

Smithfield Historic Properties Minutes
Thursday, September 19, 2019
3:00 P.M., Town Hall, Conference Room

Members Present:

Chairman-Dr. Oliver Johnson
Vice Chair-Art Andrews
Mary Nell Ferguson
Rachel Ayers
Paul Worley
Jan Branch

Members Absent:

Deanna Simmons

Staff Present:

Mark Helmer, Senior Planner
Julie Edmonds, Administrative Support Specialist

Staff Absent:

Stephen Wensman, Planning Director

Call to Order

Approval of the minutes from July 18th, 2019

Art Andrews made a motion to approve the minutes from July 18th, 2019, seconded by Mary Nell Ferguson. Unanimously approved

COA-19-01 Michael & Mary Reece

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness to make major exterior modifications to a historic structure located within the Town of Smithfield Downtown Historic District. The property considered for approval is located at 121 South Third Street approximately 200 feet south of its intersection with East Market Street. The property is further identified as Johnston County Tax ID# 15025012.

Mark Helmer stated the applicant is requesting to repoint the Third Street brick façade, make minor repairs and repaint the brick surfaces. The applicant has not provided details of the methods of restoration work or the materials used to conduct the repairs. The applicant is also requesting to make major modifications to the second story southernmost façade. The requested changes include removal of four window frames, sashes, glass, arched brickwork, filling in of the original window openings and repointing masonry mortar joints.

Mr. Helmer provided the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines. He stated they would be beneficial for the board to use in determining if the applicants request is appropriate for the structure and the Downtown Historic District.

3.1 Wood: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve wooden features that contribute to the overall historic character of a building and a site, including such functional and decorative elements as siding, shingles, cornices, architraves, brackets, pediments, columns, balustrades, and architectural trim.
3. Repair historic wooden features using recognized preservation methods for patching, consolidating, splicing, and reinforcing.
4. If replacement of a deteriorated detail or element of a wooden feature is necessary, replace only the deteriorated detail or element in kind rather than the entire feature. Match the original detail or element in design, dimension, texture, and material. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
5. If replacement of an entire wooden feature is necessary, replace it in kind, matching the original in design, dimension, detail, material, and texture. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.

3.2 Masonry: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve masonry features that contribute to the overall historic character of a building and a site, including walls, foundations, roofing materials, chimneys, cornices, quoins, steps, buttresses, piers, columns, lintels, arches, and sills.
2. Protect and maintain historic masonry materials, such as brick, terra-cotta, limestone, granite, stucco, slate, concrete, cement block, and clay tile, and their distinctive construction features, including bond patterns, corbels, water tables, and unpainted surfaces.
4. Repair historic masonry surfaces and features using recognized preservation methods for piecing-in, consolidating, or patching damaged or deteriorated masonry. It is not appropriate to apply a waterproof coating to exposed masonry rather than repair it.
5. Repoint masonry mortar joints if the mortar is cracked, crumbling, or missing or if damp walls or damaged plaster indicate moisture penetration. Before repointing, carefully remove deteriorated mortar using hand tools. Replace the mortar with new mortar that duplicates the original in strength, color, texture, and composition. Match the original mortar joints in width and profile.
6. If replacement of a deteriorated detail, module, or element of a masonry surface or feature is necessary, replace only the deteriorated portion in kind rather than the entire surface or feature. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
7. If replacement of a large masonry surface or entire feature is necessary, replace it in kind, matching the original in design, detail, dimension, color, pattern, texture, and material. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
8. If a masonry feature is completely missing, replace it with a new feature based on accurate documentation of the original feature or a new design compatible with the scale, size, material, and color of the historic building and district.

3.7 Windows and Doors: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve windows that contribute to the overall historic character of a building, including their functional and decorative features, such as frames, sash, muntins, sills, heads, moldings, surrounds, hardware, shutters, and blinds.

3. Protect and maintain the wood and metal elements of historic windows and doors through appropriate methods:
 - Inspect regularly for deterioration, moisture damage, air infiltration, paint failure, and corrosion.
 - Clean the surface using the gentlest means possible.
 - Limit paint removal and reapply protective coatings as necessary.
 - Reglaze sash as necessary to prevent moisture infiltration.
 - Weather-strip windows and doors to reduce air infiltration and increase energy efficiency.
4. Repair historic windows and doors and their distinctive features through recognized preservation methods for patching, consolidating, splicing, and reinforcing.
5. If replacement of a deteriorated window or door feature or detail is necessary, replace only the deteriorated feature in kind rather than the entire unit. Match the original in design, dimension, and material. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
6. If replacement of a deteriorated window or door unit is necessary, replace the unit in kind, matching the design and the dimension of the original sash or panels, pane configuration, architectural trim, detailing, and materials. Consider a compatible substitute material only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
13. It is not appropriate to remove original doors, windows, shutters, blinds, hardware, and trim from a character-defining façade.

