

**TOWN OF BOONE
SPECIAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2023, 3:30 p.m.
WebEx Video Conferencing**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:

Chair Eric Plaag, Vice-Chair Bettie Bond, Chuck Watkins, and Vardell Smyth

Student Member: Riley Ziegler

Town Staff in Attendance:

Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Jessica Mitchell-Long-Range/Special Projects Planner, Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary, and Mike James-Senior Planner via Webex.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eric Plaag called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting via WebEx to order at 3:32 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Vice-Chair Bond made a motion, seconded by Student Member Ziegler to adopt the agenda as written.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No individual took the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Discussion ensued on HPC positions. Chair Plaag noted that newly appointed HPC Member Vardell Smyth had not been sworn in but was attending the meeting as a guest. He asked Member Smyth to introduce himself to the Commission and Staff. Member Smyth said that he was a graduate of Appalachian State University and he had moved to Boone, North Carolina about one year ago. He stated that he had experience in working with historic districts from helping his family establish one in the Blowing Rock, North Carolina area.

Chair Plaag explained that after he ran for a Council position, he wanted to try to help find someone who was interested in occupying a seat on the Commission. He had asked Member Smyth if he was interested in a seat on the Commission, and Member Smyth then applied for an open position. Chair Plaag added that he was continuing to try to locate other people that might be interested in applying for a seat on the Commission.

Chair Plaag noted that he was not sure where Member Watkins stood on his HPC position. Chair Plaag stated that it was his understanding that Member Watkins wanted to continue to serve until someone else was appointed to the HPC. Ms. Jessica Mitchell, Long-Range/Special Projects Planner, noted that Member Watkins's term had ended in June and his open position was being advertised.

Vice-Chair Bond asked Chair Plaag if he could be a Council Liaison to the HPC. He stated that would be a Town Council discussion, and if the HPC was interested in Chair Plaag being a liaison, the HPC can put in their request to Town Council for it.

Chair Plaag pointed out that it is very important that the HPC move forward and find new leadership in the transition. He explained that if the Town Council asked him to be a Council Liaison, he will attend the meetings to liaise by asking occasional questions and would relay information from Council and would not participate in the debate.

Chair Plaag asked the HPC if they wanted to continue to meet remotely or in person. Chair Plaag explained that he finds it easier to meet remotely.

Chair Plaag informed the HPC that he had been hired by the owners of the Horton Hotel to pursue their local landmark listing for their property, and he is currently working on that process now. He said that he was not sure but it looked like the completed draft document would come before the HPC for their review after he has rolled off of the HPC and onto Town Council. He added that this is what he preferred to happen.

At approximately 3:47 p.m., Chair Plaag closed public comment.

APPENDIX D REVISION DISCUSSION

Ms. Mitchell- referred to packet page two and a Memorandum dated September 19, 2023. She reviewed the information in the memo that contained meeting minute summaries from previously shared Communication with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and previously shared examples of historic district standards from 2022 and 2023. Ms. Mitchell reviewed the summary of Appendix D discussions included in the memorandum found in the meeting packet.

Ms. Mitchell explained that from August 2022 until April 2023, the HPC and Staff had previously discussed revision topics such as historically appropriate features on nearby or neighboring buildings, inappropriate treatments or historic treatments on neighboring buildings should not be a justification for improper treatment on new construction, and within Section 9, Paint Colors, that the language “complementary to neighboring buildings” references colors that are congruous to the district. Staff added that while the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) references a color palette and any proposed colors are compared to the chart, the LRV value must be below 60.

Ms. Mitchell added that previously Staff had informed the HPC of minor suggested revisions to Appendix D from the Certified Local Government (CLG) application review letter, and the HPC had discussed the SHPO’s comments, including referencing both “Statement of Conformity” and “Certificate of Appropriateness” as “Certificates of Appropriateness” with “minor work” or “major work” in parenthesis.

