

JACKSON COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Date: June 18, 2024								
Time Begin: 5:25 pm								
Time End: 6:13 pm								
Location: Jackson County Public Library, Conference Room								
Members	Present	Absent		Present	Absent		Present	Absent
Susan Leveille	X		Jane Eastman	X		Michael Moore	X	
Bill Crawford		X	Luther Jones	X		<i>Vacant</i>		
Brandon Core	X		Pam Meister		X			
Celeste Pratt		X	Beth Parris	X				

Staff Present:

Anna Harkins, Planner I

Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant III

Hunter Rogers, Planning Intern

Call to Order and Quorum Check

Chairman Brandon Core called the meeting to order at 5:25 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Approval of the Minutes

Beth Parris made a motion to approve the minutes from May 21, 2024. Luther Jones made a motion to second the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment (3 minutes per speaker)

There were no public comments.

New Business

a) Mountain Heritage Day Discussion

Ms. Harkins stated she wanted to follow back up with the Commission regarding Mountain Heritage Day to make sure that we have everything in order since she was not here last month. Staff has contacted Print Shack about doing a reprint of the pocket guide brochures to Jackson County's National Register of Historic Places Landmarks we did at the past Mountain Heritage Day that has the different landmark sites throughout the County. She stated staff did a few updates to it including adding a link to our website underneath all of the walking tour QR codes for the different municipalities, as well as outlining some of the spots on the map to make them more visible. In addition, she stated we hope to get those printed this month because we are running low on those brochures as we have them displayed for people to take at the front desk of the Permitting Center.

Ms. Harkins stated we have discussed having some local landmarks that have museum space or can be visited by the public to have handouts or things like that available in our booth at Mountain Heritage Day. She stated she had not spoken to anybody yet regarding those materials as she did not know if we had a list of specific places to reach out to or should we just reach out to all of them and see if they have any material available. In addition, she stated she is unsure if Balsam Mountain Inn has anything yet, but she does know the Cashiers Historical Society does have some things for the Zackery Tolbert House that we can get from them. The Appalachian Women's Museum and the Chamber of Commerce, which is the Hooper House might have some material.

Mr. Core stated he believed last meeting, Ms. Parris mentioned the brochures for the historic walks. Ms. Parris stated the Chamber does those and Dillsboro's most likely needs some tweaking. She stated they are very neat how you can follow Town. Mr. Core stated I believe Webster has one on their website. Ms. Harkins stated she just does not know if they are in print, but that is why we put those QR codes for people to scan if they want to and then they can have it on their cell phone. However, it would be nice to have some to handout if people do not have smartphones. She stated she would look into that and see who is printing them.

Ms. Parris stated the Balsam Mountain Inn is really trying, and if you go to Mountain Heritage Day it is an all-day festival event and if they were to do a brunch or something the next day we can hand out stuff for them. Ms. Harkins stated she would reach out to them and see if they are interested in handing us anything to give out. Mr. Core stated if we give them a three-month runway, and if I were in their shoes I would be all over it and if I did not have something produced I would produce something just to get it in people's hands. Ms. Harkins stated she knows that they are doing music and they were saying they were trying to get going on food as fast as possible and it was going to be like a very simple kind of like a pizza kitchen and she is unsure if they have got that going yet since the last time she spoke with them. Mr. Core stated they are doing a lot, they are serving drinks and their coffee shop is open and he saw on social media today that they had a whole delivery of Waynesville Soda Jerk. Ms. Harkins stated they are also trying their best to preserve the building but they are wanting to try and draw in people as well.

Ms. Parris stated she will be meeting with the merchants of Dillsboro and they would love to have come up with something small that can either highlight our activities for October, November, and December and especially to highlight the luminaires we would love to provide that information early to people.

Mr. Core stated if staff is looking for these entities to provide the print materials as a Town he could not imagine why the Town of Webster would not provide those materials and he would try to see if they are able to provide those materials. Ms. Harkins asked Mr. Core to see if they could get materials for the Webster walking tours as that could go with our Webster Rock School coloring page.

Ms. Leveille inquired if they have been on 441. Mr. Core stated yes, the old Savannah Rock School. Ms. Leveille stated that Rock School got painted, and you could look at it and know it was a WPA work or RCCC. Ms. Harkins stated this is an example of why it really matters for people to join our landmarks programs.

