on September 21, 2016, using drawings, materials, samples, photos and colors as presented to the Commission. The COA approval was conditional upon the following stipulations:

- That landscape plantings be installed to hide the HVAC system and well.

- Contingent upon the evaluation and approval of the addition of architectural details across the front elevation to better incorporate architectural details typical of Arts and Crafts style construction.

**Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

**B. Discussion of October meeting date.**

Schneider said she would be out of town on the Commission's scheduled meeting night in October. She said there had been no COA applications submitted as of this time, but the Commission may want to reschedule the meeting date. She asked Town Clerk Sandra Smith to poll the Commission by email to see whether October 19 or October 12 suited the majority to ensure that there would be a quorum present if a meeting was necessary.

**5. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES**

**A. 2016-17 budget update.**

**B. Grant program.**

Schneider reported that the work has been completed on the Sawyer house which belongs to Barry and Susie Westmoreland, the paperwork has been submitted and a check issued. Work at the Larkins house which belongs to Gary and Myra Blackburn house is complete but the final report has not been submitted yet. Work is being done on the shutters at the Sanders-Blaylock house which belongs to Roy Nydorf and Terry Hammond, and a grant sign needs to be installed. Fundraising is being done for work in connection with the grant for Alumni Hall at Oak Ridge Military Academy.

**C. Heritage Day.**

Several Commission members had agreed to man a display on the Historic Preservation Commission as part of Oak Ridge Heritage Day, which was being sponsored by the Parks & Recreation Commission and would be held at Oak Ridge Town Park in October. Discussion ensued about what might be included in the display.

**D. Historic Markers.**

Marker dedication ceremonies were scheduled for the Larkins house on November 5 and the Zack Whitaker house on October 23. The Commission also discussed a marker for the Benbow/Stafford Farm, which will be installed at the town park next year.

**E. Historic Oak Ridge Celebration.**

The Commission discussed the possibility of creating a book that shows the historic properties in the Historic District.

**F. Communication outreach.**

Schneider said she had made plans for an ad about the Historic District and Commission to run in the Northwest Observer's At Home section on September 30.

**G. Display case.**

No report

**H. Training.**

None scheduled at this time

**6. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

None

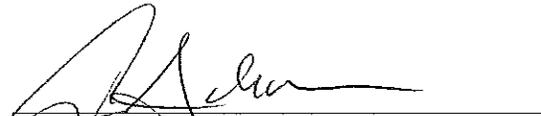
**7. ADJOURNMENT**

**Caroline Ruch** made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. **Mac McAtee** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, NCCMC, CMC  
Town Clerk



Ann Schneider  
Chair