



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
MAY 21, 2025 - 7:00 P.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Members Present

Barbara Engel, Vice Chair
Courtenay Harton
Paul Carney, Alternate (Sitting)
Emma Millard, Alternate (Sitting)

Staff Present

Sandra Smith, Assistant Town Mgr./Town Clerk
Sean Taylor, Planning Director

Members Absent

Debbie Shoenfeld, Chair
Brian Hall

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Barbara Engel called the meeting to order at 7:05 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

Engel suggested moving Agenda Item 4, New Business, until such time as the applicant arrived.

Paul Carney made a motion to approve the amended agenda, and Courtenay Harton seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

3. APPROVE MINUTES

Vice Chair Barbara Engel made a motion to delay approval of the March 5, 2025, special meeting minutes to the following month, and Paul Carney seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Council Report

No report

B. COAs approved/reviewed at staff level

None

C. Design Review Meetings

Carney noted an upcoming design review meeting on June 3 to review Philip Cooke's project.

D. Historic District Violations

Planning Director Sean Taylor reported that a fallen tree in the historic district was awaiting removal by Duke Energy and NC DOT due to its proximity to power lines.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES

A. 2024-25 Budget

Town Clerk/Assistant Town Manager Sandra Smith reported that very little money had been spent this fiscal year but that upcoming grants and the book project would utilize a significant portion of the funds.

B. Grant Program

Smith indicated that the two grant applications received would be discussed under the New Business agenda item.

C. Training

No report

D. Communications Outreach

No report

E. Display Case

Courtenay Harton remarked that some items may be added from Oak Ridge Elementary School and Engel suggested reviving the exhibits with a patriotic theme for the summer.

F. Historic Properties Book

Smith indicated that the graphic designer was making final changes to the book.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A. COA-25-02:** Erin Dennis, MD of Oak Ridge Civil Development LLC (John Hocutt, representative) requests approval for construction of a new 3,600-square-foot commercial building. The property is located at 8200 Linville Road, Guilford County Tax Parcel #239564 in Oak Ridge Township, zoned LB (Limited Business), Historic District Overlay, Scenic Corridor Overlay. The property is owned by Oak Ridge Civil Development LLC.

Vice Chair Barbara Engel explained that the purpose for the review was to provide the Commission with the opportunity to receive evidence concerning specific applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. She explained that the Commission would adhere to a quasi-judicial process to identify findings of fact which are based on submitted evidence and sworn testimony. She added that the appropriateness of an application would be based on its conformity to Oak Ridge Historic District Design Standards and its compatibility with the Historic District. She specified that the proposed COA cannot result in construction that will be incongruent to the Historic District. Engel noted that all sworn testimony will be legally binding and only matters related to size, scale and material relating to the project will be subject to the Commission's deliberation. She specified that a decision must be rendered by the Commission within 180 days of the date of the application's submission. She explained that appeals to decisions made by the Commission would be heard by the Board of Adjustment (BOA) while appeals from the BOA would be heard by the Guilford County Superior Court. She reviewed the terms for conflicts of interest and requests for recusal. Engel asked members if they had any previous fixed opinions, communications with the applicant or related parties, personal or business relations to the applicant, or any financial interests in the outcome of the application's consideration. Members responded negatively to each query.

Engel referred to the Staff Report and asked if members had any questions for the Planning Director.

Harton asked if the report referred to a commercial building or single-family residence. Taylor indicated that the report referred to a commercial structure and asked to amend the section for Applicable Sections of Standards and Description of Project in Description of Work to accurately reflect this.

Engel noted that the Staff Report would be incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

John Hocutt representing Moore Hocutt Architects, 2300 Sherwood Drive in Winston-Salem, was sworn in by Smith.

Hocutt described the construction as being a 3000 square-foot medical building for an allergist located on Linville Road across from the SECU building. He noted that Erin Dennis represented the group of owners. He emphasized the project's goal to comply with Design Standards.

