

REGULAR MEETING
TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
JUNE 7, 2006
WEDNESDAY - 2:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The Historic Preservation Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, June 7, 2006. Members present were Peter Sterling, Marc Yops, Bette Sprecher, Shawn Leatherwood, Sandra Owen, Laura Soltis, John Binford, David Felmet and Malinda Messer (Malinda joined the meeting at 2:38 p.m.). Also present were Planning Director Paul Benson and Town Clerk Phyllis McClure. Chairman Bette Sprecher called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of April 5, 2006

David Felmet moved, seconded by John Binford, to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2006 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Historic Rock Walls

Bette Sprecher asked about the status of the historic rock walls, particularly the one at the Waynesville Post Office. Paul Benson said he has written a letter to and exchanged telephone calls with the Waynesville Postmaster. Mr. Benson said he felt that the Town has done all that they can to encourage preservation of the historic rock walls unless someone wants to spearhead a fundraising effort. David Felmet said the property at the intersection of North Main Street and Mead Street is listed by a real estate agency and he felt that someone should apprise the realtor of the historic significance of the rock wall on this property. Mr. Benson will look into this matter.

Williamson House - Walnut Street

Bette Sprecher asked if there was any new information regarding the Williamson House on Walnut Street. Shawn Leatherwood said he has not seen or spoken with the Williamson brothers in several months and Tim Welch indicated that he hasn't spoken with them either. Mr. Benson said the house is stabilized on the outside at this point. Shawn said the outside of the house looks good. David Felmet said he saw the youngest brother, George, mowing the grass recently. No action was necessary.

Jennifer Cathey, NC Historic Preservation Office - Information Regarding Tax Credits for National Register Properties

Ms. Jennifer Cathey, Restoration Specialist with the State of NC Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, attended the meeting. Ms. Cathey works in the Asheville office, with the historic preservation tax credit program and the main office is in Raleigh. She distributed information regarding State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. A 20% state tax credit is available for rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures that also qualify for the 20% federal investment tax credit. A 30% state tax credit is

available for qualifying rehabilitation of non-income-producing historic structures, including owner-occupied residences. There is no equivalent federal credit for such rehabilitations. A web site is available for additional information.

Marc Yops asked if the restoration of rock walls could be eligible for tax credits. Ms. Cathey said if the rock walls were included as an important architectural element on historic properties it may be possible. She will look into this to see if the rock walls at the Waynesville Post Office might be eligible.

Report Regarding Historic Rock Walls

Peter Sterling said these historic rock walls are one of Waynesville's greatest architectural assets, and it would be wonderful to have walking tours or self guided tours of the rock walls. Bette Sprecher said as a child, there were many times that she played on the rock walls at the Waynesville Post Office. There was discussion that these rock walls could be photographed and documented. Guidelines for restoration could be established and resources could be available to help in restoration efforts. Peter Sterling, John Binford and David Felmet volunteered to take photographs and present a report to the Commission at the August 2 meeting.

Public Informational Workshop Regarding Benefits of the National Register

Paul Benson suggested that Ms. Cathey be invited to come back at a later time to conduct an informational workshop and provide general information about the national register and tax benefits for historic property owners and the general public. Mr. Benson said this could also be used as a training workshop for Commission Members. Letters of invitation could be mailed to property owners within areas proposed for local historic districts, area realtors and contractors. Marc Yops will inform the Haywood County Homebuilders Association. A press release can also be prepared to inform the public of the workshop. The Commission felt that it was important to provide information to the public about historic properties and the tax benefits available for preserving historic properties. The Commission suggested that this workshop be held on Thursday, August 10 at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Cathey said she would be available at this time and will check with some of her coworkers to see who would be available. Bette Sprecher will call the Haywood County Library to see if a room is available for this workshop.

The Commission thanked Ms. Cathey for attending the meeting and said they look forward to working with her. Ms. Cathey asked that the Commission call her regarding historic properties and with any rehabilitation or restoration problem they may have.

Process to Designate Local Historic District Guidelines Handbook - Chapter 7

Paul Benson led a discussion regarding Chapter 7 which deals with the process for designating local historic districts. Ms. Benson said the Historic Inventory has entries for Love Lane, identifying nine houses as historic properties. Once an area becomes a local district, a certificate of appropriateness would be required before alterations are made on any structure within that district. A consultant would study the district and prepare a report, including a description of the properties, history, occupancy, etc. and it would be forwarded to the State for their

recommendation. Upon return from the State, the Commission would make their recommendation to the Board of Aldermen. The Commission would also vote on issues dealing with the property such as a certificate of appropriateness when changes are planned. One important aspect of the process is to have the support of the property owner and that they understand what is involved when a property is designated as a local historic landmark.