Mr. Core stated regarding the landmarks program, what kind of timeline might we be looking at for those ordinances, because it was this time last year that we were saying let's try to get it to the Town's by September of 2023. Ms. Harkins stated yeah, and then

that is when our department got a little chaotic. She stated I have been working with Michael Poston, Planning Director to try and reach out to some of the boards and trying to figure out what is the best timeline for them because we want to do it and if we are going to do it, we want to do it in one fell swoop and would like to try and see if we can sync it all up. She stated she would follow up with him again, and we also need to follow up with Forest Hills about our at large member from Forest Hills that we need to fill.

Mr. Core stated I know last year at this time, we were like waiting on the County's attorney to provide an updated draft of the ordinance. Ms. Harkins stated yes and the previous County attorney did take a look at it before she left and we have that one on standby but it is kind of only for emergency. She stated we can revisit it if that is something that the Commission wants to look at the next meeting, and she can take a look back through that ordinance over the next month and we can try and come up with a game plan for that. Mr. Core stated I think that would be good as us taking forward steps on anything with a landmark program is hinged upon that ordinance and the approval by the participating municipality. He stated can we do the legwork that we need to over the next couple of months so we can get on these calendars around September or October timeframe. In addition, he stated I am not trying to bring Ms. Harkins personal matter into this, but anything that we can get buttoned up while we know that you are still with us. Ms. Harkins stated for those of you who do not know, I recently got married, my husband is in the Army and he has been stationed in San Antonio in the fall and that is where I will be going to join him. However, she stated I will still be here for a little while longer and I will be on call if you all need me. She stated we are thinking it will be around September when I move, so if anything, I can have everything set up and Mr. Poston can go in to these boards.

Ms. Parris inquired how does it have to be set up, because we approved it. Ms. Harkins stated it was approved by the Commission to move forward with it. She stated she does not know if a staff report is necessary for this, so it would just be making sure that Mr. Poston knows what to tell the boards that he is presenting it to. In addition, she stated it is simple changes that the Commission has gone over regarding making it to where staff can approve minor changes to buildings, simplifying the process to make it easier for people to join the landmarks program, and making it compliant with the state's laws.

Mr. Core stated if he remembered correctly, as a Commission we kind of approve things to move forward and we just need an attorney to make sure that verbiage is correct before it goes before these entities. Ms. Harkins stated she would take a look into that further and see if what our last County attorney had said is still valid since it has been over a year. She stated she did not think there has been any major changes with North Carolina's Historic Preservation standards, but she would go through and double check and if not, she can start working with Mr. Poston on getting on some schedules.

Mr. Core stated he would imagine that whenever these meetings are scheduled, it would probably be helpful for at least a couple of us to at least be present. Ms. Harkins stated it would be helpful especially if you have been appointed for a specific area to go and talk with those boards or call them ahead of time or meet with them. She stated we can start moving forward on that now that budget season is over which that is what takes up all these different boards and councils time.

b) Staff Updates

Hunter Rogers is the planning intern for the summer and introduced himself to the Commission. Mr. Rogers stated he was from Franklin and received his undergrad at Western in Political Science. He stated he has always felt the call to go to local government and was unsure what that looked like until this past semester when he had a government planning elective and for his program he needed to have an internship and decided to look around and since he is living in Sylva, Jackson County's Planning Department seemed to be the right fit.

Ms. Harkins stated Mr. Rogers is working on for us this summer is a Story Map that will focus around the Jackson County Land Use Plan 2040, which is a comprehensive plan for the County. In 2017 the County did their comprehensive plan for the next 25 years and it is common practice in the planning world to go back and take a look at your comprehensive plan every five to seven years to make sure there is nothing that needs to be updated or to update things where for example we have already accomplished these goals can we add on to things or this goal is not as achievable and what can we add to it. She stated we are currently starting that process, but a lot of that process we want to include the public and something we realized is the public does not know what goals we already have achieved. We have achieved a lot of goals as Jackson County as a whole, some of the major ones are building the animal shelter, building the indoor pool, Greenway, all of the small area plans, expanding our historic preservation programming to have more public education and doing the updated survey of our historic landmarks, or historic sites. Ms. Harkins stated what Mr. Rogers is doing is creating a Story Map that guides people through what has been happening in Jackson County since 2017 so the public can give their input on what we should move towards what they have enjoyed that we have done in the past couple of years. In addition, she stated he is also learning about planning, we are taking him around the County and to meetings.

