

**Guilford County Historic Preservation Commission
Regular Public Meeting
July 18, 2023
6:00 p.m.
Carolyn Q. Coleman Conference Room, 1st Floor, Guilford County Courthouse
301 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC
AGENDA**

A. Call to Order

Chair Benjamin Briggs called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Kaye Graybeal called the roll for those in attendance: Benjamin Briggs; Jayne Payne; David Millsaps; Dawn Chaney; Terri Hammond; Abigail Pittman; David Horth; Sean Dowell. Megan Sommers was absent.

C. Agenda Amendments

Justin Snyder stated that there were no amendments to the agenda.

D. Approval of March 21, 2023, Minutes

Ms. Pittman stated that she was identified in the minutes as Jane Pittman, and it should be changed to Abigail Pittman. Mr. Horth stated that he would abstain from voting since he was not in attendance at that meeting.

Mr. Millsaps moved to approve the minutes of the Minutes of March 21, 2023, as amended, seconded by Ms. Payne. The Commission voted 7-0-1 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Briggs, Payne, Millsaps, Chaney, Hammond, Dowell, Pittman. Nays: None. Abstained: Horth.)

E. Old Business:**Evidentiary Hearing Items:**

None

F. New Business:**Evidentiary Hearing Items:**

None

G. Non-Public Hearing Items**1) Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation for resigning Commission members**

Kaye Graybeal presented Chair Briggs with a Certificate of Appreciation for his years of service to the Commission. She stated that Mr. Briggs has been on the Commission from 1996 – 2011 and then again from 2016 – 2023. She stated that Mr. Briggs was highly intelligent and passionate about historical value. He has been an integral part of historical tours and resources.

He has really been a big help in his service to homeowners of historical properties for the past 45 years. Staff and the Commission members wish him well in his future endeavors.

Mr. Horth asked Chair Briggs if he was going to sell his house or rent it. Chair Briggs responded that he will be living in Raleigh, and he will keep his house in High Point. A lot of his business will be in the eastern part of the state, so it makes sense to live down there.

Chair Briggs stated that it has been a real pleasure to serve with all the Commissioners, and he feels that Guilford County has a strong reputation in the State of North Carolina and people look up to this County as a resource and admire what the Commission has done in the past, currently, and also in the future. The Commissioners are part of that team and are making Guilford County a role model in the State. He is proud to have been a part of all that. Their work is being recognized around the State.

Mr. Horth stated that one of the reasons he stayed on this Commission was his Chairmanship and wisdom and passion and wry sense of humor. He has absolutely enjoyed being at these meetings because of the way he chaired and shared his wisdom. Mr. Horth thanked Mr. Briggs again.

Ms. Pittman stated that she is so pleased for him and proud of him. She remembers when he just got out of college, and he was living in the attic of the house at the end of 901 Johnson Street, re-doing the house and everything. Mr. Briggs added that the house has an easement held by Preservation North Carolina that Barbara Wishy put on, so it all comes full circle. He got a Gertrude Carraway Award from Preservation North Carolina in 1993, and he is the youngest person to ever receive that award.

Ms. Chaney stated that they are going to miss him, but she is very happy for him to take the position in Raleigh. She knows he can make a difference throughout the entire State of North Carolina. Mr. Briggs stated that he would be spread 500 miles wide and 1/8 inch deep, and he appreciates the recognition from everyone.

Kaye Graybeal stated that Mr. Briggs has been a big advocate for passing things along and reusing elements and materials for the next generation.

Kaye Graybeal presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Dawn Chaney for her years of service to the Commission. She stated that Ms. Chaney has served from June 2016 until May 2023. She has raised some of the hard questions and has been the voice of reason, and her knowledge of real estate really helped tremendously.

Ms. Chaney thanked everyone who has been here, some much longer than her, but she has enjoyed the work that she has done here. She has found someone else to take her position. Ms. Graybeal stated that staff has not received confirmation yet, but that is in the works. The proposed new member has served on the Fisher Park Board for some time and has a good background in historic properties. Mr. Briggs stated that Ms. Chaney came to the Commission with a great amount of experience with other groups and other organizations and Commissions, and a lot of knowledge of historic properties and has focused on problem-solving and not problem-making, and he thanked her again for her support through the years.

