

Historic District Commission

October 23, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Chair Kaitlyn Peeler called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 5:59 p.m. on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at City Hall in the Council Chamber, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Kaitlyn Peeler and Commissioners Carol Hauer, Stephanie Hartmen, Jeff Trepel, Blair Propert, Joshua Hauser and Ben Pruitt.

Absent: None

Staff present: Charles Graham, Joe Gates, Jalen Nash, and Rebeca Mintz.

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check

Chair Kaitlyn Peeler opened the meeting, conducted a roll call, and declared a quorum.

ITEM 1b. Approval of September 25th, 2025, Meeting Minutes

With no corrections to be made to the September 25, 2025 meeting minutes, Commissioner Hauser moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Commissioner Hauer seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500427)

- Julian Hernandez
- 424 W. Second Avenue
- Requesting approval for the construction of a new single-family home.

Chair Peeler opened the public hearing and recognized Mr. Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated the request is for a new single-family residence at 424 W. Second Avenue. The applicants are Julian Hernandez and Segundo Pinos, with Mr. Hernandez present for the hearing. The property is zoned O-1 (Office), is currently vacant, and while a home may have existed previously, it is not listed in the York-Chester Architectural Survey and is considered a non-contributing lot within the district.

Mr. Nash reviewed the setbacks for the O-1 zoning district and presented the initial project submittals. Commissioner Hauer asked whether the submittals were reviewed by Planning Staff or an HDC subcommittee. Mr. Nash responded that the September 10 subcommittee reviewed the request and provided recommendations to the applicants.

Commissioner Peeler requested clarification on the lot location. Commissioner Hauer stated the property is located behind the graveyard on Second Avenue, across from the First ARP Church, and noted that the site had previously gone through COA reviews for two homes at 416 and 424 W. Second Avenue, which have since been combined into a single lot at 424 W. Second.

Commissioner Hauer asked whether the materials had changed since the subcommittee review, referencing the foundation material. Mr. Nash confirmed the applicants revised the plans to include a brick veneer over the concrete foundation that was not shown in the original submittal.

Mr. Gates requested that questions be held until the presentation was complete. Mr. Nash stated the proposal is for a one-story frame residence of approximately 1,600–1,700 square feet, excluding covered porches. The design is a modern ranch with Craftsman elements, featuring a double front gable, single rear gable, hipped sides, architectural shingles, and one-foot overhangs. The exterior includes horizontal lap siding, cedar shake in the gables, and decorative gable pediments. The foundation is a four-inch concrete slab with Southern Pro brick veneer. The front porch is 109 square feet and the rear porch is 188 square feet.

Mr. Nash stated the home will include white vinyl windows: five 6/1 and one 4/1 on the front façade with a transom entry door; seven 6/1 windows and one sliding glass door on the rear; two 6/1 and one 4/1 on the west elevation; and two 6/1, one nine-light picture window, and one fixed window on the east elevation.

Mr. Nash presented the relevant excerpts from the Unified Development Ordinance, Section 7.6.2 – Design Principles & Standards, related to new construction and fenestration.

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Mr. Nash then presented the site plan showing the proposed driveway and landscaping. He stated that no new tree plantings are proposed and that the site currently contains no existing trees other than those serving as a buffer between the cemetery and the subject property.

Commissioner Hauer asked whether any plantings were proposed for the project. Mr. Nash responded that while no tree plantings are shown on the site plan, landscaping and shrubbery are proposed along the front façade of the home.

Mr. Nash presented the revised elevations, noting where windows had been added to the front right and side elevations. He also presented photos of the interior layout of the home.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash about the location of the small horizontal window on the right elevation. Mr. Nash responded that the small fixed window is located within a walk-in closet.

Mr. Nash presented photos of the proposed front door selection and brick veneer. Commissioner Trepel stated the proposed door did not match the one shown on the front elevation in the plans. Commissioner Hauer agreed and stated she was not in favor of the proposed door. Commissioner Trepel added that the door shown on the plans would be a more appropriate option.

