

**Orange County
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**Approved Meeting Summary
December 2nd, 2015
Old Orange County Courthouse
106 East King Street, Hillsborough**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Ireland (Vice Chair), Susan Ballard, Rob Golan, Jaime Grant, Tom Loter, and Grace White

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Peter Sandbeck, Cultural Resources Coordinator, DEAPR

GUESTS: Todd Dickinson

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

ITEM 2: CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: Former Chair Dickinson requested permission to speak for a few minutes to offer some parting words of encouragement.

ITEM 3: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS:

Members introduced themselves and welcomed Mr. Loter to the HPC. Mr. Dickinson then spoke to the HPC to review the long history of the book project. He described past efforts that were not successful. He feels that the book project now has solid momentum and asks members to work to support staff to the fullest extent possible to help keep it on track and get it accomplished. The group should keep its focus on this project and not get distracted by non-essential ideas or projects that could slow this down. Dickinson then thanked the members for their support while he was chair. Staff explained that the County BOCC decided to not bend their existing rules to reappoint Dickinson after he had already served two terms, so his term officially ended with the October meeting. Staff reviewed the current roster, noting that one of the new appointees wrote today to decline to serve, so there is now one vacancy again that will need to be filled.

ITEM 4: ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR:

Staff noted that with the retirement of Dickinson, it is now necessary for the HPC to elect a new chair. In larger boards or commissions, there is often a nominating committee, but that is harder to do with a small board. Members can now propose nominations. Ireland moved to nominate Ballard to be chair. Ballard explained that she would be willing to serve. Golan seconded the nomination. Ballard was elected Chair by acclamation. For Vice Chair, Ireland is currently serving and agreed to remain until our regular elections are held in February.

ITEM 5: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (October 28th, 2015 meeting)

White noted that she was incorrectly marked as present when she had an excused absence. Golan moved to accept the minutes with the correction noted by White, seconded by Ballard. Motion passed.

ITEM 6: ITEMS FOR DECISION:

- a. Second step of Local Landmark application process for the Nicholas Corbett Hester House, Part 2: Staff noted that we are waiting for the SHPO to provide their mandatory review comments, which are due by Dec. 5th. Once we get their comments, staff will send out a revised version with any changes noted in highlight. Then we can move the entire package forward, with the SHPO letter, to the BOCC in time for our Dec. 15th joint public hearing. This is inconvenient, but not a problem. We will still be able to hold the hearing, then the BOCC can pass the ordinance. The good news is that this will be the first public hearing item on the BOCC agenda. The hearing will be held at the Southern Human Services Center in Chapel Hill, on Homestead Road. Staff will send a map link and other information.
- b. Review of Procedure for HPC joint public hearing with BOCC: Staff gave an overview of how this will work. Most members were present for the White Cross School landmark hearing back in May, so it will follow that same process. Members will have reserved seating in the front row. Staff will introduce you to the BOCC, then give a brief presentation about the Hester House. The BOCC chair will open the public hearing, ask for any comments, then close the hearing. They will then vote on the adoption of the ordinance to designate the house as a landmark. Last time the BOCC did not vote but waited for a month, then staff had to make a second presentation about the same property, and then the BOCC acted. This time we will shorten the process as other commissions do if there are no substantive public comments. If we ever do receive comments that must be addressed, then we will have to wait until a later meeting so that those comments can be addressed.
- c. Adoption of meeting calendar for 2016: The draft calendar presented by staff was approved by acclamation. Staff will review the attendance policy at our next meeting to bring everyone up to date. The County Clerk is asking all boards to observe that policy more rigorously. Ireland wants the record to show that Golan has missed only one meeting during his entire two terms of service, over almost six years.

ITEM #7: DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Annual Report and Work Plan due on Dec. 18:
Staff reviewed the annual report/work plan process and noted that the board chairs and staff will attend a BOCC work session on February 9th to answer questions and explain goals and needs. Ireland raised questions about the quantity of the various work items listed and wondered if the BOCC put special emphasis on metrics. Staff noted that in past work sessions, it is clear that the County Commissioners are most interested in the big picture, the stated goals and recent accomplishments. They want to know that you are setting goals and getting things done. They also want to know about issues that may be of special interest, ie, are politically sensitive or will require funding. Ireland asked if this reflects the current goals. Staff explained that the goals here were defined during the HPC's retreat held in 2013. It may be time to start talking about having another retreat to review goals and set new ones. Ballard stated that the book was going to be a demanding project and would require our focused effort to get it accomplished. It would help her and other members to get an updated, detailed timeline for the project, mapping out the next steps and the future budget needs. Staff will provide this for the next meeting. Ballard reminded members that while the book is our main focus, we also need to maintain our focus on designating at least two landmarks per year. Discussion followed about how landmarks are funded. Staff reviewed the current scenario whereby there is some funding available each year through the Lands Legacy budget to help property owners pay consultants to do landmark applications so we can maintain this pace. We try not to pay for the whole thing but get owners to put up some of the cost so that our County funding can go as far as possible. There is a down side for local governments if too many