Ms. Mitchell added that previous updates included research strategies with the HPC, and the HPC had suggested that the Staff research other historic districts that were similar in size and architectural makeup like Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Ms. Mitchell discussed updates on Appendix D including a workflow process to incorporate proposed changes of what Staff and the Commission have learned since the beginning of the COA process.

Ms. Mitchell added that Staff had provided updates on Appendix D that clarified using the term “standards” versus “guidelines” within Appendix. She continued that Staff also reminded the HPC that when there is a text amendment on the historic district standards, it has to be reviewed by SHPO, which takes approximately 30 days for their review.

Ms. Mitchell explained that in June and July of 2023, the HPC’s discussion included substitute material in the historic district and within Appendix D, standards for the R.L. Clay (Rivers) House with a local landmark designation, and research from other jurisdictions on historic district standards. She added that other historic district standards are used as comparisons throughout the process and as a reference for the HPC.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that on packet page four there is a list of the jurisdictions that staff researched for revisions to Appendix D. Ms. Mitchell said that when looking at other jurisdictions she focused on how they had formatted their standards. She said some jurisdictions had their standards formatted separately between residential and commercial properties. Chair Plaag clarified that when we talk about other jurisdictions and how they handle multiple historic districts, a lot of times the way these things evolve is you are expected to write a set of standards that are district-specific or landmark-specific. He said it has been his experience in North Carolina, and other states, that SHPO’s want to see specific standards separated out from other standards. He continued that it places a burden on Staff because they have to be really careful when crafting a standard, broadly speaking, that they do not create an exception on one type of property that you do not mean to because of the way you frame the standard. He noted in some of the current historic standards they have contradictions in them; that just happens sometimes when trying to interpret a given standard, and then there is disagreement on the interpretation. He said if the contradictions can be limited as much as possible without creating new problems, it would be ideal.

Ms. Mitchell explained that the Historic District was adopted in October of 2021. She said that each of the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) cases had been a learning experience. She said the topics that came up in the COA cases showed that more clarification was needed and is what spurred some of the Appendix D revisions.

Ms. Mitchell noted starting on packet page five there is a memo dated May 30, 2023 that includes email correspondence from the SHPO regarding the use of thin-set brick material in the historic district, especially using thin-set brick with pre-cast concrete panels, in regards to substitute materials.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that starting on packet pages 11 through 13, there are the Charlotte Historic District Design Standards that had been referenced by the Town Attorney for the HPC to review and shared with the Commission previously.

Chair Plaag talked about the diSanti Law Firm building on the corner of North Depot Street and King Street. He said it was a difficult case for the HPC but it went through well. He said what is on the outside wall of the building now is not what the HPC thought it would be. Ms. Shook agreed with Chair Plaag on the outcome of the exterior wall. She told the Staff that the language has to be very specific on what we want a stucco finish to actually look like. Chair Plaag said he was asked by several people how this finished exterior wall got through the HPC because this type of look is something that should not be allowed in the historic district. Ms. Turner added that the applicant is working on this issue. In addition, in the commercial standards there is a reference to domestic architecture regarding windows that should not be in there and should be reviewed for a possible revision.

Member Watkins stated that the problem is if you make it as specific as you possibly can be in the approach, you will invariably leave something out, and you are always going to cause something dramatic in the overall approach. He added that if you make the decision loose then decisions would look arbitrary. He stated that to be successful you have to find out where does it go.

Chair Plaag talked about the COA case on Howard Street where the “Everybody’s Bruncheon Club” business is located. He explained that this case is a classic example of how there can be a disagreement when interpreting the standards. He said that one Commission member wanted to follow the standards and let the applicant come back to the HPC after they have jumped through all of the hoops. Then another Commission member did not want to waste time on the case and wanted to approve it. Chair Plaag said that as it turned out the applicant was not able to do what they needed to do. He told the HPC that they needed to discuss how they would handle these kinds of cases in the future.