Commissioner Hauer stated that discussion should begin with the small window selections, particularly those on the front elevation.

Commissioner Hartman asked Mr. Nash whether the brick veneer is Masonite and if that material is appropriate within the Historic Districts. Mr. Nash responded that he believes it is and noted that Masonite is an approved material used within the districts.

Commissioner Pruitt stated there is not a practical way to increase the size of the smaller window in the half bath on the front elevation, as doing so would interfere with interior elements such as the mirror and vanity.

Chair Peeler asked if there were any additional questions for staff before the board discussed recommendations or potential changes to the proposal.

Commissioner Propert asked Mr. Nash whether, since this is a new construction, the proposal would go to the Zoning before or after HDC review to ensure the setback requirements are met. Mr. Nash responded that the proposal would come before the HDC prior to zoning review, but that the O-1 district setbacks are noted in the staff report and the current proposal meets those requirements.

With there being no further questions for the Planning Staff, Chair Peeler recognized Julian Hernandez at 2612 Keady Mill Loop, Kannapolis, NC.

Commissioner Hauser mentioned in the previous submittals, the proposal was showing more exposed foundation compared to the revisions that appear to be directly slab on grade with a whitewashed brick veneer, and asked Mr. Hernandez what the reveal of the foundation would be. Mr. Hernandez responded there would be about four to six inches of exposure as this is a pretty flat lot.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Hernandez to confirm whether the white rectangles beneath the rear porch on the elevation drawing represent the area where the sliding glass door would be located. Mr. Hernandez responded, "Correct."

Commissioner Trepel then asked Mr. Hernandez about the color of the horizontal siding. Mr. Hernandez responded that it would be Alabaster White.

Commissioner Trepel asked which portions of the structure would be painted Townhall Tan. Mr. Hernandez stated that the columns and doors would be painted Townhall Tan, and the cedar shake would be painted African Gray.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Hernandez if the intention was to not include any shutters. Mr. Hernandez responded that he does not believe there are shutters on the plan at this time. Chair

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Peeler stated she had a question regarding the proposed landscaping, but she does not see an official landscaping plan and only saw the area where landscaping is proposed, not the actual selections.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Nash what the setback requirements were for this district. Mr. Nash responded three feet.

Chair Peeler asked the commissioners who attended the subcommittee meeting if the current door selection was part of that review. Commissioner Trepel responded no and stated that the door reviewed at subcommittee is what is currently shown on the elevations.

Chair Peeler asked the board if there were any further questions for Mr. Hernandez. Hearing none, Chair Peeler recognized Bronnie Yorke at 412 W. Second Avenue, Gastonia, NC. Ms. Yorke stated she had purchased 25 feet of the subject property so she would not have two tract homes side by side. She stated that when she saw the original plans, she thought the new construction was too wide and looked like a community center. She added that even after the revisions, the home still appears very wide and looks out of place.

Ms. Yorke stated that the neighboring homes have a normal width, but the proposed home appears unusually large. She said she preferred the look of the rear elevation and recommended reversing it with the front elevation so the home would better fit the neighborhood. She also recommended painting the columns white to match the trim and replacing the sliding glass door on the rear elevation with a more appropriate door.

Ms. Yorke stated she hoped the front door with the Victorian oval would not be used. She also stated the small window in the powder or half bathroom was not appropriate because it is not symmetrical and does not match the other windows. She stated she has been doing architectural revisions for 40 years and suggested widening the window during preconstruction to keep it consistent with the rest of the elevation.

Ms. Yorke expressed concern that the windows on the right elevation do not match, which she said is not typical of the York-Chester community. She also noted the home is on a slab without the raised foundation seen on other proposals for this lot such as the Red Cedar homes, which she felt made those designs more compatible. She stated the proposed home still appears like a very wide track home.

Ms. Yorke requested that the home be built parallel to the sidewalk and not aligned at an angle with the rear property line, as she said has happened with other nearby homes and proposals.