2) Election of Officers

Chair Briggs opened the floor for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission.

Ms. Pittman nominated Jayne Payne for the position of Chair, seconded by Mr. Horth. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the nomination and Jayne Payne will serve as Chair.

Mr. Horth nominated Sean Dowell to serve as Vice Chair, seconded by Ms. Chaney. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the nomination and Sean Dowell will serve as Vice Chair.

H. Other Business

3) Updates on the Comprehensive Plan and Survey participation

Kaye Graybeal stated that the County has been providing the Comprehensive Plan survey to all Guilford County citizens. She will send out the link again, but she also has some paper copies if anyone needs one. Everyone is strongly encouraged to take the survey and submit it, so the County can have a better understanding of the needs of the County, and how people perceive living in this area. Also, it will help the County gain insight on what people would like to see for the future of Guilford County. There will be approximately three to five public meetings in different locations around the County to obtain information and suggestions from the citizens of the County. Members will be notified when the final date and locations for those meetings are determined.

4) Updates on various COA projects, potential Landmark nominations, and inventoried properties

Staff has been talking a lot about the fact that the southeast and northeast portions of the County are the least developed. Kaye Graybeal pointed out that the dairy farms are disappearing. Justin Snyder stated that there are only two left in this region. Kaye Graybeal stated that they have to look at balanced growth and retaining food sources.

Justin Snyder stated that going down toward Randolph County area where the new Toyota Plant will be, staff is looking at all the different land uses that could go down there, maybe Business Park, Mixed-Use, Industrial, or Heavy Commercial, which may qualify under the City of Greensboro's sewer connection policy, but straight residential subdivisions, which is what they really need down there to support those kinds of uses, are not currently allowed to tap into the water and sewer that will be extended to that area. There will probably be some tweaks that happen with that policy over time as things develop.

Ms. Hammond stated that the Town of Oak Ridge has a house that is on the Town Park Property, and the initial estimates had been \$500,000 to restore and renovate it, and it was to be used as a Community Center. New bids came in at \$630,000, and thankfully, there was a really good turnout for the Town Council meeting, and a lot of people spoke on both sides. The final vote was 3-2 in favor to move forward with the renovations, and it will be restored.

In the bad news category, her husband is on the Tree City USA Committee for Oak Ridge, and they did a Treasure Tree project, and one of the Treasure White Oak trees was in Town Park. This part of the Town Park is called Heritage Farm, and they are doing a lot of renovations and building a new Veterans Memorial and putting in a new driveway, and they cut down the Heritage (Treasure) Tree. It was not a very healthy tree, but they tried to get them to move the driveway a few feet to accommodate the tree and save it, but they still cut it down.

Ms. Payne stated that the Johnson House is gone.

Mr. Dowell stated that the Gibson House was a home related to the people that Gibsonville was named for. On that property, the original home was gone, but there was a part of the kitchen that was saved. It was a turn-of-the-century home that was beautiful and could have sold for \$500,000 by itself. It had been rehabbed into a lawyer's office and was a great historic asset that was wonderful. The property was purchased by a multi-family developer, and the home, being built in the most usable part of the land, ended up becoming a sacrifice to that. The developer was not really informed about the history of it, but the town did have enough history on it to tell him, but nobody brought it up at Planning Board. This has spurred an inventory of cemeteries in eastern Guilford County and an updated inventory sheet to all the Planning Boards; and he is helping to put together part of an annual summit for all historic properties in Alamance County. However, the home that was there, they had the opportunity to salvage it, but they did notice that prior owners had given salvage rights to some Greensboro antique stores, who went in and stripped everything and sold all the items saved.

Mr. Briggs added that when the house was converted into a law office, a lot of the interior was stripped out, and from what he could tell, the doors, floors, mantels, windows, basically everything had been stripped out in the 80's or so. But the exterior was significant and had some wonderful details on it. Because of the conversion, the building was deemed ineligible for National Register. A long tail had been built on the back of it to contain the one-story offices. When picking your battles in what you're going to prioritize, National Register eligibility is one that you can look at and that's available through the State Historic Preservation Office map. One day, they will update what is eligible in Guilford County, with the new survey.