Member Watkins talked about the National Trust program and when the Downtown buildings and architecture looked the same. Chair Plaag spoke to Member Watkins’s point about the National Trust, he said one of the most constructive things you can do to get into this realization about aesthetic vision is to go to the Downtown Boone Development Association (DBDA) Collection of digital photography from Digital Watauga. He said all of these images are from the 1990s, along with several plans that the Main Street Program had proposed for some of the Downtown buildings that did not meet the standards.

Ms. Mitchell passed out a handout on Appendix D, illustrating the suggested reformatting for the Appendix D revisions. She explained that in the meeting packet the Staff had prepared a reformatted draft of Appendix D that matches the formatting of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Chair Plaag asked if the goal with the reformatting was to have a cheat sheet to go by when the Staff meets with an applicant and explains the standards to them for their proposed project. Ms. Mitchell responded that the goal was to create better or quicker references to a particular article in Appendix D for the applicant to review on their proposed project. Ms. Shook added that that the overall goal is to incorporate both the narrative and the regulatory text appropriately as there can be regulatory material in the current narrative

text. She added that Staff would reference the articles of the UDO for permits and public hearings just like we do everything else in the ordinance. Ms. Mitchell said that the introduction for the general provisions will apply to all properties, then specific-district standards applying to any local landmark for any historic district property would apply. She explained that the Staff wants to review the language in UDO Articles 2, 4, 6 and 8 because there are portions of Appendix D that have the same language as these UDO Articles. She added that the goal would be to reference to the UDO Article within Appendix D to make it better to understand by the applicants.

Chair Plaag referenced proposed Section D1.02 and what it means to the HPC to have the Certified Local Government (CLG) status. He explained that the HPC has the ability, as a Commission and with the approval of the Town Council, to apply for grants to fund whatever the next thing is the HPC wants to do. He stated he had been the recipient of those grants, but he had never applied for one. He suggested that the HPC put it on their list to discuss with the SHPO staff about the process for applying for a grant and prioritization of them. He stated he had been hired on projects funded by those grants that enable you to be able to hire consultants to do the work on the more difficult things that need to be done. Ms. Mitchell said at this time the Staff has already started the process for Appendix D, but there could come a time in the future where the HPC could benefit from the use of a grant. Chair Plaag said that the use of a grant would be most helpful for surveying the Grand Boulevard and Cherry Park neighborhoods. He said that Dr. DeathRidge's history students at Appalachian State had been doing some surveying in these areas. Vice-Chair Bond questioned how much survey work the students were actually doing. Chair Plaag clarified claims about racial restrictions for the Grand Boulevard area. He said this area was called the Daniel Boone Park Subdivision, but there was a separate area called Daniel Boone Cabin Colony, which was definitely a restricted neighborhood. Chair Plaag explained that in a big city the Request for Proposal (RFP) process would be followed and in that bidding process several consultants would bid on doing a survey. He said that it is harder to do that here because there is not enough work in the area; therefore, it is not sustainable for a consultant in Watauga County.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that since the Blue Ridge Tourist Court is a local landmark and not in the historic district, the Staff would have to create separate standards for that property within the Appendix D revisions.

Ms. Mitchell talked about the proposed Section D2, Downtown Boone Local Historic Districts and Landmark Standards. She explained that the "Purpose" section would be merged with the first "Introduction" section and there are areas Staff plans to further address and condense.

Ms. Mitchell talked about Section D2.02 Downtown District Summary. She explained that Staff would format appropriately to account for the current footnote references in Appendix D.

Ms. Mitchell talked about Section D2.03 Landmarks within the District. She explained that Staff had discussed various ways of breaking out the standards with one option being to incorporate the local landmark properties within Appendix D, so we do not have separate documents within the historic district for the things that would apply to that property. She also noted another option would be to use a different

color for each landmark property, and use formatting features, such as text boxes, to include the properties as break out items within the historic district standards. Ms. Shook said this is a great opportunity to introduce the narrative, to show what is important, and can be used to indicate how the standards apply to a specific property. Chair Plaag pointed out that the Downtown Boone Post Office needs to be called out in the standards because it is unusual that a portion of its interior is also included in the local landmark designation. He explained that normally in local landmarks, just the exterior is designated unless the property owner consents to the interior of the landmark being designated. He said that you do not want to reference interior elements in the architectural description and not have standards written for the interior. He added that the standards should include how the interior is treated when repairs or replacement are necessary. Chair Plaag confirmed with Staff that they could write the standards for that specific element of the property.

