

REGULAR MEETING
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE
OCTOBER 6, 2010
WEDNESDAY, 2:00 PM
TOWN HALL, 9 SOUTH MAIN STREET

The Historic Preservation Commission held a regular meeting on Wednesday, October 6, 2010. Members in attendance were: Chairman Nikki Owens, Vice-Chairman Peter Sterling, Henry Foy, Sandra Owen, Bob Kearney, Shawn Leatherwood and Ann Melton. Also present were Planning Director Paul Benson, Intern Melanie Verges and Secretary Ginny Boyer. Absent was Bette Sprecher.

Approval of Minutes

Shawn Leatherwood made a motion to accept the minutes of September 1, 2010 as presented. Peter Sterling seconded and all were in favor.

J.B.S. McIntosh Building local landmark designation removal

Paul Benson gave an overview of events leading up to the Commission's decision to reexamine local landmark designation for the J.B.S. McIntosh Building: Mr. Benson mentioned that while doing research on the Walking Tour Brochure, it was discovered that the building did not rise to the level of historic landmark. As a result, the commission decided to reexamine the designation. It was at that point Mr. Benson sent Becca Johnson with the State Historic Preservation Office a letter requesting her comments at which time she requested a more formal report on why we have decided to remove the designation. Mr. Benson mentioned the State's original response was that a case has not been made for the designation ("You haven't established that it is a unique property, has historic integrity, and the building has been extensively altered").

Mr. Benson understands the Commission's need to point out that the building does not rise to the level of historic landmark, but the State Historic Preservation Office will be hesitant to recommend removal. He also pointed out that for the designation to remain in place is not a bad thing. When people want to make changes, we can direct the changes back to a more historic look. The Historic Preservation will have some control.

Owners Bruce McDonald and his wife Cathy were in the audience. Mr. McDonald addressed the Board, saying that it was a business decision they had made based on historical significance and asked the Board to have the local landmark designation remain.

Cathy McDonald mentioned purchasing the property from Penny Morse in 2001 after the designation was in place. She asked the Commission to consider several things in hopes of retaining the designation. First, the building is one of the oldest brick buildings on Main Street, built in 1896, and being one of four that has retained its architectural integrity. Secondly, the building is significant due to its history (namely, previous owners of the property). Thirdly, it would be beneficial for the Commission to retain control of any alterations of the property.

Lastly, new tenants, current owners of Sweet Onion, will be opening a new business in the building and are very interested in emphasizing the history of the Town, the uniqueness of the building in particular. An artist plans to paint murals inside the building depicting historic Waynesville.

Mrs. McDonald respectfully requested the historic landmark designation remain in place.

Chairman Owens mentioned that the decision was not a personal one, but once the information was brought to the Commission's attention, the HPC wanted it to be on record that we recognized the faults of the previous Commission in passing that through. We wanted to be as consistent as we could.

Shawn Leatherwood recognized the validity in maintaining control as the building changes ownership. Mr. Leatherwood thanked the McDonalds for their concern and understanding.

Bob Kearney mentioned the issue of retaining control. The changes to the building have already been done. The previous tenant was a source of a lot of problems on Main Street so worrying about who you might sell it to or how else it might be used shouldn't be a major concern. Mr. Kearney also mentioned the owners look on the bright side which is a nine-year tax break based on what the HPC perceived to be an error by a previous Commission. Mr. Kearney mentioned this being "one of those unfortunate cases" where we have looked at it by the standards we are directed to maintain by the Board of Aldermen. He also stated the mission of the board is to preserve the integrity of the building, stating also that the report by Sybil Bowers was paid for by Penny Morse, the property owner at the time, and was not an independent report.

Mr. Benson said he would appreciate some direction from the Commission. Do you want a more detailed report to be sent to the State office? Once we receive comments from the State, the Commission will have an opportunity to vote on whether to recommend the designation removed. If they do vote to remove designation, it would then go before the Board of Aldermen and they would have to notify property owners and hold a public hearing before they could take any action. The Board of Aldermen may or may not follow the recommendation of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Shawn Leatherwood made a motion to have Paul proceed with repackaging the information for the Commission, including getting some input back from the State, so that the Commission can look at all the information in a cohesive package. Bob Kearney seconded and all were in favor.