Ms. Yorke stated that the front porch is very important and noted that all of the homes on that street have beautiful porches with features such as pickets that make them feel cozy, inviting, and charming. She stated the proposed home lacks that charm. She added that while the design appears to try to fit in with elements like cedar shake, it still needs additional work. She apologized for feeling like the “squeaky wheel.”

Commissioner Hauer responded that Ms. Yorke’s comments were welcome and that the board values hearing feedback from residents who live on the street.

Ms. Yorke stated the plans still need revision. She stated the Town Hall Tan columns were not appropriate because everyone paints their columns white, and if the window trim is white, the columns should also be white. She added that Town Hall Tan might work on the foundation if it were taller than four inches.

Commissioner Trepel asked Ms. Yorke what she thought about using Town Hall Tan for the siding with white columns and trim. Ms. Yorke responded that this would be better since her house is white, the proposed home would be Alabaster White, and the house to the west is also white.

Ms. Yorke asked the board if vinyl siding was permitted, stating she believed the requirement was Hardie plank in the neighborhood. Commissioner Hauer noted this had been a question earlier. Chair Peeler stated she believed the siding was Hardie plank, and Commissioner Trepel confirmed that it is.

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Ms. Yorke stated the selected color was a good shade for Hardie plank and that the window trim should be white, but substantial in size rather than two or three inches. She stated the trim should be larger and more consistent with Craftsman-style homes. She added that she would not be able to live with the three different window types on the right elevation because she would see them daily from her kitchen window.

Commissioner Trepel responded that it seemed like an easy fix to change the middle window to a six over one to match the others. Commissioner Hauer stated she believed the horizontal light window on the right elevation looked inappropriate.

Ms. Yorke agreed and stated it looks completely out of place. Commissioner Hauer added that she agreed with Ms. Yorke's earlier comments regarding the windows on the other elevation as well. Ms. Yorke stated the windows do not make sense and there is too much space between them. She stated the design looks like a cheap new build.

Chair Peeler asked the board if anyone had any additional questions. Commissioner Hauer responded that she was grateful only one house would be built on the lot instead of two. Ms. Yorke responded that she purchased the additional 15 or 25 feet specifically to ensure only one home could be built, and she is still paying for it.

Commissioner Hauer stated she agreed with the concerns about the windows, not just on the front elevation but on the side elevations as well. She stated that in the past, when the board has accommodated the need for a small bathroom window, the result did not look right once completed. Commissioner Hauer noted that the small octagonal window on a home on South Street makes her cringe every time she goes by.

Commissioner Hauer stated she also agreed that the rear elevation looks better than the front. Chair Peeler stated that when looking at the elevations, the rear stands out more because it is on a larger scale. She stated that if the front elevation extended the center porch element across the full width of the house, the design would appear more Craftsman in style and more consistent with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Hernandez how deep the front porch was intended to be. Mr. Hernandez responded that the porch depth is 7 feet 7 inches.

Commissioner Hauer stated that when looking at the rear elevation, even with the current window arrangement, it appears another set of double windows should be placed to the left of the back door. Chair Peeler asked Commissioner Hauer if she meant behind the column. Commissioner Hauer responded yes, noting that for balance, that would look better. Commissioners Hauser and Trepel stated they agreed with Commissioner Hauer.

Chair Peeler asked the board if there were any other opinions on the front elevation since that seems to be a major concern and is the view visible from the street, unlike the rear. Commissioner Hauser stated the front is a little deceiving because the elevation does not show the depth difference between the entry and the half bath with the smaller window. Commissioner Hauer stated there is value in having a more usable front porch that fits the character of the neighborhood, noting that all the other porches on that street are fairly deep.

Commissioner Hauser stated he liked Chair Peeler's suggestion of centering the gable on the front and extending the porch to cover the bathroom window to make the design more fitting. Commissioner Trepel asked the board whether, in that case, the door should be moved to the right. Chair Peeler responded she felt the door would need to be somewhat centered. Commissioner Trepel suggested the door and the center window might need to be flipped.