Ms. Mitchell talked further about incorporating the landmark properties into the historic district standards. She added that she has currently included descriptions from the Comprehensive Architectural Survey report and the District Designation report. She said Staff could use similar formatting and differentiate the reports with colored text boxes. She added that in reviewing the ordinances for the landmark properties, most of them referenced UDO Article 8, the Secretary of the Interior Standards, or Appendix D. She added the idea of including the landmark properties within the proposed Appendix D was to eliminate having to write separate standards for each property, and to identify that each property is to follow the standards in Appendix D.

Chair Plaag thought it was important to give an example of the Appalachian Theatre, that is not currently a landmark property. He said at the time the HPC was working on the broader standards the theatre renovation was not completed. He said this is the reason that the standards did not include how to repair or replace structural glass or spandrel glass. He said if it was a landmark property, that is the place to specifically address standards for how to repair or replace both types of glass. He said right now there is no exposed spandrel or structural glass in the Downtown buildings other than the theatre. He said there are two buildings where this type of glass still exists but it is hidden. He said one building is the old Newtons building that has baby blue structural glass underneath the veneer brick. He said the other building is the mini mall where the old Crest Dime Store used to be, which had the red, black and white structural glass.

Ms. Mitchell referred to Packet Page 47 and she explained the workflow for the proposed General Standards section. She explained that the Staff merged the residential and commercial standards where they seemed to mirror each other. She used the existing residential standards as the basis and compared section by section to the existing commercial standards. She showed the text in various colors to show the difference between the residential and commercial changes to the standards.

Ms. Mitchell noted that she had started reviewing the Streetscapes section, specifically the Design Standards for Historic Streetscapes, Landscapes, Monuments, and other Resources in the District, which is towards the bottom section of the current Appendix D. She added that the language in these sections already applies to all properties.

Ms. Mitchell referred to proposed section D2.04.02 Elevation Definitions and pointed out the text colored in light blue is suggested by Staff as edits to the text. She added that based on the cases the HPC has heard, she suggested edits to make the text clear and easily identifiable.

Ms. Shook pointed out that Staff used a Google document to show the proposed revisions to Appendix D rather than showing the proposed revisions in Word with track changes. She stated that the Staff would like to create a reference table to ensure that Staff has captured all of the revisions and provide the HPC with a clean document. Chair Plaag pointed out that this approach was different than what is usually presented to the Planning Commission and noted that the Staff was reinventing the wheel in a positive way by making it more efficient. Ms. Shook noted that the Staff was refining the text. Chair Plaag said he was fine with this new process because the Staff was making it a more cohesive document. He asked the other HPC members if they had any objections to the approach by Staff to refine this document. There was consensus from the HPC on the approach the Staff was taking to improve this document.

Ms. Mitchell asked the HPC if they wanted her to continue to review each section or give the highlights of the proposed revisions on the rest of the draft document. Chair Plaag responded that he understood Staff was still reviewing the document for proposed revisions and were checking with the HPC to make sure they were alright with this approach to do it. He said the HPC would have the opportunity to review the draft document in more detail after Staff had made further revisions to it. He suggested to Ms. Mitchell that the HPC discuss the key topics that she mentioned in her memo.

