



**Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Indian Trail Meeting Hall
May 3, 2023
4:00 p.m.**

Members Present: Charles Drew, Rick Pukenas, Joanne Wesson, Tal West
Josh Cline McGee, Alexis-Gore Graves, and Bonnie Bray.

Members Absent: Jim McKee and Bonner Herring

Staff Present: Travis Henley, Director of Development Services
Maureen Meehan, City Planner
Tanya Shannon, Deputy Clerk

**Board of Aldermen
Liaison:** Robert Carroll

- A. Chairman Charles Drew called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- B. Ms. Graves gave the Invocation.
- C. Chairman Drew led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- D. In the absence of Mr. Herring and Mr. McKee, a Motion was made to vote Ms. Bray and Mr. West in as voting members by Mr. Pukenas and seconded by Mr. McGee. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***
- E. Mr. Pukenas Motioned to approve the Agenda and was seconded by Mr. McGee. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***
- F. A Motion was made to approve the April 5, 2023, Minutes by Mr. Pukenas and was seconded by Mr. McGee. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***
- G. **Public Comment:** None
- H. **Old Business:**
 - 1. **Inventory Discussion**

There was much discussion on the inventory taken at the location that each member was assigned to. Each member discussed the condition of the structures and if there were any moderate changes or updates. It was the consensus of the Board that the majority of the homes were in good condition.

However, some structures have deteriorated over time and will most likely be unsalvageable. Ms. Bray said that around 85% of the houses in her inventory were in good condition. She said she was very impressed with the upkeep of the older homes and the pride people take in maintaining the property. Ms. Graves's noted that there is a cottage-style house at 314 Rhett Street, and the roof is caving in, but she believes it could be salvageable if the family heirs would contribute. Otherwise, she felt that the houses were in good condition. Mr. West said that he found a property in his inventory that was strange and that it had a tool shed on the front of the lot. He also stated that a few houses in his inventory appeared to be under construction or unlivable. For example, 320 College Street is in significant decline. Chair Drew said that this house has several heirs to the property, and getting the heirs to agree on how to proceed with the house becomes difficult.

Mr. McGee noted that most houses seemed to be in good condition. He said there were a variety of styles, such as the Victorian or Cottage look. Mr. McGee mentioned the old church at 230 N. Caswell and W. West that has been renovated into a residential home. He hopes the owners will keep the structure close to its original construction. Chair Drew said that the bell on the church would be removed and that it is essential to establish guidelines as soon as possible to prevent the loss of other historical values. Ms. Bray asked how such things as this could be prevented. Director Henley explained that the State would have to become involved, and he is still determining if anything can be done to defer this situation; he said he would look into it. He said that the Board would not have the discretion for a change of use to prevent a church from becoming a residence. Chair Drew asked if Churches are allowed in any District. Mr. Henley said that he believed so.

Mr. Pukenas stated that 85% of the houses in his inventory are structurally sound. The styles have specific differences, but they fit in with the general character. He was surprised at the number of additions to homes, but they blended into the structure and transitioned smoothly.

Ms. Wesson said that 90% of the houses in her inventory are in good condition. She said there was a house on Rhett across from the cemetery about 15-20 years old that would not qualify for the historical distinction.

Alderman Carroll said that within his two blocks of inventory, one of the blocks was primarily commercial and very similar to what they were when first constructed. He said that on another block, 5 out of 13 structures are no more than 15 years old. He said that a variety of Victorian, Bungalow, and Cottage style homes make Southport unique. Overall, he said that the structures are in good condition and fit in well with the character of Southport.

City Planner Meehan observed 50% commercial and 50% residential structures in the Staff's inventory. She said that the majority appears to be the same as at least from the 80s, and even with some upgrades, all seem to be contributing. The inventory included some of Howe St, Moore St., and Davis Street.

Director Henley said it is important to note that he is not about the specifications of the structures but how they conform together. He said he hears the term "The Southport Look," but that is characterized by the uniqueness of the City and the ability to blend. The initial setup of the design guidelines is the most essential part of the process.

Ms. Bray commented that the space between the houses is another unique part of Southport. She said the uniformity of the properties is aligned uniquely with the trees and landscape. And it all brings

in the City's Historical nature. Ms. Bray said that her inventory included parts of Moore St, Caswell Ave., W. West St., and the Yacht Basin. Alderman Carroll noted that the areas he was designated to take inventory were different. He said that some of the lots were close together, and others were spaced apart. He explained that there were some original 33' lots, and then there were flag lots with another house in the front yard that was moved and put there. But also, on N. Atlantic Avenue, some homes are very close.

Director Henley explained how Wilmington addresses its Historic District with a different residential zoning than the rest of the City. It has its own unique zoning district that only applies in the downtown corridor. Ms. Bray asked if that happened initially or if it evolved. Mr. Henley said that this has been growing over time and recommended that Southport consider this as well. Mr. Henley noted that all the residential areas in downtown Southport are zoned R-10, and there is nothing about R-10 about any of that. He says that is why the UDO is written to provide carve-outs and exceptions for non-conforming R-10 lots. He said creating a Zoning District would help redesign the district and make the lots conforming. "Let the built-in environment dictate the zoning versus letting the zoning dictate the built-in environment." Mr. Henley said that first would have to come to the design standards, and from those design standards, will come potentially looking at different setbacks. He noted the Commission could make that recommendation and then bring a proposed text amendment to the Planning Board and Board of Aldermen for approval.

