

**CITY OF ELIZABETH CITY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY
October 8, 2015
4:30 PM**

Chairman Golden called the meeting to order with the following members present: Roy Golden, Rick Boyd, Georgene Falcon, Harvey Harrison, Doris Johnson and Marian Stokes. Also present were Kaitlen Alcock, Planner and Dawn Harris, Secretary to the Board. An introduction of the Commission members was made. It was stated for the record that the Commission had a quorum.

Chairman Golden asked for a motion to adopt tonight's agenda. Ms. Falcon made a motion to **ADOPT** the October 8, 2015 Agenda as presented. Mr. Harrison seconded the motion. **ALL IN FAVOR: GOLDEN, BOYD, FALCON, HARRISON, JOHNSON and STOKES. NONE OPPOSED. MOTION PASSED.**

Chairman Golden asked for additions or corrections to the August 2015 minutes. Ms. Falcon and Chairman Golden had previously sent corrections via email to Ms. Harris. Those corrections had already been made. Chairman Golden asked for a motion to approve the August 13, 2015 minutes. Ms. Stokes made a motion to **APPROVE** the August minutes with corrections. Mr. Boyd seconded the motion. **ALL IN FAVOR: GOLDEN, BOYD, FALCON, HARRISON, JOHNSON and STOKES. NONE OPPOSED. MOTION PASSED.**

Chairman Golden asked that the Statement of Disclosure be read. Ms. Harris read the following statement: Elizabeth City Code of Ethics provides that public officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible to the public; that governmental decisions and policy be made in proper channels of the governmental structure; that public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government. In recognition of these goals and in keeping with the ethical standards of conduct for city public officials and its employees, disclosure of interest in legislative action must be stated for the public record, as per City of Elizabeth City Code of Ordinances Section 2-113. Any member of the Historic Preservation Commission who has an interest, as defined in Section 2-111 of the City of Elizabeth City Code of Ordinances, in any official act or action before the Commission shall publicly disclose on the record of the Commission the nature and extent of such interest, and shall withdraw from any consideration of the matter if excused by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 160A-75.

Chairman Golden made the following statement: Prior to today's meeting, notification was sent to neighbors living within 100' of the properties in question. Commission members received a copy of each application and were to visit the site. North Carolina law provides that persons have an opportunity to address an application; thus the Commission conducts a public hearing on the application. During the hearing the Commission receives evidence to determine that proposed changes are not incongruous with the special character of the historic district or the historic property. They review this evidence against guidelines listed in the City's ordinance before issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness. Each application is heard the same way. The judicial format of the hearing requires that they be impartial. Any written Staff comments are evidence presented just as any other evidence. If any Commission member has had reason to discuss the specific details of the application, they ask to be excused from hearing the application.

Because of the quasi-judicial format of the hearings, the Commission hears evidence and judges whether the change is not incongruous. The Commission is required by North Carolina law to swear in persons who speak before the Commission and offer evidence.

First item on the agenda was Application HP-09-15 filed by The Photography Company located at 104 South Poindexter Street. The applicant is requesting to install signage at this location: one wall sign and one bracket sign. Ms. Leah Simpson was present as applicant. She came forward and was sworn in by Ms. Harris.

Chairman Golden asked for Ms. Alcock's Staff Report. It is as follows.

STAFF REPORT

The case is HP 09-15 filed by Leah Simpson of the Photography Company, located at 104 S Poindexter Street. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as 601-603 E Main Street, Bradshaw Jewelers. The structure was originally built around 1891 but underwent a thorough rebuilding in 1969 after a fire seriously damaged the original structure. It is described as a two-story brick building, with street facades, covered with mid-20th century metal sheathing.

A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued in March 2014 authorizing the current landowner to restore the primary structure, including resealing the panels on the lower floor, repairing and repainting the stucco on the upper floor, and repainting the trim and entryway. The current applicant is requesting a COA to allow for the installation of 2 wall signs along Poindexter Street, the first, a large metal sign will be approximately 28.5 square feet, while the second, smaller sign will hang closer to the entrance and be approximately 7 square feet. According to the Applicant, there have been issues with current and potential customers finding the business due to its location on the second floor as well as the entrance off the rear of the building.

When considering this application, Staff referenced the National Park Service Technical Preservation Services briefs, excerpts of which were included in the staff report provided, as well as the input from Preservation Office staff. According to the briefs, any new sign installed on a historic building should respect the size, scale and design of the building itself as well as surrounding buildings; should not obscure any significant architectural feature; should be constructed of materials compatible with those of the historic building; and should be attached to the building carefully to prevent damage to the historic fabric. Similarly, Scott Powers, Regional Supervisor for SHPO's Eastern Office, stated the Commission would have more latitude in such a case since the historic fabric of the building is being retained. In his opinion, the signs size, color and placement are more important than the specific design.

