



**OAK RIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
APRIL 26, 2017 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Ann Schneider, Chair  
Kristin Kubly  
Caroline Ruch  
Paul Woolf, Alternate (Sitting)

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Planning Director  
Sandra Smith, Town Clerk

**Members Absent**

Debbie Shoenfeld, Vice Chair

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Ann Schneider called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m. She welcomed meeting attendees and introduced Commission members and staff. Schneider 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**

**Paul Woolf** made a **motion** to approve the agenda after removing approval of the March 15, 2017 minutes. **Kristin Kubly** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

**3. APPROVE MINUTES**

**Paul Woolf** made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2017 special meeting. **Kristin Kubly** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Council report.** Schneider presented the report at the April Town Council meeting. She volunteered to present in May.

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

None

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

The painting at L&T Small Engine Repair has not yet been completed. Bruce said the COA is good for one year, but he will encourage the applicant to complete the project as soon as possible.

**D. Design Review Meetings.**

None

**E. Historic District violations.**

None

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

Schneider said the Commission would conduct a quasi-judicial evidentiary hearing with sworn testimony, which means each Commission member acts as an independent judge and a member of the Commission, and all testimony is legally binding. She 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 ensuring approved projects are compatible with the District and the surrounding buildings. She said Commission members are each tasked with being impartial, without taking the opinions of themselves or others into account, and that all applications must be approved, denied or continued within 180 days. She stated that appeals of the Commission's decisions are heard by the Board of Adjustment; appeals of Board of Adjustment decisions are heard by Guilford County Superior Court.

Schneider then asked if Commission members had any conflicts 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 a case. Commission members Caroline Ruch, Kristin Kubly and Paul Woolf indicated they had no conflicts. Schneider said she had none, but disclosed that she had briefly discussed the Blackburn's COA with them before it was submitted and had participated in a design review meeting on the Pugh Oil structure with architect Eric Bradley and Planning Director Bill Bruce.

Schneider read the property description, then asked Commission members to confirm the eligibility of the project, whether it fell within the scope of the Design Guidelines, and whether they had sufficient information to make findings of fact and render a decision. Commission members agreed by consensus that they did.

- A. COA CASE # 17-05:** FPB Oak Ridge LLC requests approval of a 2,500-square-foot automobile service facility. The property is located at 8004 Marketplace Drive in Oak Ridge Township. The property is Guilford County Tax Parcel 01.66237, Zoned CU-SC (Conditional Use- Shopping Center), Historic District Overlay, Greensboro (GW-III) Overlay, Scenic Corridor Overlay. It is owned by FPB Oak Ridge LLC.

Bruce noted a typo on page 1 of the staff report, pointing out that it should say "parking is located on the side of the structure...."

Schneider also noted that page 2 of the staff report gives information about lighting wattage, and while that information is relevant to the Town lighting ordinance, it does not have any bearing on the Commission's review.

Town Clerk Sandra Smith swore in Planning Director Bill Bruce, architect Eric Bradley and engineer Leigh Potts.

Bradley said the project was for a 2,500-square-foot automobile service facility. He introduced Leigh Potts with the engineering firm of Withers & Ravenel. Potts said he had taken some of the comments from the design review meeting and tried to incorporate them into the building. He said it was impossible to rotate the building as suggested because of the size of the lot. He said the landscaping plan is complete and has the correct number of plantings. He said there was a recorded utility easement along the front of the property, but because there were no utilities located there and no plan for any, they had been able to spread the plantings out along that area. Potts said there would be LED lights, and that the fixtures were more streamlined than the old shoebox-type of lighting fixture. He said the actual lights were located inside the fixtures so they would project downward, and that the photo cell lights would come on automatically when it got dark. He said the lighting plan had been created by Duke Energy.

Schneider commented that Bradley had said the photo in the packet was of the company's facility in Kernersville and showed the color of the brick. She asked about another photo in the packet which looked like the building at 8001 Marketplace Drive; Bradley said she was correct, and that it had been included because he did not have another good image of the gooseneck light fixture proposed for the side of this building. He said the standing seam metal roof would also be the same as it is on 8001 Marketplace Drive.