Harton noted the absence of drawings for signage that had been included in the application and inquired about it. Hocutt replied that the sign would be similar to that of the SECU building across the road. Harton asked if the sign would be lit and Hocutt indicated that the sign would be ground lit with a block out shield. Harton

asked for specifics regarding the lighting being installed by Duke Energy, one of which would be visible from the road frontage. Hocutt noted that the lights would have an acorn fixture on a 16-foot pole which were previously approved designs.

Harton referred to the row of soldier bricks in the design and asked if the brick selection had been made. Hocutt responded that the brick selected was the Pine Hall Yorkshire brick which is the same brick selected for the body of the building.

Emma Millard asked if the board and batten along with the window casings would be a pure white color. Hocutt responded affirmatively adding that the windows were storefront windows with a white powder coat finish. Harton asked if the windows would have mullions and Hocutt replied that the mullions would be aluminum framed on the outside and simulated on the inside.

Harton asked for the color of the shingle. Hocutt indicated that the shingle would be a Certaineed Moire Black.

Engel proceeded to review COA-25-02 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.

Harton cited page 42 of the Oak Ridge Historic Design Standards Handbook under "Existing and New Structures: Site Features and District Character," the section on Lighting: Applicable to All Land Uses. She stated Items (a), (b), (e), and (f) as applicable along with page 43, items (g), (h) and (k).

Harton cited a statement in the section on "New Construction: Design, Development, and Materials" on page 45 which should be included as a finding. The statement read "It is important to incorporate the five primary design concepts" as scale, balance, rhythm, proportion and order.

Harton included the section for "General Standards for New Construction" on page 47 items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

In consideration of siting, Harton referred to the section on Siting on page 47 and identified items 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 on page 48 as relevant.

Harton cited the section on Building Shape and Massing on page 48, and identified items 1 and 2 as applicable. She continued to cite items 1, 2, and 3 under Height and Width on page 48 as relevant. She added item 1 on page 49 under the section Building Materials and items 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10 under the section on Roofing on page 49.

Harton continued to discuss Design, Development, and Materials of New Structures on page 50 focusing on the section on Windows and Doors. Here she identified items 1, 3, 4, and 8 as relevant. Engel inquired about item 2 and Harton indicated that the item was not relevant because the main entrance in the design was located in the rear. She pointed out that items 1 and 2 under the section on Architectural Elements

and Details on page 50 were pertinent but items 5 and 6 were not owing to the absence of shutters.

Regarding Mechanical and Other Site Systems on page 51, Harton selected items (a), (d), and (j). She questioned if there was underground utility and was assured that there was and hence added item (f) as relevant. She pointed out that item (c) was not applicable because the screen wells were in the far rear of the building.

Relating to Paint and Colors, Harton noted on page 52 that a range of colors is not prescribed by the Historic District Design Standards, but compatible colors are prescribed. She determined the color white selected in the design was compatible. She further pointed out that painted brick is discouraged but the design called for natural brick which was an acceptable standard. Harton determined that the white gutters in the design was compatible with the guideline outlined in item 2 under the section Other Types of Structures and Architectural Features also on page 52.

Harton turned to review the landscaping citing the section Site Features and District Character under Existing & New Structures. She determined that items (a), (c), and (d) on page 39 were pertinent. She noted that the design included abundant canopy trees, understory and shrubs which were in compliance with the standard outlined in item (c) in the section on Parking Areas on page 39 which required one canopy tree per six parking spaces.

Harton continued her review of landscaping citing the section on Additionally Applicable to Site Improvement or New Construction on page 40 and she selected items (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) as relevant.

Carney pointed out that according to both Hocutt's description and Duke Energy's lighting scope, the standard outlined in item (m) in the section on Lighting of Existing & New Structures was applicable due to the shielding of the lights "to prevent shining beyond property lines of the property on which the light fixtures are located."

Harton commented that although no drawing had been provided for the planned signage, she was agreeable to the suggestion that the sign would be similar to the design of the sign at the SECU building across the road from the property. Smith advised that although the monument structure of the sign was appropriate the Commission should also consider the specific colors and typeset selected for the sign. Millard echoed the desire to review the features of the sign and Harton suggested asking staff to follow up with these details via email with the property owners. Engel agreed with the suggestion noting that construction would not be delayed because the sign would be erected towards the end of construction. Taylor pointed out that the particulars of the sign would be provided in the application for a sign permit by the property owners. He noted that he would be able to identify the sign's conformity to design standards when reviewing the sign permit application.

