



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
MARCH 5, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Members Present

Debbie Shoenfeld, Chair
Barbara Engel
Paul Carney, Alternate (Sitting)

Staff Present

Sandra Smith, Assistant Town Mgr./Town Clerk

Members Absent

Courtenay Harton
Brian Hall
Emma Millard, Alternate

Staff Absent

Sean Taylor, Planning & Zoning Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She explained the purpose of the meeting, which was to promote the restoration and preservation of historic structures and review proposed changes to existing structures and designs for new construction to ensure compatibility with the special character of the Oak Ridge Historic District.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Shoenfeld suggested switching the order of Agenda Items 4A and 4B, allowing discussion of 4B to occur first.

Barbara Engel made a motion to approve the amended agenda, and Paul Carney seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (3-0).

3. APPROVE MINUTES

Paul Carney made a motion to approve the November 20, 2024, regular meeting minutes, and Barbara Engel seconded. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

4. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld reviewed the process for identifying any conflicts of interest among Commission members and explained that all communication regarding the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness would be considered within the confines of a quasi-judicial hearing making any limitations on ex parte

communication extend indefinitely beyond the proceedings. She asked members if they had any previous fixed opinions, communications with the applicant or related parties or any financial interests in the outcome of the application's consideration. Members individually confirmed that they had no conflicts.

- B. COA-25-01:** Howard and Susan Welch (Charles Young or Stephen Welch, representative) request a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for construction of a fence at their property at 8511 Merriman Farm Road, Guilford County Tax Parcel #165601 in Oak Ridge Township, zoned RS-40 (Residential, Minimum 40,000 square-foot lots), Historic District Overlay, Scenic Corridor Overlay. The property is owned by Howard and Susan Welch.

Shoenfeld proceeded to confirm the eligibility of the COA by asking Commission members to determine if the application fell within the scope and activities allowed by the Oak Ridge Historic Design Standards and if there was sufficient information presented to identify findings of fact to render a decision regarding the application. Commission members individually responded affirmatively to her query.

Shoenfeld referred to the Staff Report and asked if members had any questions for Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk Sandra Smith, who was acting on Planning Director Sean Taylor's behalf in his absence. No questions were posed, and Shoenfeld noted that the Staff Report would be incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

Applicant Charles Young, 5504 Clydebank Road in Greensboro, was sworn in by Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk Smith.

Young indicated that the project involved the installation of a fence at the property, which was owned by his in-laws, but he indicated that he had very little information about the project beyond what had been outlined in the application.

Shoenfeld proceeded to review COA-25-01 for its conformity to Oak Ridge Historic District Design Standards. She encouraged Commission members to keep track of the findings of fact identified during the review to consider during the application's approval process.

Shoenfeld cited page 41 of the Oak Ridge Historic Design Standards Handbook under "Existing & New Structures: Site Features and District Character," the section on Fences and Walls. She read aloud that "barbed wire and open horizontal board fences serve to visually mark boundaries, limit access, enclose grazing land, or separate public space from private space in Oak Ridge." She continued with "Although the fencing of front yards in the community is not typical, fences of open horizontal wood boards or rails, wood picket fences, or low stone and brick retaining walls may be appropriate in some cases. Privacy fences and walls are rarely used in the Historic District, where trees and shrubs are more typically used for screening." She continued with "Fences that are part of a bona fide farm property are exempt from the Certificate of Appropriateness and design review processes." Shoenfeld pointed out that the property was not considered a bona fide farm. She read that "In all other cases, construction of new fences or walls, or relocation of existing fences or walls in front yards (within the front setback line), or in back or

side yards when visible from the street, will require design review for a COA. Proposals for new fences are evaluated in terms of appropriateness of design, materials, dimensions, architectural details, finish, and location.” Shoenfeld noted further that the standard (a) outlined on page 42 was not applicable, but that (b) was relevant in ensuring compatibility of the proposed fence with the building with which it is associated as well as with nearby contributing properties. Commission members Barbara Engel and Paul Carney agreed with her finding.

Shoenfeld expressed concern with a possible contradiction in the application with the standard outlined in (c), which required front yard fences to be kept to a maximum height of 42 inches, and back or side yard fences to a maximum height of seven feet. Engel commented that the 42-inch requirement referred to fences in the front of the house while the fence in the application was located in the back and side of the house. Carney added that the staff report indicated that the proposed fencing would be 42 inches on the side of the house and 48 inches in the rear, which appeared incompatible with the details of the application which noted 48-inch fencing throughout. Smith clarified that the application showed the fence even with the rear building line of the house and thus would not be considered to be in front of the house. Shoenfeld ascertained that the details of the fence in the application were in keeping with the standard outlined in (c). Shoenfeld determined that no other guideline applied to the application.

Barbara Engel made a motion to accept the staff report, and the guidelines outlined on pages 41 and 42, items b and c, as findings of fact. Paul Carney seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (3-0).

Paul Carney made a motion to approve COA-25-01 as stated, and Barbara Engel seconded. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Council Report

No report

B. COAs approved/reviewed at staff level

None

C. Design Review Meetings

Shoenfeld stated that a design review meeting would be scheduled to review Philip Cooke's project and that Cathleen Turner with Preservation North Carolina would need to be informed of the meeting. Shoenfeld noted that she would schedule the meeting.

D. Historic District Violations

None

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES

A. 2024-25 Budget

No report

B. 2025-26 Budget Requests

No report

C. Grant Program

Shoenfeld indicated that she had contacted Julia Wood who represents Oak Ridge Military Academy, but that no grant request for Maple Glade had been submitted yet.

D. Training

Shoenfeld stated that she planned to attend a training session in Kernersville on March 7.

E. Communications Outreach

Shoenfeld asked if an ad had been posted on the Town's website and Facebook page for the grant program. Smith offered to check on it.

F. Display Case

No report

G. Historic Properties Book

Smith reported that she was currently editing the book before submitting it to the graphic designer, and that Shoenfeld had obtained additional quotes for the book's production costs. Smith noted that a meeting had been scheduled between herself and Shoenfeld and that she anticipated signing a contract printing soon. Smith explained that pages may be added to include more historic properties such as the Mattie Benbow House, Crutchfield House and the Apple-Brown House.

H. Walking Tours

Smith suggested removing walking tours from the Commission's projects due to a lack of activity and interest.

4. A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Barbara Engel nominated Debbie Shoenfeld for chair. With no other nominations, the vote for Debbie Shoenfeld for chair was unanimous (3-0).

Debbie Shoenfeld nominated Barbara Engel for vice chair. With no other nominations, the vote for Barbara Engel for vice chair was unanimous (3-0).

6. B. 2025-26 Budget Requests

Smith realized that the Commission needed to submit budget requests for the next fiscal year in the next few days and suggested that the budget be e-mailed to Commission members for a consensus decision. Shoenfeld stated that a historical marker for a tree at Heritage Farm Park was being considered. Smith encouraged further discussion of the consideration as it was not a typical use for a historic marker. Shoenfeld added that the budget would include advertising in the quarterly Connect2 Northwest Guilford publication or in a targeted mailing advertising campaign. The Commission agreed to continue the discussion and finalize the budget in a consensus agreement.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Paul Carney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m., and Barbara Engel seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (3-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

Sandra B. Smith, CMC, NCCMC
Asst. Town Manager/Town Clerk

Debbie Shoenfeld
Chair