Schneider said at the design review meeting, she had said the Commission typically does not want to see oversize doors facing the right of way. Bruce said the Town's development ordinance said drive-throughs should be located at the rear of buildings. Schneider said she was also concerned about the scale of the doors, which appear much like windows on the building, so she had asked if they could try to rotate the building on the lot. She said the building would also be located in the center of the Historic District on a prominent site, but that the lot slopes downward in the back. She said at the first design review meeting, a franchise building was presented; she said the design had come a long way since that first meeting. Bradley pointed out the building's proposed orientation on the property, and said rotating the building would almost make the doors seem more prominent.

Ruch asked why there was a 7-foot retaining wall at the front of the property. Potts explained that there is a 14- or 15-foot slope from the road to the curb in the existing driveway at the back of the building, so the drop had to be accommodated in some way. Ruch said that could work to the applicant's advantage; she asked how much of the front elevation of the building would not be seen, and Bradley said probably most of the large doors would not be visible from the road. Schneider also

pointed out that landscaping and the retaining wall would also help block the view of the building from Oak Ridge Road. Ruch asked if most of the building would be obscured, and Potts said likely only the building parapet would be visible.

Woolf asked about the site lines in the area. Potts responded that there was a wide stretch of right of way there, and said the planting areas would be far enough back so as not to obscure the oncoming traffic.

Ruch asked about sidewalks. Bruce said a sidewalk would be required, but it would be located between the landscaping and the road.

Ruch asked if the front doors would be visible from the road. Bradley said they would largely be hidden. He said a 42-inch guardrail would also help to hide them. Potts said the guard rail would be an aluminum safety barrier, and Bradley said it would be identical to what was installed at 8001 Marketplace Drive.

Schneider asked if the retaining wall would be visible when walking down the sidewalk. Bradley said the top of it would be almost flush with the ground, and added that shrubbery would be planted between the sidewalk and the retaining wall.

Kubly asked if the top of the roof would be visible from the road. Bradley said no, and Potts explained that the building would have a parapet roof and that the HVAC units would be on top of the building and would be obscured by the parapet. Schneider asked if the parapet was on three sides of the building roof, and Bradley said it was on all four sides. Schneider asked Bruce if the concerns he raised about the roof in the staff report were resolved, and Bruce said yes.

Woolf asked about signage. Bradley said Pugh Oil was working with a sign company, but his guess was that the main body of the signage would be located above the overhead doors. Schneider asked if a monument sign was also anticipated. Bradley said he did not recall discussing that, but he assumed Pugh Oil would want the maximum signage allowed. Potts said he knew a separate permit for signage was required and that any signage must meet the requirements of the ordinance. Schneider said she thought it would have been nice if the COA for signage had been included so the Commission only had to consider one COA for the project.

Schneider said she had originally been concerned about the overhead doors since the Design Guidelines talk about human scale. She remarked that when the doors are closed, they will basically look like windows. She said there was also a precedent for an overhead door at the car wash across the road, and that the car wash building is also located below the grade of the road.

Bradley explained that Pugh Oil had originally worked with a different architect, whose idea for the structure was basically a brick box. Bradley said he had done work in Oak Ridge before, most recently the building at 8001 Marketplace Drive. When his firm got involved, Bradley said his firm tried to get away from the plain box-style of building and give the design some relief on the face and with the variation of parapet heights. He said the original design had only a brick façade on the east and west sides, and there were no windows there. He said his firm added

the accent brick and the high transom windows. Bradley added that the higher parapet roof provides a screen for the HVAC system, and he also noted the gooseneck-style lighting on the building. Bradley pointed out the EFIS color in the packet, and said the EFIS cornice would match the color of the accent brick.

Schneider said she felt the design presented was a more visually rich design than the original did. She asked the Commission to discuss the windows, and said her primary concern was with the lack of architectural detail. She said the current design seems evocative of traditional brick adapted to commercial brick, and it is similar to other commercial brick in Oak Ridge, including what was used at 8001 Marketplace Drive.

Bradley presented a sample of the trim and awnings, which was a dark bronze color. Schneider complimented the color.

