

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at City Hall in the Council Chamber, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Andi Eddlemon and Commissioners, Jeff Trepel, Carol Hauer, Josh Hauser, Blair Propert, and Kaitlyn Peeler

Absent:

Staff present: Charles Graham, Sushil Nepal, Maddy, Gates, Jalen Nash, and Rebeca Mintz

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check

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

ITEM 1b: Approval of October 24th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Trepel stated he had no corrections but asked Mr. Nash about the for-sale status of 312 W. Third Avenue, referencing page four, sixth paragraph from the bottom. Mr. Nash confirmed there was discussion about whether the property was for sale or rent but noted it was not relevant to the Certificate of Appropriateness review and was omitted.

With no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon invited a motion. Commissioner Hauser moved to approve the October 24, 2024, meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Trepel. The motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 1c: Approval of 2025 Public Hearing Schedule

With no questions for staff, Chair Eddlemon asked if any board member was prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Hauser moved to adopt the 2025 Public Hearing Schedule as submitted, and Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400265)

- Johnnie Dorsey
- 703 S. South Street
- Requesting after-the-fact approval for the installation of a new pathway to the front porch and its renovation.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented. Mr. Nash presented the property's zoning map and stated the property is zoned RS-8 and is surrounded by residential land uses.

Mr. Nash presented the Staff Report. Mr. Nash stated that this is an after-the-fact approval request for the installation of a new pathway to the front porch and the renovation of the porch itself. He explained that the home, built in 1931, is considered a contributing property in the local York-Chester Historic District.

Mr. Nash further noted that four rotting 4x4 columns were removed and replaced with two cedar 6x6 posts, as detailed in the application. He added that a cedar railing was installed on the front porch. Regarding the pathway, Mr. Nash explained that the existing pavers had sunk into the ground and were removed. In their place, new boulders and gravel were installed, as reflected in the images provided in the agenda.

Mr. Nash also stated that four cedar shutters were added to the front elevation of the home. He concluded by presenting before-and-after photos of the property and reading the relevant excerpts from the Design Standards on Landscape Features, Shutters, and Porches, Decks & Patios, as listed in the staff report for the board's review.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if there were any questions for staff. Commissioner Trepel inquired how Mr. Nash became aware of the violation. Mr. Nash responded that he was notified through a list of violations he had received during a previous discussion.

With no further questions for staff, Chair Eddlemon recognized Johnnie Dorsey of 703 S. South Street, Gastonia, NC 28052.

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Hauser stated that the Design Standards prohibit the use of "barn-style" shutters and the installation of shutters on bay or double windows. Commissioner Trepel agreed, adding that while the walkway looks good, the shutters are not appropriate for this home or any other property in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Hauer asked Mr. Dorsey if he planned to paint the wood or leave it unfinished. Mr. Dorsey explained that he added railings due to safety concerns after his child fell, as the sides of the porch are about 30 inches high. He also addressed rotted wood in the four-by-four posts and stated he had no issue removing the shutters.

Commissioner Peeler noted that the railings were more of a building code issue and did not bother her. Commissioner Hauser commented that the updated posts and railings were visually consistent with the neighborhood and an improvement. He suggested they be painted, which Commissioners Peeler, Trepel, and Hauer agreed with.

Chair Eddlemon expressed concern about the railings being attached to the window frame but understood the need for the railings for safety. She agreed they should be painted white and had no issue with the shutters being removed and repainted.

Chair Eddlemon asked if anyone had further comments before discussing the walkway.

Commissioner Hauser expressed approval of the neighborhood improvements.

Mr. Dorsey clarified that the rocks in the walkway were not purchased but had sunken into the ground, except for the gravel, which was necessary to add. Commissioner Hauser stated he doesn't take issue with the pathway, noting that while it looks contrasting now, it will blend better once the grass grows back.

Commissioner Peeler expressed some concern about the gravel, as the standards prohibit its use, but she was okay with the larger stones.

Commissioner Hauer suggested the gravel might be acceptable if a border is used to keep it in place. Commissioner Peeler confirmed there appears to be a metal or rubber border, and Commissioner Trepel confirmed the border is visible in the photo.

Chair Eddlemon stated she had no issue with the original stepping stones and believed that with consistent trim painting, they would look great. However, she would have preferred gravel in a tone similar to the larger stones, such as pebbles in natural colors, for a more finished look.