Local historic district designation and guidelines, guest Carolyn Wooten, consultant

Ms. Wooten is a preservationist who for 35 years has worked in property, neighborhood and community development with a focus on preservation. As of late, she has used her experience to identify gaps in federal, state and local levels whether it is a dissemination of information, or getting a timely response from any of the agencies when there is an issue with a property. Ms. Wooten's focus is on small Southern towns, 50,000 to 70,000 in population, calling them "the last frontier". She mentioned people buying properties and not always doing what they should. Her specific focus has been on local designated districts.

She wants to help with moving forward in designation, possibly with the Love Lane area if there continues to be interest. “You will need a report, then there will be a public hearing, then, if it is adopted, the city can take it into their planning”. Ms. Wooten mentioned the importance of keeping all Southern towns prosperous and managing growth.

Chairman Owens requested Ms. Wooten’s presence at the upcoming Love Lane public workshop. Ms. Wooten agreed to answer any questions at the workshop.

Love Lane Public Workshop update

Ms. Verges relayed information she received from Becca Johnson with the State Historic Preservation Office: Love Lane has been on SHPO’s “radar” for some time, has been evaluated for possible National Register Historic District but “does not have the integrity required for some good strong boundaries”. It has been suggested that historic designation be attained through local designation since requirements for local designation are not as strict as those for national register. Ms. Johnson also recommended the HPC move forward as one body to vote on how to proceed.

Ms. Verges mentioned Becca Johnson and Rob Crawford (Preservation Commission Services/Certified Local Government Coordinator staff person) from SHPO would possibly be able to attend the workshop.

Ms. Wooten recommended getting a report done as a first step, and then reach out to the community.

Mr. Benson mentioned the State not funding a report because it is not national register eligible. The Town will probably not be able to fund the study. This leaves it to the property owners to hire a consultant to prepare a professional report. Does the commission want to hire a consultant to come up with a report, or have a meeting?

Nikki Owens mentioned needing a workshop that will focus on local historic district designation rather than national historic district designation.

Shawn Leatherwood made a motion for the Historic Preservation Commission to host a roundtable discussion along with Carolyn Wooten, Becca Johnson and/or Rob Crawford along with Commission members and Town staff so the folks on Love Lane can pose questions, get answers and receive follow-up information to see if they want to proceed with local designation. Bob Kearney seconded and all were in favor. Possible dates, one of which Melanie Verges hopes to confirm, are Thursday, November 4th at 7pm and Thursday November 11th at 7pm.

Peter Sterling asked if the Board could meet elsewhere as the Board room speaks of governmental authority and not a roundtable environment. It was suggested that the Isenbergs on Love Lane might be willing to open their home to the Board for the roundtable discussion. Ms. Verges will inquire.

Hannah-Graham house

Ms. Verges' report is ready. The house did go into foreclosure and is now bank-owned. The goal is to send Becca Johnson the report to the Western SHPO office so the HPC can vote on it to be a local designated landmark as an element of protection.

Historic Preservation Commission efforts in Asheville, Melanie Verges

Ms. Verges mentioned that Asheville's preservation efforts are combined at the Board, city and county level.

She mentioned a side project being making Main Street a local district as the since the national register report is already done. Chairman Owens mentioned Historic Frog Level Merchants' Association may be more interested in gaining that status as their buildings are the least changed.

Other Business

Bob Kearney mentioned sales of the Walking Tour Brochure continuing, the best venues being Blue Ridge Books & News, Panacea, Mast General Store and Twigs & Leaves Gallery.

With the upcoming Church Street Arts & Crafts Fair, commission members mentioned the possibility of including the Walking Tour Brochure on the table manned by Michael Beadle. Bob Kearney will get books to Melanie who will then get the books to Mr. Beadle.

Adjourn

Shawn Leatherwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:36 pm. Ann Melton seconded and all were in favor.

Ginny Boyer, Secretary

Nikki Owens, Chairman