

Orange County
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Approved Meeting Summary

January 27th, 2016
Old Orange County Courthouse
106 East King Street, Hillsborough

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Peter Sandbeck

GUESTS: None

ITEM #1: CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ballard called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

ITEM #2: CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: None

ITEM #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (January): Golan offered one correction. Ireland moved to accept the minutes corrected as noted; seconded by Golan; motion passed.

ITEM #4: ITEMS FOR DECISION:

a. **Review prospective member applications and nominate one applicant to recommend to the BOCC for appointment:**

Members reviewed the current applications. Golan noted that he was going to rotate off the HPC with the expiration of his current term at the end of March. Thus we will have an additional vacancy to fill soon. Discussion followed. Grant noted that having a member with a strong archaeological background would be a plus. Other members agreed. Ballard called for a nomination. Grant nominated Ms. Alexandria Mead to be the next appointee; seconded by White. Motion carried. Staff will send an official letter to the County Clerk to add to the agenda for the Feb. 16 meeting of the BOCC .

ITEM #5: DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. **Staff proposal to cancel the February 2016 meeting:**

Staff requested the cancellation of the February meeting to free up time to deal with getting the next phase of the historic resources inventory project started and other pressing tasks. Members felt this was a good idea. Golan moved to cancel the February meeting, seconded by White. Motion carried. The next HPC meeting will be on March 23rd.

b. **Draft of updated timeline/budget document for book project**

Staff passed out copies of the document emailed to members yesterday. This is a companion document to the one presented by staff to the Town in January. The Town HDC did vote to do a survey of the areas of the town outside of the Hillsborough National Register Historic District and will apply for a CLG grant to fund this first piece of their part

of the book project. They will appoint a book committee, to work with ours to develop a joint vision. There is discussion of having the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough as a partner, to help by applying for and receiving grant funds for the joint project; funding needs to be collaborative to avoid having the Town and County compete for grants.

One idea for the essay component is to tap into the knowledge of local experts, for example we ask Dr. Steve Davis to write a chapter essay about the Native American story of the area, since he has done so much already. The focus of this will be present-day Orange County even though the county was larger in the 18th century. The essay can touch on the larger boundaries but focus on the current area. Staff was asked to talk to Dr. Davis. We need to be clear about what we want/are looking for, and do we pay or not? Staff proceeded to walk the members through the handout. Additional targeted research will be needed for special topics and properties.

Discussion followed about the duties of a proposed book committee: formulating the vision, working out the essay scope, then dealing with the smaller details, like number/selection of properties, design and layout issues, number of copies etc. This could be a working group or task force that will not make decisions, but rather, will bring ideas back to the HPC at a regular meeting for consideration and decision; they will provide notes of meetings. As we complete our essay and the town works on their essay, we have to think ahead to a final editing process in order to blend different writing styles. The Town is willing use the same consultants; this will help with the continuity.

There is still the option of approaching UNC Press about the project to gauge their interest. Ireland noted this project will require a lot of depth, hard work and expertise. UNC may be the best route. Staff could speak with authors who worked with UNC press to see what they advise. County and Town staff need to write down the parameters of what the book committee would be doing; to establish guidance for their work. We need to call a meeting of the "joint book committee" to develop guidelines for the joint vision/scope, function and purpose. Staff will explore this and follow up with the Town. Are there members who would like to volunteer to serve on the book committee? Ireland noted that the committee needs to determine its own goals and map out how it will achieve its purposes. Grant, Ireland and Ballard all volunteered.

Staff walked members through the rest of the document, noting the importance of illustrations, including historic photos, maps, floor plans and site plans showing the buildings in relation to the landscape or farmstead. We will need to spend a lot of time later talking about fund raising, including selling sponsorships or patrons. If we partner with UNC press, they would like to enter into the process sooner than later.

ITEM #6: UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Meeting with Town HDC regarding book project:

Staff reported on the January 6 meeting with the Town HDC, and the positive feedback already discussed in the prior agenda item. The Town is on board and is proceeding with their application for CLG funds for their survey update, and will appoint a book committee.

b. Update on next phase of historic resources inventory project now getting underway:

Staff covered this topic during the discussion of the prior topic, the book project.

c. Overview of current preservation projects/needs for County:

Staff gave a presentation about current projects, beginning with the historic courthouse which last saw major repair/preservation work in 1985. The clock tower was restored as part of the clock restoration project in 2004-5. Former chair Dickinson joined staff in several inspections of the building, which generated a list of needed preservation work. The grounds became a focus when the Town's Tree Commission asked for permission to plant a permanent Christmas tree on the grounds. In response, the County decided that

the grounds of the Old Courthouse merited special study and then needed a master plan to guide future work.

Staff recommends a cultural landscape report, to compile a researched record of all the activities and changes that took place on the court square from the time of the first settlers to the present; this will create a large body of background research to guide future decisions. People who look at the ground today don't realize that the very large old jail stood at the SE corner of the square until the WPA tore it down in the 1930s, or that the old, late 18th century courthouse stood just east of this building and was used until the new courthouse was dedicated in 1846; the old one was then torn down. We also need a thorough assessment of the building itself, to generate a preservation plan and do the design work needed for any current repairs and preservation work. The Alliance is now planning tours, but we have no researched factual script available; this would be an excellent project. Also, there is no interpretive signage now on site for the public.

The Norwood-Jones Law Office at the corner of Margaret Lane and Court Street is also owned by the County and needs some repairs to the brickwork and doors; some funding has been offered by the Historic Hillsborough Fund. At Blackwood Farm, the next phase of the project is to restore the 1827 farmhouse, starting with removing the modern aluminum siding and restoring the exterior. The County is ready to move forward to hire a preservation architect to guide this work. Also, there is a collection of farm implements that once belonged to the Whitfield Family, from their farmstead down on Whitfield Road between New 86 and Erwin Road. This is being offered to us to add to our own collection of farm implements from the Blackwood Farm and the Cate Farm down near Carrboro. This will force the larger question of how to properly store, curate and exhibit this sort of material. The first step will be to catalog each item. White is interested.

The slave cemetery at Blackwood Farm was first mapped and identified in 2007 during our archaeological survey of the farm property. We have initiated a project to bring in the same archaeologist (Deborah Joy with Legacy Research in Durham) to locate and map each burial and help us determine the boundaries, as this will be near a trail and will be featured on a new interpretive. White noted that Ken Strayhorn, who owns the property across New Hope Church Road, has helped with family reunions of descendants of former Strayhorn slaves and may have contact information. We suspect there are more burials and would like to connect with descendants. White offered to help with cataloging of the Blackwood artifacts.

d. Open air time: None

ITEM #7: ADJOURNMENT: White moved to adjourn, seconded by Golan. Meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm

Meeting summary by Peter Sandbeck, DEAPR staff