Kaye Graybeal stated that Justin is good at applying for Grants for such things, and he is really passionate about it. There were a lot of roadblocks when he tried over the past year.

Mr. Dowell continued by saying that they were then left with the historic cemetery. When the owner sold the property in the 70's, he took the gravestones, making it difficult to identify where the graves are. Thinking he was preserving the property and within a couple of years, he gave them back to the Historical Society, and they did not know whether to take them or not, because that is a felony to mess with graves. They did take them, however, and held them for the guy to find out where they belonged. In searching for the graveyard, the developer initially, was not very helpful and then he talked to his attorney, and he was very helpful. Justin Snyder said he talked to the developer and gave them information on state laws regarding cemeteries.

Mr. Dowell stated that someone came out with electronic pulsing across the property, and they thought they had found the graves, so they called the gentleman who works at the cemetery, and he dug up the area, and it was not the graves. They have now gotten the local community more involved; the Aldermen are involved. There is one large team that is working together to try to find the historic graves. There is a grant through the library where they got their African-American history for the region, and this is helping all that come together. Today, they are doing the second round of pulsing, in conjunction with additional aerials pulled from the historic record in order to find the graves.

Justin Snyder stated that he has spoken with Dr. Carr at length, and he had asked about the markers, and he directed the doctor to NCDOT's Highway Marker Program to see if they can do a highway marker, and they will follow up on that. The developer seems to be willing to fence off that area once boundaries have been established.

Ms. Hammond stated that she has been volunteering with an African-American slave cemetery that was part of Hardscrabble Plantation outside of Durham-Hillsborough area. The owner of the house, in December 2022, gave two sisters the deed for one acre where they found this cemetery. It is all overgrown, a little wooded acre, and several people she knows are interested in this and were recruited to come over one day and help. They were clearing brush and operated a chipper and stuff. This one lady, Beverly, said they had identified over 100 graves. There were little flags all around for identification. Ms. Hammond asked her how they had found the graves and if they had used ground penetrating radar or something? Beverly responded that they did not have that kind of money, so she said she is a "Diviner," and she was able to find the graves that way. Beverly had two metal rods, bent into an "L" shape and were inside plastic tubes, so her fingers were not even touching the rods. Being in the plastic tubes, the rods had freedom of movement. She would stand over a depression in the soil and the rods were straight out, and she steps onto the grave and the rods cross each other. She then steps away, and the rods move to the forward position again. Beverly then says, "Where is the head? Is this a male or female?" And if the rods go to the left, it is a female, and if it goes right, it is a male. Ms. Hammond stated that she was just watching, and she was very shocked to see the results. Then Beverly gave the rods and plastic tubes to her, and Ms. Hammond focused and asked the spirits to tell her. Ms. Hammond stated that she had found some Divining Rods in the attic of her house, and the well ran dry within 10 days after they bought their house, and they dug a well in one place, and they did not strike water. Ms. Hammond stated that she would be glad to loan them to help them out. It was a remarkable experience for her.

Kaye Graybeal was showing historic houses on the screen during this time.

Mr. Dowell stated that they have been talking to Burlington to try to figure out how to make sure things are safe, because this is on a plot for a shopping center. Mr. Briggs added that it is zoned for shopping.

Mr. Briggs stated that at the Coltrane House, they spent their \$250,000 so they were able to spend all the money before June 30th, which meant anything they did not spend they had to give back. That was invested in the Coltrane House with all the things that were approved with a COA, and everything was executed.

Kaye Graybeal showed a photo of a gray stone house in Fisher Park that will come to the Commission in August. There will be a tour from 4:30 – 5:30 before the meeting at 6:00.

Kaye Graybeal stated that the City Attorney's Office is asking that all Boards and Commissions keep a log of attendance for each member. If a member is going to be late or miss a meeting, they need to let staff know as soon as possible. If not, they will be considered an unexcused absence.

I. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting – August 15, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

July 24, 2023

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