

**Orange County
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**Meeting Summary
April 23rd, 2014
Old Orange County Courthouse
106 East King Street, Hillsborough**

APPROVED: 5-28-14

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Dickinson (Chair), Susan Ballard, Rob Golan, Jaime Grant and Bob Ireland (Vice-Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Peter Sandbeck, Rich Shaw

GUESTS: Student from the UNC Planning Department Preservation Class

ITEM #1: CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dickinson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. He then recognized a student from the UNC Planning Department who is taking Myrick Howard's course in preservation planning, and invited the student to feel free to participate.

ITEM #2: CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: Sandbeck asked for permission to make a brief presentation about the role of the HPC in developing a long-range preservation plan for the courthouse and the landscaping of the courthouse square.

ITEM #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (March 26th meeting)
Ballard moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Golan. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM #4: ITEMS FOR DECISION: None

ITEM #5: DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Update on Potential Orange County/Chapel Hill Preservation/History Symposium

Work is still underway on getting a volunteer roster set up with various duties and assignments. Ireland had trouble downloading the registration form. Sandbeck will email more detailed programs to members to allow them to view the full slate of activities. They are still in the final stages of completing the program. Marketing was discussed. Ballard mentioned that she could forward our material to her West Hillsborough neighborhood group. She is willing to help push this along. Ireland felt that the Alliance would send it to all of their various member groups and members of those groups. The Burwell School, Orange County Museum and the Fund are all helping by giving tours so they will be helpful in spreading the word. Ballard asked about a press release on WUNC. We are working with News of Orange and the Chapel Hill News. All agreed that the PR push needs to happen soon. Preservation Chapel Hill will be doing a glossy handout. The PR needs to be coordinated.

b. Membership:

Sandbeck handed out copies of the current roster of applicants who have filled out the online forms. Many have applied for multiple boards, with the HPC as being a default choice behind other boards. Only one of the present applicants, Grace White, has a

professional background or demonstrated special interest in historic preservation or related field. Ms. White's experience with the conservation of historic materials would make her a good candidate. Dickinson asked Sandbeck to proceed to move the forward to relay the HPC's recommendation for her appointment to the BOCC.

c. Certificate of Appropriateness training session:

Members were referred to the handouts that were sent with their packages. Sandbeck cited the 1994 manual as the primary handbook; it is still relevant today. The COA process places great emphasis on having the HPC make a determination that a proposed addition or new building etc. **is, or is not, "incongruous"** with the special character of the property or district. He reviewed the COA process as outlined in the handouts. He will prepare a staff report that he will present to the members at that meeting. This will provide an overview of what is being proposed and will cite the relevant clauses of our design guidelines. It will conclude with a summary of how the submittal addresses those points of the guidelines. His role is to ensure that members understand the application and understand where it meets or does not appear to meet our guidelines. He will not offer opinions or seek to influence the membership. This is a quasi-judicial process with a legal ramification to our opinion; any legal appeal would involve a review of our process but not our opinions. We can hold regular meetings for non-controversial projects, or hold a public hearing for controversial projects. In either case, we will have to swear in any speakers. Property owners within 500 feet were notified by certified mail about the project and our meeting. Chatwood, our upcoming COA project, is set far back from the road so none of the neighbors will be able to see the house or the proposed additions. The challenge of how to avoid injecting personal opinion was discussed. Golan raised the issue of how to address COA applications where people are greatly increasing the size or footprint, but in point of fact, their application meets the guidelines to the letter.

d. Historic Resource Evaluation Exercise:

Members discussed and evaluated the Smith-Cole House (OR 365) located at 1430 Smith Level Road, just south of Chapel Hill, in Chapel Hill Township. Sandbeck explained that this house is actually located in the Carrboro ETJ, and thus does not presently fall under our jurisdiction. If the HPC is interested, Sandbeck would be willing to enter into a conversation with Carrboro about an interlocal agreement similar to what we are proposing for the Hillsborough ETJ. Sandbeck provided a PowerPoint presentation showing details of the property and its history. It is a remarkably intact late Federal style plantation house built about 1845, one of a group of the three largest in the county, along with Sunnyside and the Snipes House, which were also illustrated. The property has a complex story involving slave treatment by the Smith family, as chronicled in Pauli Murray's "Proud Shoes." Ireland explained the details of this history. Grant expressed concern that the background materials given to members did not include any substantive documentation or discussion about slavery and that era, which seems important and relevant here. The house now sits on about 10 acres out of the former large plantation site, which was developed as a large-lot subdivision in the last 20 years. The **final average score was 65.9**, based on its original interior and exterior woodwork, chimneys, original outbuilding, its complex history and good visual setting despite the loss of much of the original farmland.

ITEM #6: UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Developments on County Survey Update and Book Project:

Sandbeck referred to the memo he included in the package. Our county matching funds were included in the manager's recommended budget, so it appears that we should have a good chance of having that approved. We will make a case for this when the timing is right. We expect to hear about our CLG grant application by the end of April, or very soon.

b. Letters to Property Owners:

Sandbeck gave an update on responses he received from the letter that he sent to owners of the 30-plus study-listed properties. Sandbeck reviewed the buildings that had been put on the study list in 1993, and found a number that had to be pulled due to extensive alterations that made them ineligible for landmark status. Gordon Neville responded with interest in becoming a landmark.

c. Open Air Time:

Sandbeck relayed the recent matter of a request from the town about planting a town Christmas tree on the courthouse square. Our role should be to advocate for having the county develop a long-range historic preservation plan for the historic courthouse, as well as the landscaping of the courthouse square. This would be a multi-year effort involving hiring experts in building preservation, cultural landscape preservation etc. The goal would be to have a final report or master plan that would include a public process, to be eventually adopted by the BOCC and implemented over a period of years through the capital project process. All agreed that this would be a good idea and want staff to move this forward.

ITEM #7: **ADJOURNMENT:** Golan moved to adjourn, seconded by Ballard; motion passed. Chair Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 9:06 pm.

Meeting summary by Peter Sandbeck, DEAPR staff