

Historic District Commission

April 24, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Chair Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:02 p.m. on Thursday, April 24, 2025, at City Hall in the Council Chamber, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Andi Eddlemon and Commissioners Carol Hauer, Jeff Trepel, Josh Hauser, and Marty Murphy

Absent: Commissioners Kaitlyn Peeler and Blair Propert

Staff present: Charles Graham, Joe 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 March 27th, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Trepel moved to adopt the meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion. With there being no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500116 Cont.)

- Bart Knight
- 409 W. Sixth Avenue
- Requesting a COA to replace the front door, remove the front door transom window, and replace two windows at the right rear of the home.

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 stated this application is a continuation of the March 27 meeting and presented the property zoning map. Mr. Nash presented the property description and stated the house was built in 1924 and is a contributing property to the local York Chester Historic District. Mr. Nash stated the property is zoned RS-8 and is surrounded by residential zoning districts.

He stated the key elements of this request are to remove the current front door and replace it with a Craftsman-style, six-light, 36-inch by 80-inch front door; remove the transom window that flanks the front door to the left (if you're facing the home); and remove two windows on the rear right side of the home, then install two new windows farther back in that rear addition to match the existing remaining window on that right elevation.

Mr. Nash stated the new windows will measure 32 inches by 38 inches, and that there is also an additional request to paint the new front door and the shutters black for better contrast. Mr. Nash stated that at the last HDC meeting in March, the board had requested dimensions for the new windows, which he just described, and had asked for an explanation regarding the removal of the window on the right side elevation.

Mr. Nash stated the applicant is here tonight to speak on behalf of their application.

Mr. Nash mentioned there was a subcommittee meeting held on April 10 with two of the commissioners to review the proposed changes, and they felt the request still needed to come before the full commission, which is why they are here tonight. Mr. Nash presented excerpts of the related Design Principles and Standards for this project.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash what the code issue was with the existing windows.

Mr. Nash responded that he could try to explain it correctly, but that Mr. Knight was present and could probably do a better job.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if there were any other questions for Mr. Nash.

Commissioner Hauer asked Mr. Nash if he knew the measurements for the new windows and the existing windows.

Mr. Nash responded that he did not know the dimensions of the existing windows, but the new windows will be 32" x 38". He continued by stating that the two new windows in the rear addition would be the same size as the remaining window that is not being removed.

Discussion ensued over which window will be removed and which window is not.

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Mr. Nash presented additional photos of the property.

Chair Eddlemon stated she wished she could have seen some photos from the duplex property adjacent to the window replacement, as this is where most of the visual impact from removing the windows would be. She added that the privacy fence does not provide any real screening.

Mr. Nash presented photos of the windows being removed from the interior of the home. Mr. Nash stated the window does not have a proper header and is rotted, which is one of the reasons for its replacement.

Commissioner Hauer stated it does not look like the window being removed is the same height as the window remaining. Commissioner Hauser responded that it looks like it may be the same height, but possibly at a lower elevation.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if there were any additional questions for Mr. Nash. Hearing none, Chair Eddlemon recognized Bart Knight at 409 W. Sixth Avenue, Gastonia, NC 28052.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board what questions they had for the applicant.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Knight why there was a code issue with the large window closest to the rear addition.

Mr. Knight stated the first issue is that the window was replaced without a proper header. As seen in the interior photo, the original header was installed about 10 inches higher when the house was originally built. He stated that secondly, this is where the kitchen used to be, and the sink was located beneath that window.

Mr. Knight stated he is trying to return the kitchen to its original location, but there is no header, and in fact, the double studs supporting the window were cut. He stated the window had lost its stability on that side because of the removal of the double studs.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Knight if there were any other code issues. Mr. Knight responded that the other issue is with the current kitchen location. He stated the ceiling drops to six feet eight inches, and you need at least seven feet to accommodate wall cabinets above. Mr. Knight stated he could not raise the roof.

Commissioner Trepel responded that, in other words, the kitchen has to be moved back to its original location. Mr. Knight responded that was correct—it had to be moved back to that room.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Knight if he was planning to put the kitchen or the window back where it originally was.

Mr. Knight presented interior photos of the windows, pointing out that the current replacement window has been dropped lower. He stated he is not sure why it was installed that way, but he plans to raise it to align with the height of the remaining window. He continued by stating that the change would affect the back addition. Right now, there is about 12 feet of solid siding going to the rear addition. With his proposed changes, he believes the windows will appear more consistent along that elevation.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Knight if, out of the three existing windows, the one closest to the front elevation was going to remain.