She expressed concern about the gravel, mentioning that when considering after-the-fact applications, it feels unfair to adjust the standards or approvals after the work is done. She emphasized that this issue would come up frequently, as seen in tonight's agenda. Chair Eddlemon asked the board if they would have approved the gravel if it had been proposed as an idea and what could be done now.

Commissioner Peeler stated that the gravel would have been denied.

Commissioner Hauser noted that he didn't see gravel being prohibited in the standards.

Commissioner Trepel responded that the prohibition on gravel likely applies to driveways.

Commissioner Hauser clarified that gravel driveways are not prohibited, but he suggested adding such a rule in the future. Discussion continued regarding whether gravel is prohibited.

Mr. Nash clarified that gravel is not prohibited, and it can be used in driveways. The Design Standards only mention gravel concerning driveways.

With no additional speakers, Chair Eddlemon asked the board if anyone felt prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted, with the conditions that the shutters be removed and all other new wood trim be painted white. Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion.

Following no further discussion, the motion was approved by a vote of 4-3, with Chair Eddlemon, Commissioner Hauer, and Commissioner Peeler voting against it.

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400464) Revised

- Prafulla Patel
- 312 W. Third Avenue
- Requesting the replacement of wood siding with fiber cement siding in a new color.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the purpose of the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented.

Mr. Nash stated that the application is for 312 W Third Avenue, which had been before the board within the past two months. He noted that Mr. Patel called yesterday to inform staff that he would not be able to attend due to a medical emergency but still wanted his application to be reviewed. Mr. Nash explained that the request is to replace the existing wood siding with Hardie plank siding and to apply new exterior paint in either light mist or cobblestone. He added that Mr. Patel's preference is for light mist, although there is also a third option for white.

Mr. Nash stated that Hardieboard siding comes in four different measurements, but Mr. Patel did not specify which one he would use. Chair Eddlemon asked if the siding would have a textured finish, to which Mr. Nash responded that it would have a wood-grain finish. Chair Eddlemon then asked the board if there were any specific questions for Mr. Nash.

Commissioner Hauser asked if Mr. Nash knew the plans for the scallop siding on the second floor. Mr. Nash replied that Mr. Patel did not mention replacing the scallop siding with a Hardie scallop in his application. Commissioner Peeler noted that she believes Mr. Patel mentioned replacing the scallop siding at a previous meeting but did not have her notes with her to confirm.

Commissioner Hauser suggested that the board could address the scallop siding with a stipulation in the motion. Commissioner Peeler referred back to the last meeting and asked if Mr. Patel would remove the existing wood siding before installing the Hardie plank. Mr. Nash confirmed that the new siding would not be installed over any damaged siding.

Chair Eddlemon stated for the record that the staff report specifies replacing all the existing deteriorated siding as part of the key elements of the design. With no further questions for staff, Chair Eddlemon asked if any board members were prepared to make a motion.

Commissioner Hauser moved to approve the proposed Hardie plank siding with a five-inch board and added a stipulation that the scallop siding at the second-floor level also be replaced with Hardie scallop siding. He noted he had no preference for color and was comfortable with the options submitted by Mr. Patel.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Murphy.

With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 4. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400477)

- Camille Fox
- 414 Dale Avenue
- Requesting after-the-fact approval for repainting the front porch and approval for removing the shutters.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the purpose of the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented.

Mr. Nash stated that the request is for repainting the front porch (or sections of it) and the removal of shutters. He noted that this is now an after-the-fact application. A zoning map was presented, and Mr. Nash read the property description, stating that the home, built in 1920, is considered contributing to the local Brookwood Historic District. The property is zoned RS-12 and is surrounded by residential land uses.

Mr. Nash explained that the application was initially reviewed in a subcommittee following the October 24 HDC meeting and was continued with a request for a color elevation or rendering, which

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

was subsequently submitted. Two subcommittee meetings were held on November 13 and 14, both resulting in a one-to-one vote.

He read the key elements of the design from the staff report, noting the following proposed paint scheme:

- Front door: Bamboo Shoot
- Front porch: Dark Auburn
- Porch cap and center of columns: City Arboretum
- Column trim: Bamboo Shoot

Mr. Nash also read excerpts from the Design Standards on shutters and exterior colors.