Ms. Mitchell talked about the proposed changes to the commercial and residential standards. She said the residential standards would include those standards that are not included within the General Standards, but are still applicable to residential properties. She explained the same process would apply for the commercial standards and would include those standards that are not included within General Standards, but are still applicable to commercial properties. She added that new construction and additions would be different because Staff suggests to separate the existing new construction and addition standards from the existing residential and commercial sections to create a new section for only new construction and additions standards. Ms. Shook added that it would be necessary to figure out which standards that are different from additions and other construction. Chair Plaag pointed out that this topic was a tripping point when the HPC was reviewing the Southend Brewing Company Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) because they were adding a seasonal outdoor bar, the question with the proposed storage container, and whether it was considered as new construction or as an addition. He added that at that time, there was discussion on use versus temporary structure versus accessory building. He said there was also discussion involving the names for elevations, including primary, secondary and tertiary elevations, and how this language needed to be revised. Ms. Shook said the Staff read the elevation language strictly by definition because that is how Staff was trained to do. She explained if you look at how the terms are used throughout the entire standards, it was a tertiary elevation, even though by definition, it's a secondary elevation. She agreed that the elevation text needed to be revised to make it clearer.

Ms. Mitchell pointed out that she had used the color purple to highlight any proposed revisions regarding substitute material. She referred to Packet Page 61 and 62, proposed Appendix D, Section D2.04.14 and noted that the suggested text additions regarding additional exterior architectural components. She noted the difference in text color with the dark blue including text from the existing commercial standards, and the light blue text being suggested text revisions by Staff.

Chair Plaag said the current standards specifically addressed covering or replacing historic materials with substitute materials, and he added the other circumstance was with new construction concerning the parking deck. Ms. Shook said that substitute materials need to be addressed in both situations, and she added a general discussion on substitute materials is needed. Chair Plaag talked about the different interpretations of the standards that were discussed, specifically when the HPC was reviewing historic material for the COA case on the building for Everybody's Bruncheon Club. He said in terms of the standards, he did not remember any other issues except where there was the problem with the historic bricks suddenly being unveiled after decades of time had passed. He said his interpretation was yes, they could replace the historic material with a substitute material. He added that Member Watkins's interpretation was there is a history of there being stucco on this building even though it was not during the period of significance. He added that the question was is stucco a historic material or not. Chair Plaag suggested that the text be revised to clarify what we mean by "historic material," and this is a problem in the standards as they are currently written. He asked if there is a definition of "historic material," and Ms. Shook said we did in the old standards.

Ms. Mitchell added to the discussion regarding materials and referred to Packet Page 80, Section D2.04.23, Artificial Materials; she discussed the proposed revision added to this section that states the materials not to use. She said in the existing commercial standards it includes materials such as kiln brick, wood, trim, structural glass, and other coverings on buildings. She said this could have been the standard referenced for the Watauga County Parking Deck COA case. Chair Plaag said we need to define these types of historic materials, and his intent when writing the standards was that historic materials would be materials that were present on a building at some point during its period of significance, which for the historic district is 1918 to 1964. He explained that there is the one exception of the buildings predating 1918 and the things that were on them.

Chair Plaag talked about the argument that Mr. Jim Deal from Deal, Moseley and Smith, stated when the HPC was reviewing the COA case for the Everybody's Bruncheon Club building. He explained that Mr. Deal implied that the historic district standards do not define what a historic material is. He said if the HPC went with the standard dictionary definition for historic material that would be any material that is historically on a building at any point in time. He said this is why the standards need to define specifically what we mean by historic material and the timeframe of it. Member Watkins said the question is do you go with a treatment known to existing on the building outside the period of significance or do you invent something new that is congruous. He added if it is a known façade with evidence and photographs, that is a more reliable option to follow than something new. Chair Plaag talked about two examples of things that happened in the district outside the period of significance that we agreed on, when the district was created. He said the first example is the 1980s era mountain village look, which the HPC agreed that in

current standards is not appropriate. He talked about the Boone Mini Mall on King Street and if someone wanted to work on that building, they might want to bring back the mountain village portico. He explained that we know that look would not be appropriate to the period of significance. He said that particular look is an invented fantasy of what a mountain village should look like from the 1980s. He added that we have clearly stated in Appendix D that we do not want this look in the district. Chair Plaag talked about the Watsonnatta Western Store on King Street and stated that western village look is not appropriate in the district and does not fit into the period of significance for that building.