The Planning Department recommends approval of the request if the Historic Properties Commission finds the southern façade to be a non-character defining façade and that all other exterior building modifications are appropriate for the structure and the Downtown Smithfield Historic District.

Mr. Worley asked if there was a way to keep a record of any changes made to the building for any future owner that may want to see what the windows or brickwork looked like prior to these proposed changes.

Mr. Helmer stated we generally keep a record of what was requested and approved. As part of our due diligence we go back through the photographic records and attempt to identify architectural features that may have disappeared over the years. He feels the best method to retain a record with would recordation at the courthouse.

Joey Hobbs came forward and stated that his wife owned the building beside 121 S. Third Street. He thinks when the Downtown Development Corporation applied for that area to become historic, there was some documentation done at that time. Mr. Hobbs stated that this project in question today is more of a stabilization project than trying to modify the appearance.

Mrs. Branch stated this work would be major modifications to an exterior wall of a late 19th century building. It doesn't meet the federal or local Historic Preservation Guidelines. She would like to know why the Planning Department is recommending approval when it doesn't meet those guidelines.

Mr. Helmer said if you look at the guidelines closely, it states if the board finds it's a non-character defining façade then its subject for approval.

Mrs. Branch said she knew the Town was encouraging downtown residential growth as well as the Downtown Development Corporation wanting second floor residential. If these windows are bricked over it will permanently do away with potential second floor residential in the future.

Mike Reece came forward to share his presentation. Mr. Hobbs brought to Mr. Reece's attention that bricks were dropping onto his roof. His intention is to stabilize the wall, and repaint at some point. As far as this building being used for second floor residential that wouldn't be an issue as long as he owns it. They use the second floor for storage of confidential files therefore they wouldn't rent out that location to anyone.

Mr. Andrews asked if the windows would be replaced and if they would be the same windows that are currently in the building.

Mr. Reece said yes they will replace the windows and use vinyl ones as the replacements. He is happy to use whatever the recommendation would be.

Mr. Andrews asked if Mr. Reece's brick mason would brick in the windows leaving the original hole or would he leave the vertical brick that surrounds the window openings.

Mr. Reece is fine if it is done that way. That would be his preference and if it's a condition for approval he is ok with it.

Mrs. Branch asked if all seven windows would be replaced.

Mr. Reece said yes, all seven. We have problems across the board so it would be best to replace them all.

Mrs. Branch asked if the engineer felt like bricking in the windows would be enough to stabilize all those structural cracks.

Mr. Reece said it's not that the walls are in immediate danger of collapse. You're going to have water intrusion which will affect his wall and Mr. Hobbs wall as well. We need to address this problem now before it worsens.

Mr. Andrews asked what color the front of the building would be painted.

Mr. Reece said that he didn't know yet. He had received some information from Sarah Edwards about a design program for the Downtown District.

Mrs. Ayers asked if there was any interior water damage.

Mr. Reece said he didn't have any in the interior but he couldn't speak for the inside wall.

Mrs. Ayers said in looking at some of the pictures it appears there is rotting going on.

Mr. Reece said it is rotting on the outside but it isn't coming through the sheetrock on the inside.

Dr. Oliver Johnson said the issue for the commission is whether or not the southern façade is non-character defining façade. It seems we all are in agreement that it is non-character defining façade.

Dr. Johnson made a motion that the commission approves the applicants request finding that the southern façade be a non-character defining façade and that the other exterior building modifications are appropriate for the structure in the downtown Smithfield Historic District, seconded by Paul Worley. Mr. Worley amended that motion saying reasonable care would be used to preserve the outline of the windows. Unanimously approved

Dr. Johnson closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Branch mentioned that the agenda cover says Historic Properties and she thought the name had been changed to Historic Preservation. She feels it is inconsistent.

Mr. Helmer said the ordinance that allows this board to exist is Historic Properties Commission. We have recommended rolling the entire ordinance into the UDO and part of that is to officially change the local ordinance that allows this board to exist. Town Council has chosen to table that amendment as part of another amendment. We hope to have them approved soon.

Mr. Helmer presented information to the board about failed lintels. He stated that a lintel is a structural element that goes across an opening and distributes the weight down the sides away from the window casing. He showed a short video on a noninvasive way to stabilizing the wall to allow for the window to be removed then repaired and replaced.

Dr. Johnson asked if anyone else had comment. The meeting was adjourned.

The next HPC meeting is scheduled for October 17th at 3pm.

The meeting concluded at 4:15 pm.



Julie Edmonds
Administrative Support Specialist
Planning Department