Regarding the windows, Schneider suggested the Commission look at the staff report and Design Guidelines, which state that windows should not occupy more than 40 percent of any façade of a building with 10 to 20 percent preferred. She said the Commission needed to decide if the amount of window coverage is appropriate with 35 percent in the front, 25 percent in the rear, 13 percent on one side and 8 percent coverage on the other side. She said the percentage of window coverage is a little low in some areas and a little high in others, but the total does not exceed 40 percent on any side. She asked if that seemed consistent with the Design Guidelines; Woolf said he thought it did.

Schneider said she thought the architectural details were sufficient and were compatible with the Historic District when considering both contributing structures and newer buildings. Ruch and Woolf both agreed.

Schneider directed the Commission to the landscaping, and said this plan made her realize how much landscaping could transform a site, as would a sidewalk. She said she had gotten used to seeing the property as an open space. Woolf agreed, pointing out that the site has been used for years as a pumpkin patch in the fall.

With no further comments, Schneider asked for the findings of fact, and the Commission began compiling them.

**Caroline Ruch** made a **motion** to adopt the findings of fact as follows:

- To accept the staff report as part of the findings of fact, with the addition that the applicant had clarified that the parapet walls would screen all mechanical systems from the road
- That the building plan is compatible with existing and contributing structures in the Historic District in terms of appropriateness of siting, shape, mass, size and materials, and as further articulated by its roof shape, fenestration and detailing per Section C.2. beginning on page 47
- That the proposed building is not incongruent with the special character of the Historic District when considered with regard to the five primary design concepts as described in Section C.1. beginning on page 46 of the Guidelines as evidence within the Oak Ridge Historic District

- To add that the Commission found a lack of human scale on the oversize doors, which was rectified based on the building's elevation with a 7-foot retaining wall, which drops most of the building below the grade of the road and conceals most of the doors. In addition, landscaping would help further conceal the oversize doors on the front elevation based on Section G, page 52, of the Guidelines
  - That the Commission had addressed the window coverage, which seemed consistent at less than 40 percent, which is also addressed in Section G, page 52, number 4, which says it is not appropriate for windows to cover more than 40 percent of a building, with 10 to 20 percent window coverage is preferred. The proposed building largely does exceed the 10 to 20 percent, with some sides having as much as 35 percent window coverage, but that is still within an acceptable range as expressed in the Guidelines
- Paul Woolf** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

**Caroline Ruch** made a **motion**, based on the findings of fact, to approve COA # 17-05 to allow for construction of a 2,500-square-foot automobile service facility at 8004 Marketplace Drive in Oak Ridge Township, being Guilford County Tax Parcel # 0166237, Zoned CU-SC (Conditional Use- Shopping Center), Historic District Overlay, Greensboro (GW-III) Overlay, Scenic Corridor Overlay, and owned by FPB Oak Ridge LLC. The scope of the project is to be constructed as described in the COA application dated March 1, 2017, and in related information, testimony and the staff report, and using materials/colors, drawings and photos as presented to the Historic Preservation Commission on April 26, 2017. **Paul Woolf** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

- B. COA CASE # 17-06:** Gary and Myra Blackburn request approval to construct a 15-foot by 6-foot deck at the rear of their property. The property is located at 2345 Oak Ridge Road in Oak Ridge Township. It is Guilford County Tax Parcel #0163171. Zoned RS-30, Scenic Corridor Overlay, Historic District Overlay, and is owned by Gary and Myra Blackburn.

Schneider read the property description, then asked Commission members to confirm the eligibility of the project, whether it fell within the scope of the Design Guidelines, and whether they had sufficient information to make findings of fact and render a decision. Commission members agreed by consensus that they did.

Bruce said he probably erred on the side of caution by bringing the case before the Commission. He said the project cannot be seen from N.C. 150, but it is a corner lot and can be seen from Zack Road.

Smith swore in Gary Blackburn.

Blackburn said the visibility of the project changes seasonally because of the trees, something that had changed even within the last month. He said the deck that was being proposed on the rear of the house is actually the last part of the restoration of the house. He said the deck was actually a second-story enlarged balcony, and that they knew it had been there previously because you could see where the railings had been connected to the house. In addition, there is a door on the second story of the house that leads out onto what was originally the roof of the back porch, which creates about a 14-inch drop outside the door, so they assumed there was some kind of balcony there. He said they assumed the railings were the same pattern as the restored railings on each side of the house.

