

# Historic District Commission

February 1, 2023

## Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission (HDC) to order at 5:00 p.m. on February 1, 2023, at City Hall in the Council Chamber, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Andi Eddlemon and Commissioners James Henson, Carol Hauer, Jeff Trepel, Josh Hauser

Absent: Commissioners Camille Fox and Ed Starr

Staff present: Charles Graham, Kim Wallis, and Jalen Nash

### **ITEM 1. Roll Call / Sound Check**

Chair Eddlemon opened the continued public hearing.

### **ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202300009) Continued**

- Zach Boshamer
- 510 S York Street
- Backyard tree removal

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and asked if the Commission had any questions for the applicant. Commissioner Henson remarked that during his site visit he noticed that the applicant had lost a big tree in the rear yard, with a root ball of perhaps 12’.

Commissioner Hauser asked the applicant regarding the large tree that had fallen in the yard, whether he had gotten Robert Stroud [the Municipal Arborist] to look at it before it fell or after it fell.

Mr. Boshamer stated that the tree that fell had shown no previous signs of decay or rot. He stated that he had a different tree removed last year in the fall that was clearly dead and the arborist had come out then and that they had gotten staff approval to remove it.

Commissioner Hauser remarked that he would be curious to hear what Robert had said about the fallen tree as he is a city arborist, being the subject expert, and if he had seen any issues with it.

Mr. Boshamer stated that Robert was welcome to come look at it. He stated that he had his tree service out to look at it and that he had mentioned that the only rot he could see on the fallen tree was underneath in the core and the root system and that what was visible on the backside still looked good. He stated that he had looked at it previously when assessing the other tree and said that it had a couple of dead limbs but otherwise it was still alive.

Commissioner Henson stated that he had an opportunity to go look at the tree. He stated that with trees there are competing factors of safety versus keeping the tree and discussed his personal experience with removing a tree due to safety concerns. Commissioner Henson stated from a safety standpoint and having limbs falling from the tree already, he would be in favor of removing this tree.

Commissioner Hauser stated that his yard has multiple trees and limbs falling from them as well, but as he is in favor of preserving the canopy of the Historic District neighborhoods, he does not see himself voting in favor of removing this tree.

Commissioner Trepel stated that he agreed with Commissioner Hauser and he does not see any distinguishable factors from this tree and the others in the neighborhood. He stated that he would probably not vote in favor to remove this tree.

Commissioner Hauer stated she agreed with Commissioner Trepel with not allowing the tree to be removed and that the safety issue does not seem imminent. Commissioner Hauer stated that the tree is beautiful and with Mr. Stroud evaluating the tree as healthy and not seeing any signs of disease, her inclination would be to keep the tree. She stated that there is room to skirt around that tree if Mr. Boshamer wanted to add asphalt or increase the parking area. Mr. Boshamer responded that he does not know if this would be an option but that it is difficult to drive in given the proximity of the tree and driveway.

Chair Eddlemon stated that she thinks that she believes the Commission should put their trust in the professional advisors that are available at the City such as Charles [Graham, Assistant City Attorney] for legal, and Rob [Stroud] for anything arborist related. She stated that the issues the Applicant has brought up, whether it be the tree or the driveway, are issues that come with this type of historic neighborhood. Ms. Eddlemon noted that the neighborhood should be grateful for these healthy trees. Ms. Eddlemon asked if any of the other Commissioners had anything to add.

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Commissioner Hauser stated that given the Design Standards that the Commission uses and that they have helped create and maintain, the Commission would have to have an exceptional reason to allow the tree to come down. He stated that he does not personally see a major exception in this instance, given that it's a healthy tree. Commissioner Hauser stated that the Design Standards indicate it is important that the tree canopy of the historic districts be preserved and maintained.

Chair Eddlemon asked the Commission if anyone felt prepared to make a motion.

Commissioner Hauser moved to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness based on what the Design Standards state concerning trees. Commissioner Hauer seconded the motion. The motion to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness was approved (4-1).

Discussion ensued after denying the Certificate of Appropriateness on the assessment of the tree and how the Applicant could contact Mr. Stroud to receive that assessment. The Commission and Mr. Graham discussed the different avenues Mr. Boshamer could explore after receiving this denial from the HDC for tree removal.

**ITEM 3. Other Business**

Ms. Wallis stated a subcommittee meeting was needed after the meeting.

**ITEM 4. Adjournment**

There being no other business, Chair Eddlemon adjourned the meeting at 5:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Jalen Nash, Planning Technician

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Andi Eddlemon, Chair