If the Commission approves the request in sum or in part, Staff recommends the following conditions of the approval: first, the Applicant should, to the extent possible, adhere to the standards set forth in NPS briefs 11 and 25; second, any new signage should be attached to the building carefully so as to prevent any damage; and lastly, all necessary sign permits should be secured from the Planning Department as well as the Inspections Department prior to installation.

Chairman Golden asked if there were any questions for Staff from the Commission. There were none. She called Ms. Simpson to come forward. Ms. Simpson gave a brief overview of her application noting that it is extremely difficult for her customers to find her place of business and that is the most important reason for the signage request. Ms. Simpson spoke about the interior work that she had done and trying to maintain the historical value of the structure.

Ms. Falcon clarified that there was no one living in the space and asked if the furniture was props for photo sessions. Ms. Simpson stated that she has two spaces: one for the photo shoots and the one with the furniture is the "view room." Ms. Falcon asked if there was a kitchen. Ms. Simpson stated no. Ms. Falcon stated that it was a very big room and asked if the applicant had or was considering parties. Ms. Simpson stated yes. She stated that she does rent the room out for functions and has gotten calls regarding different events. She would like to install a sink as it is difficult if having catered events.

Chairman Golden asked if Ms. Simpson was the only occupant on the top floor. Ms. Simpson stated yes.

Ms. Falcon commented on how steep the stairs are going up to Ms. Simpson's business. She asked if there were plans to install an elevator. Ms. Simpson stated no there are no plans.

Mr. Boyd made comment that he knew where Ms. Simpson's business was located and he still had a hard time finding her. He stated that she needs a sign.

Ms. Simpson stated that she has a picture of the sign on her phone or computer if the Commission would rather see instead of the printout. Ms. Alcock stated that she had included the picture that Ms. Simpson had originally submitted.

Ms. Johnson commented that downtown AoA and a lot of the other businesses are becoming more artsy. She stated that she feels the sign meets a happy medium with both the historic and arts involved. She stated that she loves the sign.

Ms. Simpson stated that she has been interested in artsy historic areas for a long time. She stated that she finds that it is what you find if you go to these places is that walking the line between really preserving the great history and having a little artsy edge. Ms. Johnson stated that it seems to always come right before an area becomes very progressive or successful.

Chairman Golden asked if Ms. Simpson if her business was only during the day. Ms. Simpson stated no. Chairman Golden asked how visible the sign would be at night. Ms. Simpson stated that the drawing she had seen and thought was submitted to Planning included a lite sign on the front side. She stated that there was some discussion with Ms. Alcock and she didn't believe that there had been signage passed with lighting. Ms. Alcock stated that in 2014 there were renderings submitted by Main Street Program and it did have a metal sign on the front with lighting but was never part of the application so it was not part of the approval. Ms. Simpson stated that the idea was to be able to light the sign from behind so you would just see the letters come through. Chairman Golden stated that she thinks that would be cool but that you would have to invade the structure to install the sign with lights. Ms. Falcon stated that you may be able to offset just a little from the brick. Ms. Simpson stated that they would like for the sign to be lit from the back. She stated that they want to preserve the structure for historic preservation and their own interest. Ms. Simpson stated that the other photographer that is in the space actually works very closely with a contractor with Chessons. A number of people that helped with the updates were friends. They are giving good tips and advice and will be involved in the installation.

Chairman Golden stated that it will probably require at least a plan and to come back to the Commission. She stated that they would need cost estimate. She stated that perhaps Planning could decide without the Commission, but since the applicant did not present it some form of application will

need to be done. Ms. Simpson stated that it was on her original application. Ms. Alcock stated that once Ms. Simpson gets her approval from the Commission, Planning will issue sign permits. Building Inspections handles any illumination of signs. A separate permit is required from Inspections. She stated that it is up to the Commission if they would like to hear it again, but it will have to meet certain standards from the Inspection Department. Chairman Golden was concerned that they may want something different such as red lights. Ms. Simpson stated that they only want to be able to have clear/white lights. Mr. Boyd stated that the sign ordinance would have to come into play as far as what she could or could not do. Ms. Alcock yes and Inspections is going to look into the lighting aspect of the signage. Planning and the Commission can state for it not to affect the facade of the building. Mr. Harrison stated that his thoughts are that if she illuminates the sign with a white light as specified in such a fashion that it does not damage the structure and meets Planning Department's requirements then the Commission can go ahead and approve the application. Ms. Alcock stated that would be fine. Planning will have to have information on how the sign is to be lit and the specifics of it. If it turns out that Ms. Alcock or Ms. Brooks thinks there may be an issue and it needs to be brought back to the Commission, then they will bring it back. Ms. Alcock stated that she doesn't think that the Commission needs to say that it automatically needs to come back for the lighting.