Millard inquired about the long and narrow design of the building and asked if limitations in development determined this design. Hocutt responded that the placement of medical exam rooms down the center corridor of the building determined the outcome of the building's design. Millard pointed out that 104-foot

of road fronted the single-story building which offset the balance, scale and proportion of the design. She suggested creating an L-shaped turn in the building to break the monotony of a long and narrow structure. Taylor explained that the shape of the lot and the location of a creek on the property limited the design of the building while still allowing space for the parking lot. Millard suggested lifting up the façade in the center of the building to create visual balance. Harton pointed out that the porch design in the building's center in the front protruded out to create visual balance and she indicated that the dogwoods included in the landscaping in that area would break the façade of the long narrow run in the building. Hocutt stressed that efforts were made to achieve balance and scale by breaking the roofline with the portico and adding columns to simulate a sense of greater height from the road.

Courtenay Harton made a motion to approve the findings of fact as identified in the Commission's discussion as well as the amended Staff Report. Emma Millard seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (4-0).

Courtenay Harton made a motion to approve COA-25-02 based on the findings of fact identified by the Commission for new commercial construction of Guilford County Tax Parcel 239564 zoned limited business in the Scenic Corridor with an Historic District Overlay, and owned by Oak Ridge Civil Development LLC, represented by John Hocutt and applicant Erin Dennis, MD. The motion approved the scope of work as described in the COA application dated April 5, 2025, and as described in the applicant's presentation and responses to the Historic Preservation Commission during its meeting on May 21, 2025, and submitted for compliance with the Oak Ridge Design Standards. Paul Carney seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Consideration/Approval of Historic Heritage Grants

Smith referred to the grant information sheet in the meeting packet, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes and directed Commission members to consult the sheet for terms of grant eligibility. She explained that two grants were reviewed by experts Benjamin Briggs of Preservation North Carolina and David Hoggard, owner of Double Home Windows.

Smith noted that the first grant request involved the replacement of the front doors at the historic Ai Church which were rotting at the bottom. She stated that the cost to replace the doors was approximately \$11,000 and that the applicant had requested the full allowable grant total of \$4,000.

Millard commented that previous discussion of this project had revealed a chronic problem with water flowing back towards the doors and that improper grading was at issue. Harton remarked that gutters were being installed to draw water away from the building. Millard expressed concern that the problem would persist without addressing the inadequate grading. Taylor added that at the time the building was being restored, building code required that the front doors be installed as outward opening doors. This, he explained, caused the full front door to be flush with the face of the building and eliminated a four-inch inset typically created by an inward opening door. He further explained that the problem predated the building's

restoration and that the grading was accurate. Millard questioned if the doors should instead be stained more often to provide a seal or replaced with an aluminum door. Taylor responded that the existing doors were a poor quality and Harton pointed out that a better-quality Brazilian wood door with a 50 year warranty had been proposed to replace the current pine wood doors. Taylor added that Hoggard, who specialized in window and door restoration, had approved of the door. Millard noted her satisfaction with the review.

Smith stated that the second grant involved exterior cleaning of the Sanders-Blaylock home on NC 150 built in 1815. She explained that the owners Roy Nydorf and Terry Hammond were good stewards of the home and were proposing a cleaning solution for the exterior which would cost \$4,000. She noted that the applicants requested \$2000 in the grant application and that they would perform the task themselves.

Courtenay Harton made a motion to approve both grants, allocating \$4000 to the Ai Church building project and \$2000 to the Sanders-Blaylock cleaning project. Paul Carney seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (4-0).

Smith noted that surplus grant money remained for the fiscal year after the award of the two discussed grants. She pointed out that a third grant request was potentially pending.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Emily Lockridge introduced herself as an applicant for an alternate position in HPC.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Paul Carney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10pm, and Emma Millard seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

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

Barbara Engel
Vice Chair