Chair Peeler stated that although she did not have exact dimensions, extending the porch would likely require two or three additional columns, but she still felt the door would need to be centered. Commissioner Trepel stated he agreed. Commissioner Hauer stated she would need a visual of those revisions, noting it is difficult to picture without elevations. She stated she agreed with centering the door but questioned how the windows would be adjusted, noting that in a typical ranch you would see the door centered with windows on either side.

Chair Peeler stated that the application describes the design as a ranch and Craftsman combination, but based on what is being presented, especially the front elevation, the design

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reads more Craftsman than ranch. She added she was unsure what elements were making it a ranch. Commissioner Hartman stated she did not see Craftsman details in the Design Standards. Chair Peeler responded Craftsman details are included in the Design Standards. Commissioner Hauer stated there are no other ranches on that street except the group home, which stands out and does not blend in with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Hauser stated he believed that if the dining room and foyer were flipped, the door could be centered. He added the dining room would not be significantly impacted, and it makes more sense to enter the home into the family and kitchen area rather than through a hallway.

Chair Peeler asked the board how they felt about the single bathroom window if the front elevation were revised. Commissioner Pruitt stated that, as Commissioner Hauser mentioned earlier, the floor plan dictates the symmetry on every elevation. He noted the house next door has a centered wood door, two matching windows, a small gable, and a deep usable porch, and homes along the street continue that pattern. Commissioner Pruitt stated the current floor plan cannot achieve that symmetry, and discussing window changes will not matter until the floor plan is addressed.

Chair Peeler responded that the board does not assess interior layouts but understood Commissioner Pruitt's point and stated it would be up to the applicant to reconfigure the interior. Commissioner Hauer stated the floor plan would have to change to accommodate the revisions being discussed. General discussion continued about the interior layout.

Chair Peeler stated there is no landscaping plan and that would need to be included in the resubmission. Commissioner Hauer stated clarifying the front door selection is also important. She noted the board discussed color changes and agreed the columns should be white. Commissioner Hartman stated the applicant added more windows as requested at subcommittee. Commissioner Trepel stated the applicant addressed most previous comments but that the board can still request additional changes. Commissioner Hauer agreed and added that the foundation height should be increased, as four to six inches is not enough.

Commissioner Hauser asked whether the board should review every item or send the application back to subcommittee. Mr. Gates responded that staff needs a clear list of elevation changes so they can accurately instruct the applicant and avoid unnecessary back-and-forth. Commissioner Trepel asked if the board would still need to review the updated drawings. Mr. Gates responded yes, and that a motion would eventually be needed to determine whether the item is continued, denied, or approved with conditions.

Commissioner Hauser stated the board's main concerns for the front elevation are: centering the front door, possibly by flipping the dining room and foyer; centering and enlarging the front gable; and revising the smaller window so it is more consistent in size with the others.

Chair Peeler stated the rear elevation revision included adding another window to the left of the sliding door. Commissioner Trepel stated that on the right elevation, the center window could be changed to a six over one to match the others and said he did not have an issue with the small horizontal window given its purpose. Discussion followed on whether to continue or deny the application.

Commissioner Hauer stated the interior may need redesign so the front elevation can become a more balanced and symmetrical façade consistent with the neighborhood. She added that the rear looks better because of the wider porch and larger columns, and agreed with Commissioner Pruitt's point that the floor plan must change if the small front window is eliminated.

Chair Peeler asked if shutters or a thicker foundation were considered at subcommittee. Commissioner Hauser stated the front door needs to be more traditional. Commissioner Trepel asked whether the front elevation door shown was acceptable. Commissioner Hauser stated he thought it looked good, and Commissioner Trepel agreed, recommending the applicant keep that door instead of the one shown in the alternate illustration. He said he was not convinced shutters were necessary. Chair Peeler responded the need for shutters depends on final layout. Commissioner Hauer stated she would need to see revised elevations with shutters. Chair Peeler recommended color renderings since color has become a key discussion point.

Commissioner Trepel stated the columns and trim should be white, and other colors could be considered, possibly keeping the white and Town Hall Tan combination. Commissioner Hartman stated the Design Standards show darker color schemes for ranches and one example with khaki, tan, and plum accents, noting the submitted colors do not match the standards. Commissioner Trepel

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stated they were effectively asking the applicant to flip the color scheme, and Commissioner Hartman agreed.