Chair Plaag pointed out that there were reasons why the HPC picked the dates for the period of significance. He added that if the HPC wanted to revisit the dates for the period of significance for possible changes to them, it happens sometimes because people change their minds on what they want to see in their districts. He said it might be a challenge to convince the SHPO why it is a good idea to change the dates. He explained that this is how the process works by defining your boundaries and it also puts a protection in place for the district. He added to the conversation that SHPO provided guidance to choose 1964 because of a 1965 renovation to the current Ben & Jerry's building that removed a façade similar to Farmer's Hardware with a three-story glass lobby, and the 1968 completion of the Watauga County Courthouse.

Mr. Vardell Smyth asked the question if there are multiple facades if it is possible to look at the earliest façade. Chair Plaag provided an example with the Mast General Store façade and said that the stucco was added to it in the 1950s and at one point it had cable hung awnings on it and that was how it looked in 1954 when Mr. Hunt decided to make it a department store. He said if someone wanted to put cable hung awnings back on that building, Appendix D allows for that to happen, if there is precedent for it because it falls into that range of the period of significance. He added that with the current Appendix D language on that specific building someone could come forward and say they wanted to stucco the whole thing.

Ms. Shook asked the HPC about the various facades on buildings and what should the Staff be telling applicants regarding the period of significance. She stated that it would eliminate questions about which period to go by, if the proposed language had the earliest period of significance in it. Chair Plaag pointed out that you would see this type of thing in older Plantation houses that may go through several different iterations of a façade over a period of time that might be in their period of significance. He said this could change in 20 years, but the practice now is what is the most significant part of that period of significance, if you can quantify it. He said this might mean putting back a porch that was on that building in 1820 when it was built. He asked the HPC if it was acceptable for the applicant to do their investigative work for their proposed project, and if they find that they can carefully restore a façade back to its period of significance.

Chair Plaag talked about the Qualls Block, which is where the Venture Chocolate and Wine Company building is on King Street. He said the appearance of that building today is not the way it looked originally, but it is the closest you can get to its original look with what remains of it. Chair Plaag explained that there was a period of time in the late 1930s and early 1940s when there was a huge Colonial Revival portico on the front of the Venture Chocolate and Wine building, when it was the Carolina Hotel. He said the portico was added to compete with the Daniel Boone Hotel. He noted that the portico was on that building for

about 15 years. He said if someone came along and could demonstrate through photographs that they owned a portion of the sidewalk, the portico is not in the right of way, and the portico would be on their property, he thought the HPC would have a difficult time fighting not allowing the portico to be put back on the building.

Chair Plaag started a discussion on deciding the period of significance for a building in a historic district. Commission Member Watkins asked isn't it the "every man historian" or a group of historians that decide what that period of significance is for a building. Student Member Ziegler added that it also refers to the general public. Ms. Shook said the general public makes up who lives in this area, and she pointed out that the HPC and Staff respond to the general public. She explained that when the first conversations started about the historic district, some people showed concern for what happens to the community that they grew up in, if the appearance of buildings goes back to the period of significance and they have totally lost their place in their community. She said that did not seem fair and a difficult thing for people to handle.

Ms. Mitchell talked about substitute materials and the application of them. She asked the HPC what would be allowable substitute materials. She asked if the applicants would have to demonstrate that it would not make an impact, provide evidence, or does the Staff need to be more familiar with the substitute materials and application of them. Ms. Shook asked if there was a process that would benefit the applicant in the everchanging market of building materials. She said the standards that are put in place today, in two years for example will there be a product available that might be acceptable. She said do we allow the applicants to propose a material and provide information about why it might be acceptable or will there be super strict standards provided for the applicants. Chair Plaag responded that the National Park Service (NPS) position is that they no longer endorse substitute materials of any kind because they have learned their lesson that if they endorse this now, and then in 25 years from now, they could find out a product fails at a high rate. He added it is self-defeating what they are trying to do. He said the HPC's position is the same as the NPS's position, they do not endorse substitute materials and prefer a purity of original materials.