Mr. Knight responded that technically, no, it will be replaced with a new window because it needs to be slightly shorter to allow cabinets to fit underneath. He added that the new window would be wider than the existing one.

Commissioner Trepel asked if the new window would be installed at the same height or lower than the other new windows. Mr. Knight responded yes—that is what he is proposing. He mentioned he would be raising the window back up to its original height.

Discussion ensued over what the original window design may have been.

Commissioner Hauer stated it seems like a large space that will have only the one window closest to the front elevation. Mr. Knight responded that there is less than seven feet of siding on both sides of that window. He emphasized that there would be more window coverage on that elevation.

Chair Eddlemon asked Commissioner Hauser for his thoughts on the application.

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Commissioner Hauser responded that he is perfectly fine with returning to the original design and believes that is the ideal solution in his mind.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Knight if he was going to replace the transom window or remove it and cover the area with new siding. Mr. Knight responded that he plans to return to the original design there as well and only remove the transom window. He explained that, on the right-hand side, you can see where the stud was cut and the structural stability compromised—whoever installed the current window just nailed it to the other side of the board to make it fit. He stated this diminished some of the structural integrity of the house.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Knight if he planned to put anything else in that location and then corrected himself, noting that based on the interior photo presented, it's clear that nothing can be added there. Mr. Knight agreed with his comments.

Commissioner Trepel stated he had no problems or concerns with the application and moved that the application be approved as submitted. Commissioner Murphy seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500134)

- Ashley Welch
- 529 S. Clay Street
- Requesting approval for the removal of two oak trees measuring over 8 inches in diameter, with one tree located in the rear yard and the other in the front yard.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated the application has been withdrawn and the homeowner intends to trim the large limbs on both trees that hang over the home.

ITEM 4. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500153)

- Dennis Jones
- 417 S. South Street
- Replace porch columns and install column details in the front porch rebuild to match the previously approved COA, file #202300155.

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

Mr. Nash stated that Dennis Jones, the applicant, is present tonight and is requesting approval to install the column details on a front porch rebuild that was approved at the May 25, 2023, Historic District Commission meeting. The property zoning map was presented.

Mr. Nash stated the home was built in 1919 and is considered a contributing property to the local York Chester Historic District. He stated the property is zoned RS-8 and is surrounded by a mix of residential and office zoning districts. The property description was presented.

Mr. Nash stated the first time this application came before the board was on May 26, 2022, and then again on June 23, 2022, when it was approved for repair. However, he believes there was a violation involving the installation of incorrect columns. Mr. Nash stated the columns installed were one foot shorter than what was approved.

He stated the applicant returned the following year to install nine-foot columns instead of eight-foot columns and to apply all of the changes that Mr. Jones originally proposed.

Mr. Nash stated Mr. Jones is planning to install ten columns, eight inches in diameter and nine feet tall, and he is planning to cut down the concrete base to accommodate the nine-foot columns. Mr. Nash stated the applicant is going to keep the standard column cap and base, as well as the decorative element on the porch roof. He stated it is essentially the same proposal as two years ago.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash if this application was being reconsidered because the previous approval had expired. Mr. Nash responded that this is correct.

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Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Nash if the house had been unchanged from what had originally been approved. Mr. Nash responded yes. Commissioner Hauer mentioned the home has been deteriorating.

Commissioner Hauer asked if the fascia on the front porch is going to remain the same, which wasn't necessarily done correctly, or if it will be corrected to match the drawings in the application.

Before Mr. Jones responded, Chair Eddlemon asked the board if anyone had any questions for Mr. Nash or if he had any additional material to present. Mr. Nash responded no, and Chair Eddlemon recognized Dennis Jones at 743 Mylinda Drive, Newton, NC 28658.

Mr. Jones responded to Commissioner Hauer, stating that all the fascia boards currently on the outside are going to be replaced because when they were installed, the screws were pulled in too deep. He said that in one of the pictures, you can see the board peeling away, and the boards were supposed to be staggered. Mr. Jones stated he is going to install new boards and secure them with trim nails, but the boards will be covered by the trim decoration that he will install afterward.

Commissioner Hauer said that would be great. Chair Eddlemon and Commissioner Hauser agreed.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if they had any other questions for the applicant. Commissioner Trepel stated this would be a huge improvement to the streetscape when completed.

Commissioner Hauer asked Mr. Jones if everything would be painted. Mr. Jones responded yes, everything will be painted white to match the existing scheme.

Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Jones if the windows would be replaced or repaired if there was any damage since they are original to the home. Mr. Jones stated he would not be replacing any windows and would only repair them if damaged.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Jones if the decorative metal on top of the porch was going to be replaced or reinstalled. Mr. Jones responded that those pieces would be reinstalled and are currently stored in the garage.

Chair Eddlemon asked if anyone was prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Hauser moved to approve the application as submitted. Commissioner Trepel seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 5. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500158)

- Justin Nifong
- 518 W. Fifth Avenue
- Requesting approval for front porch renovations, including replacing the columns and front door, repainting the exterior, and repointing and parging the foundation.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated that item number five has been withdrawn, or more accurately, revised.

He explained to the board that the applicant plans to repair the porch columns and foundation without parging the foundation and will only move forward with the door replacement, which will be discussed in a subcommittee meeting afterward.

ITEM 6. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500168)

- Jennifer Baker
- 508 W. Fifth Avenue
- Requesting approval for the renovation of the front porch and the home's front exterior, which was previously denied at the February 27th HDC meeting.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented. Mr. Nash stated the applicant is requesting approval for the renovation of the front porch and the home's front exterior, which was previously denied at the February 27th HDC meeting.

The property's zoning map was presented. Mr. Nash stated the home was built in 1940 and presented the property description.

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Mr. Nash presented the original changes that were implemented and denied at the February meeting.

Mr. Nash presented the revisions to replace the black vinyl window trim with the white vinyl window trim, paint the black trim between the vertical and shake siding white, paint the pressure-treated wood columns black to resemble the previous black metal columns, and add appropriately sized black shutters to the front elevation. Mr. Nash presented related excerpts from the Design Principles and Standards.

Mr. Nash presented the revised elevations and noted that one of the windows may not appear to be the correct size because this is only a rendering generated by ChatGPT.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if there were any questions for Mr. Nash. Hearing none, Chair Eddlemon recognized Jennifer Baker at 508 W. Eighth Avenue.

Chair Eddlemon asked Ms. Baker if she preferred the look with or without the shutters.

Ms. Baker responded that she doesn't think it looks bad and that it resembles the original. She stated that when she was creating the rendering, she had looked through some apps and ChatGPT was her last resort. She said she was surprised by how well the rendering turned out and, with the white trim on the windows and the shutters, she thinks it looks fine. She emphasized that it just looks original.

Ms. Baker mentioned that Commissioner Hauser brought up at the last meeting that the shutters originally on the home weren't appropriately sized, and that was how they were when she bought the house. However, she would like to get shutters that are appropriately sized for the windows on the front.

Commissioner Hauser stated he thought ChatGPT's rendering looked great.

Commissioner Hauer stated the columns pop against the white, and it's such an improvement from before. Ms. Baker agreed, adding that when she painted the columns white, they were kind of washed out against the white siding.

Chair Eddlemon stated the columns are the only part that she doesn't love and that she would rather have them painted white. Commissioner Trepel agreed but said he doesn't feel strongly about it.

Chair Eddlemon added that, from a historical standpoint, the solid black columns with the black trim are a lot of black for a historic neighborhood. She said that's her only concern but that she doesn't have a strong opinion about the shutters — if the applicant likes them, that's great.

Ms. Baker responded that the porch floor, when you walk up, isn't black, but ChatGPT colored it that way, so there isn't as much black as shown in the photo.

Commissioner Trepel asked Ms. Baker what she thought about painting the columns white instead of black. Ms. Baker responded that she didn't think white would look good because, in the rendering with white columns, they were washed out against the siding. She added that the black gutter stands out with white columns, but with black columns, the gutter blends in and looks seamless—you can't tell there are gutters.

Commissioner Hauser stated that it looks good as submitted.

Chair Eddlemon asked Commissioner Hauser if he felt prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Hauser responded yes and moved to approve the application as submitted.

Commissioner Trepel seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was approved 4-1, with Chair Eddlemon opposed.

ITEM 7. Other Business

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash if there was any update to the violation list that Mr. Nepal mentioned would be provided at the meeting. Mr. Nash responded that is completed and he will be emailing that information shortly.

Mr. Gates updates the board on a possible addition of a Certificate of Appropriateness fee that the Planning Staff has been looking into. Multiple Commissioners emphasized they would also like to see that information and Mr. Gates responded that would be provided. Mr. Nash stated a subcommittee meeting would be needed.

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ITEM 8. Adjournment

With there being no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon adjourned the April 24th, 2025 meeting of the HDC at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andi Eddlemon, Chair
Historic District Commission

Jalen Nash – CZO, Planner
Planning Department