

JACKSON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Date: January 17, 2023								
Time Begin: 5:24 pm								
Time End: 6:46 pm								
Location: Jackson County Public Library, Community Room								
Members	Present	Absent		Present	Absent		Present	Absent
Susan Leveille	X		Jane Eastman	X		Beth Parris	X	
Bill Crawford		X	Luther Jones	X		Vacant		
Brandon Core	X		Pam Meister		X			
Celeste Pratt	X		Carl Iobst		X			

Staff Present:

Michael Poston, Planning Director
 Anna Harkins, Planner I

Call to Order and Quorum Check

Chair Susan Leveille called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of the Agenda

Luther Jones made a motion to approve the agenda as written. Jane Eastman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes

Brandon Core made a motion to approve the minutes from September 20, 2022. Jane Eastman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment (3 minutes per speaker)

There were no public comments.

New Business

a) Local Landmark Program Discussion

Ms. Harkins gave an update that St. David’s Episcopal Church in Cullowhee is working on their National Register of Historic Places nomination form, and they may be interested in local designation.

Ms. Harkins stated last meeting they had questions about the local designation program, and certificates of appropriateness. The following were questions that were asked by the Commission:

- What is local landmark designation and what does that necessarily mean for the property?
- How would we evaluate what goes on the local register?
- What do we evaluate with that certificate of appropriateness to?
- Can we recognize historic buildings without going through this process, and what would that look like?

Ms. Harkins stated the local landmark designation is an ordinance that has to be adopted by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners or the appropriate governing board. In addition, the local landmark designates it as having significant value to the county, historically, architecturally, culturally, and it deserves recognition and protection. Accompanied by that designation, it is available for up to 50% tax deferral on their local property tax, which is not determined by the Commission or staff. The county tax department would determine the percentage that would be based off how much of the property is actually considered a part of that ordinance. For example, if it's just one building, additional dwellings, or it's also a lot of the landscaping that is what the tax office would consider. In addition, she stated in order to keep the historic value of the landmark there has to be review of the structure because it is an ordinance, and it is getting tax benefits.

Ms. Harkins stated the standards in which we evaluate landmarks is pulled straight from the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and it could be a building, site or object like Judaculla Rock that possess special significance in terms of its history and architectural value. Local landmarks are meant to have special significance to the county, which could be its association to the county as a whole, someone who has lived there, the architectural style, and the story and full history of the building has to also be involved.

Ms. Harkins stated they are a joint commission, and she found that Transylvania County had a similar set up and she took some of their models to help understand how this board was meant to function as a joint commission. The Commission reviewed over the flow chart for Transylvania local landmark designation process. The process begins with a submitted complete application, staff would review and get feedback from the NC Historic Preservation Office, create a staff report and present to the Commission to make a recommendation and hold a public hearing with the appropriate governing board for the final decision. She presented an example of a home in Forest Hills that was on the recent Architectural Survey Update between 1945-1975 that qualifies as a historic building (over 50 years old), but may not meet the standard of having local significance as there is no full history or knowledge of the builder of the structure. In addition, she presented an example for St. David's Episcopal Church, which they have a complete history of the structure who built it and a complete architectural survey done of the building. Ms. Harkins stated they also discuss the impact that the congregation has had on the community, people who have gone to that church, people who were involved with the church and lived in the area. She stated if there was a full application that had all of that information, she could see that application potentially be approved by this Commission.

Ms. Pratt inquired what would be the benefit for a place like St. David's Episcopal Church to be on the local register as they already receive tax benefits. Ms. Harkins stated it offers extra protection for the building if something were to happen. Ms. Leveille stated an example would be if DOT were to build a highway that would impact the structure they could challenge the project as it is a registered historic structure. Ms. Harkins stated it would be one of those cases where if the building was threatened that this commission could support the protection. Mr. Poston stated it has always been a church, but that does not mean that it always will be a church. For example, The Hillside Grind on campus was the Presbyterian Church for a number of years, which was repurposed. He stated because the ordinance is still in place, documentation is still in place that whoever occupied that space if there was not another congregation, would still be bound to keeping the architectural integrity of the building going through the process. In addition, Ms. Harkins stated if this Commission does become a certified local government, if they have any projects that they want to do to help with repairs or the accessibility to their historic structure, we could possibly help with grant money by applying for grants for them through the state program.

Ms. Leveille inquired if the national register standards would protect historic trees that are on the property premise. Ms. Harkins stated she would go back and review those standards as usually with landscaping or mature historic trees on a site the national register does try to minimize that if there is another option on the property they would most likely say use the other option before you remove a historic tree.

Ms. Harkins stated if there is evidence that a historic structure was a big of an impact on the community, even though the structure may not be architecturally unique if someone were to make a case for it being a local landmark would be up to the discretion of the Commission. In addition, another question that was brought up was can a property owner undesignated a local landmark. Ms. Harkins stated they could undesignated a local landmark, but it would require repealing the ordinance to the governing board that approved the designation, and then it would also require paying back some of the taxes that they had deferred from them. Mr. Poston stated the governing board could refuse to repeal it, however it is a voluntary program that typically is when a property owner asks to be on the register or if someone purchases the home later with the knowledge that these are the constructs of which we operate with this building and to some extent the tax deferral.

Ms. Harkins stated another question was does local landmark status negatively affect the property value. She stated she has researched academic studies and journals, and has only seen positive cases that a landmark designation would increase property value as it mainly stabilizes the value of the home. In addition, she stated this also applies to a historic structure in a local district as they know their property and surrounding properties are going to stay the same, which could possibly increase the value of the surrounding houses. In real estate communities, they are considered as uncommon or special properties, they consider these properties different, and that is something they use for marketing. In addition, she stated in many cases neighboring property values would increase, however, there are a few cases that are isolated incidents, but overall the research points to a local designation helping property values.

Ms. Harkins discussed how the Commission would evaluate a certificate of appropriateness (COA). She stated this process is similar to a rezoning or any other type of review such as a special use permit. Ms. Harkins stated staff would create a staff report based on the submitted application, and provide background to the site, location of the site, the proposed changes are to the site, and staff would recommend approval with conditions or denial to the Commission. The Commission would then make a recommendation to the appropriate governing board that would be the final decision for the local landmark designation. Mr. Poston stated the COA would follow a quasi-judicial process, which this Commission would act as the judge in a case and the county attorney would be present to guide you through the procedural process that are prescribed by the state. The Commission went through examples of COA applications and discussed possible determinations. In addition, she stated she spoke with the NC Historic Preservation Office about some of these concerns and questions, and they would be happy to come meet and discuss these further with the Commission along with trainings.

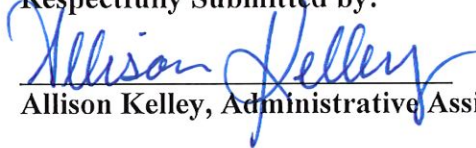
b) Design Standards Discussion

The Commission briefly discussed the design standards and offered suggestions for staff moving forward to reduce the repetitive language and consistency throughout the standards.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Jane Eastman made a motion to adjourn at 6:46 p.m. Celeste Pratt seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:


Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant

Approved by:


Susan Leveille, Chair