Ms. Shook explained that the Staff has met with applicants that want to use original materials, but sometimes the dollars associated with the original materials impact what they want to do or should be done. Ms. Shook said the applicants are looking for perhaps a range of materials that would be acceptable. She suggested this range of materials could include a low-end Styrofoam or related product that would not be acceptable, and then similar products that could be applied where you can't distinguish between. She was working on a way Staff can work with an applicant to get the best result. She asked the HPC if this topic would be worth a work session to discuss other possibilities for substitute materials.

Chair Plaag voiced his frustration with the Watauga County Parking Garage - COA case and the proposal for the use of thin-set brick material. He said the HPC's intentions were for the standards to not permit this type of material. He said the language in the standards was enough to support not permitting that substitute material for that structure. He noted that he was not comfortable with the discussion involving the Town Attorney regarding the substitute material because it was taken that the HPC should be more

forgiving of alternative materials in the future. He added this is not how the NPS approaches these types of issues. He said the NPS is very clear on the materials that are allowed, and they strongly suggest that you do not open up the door to brand new things that are not tested over time.

Chair Plaag voiced further frustration with the building that is being built at the corner of Burrell Street and King Street. He said they are cutting their expansion joints, so the masonry that was recently applied looks like a thin-set brick upon concrete. He added that this is exactly what happened to the Rivers Walk Apartment building on Poplar Grove Road. He said now traditional masonry applications are being modified to fit modern appearance on modern buildings.

Ms. Shook told Chair Plaag that she understood about the NPS guidelines and the preservation of the existing structures but she wanted to know about new construction. Chair Plaag responded that the standards can be written anyway you want to see them for the district. He added that SHPO may not like some of the things that are revised. He said the HPC claims that they want a congruous appearance in the district. He said there are various kinds of examples in Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina of new construction and new additions being done that have set some solid things to make them less intrusive. He said the best example he can think of is in Savannah, Georgia where they built an all steel and glass addition to a building that reflects the original building. Discussion continued about the Jepson Center museum in Savannah, Georgia.

Ms. Shook said how do we marry the different ends of the spectrum. She said that Staff needed direction on how to approach this topic. She explained that she understood that the HPC preferred that only original materials to be used on the buildings in the district. She said on the applicant's side, they are interested in the most cost-effective way to get the same end result or desired appearance.

Chair Plaag added about the Watauga County Parking Garage COA case that the original design was to use traditional masonry. He said it was only after the HPC made the initial approval, then the applicant came back and proposed thin-set brick. He said the applicant was motivated because the proposed thin-set brick was easier to work with and less expensive to use. Member Watkins noted that the applicant's claim was that they needed to address how to drain the water from behind the brick, and if it was built the traditional way, the implication was that it would fall apart. Chair Plaag noted that if the architect had possibly provided the HPC with the proposed materials to review and research prior to the meeting. He said it would have been a different conversation during the hearing of the case. Ms. Shook stated that approach would be out of the Staff's control regarding the applicant's presentation. Ms. Shook explained that the applicant is not going to spend the dollars for the detailed architect plans and the engineering before they get approval for their project because there is no point if they are not approved. She further explained that there would need to be time allowed for the applicant for plan modifications. Chair Plaag stated that it is wise to be hesitant to embrace relatively new technology, but the HPC had no idea of how the thin-set brick material would hold up over time on the parking garage structure. He said maybe ten years in the future the applicant might come back to the HPC because the panels are cracking and need to replace them with a new product. He said this conversation would not be happening if they had used an acceptable true and tried material. Ms. Shook asked about, in this instance, if it was the application of

the material, since it was a thin-set brick on panels. Member Watkins added that in the manufacturing process the mortar is pushed to the front surface of the brick, compared to a traditional application where the brick stands proud of the masonry. He added his opinion would have been different if it had been proposed to where the sightline included other brick surfaces, instead of off by itself.