Chair Peeler asked Mr. Nash whether the cedar shake in gray was painted or stained; Mr. Nash responded it is a solid paint. Chair Peeler stated the tones are similar to the beige and gray, and the entire color scheme needs reevaluation. Commissioner Hauer stated the side windows must be consistent in size and design. Commissioner Hauser asked whether she meant height and width; Commissioner Hauer responded both, and Commissioner Hauser said he was more concerned with height. Commissioner Trepel stated he had no issue with the widths. Commissioner Hauer stated she was concerned with the small horizontal window in the walk-in closet, while Commissioner Trepel said he did not see an issue with it.

Chair Peeler stated the window is not far back enough to be hidden. Commissioner Hauer responded that it still does not fit in. Commissioner Trepel disagreed, stating he did not think it would look bad. He asked what room was behind the small window on the left elevation, and Commissioner Hauser responded it is a bathroom. Commissioner Hauer stated she does not recall seeing similar windows on other homes in York-Chester. Commissioner Pruitt stated small contemporary-style windows were not historically used in the district, and to meet the standards, the window should be larger and more symmetrical with others on the elevation.

Commissioner Pruitt stated the board cannot direct interior changes, but can note that interior adjustments may be necessary to achieve exterior symmetry. Commissioner Hartman stated both Craftsman and ranch homes feature symmetrical designs, and examples in the Design Standards reflect that. She stated the lack of symmetry is the main issue. Chair Peeler asked Mr. Nash about the landscaping plan; Mr. Nash responded it is included on the list of required revisions.

Commissioner Hauser recommended including tree plantings in the landscaping plan. Commissioner Hauer agreed. Commissioner Hauser asked if the board had finalized its position that the foundation height must increase; multiple commissioners stated yes. Commissioner Hauser added that Southern Pearl brick was not appropriate and recommended a traditional red brick, and multiple commissioners agreed. The board discussed painted brick. Commissioner Peeler stated white brick may be acceptable depending on the application and final color scheme but is hard to judge without revisions. Chair Peeler asked if there were any additional questions for staff. Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Nash if staff had enough information to advise the applicant; Mr. Nash responded yes.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Hauser moved to deny the application as submitted. Commissioner Pruitt seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500430)

- James Preston McNeil
- 514 W. Sixth Avenue
- Requesting revisions to COA File #PLCA202400125 to utilize GBG (grilles between glass) windows in the front dormer windows.

Chair Peeler opened the public hearing and recognized Mr. Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated the request concerns 514 West Sixth Avenue and is a revision to a previous application. He presented the zoning map and property description, noting the home is contributing to the Local York-Chester District, zoned RS-8 Residential, and surrounded by residential zoning.

Mr. Nash stated the COA approved last spring was essentially to rehabilitate the entire home, including lime washing, installing new windows in certain areas, and retaining some existing windows. He stated the previous approval letter, included in the agenda packet, approved adding a dormer attic window clad with 7-inch Hardie board siding, painted white, with a six-over-six vinyl window to match the existing dormer. Another condition required replacing all wood windows with vinyl simulated divided-light windows. Commissioner Trepel asked if Mr. Nash was reading from page 22. Mr. Nash responded he was reading from the staff report.

Mr. Nash stated the previous approval required simulated divided-light windows for all replacements, but the applicant stated the Grilles Between Glass (GBG) window in the existing dormer would remain. He stated he could not find this in the prior meeting minutes, but the GBG window is visible in photos taken before rehabilitation, and the new dormer window was intended to match the existing dormer with GBG. Mr. Nash presented excerpts from the

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Fenestration section of the Design Standards and showed photos of the existing dormer before and after the rehabilitation.

