

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the
Aberdeen Historic Preservation Commission

March 17, 2014
Monday, 5:00 p.m.

Robert N. Page Municipal Building
Aberdeen, North Carolina

The Aberdeen Historic Preservation Commission met on Monday, March 17, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. for the Regular Meeting. Members present were Chairperson Kam Hurst, Ernestine Chapman, Mike Lashley, and Jon Ring. Others in attendance were Planning Director Pamela Graham, Permit Technician Amy Fulp, Planner Jae Kim, Betsy Saye, Louise Lucas, Steve Saye, Molly Menard, Tony Temple, Bryon Morris, and Mike Ratkowski.

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Kam Hurst called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular scheduled meetings of January 27, 2014 and February 6, 2014

Jon Ring made a motion, seconded by Mike Lashley, to approve the minutes from the meetings of January 27, 2014 and February 6, 2014. Motion unanimously carried.

3. Other Business

All parties who would like to give evidence or testimony were sworn in before doing so.

a. Continuation of Consideration of Certificate of Appropriateness COA #10-69 for New Signs at 101 N. Sycamore Street.

Planning Director Graham stated this COA for the business signage at Eloise has been continued twice. At the last meeting we had one of the applicants here, Louise Lucas, and some discussion about possible changes to the sign. What we ended up with is the Commission asking the applicant to bring back some possible graphic re-designs for the Board to consider.

Planning Director Graham stated she wanted to make the Commission aware that the rules of procedure for the Historic Commission state that this is a due process issue and from the date of the application being submitted you have 90 days to make a decision. If a decision has not

been made in 90 days then it is considered to be approved without conditions. We are coming up on the 90 days before the April meeting.

Chairperson Hurst questioned that in their application they did not have all the things that were required with the COA. Planning Director Graham stated that since it was accepted by the department it is considered a submittal at that time.

Chairperson Hurst asked the applicants did they bring any other drawings and Betsy Saye stated no. Betsy Saye stated the sign is their logo and it would be hard to change their logo.

Bryon Morris stated his support for Betsy Saye and her business. Molly Menard, president of the Business Guild, stated you can't compare Eloise with other businesses, if Eloise has to change their logo sign then they have to change every clothing tag, sticker, receipt, and you are looking at a lot of money. We have a lot of new younger people coming into town and their sign draws people in. She understands the importance of preserving but she doesn't believe the sign should be changed to such a drastic degree to where it doesn't pop any more. The green draws your attention in and it is cute; it makes you want to go into their store.

Tony Temple, director of sales at Meridian, stated you can't let preservation get in the way of growth. We want this town to be alive and vibrant and growing. We want to keep clients in town to have lunch rather than sending them to the Resort or Southern Pines. He tells people to go over and check out Eloise because it is new and hip.

Louise Lucas stated the guidelines seem very subjective. She drives around the Historic District and takes pictures and sees things, such as a duck on a window smashing a computer, that doesn't look like it should be in the Historic District. She thinks their sign is in good taste and a lot of people drive to Aberdeen just to see Eloise and what they are about.

Betsy Saye stated they have not painted or altered the building they are just identifying their business. The Historic Preservation Commission is taking their livelihood and their logo and saying they don't like the way it looks. Is there a color wheel or do they just decide whether a color fits or not.

Jae Kim read an email from Ariel Davenport in support of Eloise and Planning Director Graham read an email from Janet Kenworthy also in support of Eloise.

Planning Director Graham stated we do not have a color wheel. The specific language in our Aberdeen's Design Guidelines with the Historic District where it relates to color says new signage should be compatible with the district and the specific site in terms of its proposed dimensions, materials, graphics, color, supports, and placement. Signage may reflect the architecture of the building but highly stylized signs should be avoided.

Mike Lashley stated the first thing they teach you in marketing about signage is it needs to grab your attention. The second thing it needs to do is to define what the message is in a short amount of words or graphics. If you look at the Eloise sign when you come across the railroad tracks it catches your eye with a very simple logo. He sees this sign as just promoting that specific business with a style that is their logo and not out of place.

Mike Ratkowski, from Railhouse Brewery, stated the sign is beautiful and looks vibrant. He thinks a lot of the rules and laws when they are written are a lot like technology, as soon as they are written they start to get outdated and they need to be changed to conform to whatever we feel like we want Aberdeen to do. He thinks the sign does a good job with tying in the old and the new and being very relevant in today's market.

Jon Ring stated there is a project going on right now to rewrite the guidelines and we would like the business owners to be at some of the meetings and add their input.

Jon Ring stated the problem with this COA is that we didn't follow it. We got the COA and the first time we looked at it he drove over to come to the meeting and the sign was already up. They never got the opportunity to look at design or materials. Then we got together the next month and talked about some of the issues they saw and could they look at it again and here we are today.

Jon Ring stated the first question he asked the applicants was is this your logo; because if this is your logo then it is what it is. Then we talked about potentially making the sign a little bit more subtle so that it fits in. In our historic guidelines it says signs like this in the Historic District should be painted signs. Signs should be on wood and wood is better than metal and metal is certainly better than plastic; plastic is not allowed. We talked about it last time and this sign is some type of metal.

Betsy Saye stated she asked the sign company about their recommendations and what would stay. Jon Ring asked is the sign painted, is the logo painted on the metal? Mike Lashley stated you are not

going to find a lot of painted signs now anyway. Planning Director Graham stated she thinks they have a form of metal that is not even addressed in the guidelines and it is hard to reject it on that count.

Chairperson Hurst stated we are paying someone \$15,000.00 to update our guidelines. We are now certified so we can get matching money to have enough money to change the guidelines.

Ernestine Chapman stated they are going by the guidelines that have been setup and they are trying to follow the guidelines and regulations and it is not a personal thing.

Planning Director Graham stated they found the guidelines to be less than perfect and they will never be perfect. They are guidelines but they are not strict rules. They are open to some interpretation and judgment. So when this Commission is asked to make these decisions, legally binding decisions, they are in a tough spot.

Planning Director Graham stated there are occasions when we need to exercise judgment and right now especially when we know we have guidelines that are imperfect and are in the process of being revised as we speak, this might be a time when a broader judgment might make sense.

Planning Director Graham stated anytime she sees Historic Preservation and Downtown Redevelopment butt heads she wants to step back and say something is not quite working here; they should never be at odds with each other. That being said, this is this Commission's decision to make, she thinks they feel that they are looking at a set of guidelines and looking at language that is imperfect as it may be but they have to make their judgment on what is the best call to make here.

Jon Ring stated the whole issue with this COA is that we did it inside out. The sign was there even before we talked about it. So now we are rewriting the guidelines and if we approve this then it becomes the standard for Aberdeen. Mike Lashley stated he disagrees, if you look at the guidelines there is nowhere that it says this sign is not acceptable.

Jon Ring stated in his opinion, based on the present guidelines, he thinks it is beyond. But if this is what they want it to be then that is what they want Aberdeen to be and he is right there with them and this will become the standard from here on out. Louise Lucas questioned is this objectionable? Jon Ring stated he doesn't think it is objectionable but he thinks it is not in keeping with the Historic District.

Ernestine Chapman asked with this sign what would be acceptable. Jon Ring stated if you look at colors he thinks it is too bright and it is also too busy. Mike Lashley stated if you ride down a street in downtown Aberdeen and look for a store there is not a distinctive sign you can see from the road in this whole town, you need a sign that hops out at you. Eloise's sign is their logo and identifying their business. It falls within the guidelines we have now because they say nothing about specific color. John Ring stated throughout our guidelines it does talk about color and color from specific eras.

Louise Lucas stated one of the first things she said at their last meeting was she apologized because the sign had gone up. The people who made the sign came and put it up and no one was there. Planning Director Graham stated that part was out of their control that they came in and installed it. But hopefully in the future signs can come before the Board before they are ordered.

Jon Ring asked are they planning on painting the trim around the sign. Louise Lucas stated they would be happy to but they were kind of nervous to do anything about it. Planning Director Graham stated if they use the same color that is there now they don't have to go through the Commission.

A motion was made by Mike Lashley, seconded by Jon Ring, that the applicant's proposal is compatible with the historic aspects of Aberdeen Historic District with respect to the following criteria:

- Height
- Setback and placement
- Materials to be used (texture and patterns, color if authorized)

Motion unanimously carried.

b. Discussion of meeting schedule.

Planning Director Graham stated we have a conflict with the Town Board meetings so we need to change our meeting day. Mike Lashely suggested meeting on the second Monday of each month and Planning Director Graham agreed that looks like the best choice. All members agreed to have the regular meeting of the HPC on the second Monday of each month at 5:00 p.m.

c. Update on Design Guidelines Project.

Planning Director Graham stated we will be meeting with Phil Thomason on April 15th for a public workshop. He will present his draft to us around the first. Mike Lashley asked could they do a short meeting before the public workshop. Planning Director Graham stated if there are no COA's coming up then maybe they can cancel the regular meeting for April and have a short meeting the day of the workshop about 4:00 p.m.

d. Discussion of Upcoming Spring Spree Event.

Planning Director stated we will be doing Spring Spree again this year and does the Commission want to be a part of this? Do they want to get some flyers out and make people aware of what they do? They could set up a tent with brochures and get some names for Remembering Aberdeen. It would just be a matter of members being able to be there that day.

Jon Ring stated he can sign up for the day. Mike Lashley stated he will be at the beach. Ernestine Chapman stated she can stay a couple of hours and Chairperson Hurst said she can help also. Chairperson Hurst suggested maybe next year they can have a walking historic tour, a tour of Historic Aberdeen.

Planning Director Graham asked the Commission to think about it and let her know.

4. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mike Lashley, seconded by Ernestine Chapman, to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

Amy Fulp, Permit Technician
Minutes were completed in
Draft form on April 16, 2014

Kam Hurst, Chairperson
Minutes were approved
on May 12, 2014