

Orange County
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Summary

August 27th, 2014
Old Orange County Courthouse
106 East King Street, Hillsborough

APPROVED 9-24-14

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Peter Sandbeck

GUESTS: None

ITEM #1: CALL TO ORDER
Chair Dickinson called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

ITEM #2: CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: None.

ITEM #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (June 25th meeting): Golan identified several corrections that needed to be made. White moved to accept the minutes as corrected; seconded by Ballard; motion passed.

ITEM #4: ITEMS FOR DECISION:

a. Local Landmark application: White Cross School Parts 1 and 2:

Sandbeck started by clarifying that the HPC cannot yet take up the Part 2 application due to the timing of the submittal and our requirement to notify adjacent property owners in advance of the official review by the HPC. There was a general agreement that some additional detail would be helpful regarding the history of the institution itself, so that our final application covers the institution as well as the building. Members viewed an informational PowerPoint presentation about the building, including current views of the interior and exterior along with exterior views taken in 2006, showing the landscape and appearance prior to the construction of the modern wood fences and playgrounds.

There was discussion about the legal ownership of a property and how landmark status works for “for-profit” entities versus non-profit groups that may not pay property tax. Members discussed a variety of topics relating to architectural detailing and the survival of original materials. Landmark status may help the property owner deal with the modern health and safety standards required by the state and county for a pre-school. Lead abatement is an issue for the doors, windows and other woodwork. Historic maps show the locations of the county’s dozens of small white and black schools in 1922 and how many were eliminated by consolidation during the 1920s. Ireland reviewed his research about school consolidation and busing, and the impact on black students who often had to ride in the back of flat-bed trucks when transport was even offered. He will share his article with us.

Members proceeded to carry out their evaluation of the Part 1 application using the HPC's standard "historic resource evaluation form." Dickinson reviewed the process briefly. Staff noted that the property had been placed on the National Register Study List in 1993. The White Cross School received an average score of **61.1** points. Based on this score, Golan moved that the White Cross School appears to be a good candidate for Local Landmark Status and that the HPC encourages the property owner to submit a Part 2 application to proceed with the designation process. Grant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Staff will encourage the owner to move forward.

b. Local Landmark Application: Nicholas Corbett Hester House Part 1:

Staff provided an overview of the recent history of this landmark application. The owner submitted a Part 1 application in Oct. 2009. At that meeting, the HPC passed a motion stating that the house appeared to be eligible to be a local landmark and directed the owner to proceed with the Part 2 application. Our ordinance does not stipulate an expiration date for an approved Part 1, so that ruling from 2009 still stands. It is being presented today for your information and to show you the landscape changes and improvements that have been made since 2009. You have several options: 1) re-review the environmental significance in order to assess the changes since 2009; 2) review the entire Part 1 again; or 3) simply leave the Part 1 standing as already approved in 2009.

Dickinson reported that he was impressed with the quality of the restoration and the design of the landscape. He believes the HPC should leave the approved Part 1 as it now stands and allow this to move forward as a good candidate for a landmark. It is his opinion that it would not be appropriate at this point for the HPC to revisit a Part 1 application that had already been approved by a prior HPC. He finds it to be an interesting and attractive treatment that does not in any way detract from the overall site.

Staff presented exterior and interior photos of the Hester House and its many outbuildings, along with aerial views from the 1960s and 2013. Discussion followed on various aspects of the property and its integrity. The older log house, while altered by the loss of the chimney and the larger front opening, is still very significant. Like most early log houses in the Piedmont, these logs were covered by weatherboards either from the beginning, or soon after construction. There was a sidebar discussion about how we might be able to use the commercial aerial photographs like the one shown for the Hester House. Members felt that the house and the outbuildings had considerable integrity and significance. Dickinson reminded members that the motion approved in 2009 stands on its own and is still in force and in effect.

Golan moved that the HPC reaffirms its support and endorsement of the Part 1 application for landmark status for the Hester House as approved by the HPC at the October 2, 2009 meeting. Ballard seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM #5: DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Orange County Ramble/Tour by Preservation NC (Sept. 7th):

Members were encouraged to attend the upcoming tour of sites in Chapel Hill and Hillsborough, sponsored by PNC. This will be self-guided, using your own car.

b. Preservation NC Annual Conference in Raleigh (Oct. 8-10):

This conference will count toward our annual training quota required to maintain our CLG status with the state and NPS. (Our good attendance at our own CLG training will cover us this year) Sandbeck will drive the county truck daily if anyone needs a ride.

ITEM #6: UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

a. **Colonial Inn Status:**

There will not be any official movement on this effort until the end of the 30-day appeal period. We should know more in September.

b. **Survey Update Project Status**

The Orange County purchasing office issued the Request for Proposals for this project, with proposals or bids due today—August 27th. We should have more to report at the September meeting as to our selection and schedule for starting the project. We will need to start in on the process of reviewing our properties/resources to determine what needs to be included. Staff will arrange for a special session when we can review these.

c. **Include Hillsborough in in historic resources book project**

Dickinson and Sandbeck will meet with the Town's HPC, probably on Oct. 1st, to discuss ways to partner on this project.

d. **Schley Grange National Register Nomination**

A member of the Grange, Peter Kramer, is working with Grange leadership to get their endorsement for getting the Grange property listed on the National Register. This 1948 building was built as a result of the Schley Grange winning a national competition sponsored by Sears & Roebuck and the National Grange.

e. **PSNC Pipeline Project**

Staff showed a map of the proposed major PSNC pipeline project, consisting of a new 16" natural gas pipe to be installed adjacent to the 10" pipeline installed in 1952. Because of this, there will be minimal impact now, as this will run parallel to the old pipe. Based on staff review, this will not affect any identified historic resources.

f. **Status of State Historic Preservation Tax Credits**

The final state budget did not continue these, so they will expire on Dec. 31, 2014. The budget included a provision calling for a special legislative study commission to review the effectiveness and true costs/benefits of the credits. Myrick Howard, director of Preservation NC, feels that this may actually work in favor of the credits over the long run.

g. **Riverwalk Sign Status**

The Town has reached a point where they have a final draft of all the text. Staff will present the sign project and a sign easement to the Board of County Commissioners at their Sept. 4th meeting. The signs should be installed in early October. Steve Rankin agreed to provide archaeological monitoring when the footings are excavated.

h. **Idea of marking rural cemeteries**

A local resident, Don Daniels, called recently to make staff aware of the Whitted cemetery out on Dumont Rd, off of St. Mary's near Pleasant Green. It was intact and well preserved 40 years ago as was documented by the work of the Durham-Orange Genealogical Society (DOGS) on the Cemetery Census web site for Orange Co. Since then it has been almost obliterated. He wanted to know if the county could mark rural cemeteries or install an iron fence as a means of protecting them.

ITEM #7: ADJOURNMENT: Golan moved to adjourn, seconded by Grant; motion passed. Chair Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 9:11 pm.

Meeting summary by Peter Sandbeck, DEAPR staff