

**ORANGE COUNTY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Meeting Summary—Approved

**September 21st, 2015
Old Orange County Courthouse
106 East King Street, Hillsborough**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Susan Ballard and Grace White

STAFF PRESENT: Peter Sandbeck, Cultural Resources Coordinator, DEAPR

GUESTS: Jennifer Martin and Cynthia de Miranda (MdM Historical Consulting)

ITEM #1: CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dickinson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

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

ITEM #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (August 26th, 2015 meeting)

Ireland moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Grant. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM #4: ITEMS FOR DECISION: None

ITEM #5: SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

- a. **Survey Update Project Overview:** Project consultants Jennifer Martin and Cynthia de Miranda provided a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of their findings in the project to update our historic resources survey. They covered the wide range of historic resources, grouped by the major property types found in the county. In documenting churches, they found that most of the good examples were covered with vinyl siding, or with modern brick veneer. Many are overwhelmed by large newer additions, which will make it challenging to photograph them for the publication. Some of the AME churches featured a special style of thick pieces of stained glass set in what appears to be a mortar compound. Most of the few surviving rural schools have been heavily altered but are still recognizable. There are relatively few surviving rural stores, again most are much altered but from a distance, still convey the key characteristics of such stores. It was their sense that we have lost many of the stores. Some were replaced by larger modern convenience stores. A few mills were documented, ranging from the c. 1850s Faucette Mill to the c. 1950s Efland Milling Company. Their program also focused on the remaining log houses, I-houses, historic farmsteads, and a surprising group of heretofore unknown modernist houses tucked away in the woods, especially in the eastern part of the county between Chapel Hill and Durham. They found that many property owners were eager to talk about their properties and share information with them, which was refreshing. The University had a tremendous impact on the lower half of the county, ranging from purchasing produce from local farmers to the use of old farm houses as rentals for students. They feel fortunate to be able to focus their time and attention on our initial selection of 200+ structures that merited inclusion in the survey update project and potentially in the publication.

ITEM #6: DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Member reactions to “History and Architecture of Orange County” essay from 1996

Staff felt that this was an important document for everyone to read, but conceded that members needed some additional time to get through this long document. The SHPO felt that the author relied too heavily on secondary and traditional research sources, and that it lacked the depth and analysis that Orange deserved. There was the reality that the state was only willing to fund a very modest budget for this essay, so the author was limited. Our challenge is to develop a better sense of its strengths and weaknesses, to guide us as we start to scope for our own new updated essay. Discussion followed. Members were curious about what the SHPO wanted to see changed and improved. Everyone agreed to look it over and take time to discuss at a later meeting. As we move forward on our essay, we have the ongoing challenge of getting the real stories and the deeper background on properties, while dealing with the fact that the budgets developed by the state do not fund that extra level of research needed to get to the good stories. Oral histories need to be compiled, along with original research. This may require some special funding.

ITEM #6: UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

a. PNC Annual Conference:

Staff reported briefly on the PNC conference held in Salisbury on Sept. 16-18. The Commission training tracks focused on the additional powers given to HPC's by the state enabling legislation. One of the key powers is the ability to purchase and sell historic properties, which can be a very powerful tool. Some commissions, like the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, have taken this approach. They have been given over \$8 million over the years by Mecklenburg Co. to operate their very active revolving fund, whereby they purchase properties (must be landmarks) then sell them with preservation covenants. Others have run small grant programs to help owners stabilize and preserve landmarks.

b. State Historic Preservation Tax Credits:

The final state budget included renewal of the tax credits, which is a huge benefit to the preservation community. The new credit program is slightly reduced, with a cap on the eligible expenditures at \$20 million, but overall, this is a huge victory and is due in large part to the strong effort mounted by Susan Klutz, Sec. of the Dept. of Cultural Resources, along with the Governor and key members of the House on both sides of the aisle.

c. Membership:

Our prospect for the preservation architect position has promised to submit an online application for our consideration. Staff will share the application with you at the next meeting for your review. Jaime will be reappointed in October.

d. Landmark Applications in Progress:

Staff reported that the county has contracted with consultants to prepare the Landmark Application for the Nicholas Corbett Hester House up in Cedar Grove, and the goal is to have this approved by the BOCC this calendar year. Preservation Chapel Hill is now back at work on the Hackney House Landmark Application, thanks to a new intern.

e. Open Air Time: Staff gave a brief PowerPoint on the Confluence property owned by the Eno River Association. At the recent event at Ayr Mount, Dickinson learned that the Classical American Homes Trust will fully endow this property to ensure perpetual operation as a museum.

ITEM #8: ADJOURNMENT: Golan moved to adjourn, seconded by Grant; motion passed. Chair Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.