He stated that during the subcommittee meetings, there was discussion about the colors potentially clashing, but the repainting is now complete. Photos of the repainting were presented. Commissioner Peeler asked if the home had shutters before the repainting. Mr. Nash confirmed that it did.

Commissioner Hauer asked if the colors were the same as those originally submitted to the subcommittee. Chair Eddlemon noted changes, particularly in the concrete caps, which were initially proposed as darker gray but were painted green instead.

With no further questions for staff, Chair Eddlemon recognized Camille Fox of 414 Dale Avenue, Gastonia, NC.

Ms. Fox stated that she initially intended to paint the door a lighter color but opted for a darker green instead. She also mentioned that the rendering showed the front of the concrete steps painted reddish-brown, but she changed it to off-white, closer to the appearance of clean concrete, as the reddish-brown looked unappealing.

Commissioner Hauer remarked that the elevation looked much better with the changes, and multiple commissioners agreed. Commissioner Trepel asked why the shutters were removed.

Ms. Fox explained that she didn't want the shutters because they were plastic and didn't fit the double windows. Commissioner Peeler commented that the shutter removal didn't bother her, as Craftsman bungalows typically don't have shutters. Chair Eddlemon agreed, noting the house looked cleaner and highlighted its unique elements without the shutters.

Chair Eddlemon then asked Ms. Fox about her plans for the door, even though it would be addressed in a future application. Ms. Fox replied that it would be a darker brown with a cherry undertone. She added that significant work had been done beyond painting the porch. Former Commissioner James Henson had performed restorative work on the concrete caps, which she had struggled with for years. The board briefly discussed Mr. Henson's methods for concrete repair.

With no further questions for Ms. Fox, Chair Eddlemon asked the board if anyone felt prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted, and Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 5. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400504)

- Christopher Canterbury
- 525 W. Third Avenue
- Requesting approval for the installation of a new accessory structure.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the purpose of the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented.

Mr. Nash stated that the application is for a new accessory structure on a corner lot zoned RS-8, surrounded by residential land uses. He presented the staff report, noting that the primary building was constructed in 1928 and is considered contributing to the local York Chester Historic District.

Mr. Nash explained that the application was reviewed by an HDC subcommittee on November 13, 2024, and was denied because the prefabricated shed, located on the corner lot, was visible from the right-of-way. Mr. Canterbury was notified of the denial and provided with excerpts from the design standards supporting that decision. Mr. Canterbury then requested the application be brought to the

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

full commission, proposing to relocate the shed to the opposite side of the rear yard to improve its screening by the fence.

Mr. Nash stated that the building materials had not changed since the subcommittee review. The shed is a one-story frame structure measuring approximately 70 square feet and will be gray. He presented both the original and new site plans.

Commissioner Peeler asked if the shed design had changed since the subcommittee review. Mr. Nash confirmed that the design remained the same, with the only change being the shed's location.

A discussion followed regarding the differences between the subcommittee review and the current full commission review. Mr. Nash presented a Google Map of the property. Commissioner Probert inquired whether the shed design had been previously approved. Mr. Nash clarified that it had not.

Discussion ensued regarding the shed's new location and the existing fence on the property. With no further questions for Mr. Nash, Chair Eddlemon recognized Christopher Canterbury of 525 W. Third Avenue, Gastonia, NC.

Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Canterbury about the height of his fence. Mr. Canterbury responded that it was close to seven feet. He stated he has seen other sheds visible from the road and is trying to mitigate his shed's visibility. He explained that his old house lacked storage.

Commissioner Trepel acknowledged that Mr. Canterbury is entitled to have a shed but expressed concern about the metal shed being visible from the street, noting that metal sheds are typically not allowed.

Commissioner Peeler, who was on the subcommittee with Commissioner Trepel, suggested reviewing the design standards. She explained that accessory buildings should coordinate with the home, and a prefabricated metal shed does not meet this requirement. She noted that this issue was raised during the subcommittee review.

Mr. Canterbury expressed concern that, as a corner lot owner, his shed would always be visible from the road, making it difficult to comply.

Commissioner Peeler clarified that the denial was not due to the shed being visible but because it does not follow the design standards of the historic district.

Commissioner Hauer agreed, emphasizing that the metal shed does not blend with the house and is a prefabricated metal building.