landmarks are proposed, as it can cause officials to become concerned about the potential loss of revenue. A goal of two per year seems like a reasonable pace. Members encouraged staff to push for three when time permits. Referring back to the Annual Report, Ireland suggested that we make an effort to show the book as an activity in more categories, so that it is clearly demonstrated as our primary project. Members offered several suggested additions that were noted by staff. Staff asked for members to email any other suggested changes.

ITEM #8: UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

- a. Historic Resources Inventory Update Project status:
Staff reported that the consultants submitted their final products, consisting of 200 properties, with photos, files, and data entry into the SHPO database. Staff completed the required 50 additional properties. Discussion followed about the best way to sift through the entire 750 resources to determine which make the first cut for inclusion in the book. The first attempt made by staff consisted of showing members via PowerPoint programs that featured every single property in the County. This was too time-consuming. Based on guidance from the former chair, staff is now planning to review with members only those properties that made the first cut, say 200 to 250. Making the next cut, to get down to 125 or 150 to be included in the book, is the next challenge. Staff reviewed the past steps that have been taken including a meeting almost a year ago between staff, Chair Dickinson, and the Town HDC, at which time the Town agreed to support the concept of a joint Town/County historic resources publication. Now that the Town HDC has had so much member turnover, staff has arranged to speak to the new HDC at their January 6th, 2016 regular meeting, perhaps with new chair Ballard present. Stephanie Trueblood, staffer for the Town's HDC, is very supportive but indicated that the County will need to take the lead role to make this happen. This might actually help move the whole thing forward and make for a more unified, cohesive end product. Staff explained the current new phase of our inventory project, to survey the ETJ of Hillsborough, outside the Town limits. We are pushing the Town to move forward to complete their own inventory by undertaking an inventory of the rest of the Town, outside of the National Register Historic District, which they updated two years ago. Ms. Trueblood indicates that if the HPC reaffirms its support for the publication, they will go ahead and apply for a 2016 CLG grant to help fund that next phase. Members asked staff to proceed to prepare a new, updated book timeline/budget/process document for their review.

- b. Open Air Time:
Golan reported on his recent meeting with Frank Gailor who is involved in developing the old Eno mill in Hillsborough; he also redeveloped the old Glencoe Mill in Alamance County. Mr. Gailor offered to provide the HPC members with a guided tour of the mill complex. Members expressed interest in such a tour this year. Golan then reported on recent development activities at the old Halls Mill site on the Eno River just north of the existing bridge. The owner of a vacant lot there has just finished clearing it for development and has torn down the old chimney of the late 19th century miller's house. Staff discussed the concept of some type of historic designation for that site, to include the mill site and the Faucette House, owned by Golan, which is already on the National Register. Such a designation could also include Little Ayr Mount, owned by Tom Rankin and Jill McCorkle. This is a very important early 19th century brick house with some large modern additions that would rule out the National Register individually, but it could be part of a rural district that would deal with the standing resources plus the archaeological resources for the mill, including the dam upstream. All this would have to be done with the consent of the owner of the mill site. This raises the larger question for us, of how to document and protect at least some of the dozens of early dams and mill sites all over the county. Staff noted that we also need to pay attention to significant cemeteries. For example a slave cemetery was recently threatened by a clearcutting timber operation up

near the Caswell County line. The owner actually cared about the cemetery and directed the loggers to avoid it. He would entertain the idea of a marker or other sort of designation.

ITEM 9: STAFF PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION:

- a. New properties being proposed for the National Register Study List as a result of Phase I of the survey update: Staff did not feel that there was enough time left for this presentation which will take about 30 minutes. The intent was to show members the range and scope of the list of properties that our consultants recommended for consideration for the State Study List, as the first step toward being listed on the National Register. This can be shifted to the January meeting if time will permit then. White asked if members needed to resume their reading of the 1996 historical essay? Yes, staff will resend.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT: White moved to adjourn, seconded by Grant; motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm. As members left, staff handed out copies of the most recent applications we have received for membership, with the directive to review these and be prepared to discuss at the January meeting.

Meeting summary by Peter Sandbeck, DEAPR staff