Mr. McGee agreed with reforming the setbacks and bringing everything closer to the sidewalk for uniformity. He noted another thing to consider is that the new house at the corner of Caswell and Nash St is very large and tall. He said that back in the day, the houses were not that tall and did not tower over the neighbors. He recommended including language in the design standards that would prevent the establishment of larger and taller homes from overshadowing the adjacent property. Ms. Meehan confirmed that in modifying the Historic District and creating the design standards and guidelines, the setback requirements could be changed for future development or modifications.

I. New Business:

1. Discussion of Guidelines

Director Henley said this was discussed at the last meeting, along with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation Presentation by Jeff Adolphsen, Senior Restoration Specialist, NC State Historic Preservation Office. Director Henley reviewed the ten basic principles created to help preserve the distinctive character of a historic building and its site while allowing for reasonable change to meet user needs.

The Standards apply to historic buildings of all periods, styles, types, materials, and sizes. They apply to both the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features, the building's site and environment, and attached, adjacent, or related new construction.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. Removing historic materials or altering features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacing a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and materials where possible. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. If appropriate, the surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historical integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken so that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment will be unimpaired.

In looking for feedback from the Commission, Director Henley recommended reviewing other cities/towns comparable to Southport and starting with implementing some of those standards. He explained that considering the inventory of each section and the Historic District as a whole, the Commission will need to have many discussions on how to effectively proceed with applying those standards. He said an alternative would be to budget for a consultant to do a long study and review that may not work for Southport.

There was discussion on similar areas that have a Historical Commission. Chair Drew said he would like to review Beaufort and New Bern to see their standards. Mr. McGee suggested looking at other Coastal Historical areas similar to Southport or possibly Edenton.

Kristi Brantley from the State Historic Preservation Office had previously recommended reviewing Asheville's standards because it is simple and easy to follow. She said it should not be complicated for people to understand and apply for. Director Henley said the goal is to encourage people to comply rather than enforce.

Alderman Carroll asked for the timeline before being presented to the Board of Aldermen. He said he is concerned about the rapid changes and the need to establish standards and guidelines before valuable history is lost. Director Henley said it would take several special meetings and hours to review the language and establish a process that works for Southport. He said it is possible to have it come before the Aldermen by the end of the Summer. Chair Drew suggested possibly having two monthly meetings to speed up the process. Mr. McGee asked if the initiation of updating the Historic District could be done now. Mr. Henley said that it could. Ms. Bray said she did not think designating new districts now would be a good idea. She said many people fear that they are going to be told what color to paint their house, etc. She recommended having the standards in place before changing the zoning.

The Commission discussed options to engage the Public more. There was a suggestion to have Public Hearings to inform the Public of the Historic Preservation Commission and the plans for protection and preservation. Alderman Carroll suggested a live broadcast Symposium that people can attend or watch online. Ms. Graves noted that the Meetings are always open to the Public. She said that often, people have no interest until there is something contentious. She recommends perhaps advertising the meetings more. Mr. Pukenas asked if the Commission could get on the Board of Aldermen's Agenda for the next meeting. Chair Drew said that Commission Liaison Alderman Carroll always updates everyone at the Meetings. Alderman Carroll said he has always received positive Board and Public feedback.

Chair Drew asked what is the next step after the design standards are completed. Director Henley said the Planning Board would review it, and they will have the discretion to have a Public Hearing and then move to the Board of Aldermen. He also said that it is possible to have an open joint meeting with the Aldermen and the Planning Board to present everything to both Boards simultaneously. Mr. Henley said that he would be working on revising the downtown R-10 district into a Historic District.

Mr. West said that at some point, signage will need to be posted around the Historical Districts so that people can identify the areas.

City Planner Meehan will send out links to Design Standards from other Municipalities that were requested and similar to the characteristics of Southport.

J. Other Business:

Chair Drew asked if it was the consensus of the Board to schedule another meeting before the end of the month. The Board agreed that another meeting would be necessary. It was confirmed that on May 23, there will be a Special Meeting beginning at 1 p.m. The regular meeting will be on June 7.

K. Announcements:

Director Henley announced that some proposed Legislative Land Use Bills are trying to regulate certain Planning and Zoning Requirements in NC. These bills could have major implications for the City. He said he would keep everyone updated and call or email him with any questions.

There was no further business. A Motion was made to return Ms. Bray and Mr. West to their alternate positions by Mr. Pukenas and seconded by Ms. Wesson. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***

A Motion was made by Mr. Pukenas to adjourn the meeting, which Mr. McGee seconded.
Unanimous vote; Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

Tanya Shannon, Deputy Clerk

Charles Drew, Chairman

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