Woolf asked if Blackburn had any idea how far the deck extended. Blackburn said you could see where the rails originally connected to the exterior of the house and you could see where the posts were. He said Jerry Potkay (Old School Home Repair) had agreed to construct the deck, and that Potkay had done other restoration work on the house. Blackburn said a structural engineer had also visited the site and said the plan satisfied the building code requirements. He said what was constructed when the house was originally built may not be up to code now. He said the engineer was impressed with the structural soundness of the house. Blackburn explained that 2-inch-by-10-inch pine beams were located under the house and were held up by column and curtain brick construction with a brick column about 2-foot square that was curtained in between with brick. Blackburn said Potkay had checked the footings and reported they were approved. He said they were just waiting for approval of the COA so they could start construction and get the house to look like it did in the 1930s.

Woolf asked if the deck would have any exterior stairs to lead to the ground. Blackburn said no, and there was no reason to think there had been any stairs there originally. If said if there was a fire, one could figure out how to get down.

Schneider said her grandmother's house had a feature similar to this and it featured a large balcony off a bedroom. She said she thought the project seemed consistent with what had been approved for the restoration of the railing done previously on the front of the house. She added that she was pleased that the Blackburns were replacing an original feature of the house.

Blackburn said he thought the railings were probably removed after Major R.P. Larkins, the original owner, died in the 1950s and his wife was left to maintain and keep up the house. He said by that time, the railings had probably started to crumble. He said Mrs. Larkins probably did not have enough money for their upkeep, so it had been easier to just remove the railings. Schneider agreed, saying it was probably cheaper to remove them than fix them. She said she thought the project was fairly straightforward because it was compatible with the structure and the Historic District.

Woolf said he applauded the Blackburns for returning the house to how it was originally.

Schneider asked if the Commission was ready to begin stating the findings of fact. She noted that the project was for restoration of a historic feature, so the Commission thought it was compatible.

**Caroline Ruch** made a **motion** to approve the findings of fact:

- To include the staff report
- To include that based on preceding discussions of the Historic Preservation Commission which said that because the request was for a restoration project on a historic structure, it is compatible with existing contributing structures in the Historic District in terms of its appropriateness of siting, shape, mass and materials, and as further articulated per Section C.2., beginning on page 47

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

**Caroline Ruch** made a **motion** to approve COA # 17-06 to allow for construction of a 15-foot-by-6-foot deck at the rear of the property located at 2345 Oak Ridge Road in Oak Ridge Township, Guilford County Tax Parcel #0163171, zoned RS-30, Scenic Corridor Overlay, Historic District Overlay, and owned by Gary and Myra Blackburn. The scope of the project is to be constructed as described in the COA application dated March 29, 2017, and in related information, testimony and the staff report, and using materials/colors, drawings and photos as presented to the Historic Preservation Commission on April 26, 2017. **Paul Woolf** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

Schneider told Blackburn she had met Potkay, who would do the work on the Blackburn house, and that she found him to be thorough and professional. Blackburn said Potkay was a master at his job and he liked to find out how the work was done originally and try to replicate it.

**6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES**

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

**B. Historic Inventory/Markers.**

Schneider said Dick Hall had agreed to have a marker placed on his property at the corner of N.C. 150 and Williard Road with a smaller green marker indicating the boundary of the Historic District. She said there is a possibility that brown Historic District signs can be placed by the DOT at all four boundaries of the district.

**C. Grant program.**

A subcommittee meeting was scheduled for the following Monday.

**D. Communication outreach.**

No report

**E. Explore Historic Oak Ridge celebration.**

Schneider reported on the progress being made on the planning of the event.

**F. Display case.**

No report

**G. Training.**

None scheduled at this time

**7. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

None

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

**Kristin Kubly** made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. **Paul Woolf** seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:



Sandra B. Smith, NCCMC, CMC  
Town Clerk



Ann Schneider  
Chair