Ms. Harkins stated another staff update is that she has recently got in contact with Ms. Frances Owens and she is interested in kind of starting up the Jackson County Historical Society room again. She stated Ms. Owens is over in that room on Thursday's and Friday's from noon to 3:00 p.m. and she is very passionate about getting that space reopened for longer periods of time, and also, she is trying to understand what is exactly in that room and seeing if there are any archives of where some of these things came from and who they belong to, and then potentially creating some new exhibits. Ms. Harkins stated if any of you are interested in volunteering to help out Ms. Owens she definitely might need some help with identifying some of the things that are there because nothing is really labeled. She stated please let her know if anyone interested in helping out and she can get you in contact with Ms. Owens.

Ms. Leveille inquired if there was anybody that helped Joe Rhinehart periodically that might have the answers to some of that.

Mr. Core stated he had visited with Miss Owens a couple of weeks ago, she came to the Webster town board meeting and it sounded as if she may have been the one if he understood her correctly. He stated do not quote me on this, but she may have been the one pre-pandemic who was in charge of the exhibits. In addition, he stated some of the stuff in there now, like the Women of Jackson County, she says that she is the one that curated that and there is a number of artifacts there that are on loan from her own family. Mr. Core stated Ms. Owens came to the Webster town board a couple of weeks ago as she is trying to find who is in charge of it because she is trying to get a key to be able to get in there to do exhibits and said the library will not give her a key unless she has some sort of documentation. He stated our town attorney pulled the organizational documents for the Jackson County and it is not the Historical Society, it is historical something is their official term. He stated we kind of felt like there would need to be this kind of reorganizational meeting and elect new officers and capture minutes. He stated he would say in addition to Ms. Owens, just looking for any interest in the museum, is if there is anyone here or anyone that you know that might be interested in resurrecting the Jackson County Historical Society or whatever the official name is.

Ms. Parris stated it was brought to her attention the Nick Breedlove might have some details because he and Joe Rhinehart were close and she has heard that Mr. Breedlove has got a lot of things out of his home and that he was the one that supposedly helped label everything. In addition, she stated what she has learned so far is that there is no documentation at all and we do not know who those items belong to and at any point someone could walk in and say those are all mine and what would the historical society be able to do to prove that they were not. Mr. Core stated he would be in touch with Billie Jo Bryson and he can see what he can find out regarding the historical society.

Ms. Harkins stated if there is any sort of documentation that was in Mr. Rhinehart's house that could be of help for public history and even if we just take a copy of it would be helpful as we just need to know where some of the stuff came from if that exists, because someone really could come in at any point and say that all this stuff in the case is mine. Ms. Parris inquired if Mr. Rhinehart had any children or any living relatives or anything. Mr. Core stated no he did not have any children and he is sure he must have living relatives close locally. In addition, he stated Mr. Rhinehart's house was emptied and there were a lot of pass throughs before the public knew about the opportunity to pass through. He stated Mark Stein, who owns the meditation center was a close friend of Mr. Rhinehart's and one of his former students, and he thinks he was able to get some things and anything Webster Historical Society related he brought to me. Mr. Core stated he had one copy of every original Webster Historical Society newsletter and there might have been a couple of artifacts that were given to the Town, like maybe a brick possibly from the old courthouse. However, he stated he was not sure who all had access to that house before the public got wind.

Ms. Parris stated that Ms. Bryson may have paperwork for the historical society or whoever was on all the paperwork. Mr. Core stated he would ask her because she has given him paperwork for Webster Historical Society, she had original bylaws, constitution and all of that from the 70s.

Ms. Harkins stated the Jackson County Historical Society is its own entity, it is separate from the Historic Preservation Commission and it is not a branch off of the county government. The only thing that this Commission can do is as individuals go and support any way that they can, and that is why I brought it up is if you are interested in helping out as all of you know so much about local history and could be a great resource. If that space is going to get up and running again, it is going to need help and this is such a great collection of people who could help.