Mr. Boyd asked if an amendment would need to be done to the application. Ms. Alcock stated that it could be included in a motion.

Ms. Falcon asked Ms. Simpson how soon she was hoping to get the sign installed. Ms. Simpson stated on one hand yesterday, on the other hand this is a busy time for photographers. Ideally she would love to have it up by December 1st or November 1st.

Ms. Falcon stated that the sign on Poindexter would not be lit. Ms. Simpson stated that it would not be lit and will be the standard bracket sign.

Chairman Golden asked if there was any further discussion. Being none, she asked for a motion to accept Application HP 09-15 as presented. Mr. Harrison made the motion to APPROVE. Ms. Falcon seconded the motion. **ALL IN FAVOR: GOLDEN, BOYD, FALCON, HARRISON, JOHNSON and STOKES. NONE OPPOSED. NONE OPPOSED. MOTION PASSED.**

Mr. Harrison made a motion to APPROVE the lighting of the sign on the side of the building. Lighting should be placed behind the sign with white/clear lights; preferably LED lights. This is approved as long as installation of the sign does not damage the fabric of the structure and the applicant meets all Planning and Inspection code requirements. Mr. Boyd seconded the motion. **ALL IN FAVOR: GOLDEN, BOYD, FALCON, HARRISON, JOHNSON and STOKES. NONE OPPOSED. MOTION PASSED.**

Chairman Golden asked if there were any committee reports. There were none. She asked for Staff Reports. Ms. Alcock stated that the Commission will have a meeting next month for the old Jovon building. They are redoing the windows.

Chairman Golden asked for Old Business. She stated that she attended the Preservation North Carolina Annual Conference in Salisbury on September 16th through the 18th. The main topic for the entire conference was "Revolving Funds" and the stabilization of properties. You are to sure them up before they are cited for demolition by neglect. It has to be with the permission of the owner or the building donated or owed by the jurisdiction. North Carolina has the most active revolving funds of all the states.

Chairman Golden stated that she thinks it is a good idea and it is interesting to know about it. She stated that ECHNA in open meeting could talk up what the revolving fund is and how it could benefit our community. Mr. Harvey asked did she say that private owners could give their permission. He was thinking about the house on Persse and Main. Chairman Golden stated yes, but it has to be an application and that property has already been cited. Ms. Alcock stated that Mr. Spencer was in the office about three weeks ago. He has repaired the brick foundation. He is actually continuing to do work. It has been made clear to Mr. Spencer that he is not being given the certificate to just post in the window and nothing being done to the house. Mr. Harrison stated that structurally the house itself is not bad. There was a brief discussion regarding Mr. Spencer's house on Main Street.

Chairman Golden presented a few possibilities for the HPC. One was a tour of the Salisbury homes the second was possible graduate courses at UNCG for historic preservation. She asked that Staff keep the information available.

Mr. Harrison stated that the museum is having Catherine Bishir to come and speak on November 14th from 10 - 12. There will be a break for lunch at then at 1 or 1:30 Jerome Bias will speak. Ms. Bishir will be speaking on her book "Crafting Lives: African American Artisans in New Bern, North Carolina, 1770-1900" and Mr. Bias works in Old Salem. He is going to discuss Thomas Day. Mr. Harrison will also be speaking on "African American House Rights in Northeast North Carolina."

Mr. Harrison stated that he has spoken with Reid Thomas and Mr. Thomas stated that he would like to come and speak with Staff and the Commission regarding some grants that the City has not taken advantage of in several years. There are various historic preservation commission related things that can be done with them. One item that Mr. Thomas brought up was guidelines. Ms. Alcock stated that she has spoken with Ms. Brooks about doing the HPC guidelines as her Capstone project at Tech. That way it is something useful.

Mr. Harrison stated that the Commission is also responsible for landscaping you can see from the street. There is a big tree behind Mr. Spencer's house is completely dead. Ms. Alcock stated that she has pointed out two trees to Mr. Spencer. The other tree is in the front at the corner of the porch. Staff would just need Mr. Tom Campbell to go out and confirm that they are dead. Mr. Spencer would then just need to turn in an application and Staff could approve it.

Mr. Harrison had some discussion regarding the fact that the historic preservation rehab code supersedes any other building codes. He feels that the inspectors should have a training session on this information so they understand what they can or cannot require from a historical home owner.

With no further business, meeting was adjourned.
Respectfully submitted, Dawn Harris, Recorder

****Minutes were APPROVED at the November 12, 2015 HPC meeting.****