

**MINUTES ADOPTED BY THE GREENVILLE HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**

October 28, 2014

The Greenville Historic Preservation Commission held a meeting on the above date at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of City Hall located at 200 West Fifth Street.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

RYAN WEBB CHAIR	JEREMY JORDAN	DAVID DENNARD
KERRY CARLIN	SARA LARKIN	WILLIAM GEE
DAVID HURSH	ALICE ARNOLD	MCLEAN GODLEY

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: THOMAS WEITNAUER, CHIEF PLANNER; AMY NUNEZ, STAFF SUPPORT SPECIALIST.

OTHERS PRESENT: BILL LITTLE, ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY; NIKI JONES, SENIOR PLANNER; JONATHAN EDWARDS, COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICIAN.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Mr. Jordan made a motion to approve the agenda as written, Mr. Hursh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hursh made a motion to approve the September 23, 2014 minutes, Ms. Larkin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

**Resurvey of the Skinnerville-Greenville Heights National Register Historic District
AND**

**Resurvey of the Perkins Town-Cherry View Area and Briefing of Consultant's
Recommendations for Potential National Register District(s)**

Mr. Thomas Weitnauer, Chief Planner, welcomed new Commission member McLean Godley. He introduced Niki Jones who would review the surveys and answer questions in lieu of acceptance of the survey and forwarding it to City Council for approval.

Mr. Niki Jones, Senior Planner, stated that last month the Commission was presented with a large document for review. He stated he would review the survey and answer any questions. In 2004, the City created the 45 Block Revitalization Area in the West Greenville area which includes the Cherry View/Perkins Town Area eligible historic district. In 2006, the City approved the West Greenville Redevelopment Area which encompasses the Cherry View/Perkins Town district and a small section of the Skinnerville district. He stated there are many dilapidated homes that cannot be saved.

The Skinnerville-Greenville Heights District is a National Register Historic District. It was resurveyed as part of a request from SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office). SHPO would like the City to save all the homes in West Greenville, but it is not feasible for the City to do so. The City has torn down quite a bit of homes. SHPO required both areas to be resurveyed to see if there are any eligible historic districts left. The consultant for the survey was Heather Wagner Slane of Raleigh. There are some vacant, deteriorated, boarded up properties. Code Enforcement will handle these properties but many times cannot since they are heir properties or absentee landowners. The survey said that the Skinnerville-Greenville Heights District is very much intact and the City wants to keep it intact.

Chairman Webb asked for clarification of the boarded up process and how long it can last.

Attorney Little stated if a property is deemed abandoned, vacant and no utilities up to 6 months, it can be boarded up. There is a notification process and after it has been boarded up for 6 months, Code Enforcement can take it to City Council for approval of demolition. The process is about one year. The problem is that some of the properties are heir properties, heirs are dead, and no one knows who owns the property. The City will do a title search via the register of deeds office and tax office to find out who might be paying taxes on the property. If taxes have not been paid, the County will do a tax foreclosure. If the City has Code costs like boarding up and weeds and trash removal, that becomes a tax lien on the property and the City could do a tax foreclosure. It is hard to find the owner or lien holder to give notice. If the property is given to the City and could be rehabbed, then the City could sell it. If the process takes years, the property can get damaged and is not worth the salvage materials that the City could get out of it. Then it gets demolished and there is a vacant lot. Another issue is that many of the lots in the West Greenville Area no longer meet the lot size requirements for new construction.

Mr. Jones stated the median lot size is 6,000 square feet. The lot average for that area is about 3,500 square feet.

Attorney Little stated that unsafe buildings get torn down but nothing can be built. He stated that the City tries to sell the lot to an adjoining lot so it will be building lot size requirements. There are many hurdles in the process.

Mr. Jones stated the Cherry View/Perkins Town area is within the 45 Block Revitalization Area and is eligible to be a historic district. He stated there are quite a bit

of contributing structures in this area. There are a number of demolished buildings in this area as well. If it is not feasible to repair the building, demolition is the last resort.

Chairman Webb asked for an explanation of the demolition process and if anything is salvaged. After stating the need to salvage materials, he asked if the lot size requirements could be smaller.

Mr. Jones stated he would comment on the lot size first. He stated he and Mr. Weitnauer have spoken with Director Merrill Flood on this issue. They are working on it because they know the requirements hurts rebuilding in the West Greenville area. He referred to Attorney Little regarding the demolition process and salvaging items from properties.

Attorney Little stated in an attempt to salvage and make it property owned by the City, there are State property disposal rules to follow. A place to store items is needed. An exception from legislation is needed to allow the City to sell at a reduced cost or re-store any salvageable items before they are turned over to contractors to demolish. Some contractors in order to reduce costs to the City, they will salvage what they can. There are certain rules and guidelines to follow before having a re-store operation. It would all need to be explored.

Mr. Hursh asked how would this be accomplished and who would lead.

Chairman Webb stated that Washington NC has a program in place and sell the salvage items via GovBids.

Attorney Little stated the City does not own the building until the City forecloses on the lot for nuisance value. The issue is how to remove items before the City owns it. The statues do allow authorization for demolition before the City owns it, but does not include the City recovering anything from it.

Mr. Jones stated that the City must own the property in order to salvage items. The Housing Division will demolish a property before the City owns it, although they don't do a lot of demolition. He stated Code Enforcement does demolition and the vast majority of the time, the City does not own the property.

Attorney Little stated the statues allow the demolition of a property before the City owns it. The demolition costs are recovered through a tax foreclosure. When the owners can be found, options can be: demolish and take the property with additional costs to the

owner or the owner can deed the property to the City in lieu of demolition. Then the City could consider rehab and salvage.