Mr. Jones inquired since they are a separate entity from the county and that information needs to be pulled to be made public, how do we go about doing that. Ms. Harkins stated it would have to be someone from the Historical Society, which they are trying to revive and trying to figure out who might have that information. Mr. Core stated he was looking at the forming documents now and inquired if anyone knew who John L. Bell, Jr. is as he was the initial registered agent. Mr. Jones stated yes, John Bell is dead at this point in time, he was a history professor at Western Carolina University back in the 60s. Mr. Core inquired about Louise Edwards from Whittier. Mr. Moore stated that she was dead. Mr. Core inquired about J.D. McRorie from Sylva. Mr. Moore stated he was dead. Mr. Core stated those are the people who signed off on the original document which is filed with the state. In addition, he stated whoever was hosting meetings prior to 2020 there would be minutes, and maybe Billie Jo would know as they have to be somewhere but he does not know that they are on a computer because anything that she brings to him are photocopies and he has not ever received a digital file from her. Mr. Jones stated there probably are not any digital files and they probably need to be scanned and put into digital files.

Ms. Harkins stated the other staff update that she wanted to discuss was meeting dates for this summer that maybe we combine the July and August meeting together towards the beginning of August. That would give a good separation of time in between a meeting and Mountain Heritage Day.

Luther Jones made a motion to move and combine the July/August meeting date to August 13, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. Michael Moore seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Harkins stated going back to our conversation before about the Historic Preservation Ordinance, would the Commission be okay with us having those meetings with those Town's before our August meeting. The Commission gave a consensus that they would be okay with staff to move forward to scheduling those meetings with those Town's. Mr. Core asked staff to provide a status update in August regarding the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Mr. Jones inquired if staff had an approximate timeline on when they would be contacting the different communities. Ms. Harkins stated we can start as soon as possible and she needs to work with Mr. Poston on who in each area we need to contact, it would be our municipalities and the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Jones stated when you go to Sylva to give him a heads up and let's have a meeting so we can go over stuff because he gets along pretty well with most of the people.

Ms. Harkins stated she is making a handout and it is currently in the early drafting process and it will be the same setup as a trifold brochure, where it will be a guide to becoming a local landmark that we can hand to people. She hopes to have a prototype for the Commission to take a look at soon. Mr. Core stated maybe at some point in the future, which could be a second phase to that might be an FAQ that we house on the website so that if someone picks that up, but they want to know what kind of hoops to jump through or what are the benefits we could have an outline of some of those common questions. Ms. Harkins stated this guide would include "what is a local landmark", "how does my building become one", "what are the steps to doing it", and "I am a local landmark, what now", etc. and it would have the counties contact information. She wanted to create something for County staff and Commission members to just be able to hand to people in the public that would explain everything.

Mr. Core stated based on the conversation at the last meeting, he was wondering if there might be an opportunity at some point for a future Historic Preservation month to have these historic landmark structures that are on the National Register in the County to be opened up to the public. He stated whether that is a year or two years down the road, he inquired if she felt like that is something that is doable and would kind of garner some interest. Ms. Harkins stated she did think that it would, it is something that a lot of Historic Preservation Commission's do in other areas where they will do a house tour or something to talk about preservation month. She stated that would definitely be a potential thing that the Commission can move towards because preservation month is every May, the National Trust for Historic Preservation started that. In addition, she stated their whole slogan for it every year is people saving places, so it is to highlight people who are working hard to preserve local history. There is also media content that the National Trust for Historic Preservation gives to communities as well to help them with marketing and things like that.

Ms. Leveille stated Webster decades ago had Christmas historic buildings, and you went around and you had cookies here, and hot cider here, and cookies here. She stated you got to talk to the people who lived there and asked what they had done to the building. In addition, she stated she had been into the houses that I never had a need or occasion to go into, but she knew they had been there forever and that was just really neat. Mr. Core stated he did not know they did it before, but that has actually been on my radar and that is like a dream of his. Ms. Leveille stated Christmas is kind of a crazy time to do it, God bless the people that open their house at Christmas time, but it was well attended and I think everybody enjoyed it very much and she thinks it would be great. Ms. Harkins stated it does

not have to be a large-scale thing, it could just be one historic site opening up for historic preservation month.

Ms. Parris stated she had the best time last week, Mr. Blanton was here in the library and he talked about how he wrote a Christmas story every Webster for the church and he did some stories. In addition, she stated it would be kind of cool to have Judaculla Rock that is a site, even though it is not a house and there may be a great time to go up there and have some people come and tell a story.


Adjournment:

With no further business, Michael Moore made a motion to adjourn. Susan Leveille seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:


Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant

Approved by:


Brandon Core, Chair