(Malinda Messer joined the meeting at this time.)

David Felmet asked if the areas referred to as “Spread Out” and “Woolsey Heights” were considered two separate districts. It was felt that they would be considered two separate districts, but they are located closely to each other. Paul Benson said Sybil Bowers charged \$15,500 for the study that was conducted for the Main Street Historic District. Another study would be required in order for any area to be considered as a historic district. Spread Out would be a large area and the study would be more expensive. Love Lane is a smaller area and the Commission may want to consider applying for a grant to help cover the costs of a study for the Love Lane area first.

Historic Plaques

Paul Benson said the money to purchase historic plaques for those properties listed as Local Historic Landmarks is included in the fiscal year 2006-2007 budget which will be approved July 1, 2006. The plaques can be purchased after that time.

Election of Officers

Laura Soltis moved, seconded by Shawn Leatherwood, to nominate Bette Sprecher as Chairman, David Felmet as Vice Chairman and Phyllis McClure as Secretary. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Regarding Building Inspections of Historic Structures

Malinda Messer asked about the building located across the street from the Town Hall, which appears to be for sale again. Several months ago, Mr. Crook appeared before the Commission to get approval to renovate the exterior of the building. Malinda said some of the bricks on the front appear to be in bad shape. Paul Benson said the State is monitoring this project since it is one of the tax credit projects. Mr. Benson added that in talking with Randy Cunningham, the Architect for the project, he understands that there are some issues with the building inspector telling the owner to remove certain items and the state is telling them that the items should be kept for historic purposes.

Shawn Leatherwood said the local inspection department, especially when dealing with commercial historic properties, is not very sympathetic to the historic process. Mr. Leatherwood said there is a section of the existing building code that was put in place to help historic properties be brought up to speed as much as possible. He said basically you have a score card, and you are allowed to keep something that doesn't meet the new code as long as you upgrade something else. He has been told point blank by the Waynesville Building Inspection

Department that they don't acknowledge that section of the building code. From an architect's stand point it is a simple fix - to just call Raleigh. But as the architect, you just don't do that - it is a delicate situation. Marc Yops said if the Commission brings the Building Inspectors here to explain their position it would take them out of the architect's context. Shawn said it may be a lack of understanding and possibly a lack of appreciation for what the Commission is trying to accomplish, and the building inspector may not be trying to meet the same goals as the Commission. Inspectors are looking at safety issues, and whether they agree with meeting the historical aspect it is not the call of the inspectors. Shawn said it is basically a "rehab type" code and it allows for historic preservation. It is an issue that has been going on for about four or five years at least. As more buildings fall into this category and with more experience in dealing with historical building restoration, it is hoped that this area of the code will be acknowledged more. The Commission discussed building inspections of historic structures and the importance of acknowledging historic structures and maintaining their historic integrity when changes are made. Paul Benson will speak with the Town Manager about this issue. Shawn Leatherwood said that he has not had to deal with this issue specifically on a project, but two property owners on Main Street involved in the rehabilitation process have come to see him in his office, and said the inspectors have said to them that what they have requested cannot be done. The property owners want to know why they can't do it if it is in the code.

Shawn Leatherwood said the Williamsons on Walnut Street approached their project as a residence and when they found a tenant, the tenant would be responsible for upgrading the building to a commercial use. Shawn said this is a complicated, confusing section of the Code. The Inspection Department is looking at it as a safety issue and just trying to cover themselves. Shawn Leatherwood said he has heard comments from contractors who are considering bids for projects who said if a project is to be done inside the city limits they will not bid, because it is too much work. It is much easier to work with the Haywood County Inspection Department.

Consideration of Amending Meeting Schedule

The Commission discussed changing the meeting schedule from monthly to quarterly meetings. It was the consensus of the Commission that the meetings remain on a monthly schedule, the first Wednesday of each month at 2:00 p.m. If no agenda items are scheduled, the meeting can be cancelled.

Adjournment

With no further business, Laura Soltis moved, seconded by David Felmet to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Phyllis R. McClure, Town Clerk
Bette Hannah Sprecher, Chairman