Chairman Webb asked if staff had a list of every property in the Redevelopment Plan and when is that updated.

Mr. Jones stated there is a list in this current survey and a map in the Redevelopment Plan which has not been updated since 2006 because it is a 20 year plan. The plan is on the website and he has a hard copy in the office if someone wanted to see it.

Chairman Webb asked if the plan included historic preservation.

Mr. Jones stated the Historic Preservation Commission was involved with the Redevelopment Plan.

Chairman Webb stated if the plan is reexamined that the HPC needs to be more involved since they have information from consultants about musicians etc that came from these neighborhoods which makes the house worth more to save.

Mr. Jones stated they want to work with the HPC. The situation is a catch-22 since the rehab cap is \$70,000 and there are limited federal government grant funds.

Chairman Webb asked if the rehabbed properties are sold.

Mr. Jones stated the rehabs are owner occupied. Occasionally a property is purchased for a rehab and then sold. These are new construction homes which mimic the historic character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Hursh stated that maybe ordinances need to be changed in order to salvage materials before demolition begins. There is a need to identify ways to make the suggestions possible. He questioned who would make this happen.

Chairman Webb stated that he hopes the new staff person in the Historic Preservation position.

Mr. Jones stated the purpose is to decide on 1 single eligible district or 3 separate district options. The Cherry View/Perkins Town Area is an eligible National Register Historic District and the Commission could forward that request to City Council. To be a

National Register Historic District certain guidelines must be followed and can receive certain tax credits. A local district is when homeowners are held to certain standards.

Mr. Hursh stated that if it was a local district then lower expectations could be required and could receive more funding. In that scenario then a single larger district would be better than three but then three districts could have more variations of expectations.

Chairman Webb stated a single larger district would be better to make an area all inclusive. He then asked how much the City sells the properties for.

Mr. Jones stated that it depends on the market and sometimes cannot sell based on the historic character or location of the home. He also stated that if federal money is used to repair the home, then it cannot be sold to someone who makes above 80% of area median income.

Mr. Jordan asked if the reason for the surveys requested by SHPO was due to too much demolition.

Mr. Jones stated yes but it was due to one specific property. The HPC needed to see the report. He stated they need to find a way to get reinvestment.

Mr. Jordan asked if the Cherry View/Perkins Town area is less intact than Skinnerville and what properties in Skinnerville is the Housing Division interested in.

Mr. Jones stated their target areas are Lincoln Park and Douglas Avenue. He stated they need to focus efforts in on areas to stabilize a neighborhood. He stated they are not focused on Skinnerville now. There are large beautiful homes in that area that are deteriorating quickly but it is not the City's job to fix all these homes. He then reviewed key points from the survey:

- Skinnerville (National Register District) is very much intact, and has many contributing structures.
- Cherry View – Perkins Town is an eligible historic district.
- Over the past ten (10) years Cherry View - Perkins Town has experienced change; thus, the three (3) separate districts option.
- Both Skinnerville and Cherry View - Perkins Town are within qualifying census tracts. Therefore, the circumstances within these districts are significantly different from those in other districts.

He stated that staff recommends that the HPC accept the updated survey and forward the survey to the City Council for acceptance. Therefore a decision for a single district or three district option needs to be made.

Mr. Hursh stated that it appears the surveyor prefers the single district although it is not clear.

Ms. Arnold stated the contiguous district would make it more manageable in the future.

Mr. Jordan asked if starting the request for a National Register Historic District would be more expensive.

Mr. Jones stated no. The National Register Historic District would provide tax benefits.

Chairman Webb stated he was in favor of one whole district since it would be easier to market and doesn't cut out any contributing structures.

Ms. Arnold made a motion to accept the survey and suggest a single contiguous district, Mr. Jordan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Staff Report: Minor Works COA's

Staff reported two Certificates of Appropriateness issued:

- (1) 405 S. Eastern Street - Roofing
- (2) 408 S. Rotary Avenue - Roofing

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No one spoke for public comment.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Design Review, Publicity and Selection Committees did not meet.

Mr. Hursh stated he did not know how the Publicity Committee works.

Chairman Webb stated the Members need to bring back needs to the attention of the Commission. The committee markets properties and interacts with the community. The committee members can get together and nominate a chair. The Design Review Committee only meets if there is a COA.

Ms. Larkin offered to chair the Publicity Committee.

Mr. Godley offered to join the Publicity Committee.

Mr. Dennard asked for information on the Selection Committee.

Chairman Webb stated the purpose of the Selection Committee is to come up with a list of properties that could be designated locally.

Mr. Dennard offered to be on the Selection Committee.

Mr. Jordan stated that although there have been staff changes, they should not let the opportunity and money designated pass of designating another property.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Webb stated he will be speaking before City Council in November for the HPC annual report. He stated if anyone had anything to add, to get with him. He stated he was going to talk about the demolition by neglect ordinance, which states that a property owner cannot let their property decay to the ground.

Mr. Hursh stated to include taking the HPC into inconsideration regarding a new National Register Historic District for the Cherry View Perkins Town Area.

Mr. Weitnauer stated that adopted colored copies of the Design Guidelines have been provided to Commission members. He also stated he wanted to offer an orientation to new members and to members who want a refresher course. He will contact members in the near future to schedule. Also, he suggested a possible time change for the HPC meeting to an earlier time and wanted members to think about it. We received a great response to the open position and hopefully will have a new employee soon. If anyone still wants a National Preservation Membership, please see him soon before he places the order.

With there being no further discussion, Mr. Dennard made the motion to adjourn, Mr. Hursh seconded it and it passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Weitnauer, Chief Planner