Ms. Shook explained in her role as the administrator of the Planning and Inspections Department having to help Staff interpret the standards, she preferred to have direction from the HPC on how to move forward with the language in Appendix D. Chair Plaag explained that the opinions that the HPC had stated, depending on the composition of the HPC, a couple of the HPC members agreed that the thin-set brick is good and a couple of others thought it was not good. He said this is the art of preservation. Ms. Shook responded that it should not matter who is sitting on the HPC on whether the applicant gets approval. She asked shouldn't there be a level playing field to base the decision making on. Chair Plaag asked Ms. Shook if she thought the composition of the board does not matter in how cases go. Ms. Shook explained that opposition does to an extent make a difference because it is political and not design. She said an applicant probably has a savvier awareness of political than design and historical preservation.

Chair Plaag explained that the guidance in the Secretary of the Interior Standards suggested to him that modern substitute materials should be used with a lot of skepticism, when it comes to their interest in historic landmarks and historic districts on both new construction and rehabilitation. He said with the parking deck there was more allowance for their use on new construction. He said the parking deck was less incongruous than if it was wedged between two 1920's buildings. He explained that where the level of skepticism comes out is when his skepticism is greater than Member Watkin's skepticism. Ms. Shook explained that she did not necessarily agree with Chair Plaag's explanation. She explained that the Board of Adjustment is a quasi-judicial board that makes legislative decisions based on language in the Table of Permissible Uses that are acceptable for the cases they hear. She said this is the same thing that the HPC should do as a quasi-judicial board.

Ms. Shook talked about the HPC side of the process, and how they review the applications that come before them and find the critical part of them. She said on the Staff's side, they explain to an applicant how to prepare for a meeting and things they should bring with them. Ms. Shook pointed out that there has been a lot of Staff research done on mortar but there has not been a discussion on the different types of pointing of brick.

Chair Plaag talked about the new real estate office. He said the UDO language does not explicitly say that brick on new construction should be a particular color or range of colors. He said this is clearly what the HPC does not want to see in the district. Ms. Shook noted that when the applicant brought in a sample of red colored brick, it looked redder than when it was put on the building. Member Watkins noted this is the problem with introducing modern architecture. Ms. Shook said that the Staff understood the process.

Chair Plaag said it comes down to the Staff completing a draft language for the HPC to review. Ms. Mitchell pointed out that the Staff have upcoming Comprehensive Plan meetings scheduled and she was not sure when the Staff could prepare the draft language. Vice-Chair Bond told Chair Plaag that she would like to

see him be the Council Liaison to the HPC. He said he could potentially attend the HPC meetings as an observer.

Vice-Chair Bond and Chair Plaag told the Staff that they appreciated the work they had done on the revisions to made Appendix D a better product. There was consensus from the HPC that the Staff was on the right track with their proposed changes. Chair Plaag said he saw value in the Staff finding the funding, or for at least Ms. Mitchell, to at minimum audit some historic preservation classes.

Ms. Shook explained about the shifting of positions in the Planning and Inspections Department and that Ms. Mitchell would remain the staff liaison to the HPC and her new job title is Advanced Planning Specialist. She said there would be an Advanced Planning division and a Zoning Administration division in the department. She added that under Zoning Administration would be where COA are processed, and that Mr. Mike James, Commercial Zoning Administrator, would be handling commercial projects and Ms. Christy Turner, Residential/Sign Zoning Administrator, would be handling residential projects. She said that the department had gone through some necessary renovations to be able to incorporate an office space for a new residential housing position.

OTHER DISCUSSION

There was no other discussion at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Student Member Ziegler, to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Eric Plaag, Chair

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary