

CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

May 19, 2005

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners reconvened their recessed regular session of May 17, 2005 on this date, at the hour of 12:00 noon, in the Commission Chamber of the Cleveland County Administrative Offices.

PRESENT: Jerry L. Self, Vice-Chairman
Mary S. Accor, Commissioner
Johnny Hutchins, Commissioner
Willie B. McIntosh, Commissioner
David C. Dear, County Manager
Sam Craig, Deputy County Attorney
Wanda Crotts, CMC, County Clerk
Bill McCarter, Planning Director
Eddie Bailes, Human Resources Director
Lucy Penegar, Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission
Andrew Bryant, Gaston County Planning
David Williams, Gaston County Planning
Milton Holloman, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Brownie Plaster, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Randy Cook, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Fred Blackley, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Mark Patterson, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Sharon Jones, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission
Joy Scott, The Star
Other individual names on file in the Clerk's Office

ABSENT: Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Self called the meeting to order and announced the meeting would move to the Commission Conference Room, adjacent to the Commission Chamber.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Lucy Penegar, Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission, and David Williams, Gaston County Planning Department, reviewed the following information:

Mission Statement

The mission of the Historic Preservation Commission is to safeguard the heritage of the County and its municipalities by preserving any historic sites therein that embody important elements of their cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, or architectural history.

What We Do

- Operate a professional preservation program with all volunteer commission members.
- Educate the general public, the historic property owner, and the potential buyer of the significance and importance of historic property.
- Research historic or significant sites and structures and recommend to the Board of County Commissioners for inclusion on the County Register.
- Use adopted guidelines for new construction, alterations, additions, moving, and demolition of designated historic landmarks.
- Leverage local, state, federal and private resources to study local history and promote historic preservation.
- Provide crisis intervention for endangered historically significant structures and archaeological sites through advocacy and the Historic Revolving Fund.
- Partner with other organizations such as: Gaston Together, Gaston Chamber Leadership Program, Gaston Tourism, Hoyle Historic Homestead, Gastonia Downtown Development

Association, GAMTRA, Piedmont Charter School, and Preservation North Carolina.

They explained, "We do a lot more advocacy than designation of property . . . there is a lot of red tape with designation, so we spend a lot of time talking with owners to encourage them to save the structure from demolition." Ms. Penegar explained Gaston County has an 1890's Village project and will move appropriate structures there to save them from demolition, as a last resort. They explained they are not "qualified to do national designation", as statewide comparisons are required for such designation.

Brownie Plaster, Cleveland County Historic Preservation Commission (*CCHPC*) chairperson, reviewed that the formation of the CCHPC was one of the recommendations from the 1993 Cleveland Tomorrow study conducted by UNC-C Urban Institute, which was sponsored by five entities. Mrs. Plaster stated part of the recommendation was to become a Certified Local Government (*CLG*) and Ms. Penegar stated their organization operated for a long time without the CLG designation, then realized they were being overlooked for such funds as National Park Association grants.

Commissioner McIntosh explained recent complications with the county trying to site a communications tower in the Uptown Shelby Historic District as the basis for his concern over any designation that may cause future problems with similar public safety projects. Commissioner Hutchins reiterated Commissioner McIntosh's concerns regarding public safety issues, but also expressed concern over how this may also "infringe on neighbors rights." Ms. Penegar clarified that the national register of historic properties exists with or without a local designation and the local designation does not impact the national designation, meaning the property owner can apply for national designation without Commissioner approval. She said they "have never had a 106 review (such as the one blocking the communications tower project)" and stressed that local properties receive local designation from the board of county commissioners. She also noted that once the local designation is made, the deed says public safety is always to be considered as a priority.

There was discussion regarding tax benefits; the positive impact restoration of buildings has on communities, air quality and "urban sprawl"; preservation of identity of communities; a "holistic approach for the entire community"; increased construction and economic benefits for the community; and the process of taking away a designation and demolition of structures.

Ms. Penegar and Mr. Williams advised the only "negatives" they have experienced with their program are so many people waiting to receive designation that they do not have enough people to cover all the requests. They also discussed the tourism benefits historic designation

and preservation brings to communities stating, “If a community can tell their heart and soul as to why they are who they are, it benefits not only the present generation, but those to come.”

There was discussion regarding the importance of the Commission remaining non-political, with Mrs. Plaster stating the State guidelines specifically state commissions should be “A-political.”

Fred Blackley stated he felt this is “another economic development tool . . . economic development in little pieces throughout the county.”

Ms. Penegar and Mr. Williams emphasized that no property can be given local designation without the County Commission approval, noting in their 25-years of working with this program in Gaston County, the Gaston County Board of Commissioners have never turned down a petition for designation.

RECESS TO RECONVENE AT A TIME AND PLACE CERTAIN

ACTION: Willie McIntosh made the motion, seconded by Johnny Hutchins, and unanimously adopted by the Board, to ***recess this meeting until Tuesday, May 31, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. for budget discussion.***

*Ronald J. Hawkins, Chairman
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*

*Wanda Crotts, CMC, Clerk
Cleveland County Board of Commissioners*