Mr. Nash stated the applicant intended to keep the existing dormer window and install a matching window in the new dormer. He stated the City could not require the removal of the existing dormer window under current ordinances because it predated the applicant's ownership. Therefore, installing an SDL window in the new dormer would not match the existing one. Commissioner Trepel asked which dormer was new. Commissioner Hauer responded the one on the right. Mr. Nash presented photos of the original dormer, confirming it had the same GBG window. He stated staff could have required an SDL window for the new dormer, but that would result in a mismatch.

Mr. Nash stated that installing an SDL window per the standards would not match the existing dormer. Commissioner Trepel asked if the applicant was essentially requesting approval to not install the SDL window in the new dormer. Mr. Nash responded yes. Commissioner Hauser asked if this was solely because the original window was not SDL. Mr. Nash responded yes. Commissioner Trepel stated he had no problem with the request. Commissioner Hauer stated she preferred all the windows match but understood the issue.

Commissioner Hauer stated the board is being asked to approve a new window that would normally not pass but is being considered due to the existing non-SDL window. Commissioners Trepel and Hauser agreed. Commissioner Hauer stated she thought the house looked great overall, and this was the only element that did not. Commissioner Trepel stated he had a question for the applicant when he came forward.

Chair Peeler stated one of the windows existed when the prior COA was approved, which is why a like-for-like installation occurred, but at the time SDL lights were still required by the standards. Mr. Nash stated the COA did list SDL for all new windows, but matching the existing dormer window would not have been possible with SDL. Chair Peeler asked if this was technically a COA violation rather than a revision. Mr. Nash responded yes. Mr. Graham added that the applicant installed a window that violates both the prior COA and the Design Standards, so the new application is for after-the-fact approval to keep it.

Commissioner Hauser stated an argument could be made that the board approved the GBG window previously, referencing a statement on page 24 from Ms. Gates that the new dormer would include a six-over-six window to match the existing dormer.

Mr. Graham stated that because the Design Standards specifically prohibit GBG windows, the board may only deviate with a reasonable justification. In this case, the justification could be that an existing nonconforming window remains and strict enforcement would create a noticeable mismatch. He emphasized this explanation provides a legal basis if the board chooses to deviate but that they may also uphold the standards.

Discussion continued on how the board could justify deviating from the Design Standards and what types of decision-making are permitted under state statutes.

Chair Peeler asked the board if there were any other questions for staff. Hearing none, she recognized Preston McNeil of 2465 Autumnwood Trail, Gastonia, NC. Chair Peeler asked if the board had any questions for the applicant. Commissioner Trepel stated he had a question for Mr. McNeil and asked whether he could replace the window on the existing dormer with an SDL window, and if not, why.

Mr. McNeil responded that his application was always intended to match the existing dormer, and he believed that was what had been approved. He stated that in hindsight he should have been more explicit about using a GBG window, but his understanding at the time was that matching the original window was acceptable. He stated that now that he understands the standards better, replacing the existing window would require removing siding, replacing windows, and significant time and cost for something he believed had been approved as submitted. He stated the situation was a misunderstanding and that he felt he had followed the approval as he understood it.

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Commissioner Hartman stated that although it is a subtle point, page 24 of the previous meeting minutes noted that all windows were to be replaced with six-over-six SDL within six years. Commissioner Hauser stated he had a question for both the applicant and Mr. Nash, noting the minutes also reflected a request for staff to contact the Department of Historic Preservation about lime washing. Chair Peeler responded yes, and that lime washing was discussed on page 23.

Chair Peeler asked if there were any other questions for the applicant. Commissioner Hauer stated she thought the house and color looked great overall but noted windows are an important feature on older homes and that is why she was focused on them.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted. Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5–2 (Commissioners Hauer and Hartman opposed).

ITEM 4. Other Business

Mr. Gates stated that the 2050 Comprehensive Plan was approved by City Council and is now effective. Staff will begin preparing UDO updates to align with the new plan and will likely issue an RFP to bring on a consultant for the ordinance rewrite. The updated plan should be posted within the next one to two weeks. He noted that some zoning district names and descriptions may change under the plan's new placemaking approach.

ITEM 5. Adjournment

There being no other business, Chair Peeler adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Rebeca Mintz, Planning Technician

Kaitlyn Peeler , Chair