Mr. Canterbury asked if Hardie or wooden materials would be more appropriate.

Commissioner Trepel read the relevant design standards for accessory structures from the agenda. He stated that while the shed's size, scale, form, height, and proportion may be acceptable, its materials are incompatible due to being prefabricated metal.

Commissioner Hauser agreed, stating that the design standards encourage sheds to resemble miniature houses with wood or Hardie siding, architectural shingles, and features like windows or vents. He noted that prefabricated sheds with these characteristics are available at a slightly higher price point but blend better with the neighborhood.

Discussion ensued about previous applications and examples of sheds that met these standards.

Chair Eddlemon suggested that rather than focusing too much on the location or a custom shed, Mr. Canterbury could consider planting something that could provide screening in the next few years.

Mr. Canterbury responded that, as a flight attendant, he must be cautious with his budget.

Discussion then ensued about other projects completed on the home.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Hauser moved to deny the application as submitted. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 6. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400532)

- Jacques Francois

Historic District Commission

December 12, 2024

Meeting Minutes

- 401 Dale Avenue
- Requesting after-the-fact approval for the installation of new garage doors.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the purpose of the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented.

Mr. Nash read the property description and stated that the request was for after-the-fact approval for the installation of the garage door. He explained that a single door had been installed on a two-car garage.

Mr. Nash read the relevant design excerpts from the agenda related to this project. He noted that another issue mentioned in the application was the lack of trim around the garage door. Mr. Nash explained that work had stopped once the owner received the violation letter. He added that Mr. Francois plans to add white trim if the application is approved.

Commissioner Murphy asked Mr. Nash why Mr. Francois received a Notice of Violation (NOV). Mr. Nash responded that it was due to failing to apply for approval before installing the garage door.

Commissioner Murphy then asked Mr. Nash if someone from the Planning staff had noticed the work, considering the garage is located far back on the property.

Mr. Nash responded that he assumed he was notified.

With no further questions for Mr. Nash, Chair Eddlemon recognized Jacques Francois of 401 Dale Avenue, Gastonia, NC.

Mr. Graham noted that Mr. Francois would need to be sworn in before giving his statement.

Commissioner Propert thanked Mr. and Mrs. Francois for stopping the work once they were notified, as that is not always the case.

Commissioner Murphy asked Mr. and Mrs. Francois if they lived at the home or if it was a rental. Mrs. Francois stated that her son lives there.

Commissioner Murphy mentioned that, at some point, theft had occurred at the property and assumed that this was the reason behind the garage door installation. Mr. Francois confirmed that was correct.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. and Mrs. Francois if the garage doors were made of typical insulated metal material. Mr. Francois responded that he doesn't think the doors are insulated, but they are metal.

Chair Eddlemon asked if the garage door was automatic. Mr. Francois confirmed that it was.

Commissioner Peeler asked for additional opinions.

Commissioner Trepel shared that he had extended his garage 10 years ago and had an old 1939 garage door that functioned like a barn door. He explained that it was difficult to live with, as it would break often, was not airtight, and was always cold. He replaced it with modern metal garage doors. He acknowledged that while they are not as aesthetically pleasing, they are far more functional.

Commissioner Peeler stated that the garage door didn't bother her, and she would be curious to see what the trim looked like. However, she mentioned that the window placement seemed a little odd, especially given the issue of theft.

Commissioner Hauer stated that her preference would be for there to be no windows or for them to be placed only at the top.

Commissioner Trepel agreed on the window issue but stated that the garage door itself didn't bother him.

Commissioner Hauser said he didn't disagree with any of the comments about the windows but didn't feel strongly enough to deny the application.

Historic District Commission
December 12, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted, with the proviso that the trim be replaced and painted white.

Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was approved (4-3, with Eddlemon, Peeler, and Hauer against).

ITEM 7. Other Business

Mr. Nash stated that a subcommittee meeting is needed.

Ms. Gates presented the board with additional materials for their 2025 Comprehensive Plan homework assignment.

Sushil Nepal introduced himself as the new Planning Director and expressed his enthusiasm for working with the board in the future.

ITEM 8. Adjournment

With there being no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon adjourned the December 12th, 2024 meeting of the HDC at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andi Eddlemon, Chair
Historic District Commission

Jalen Nash – CZO, Planner
Planning Department