

ALAMANCE COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday March 11, 2014

6:00 p.m., Office Annex Conference Room

Members Present

John Braxton
Rodney Cheek, *Vice Chair*
Bryan Dalton
Marti Friddle, *Chair*
David Mickey
Gale Pettiford
Laurie Smith

Members Absent

Jimmy Ray Cobb, Jr.
Jane Iseley
Jennifer Talley

Staff Present

Aspen Price, *Planner*

Guests Present

Ravi Balan
Dr. Nettie Baldwin
Wesley Baldwin
Leo Crowson

I. Call to Order

Chair Marti Friddle called the March 11, 2014 meeting of the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. Ms. Price completed the roll call and confirmed that a quorum of members was present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Friddle asked if there were any changes to the minutes. None were suggested.

Motion: Mr. Dalton made a motion to approve the February 11, 2014 minutes; it was seconded by Mr. Braxton.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

III. Items for Decision

Historic Marker Application: Graham High School: Ms. Price introduced Nettie and Wesley Baldwin, who want to put up a marker for the Graham High School, and she added that there were several iterations of the school that were demolished. She stated that there is not a specific location yet, so the "X" on the aerial photo shows the general location, but that the applicants do want to have it on Gilbreath Street. Ms. Price noted that they do not yet have approval from the property owner, which is the Alamance-Burlington School System, but that they were working on gaining approval and the Commission could make a decision tonight contingent upon getting that approval. Mr. Cheek asked if the site was inside the city limits of Graham, and asked if they were in the process of doing something with Graham proper. Ms. Price responded that it was within city limits, and they do not need a sign permit for a marker. She added that because Graham does not have a marker program, this comes through the County Commission.

Dr. Nettie Baldwin introduced herself, and stated that she was born in Greensboro but grew up in Alamance in Thompson Township. She introduced her husband, Wesley Baldwin, who grew up in Graham, and Leo Crowson who grew up in the Woods Chapel area. She stated that for her, this has become a project, not just the marker, but preserving the history of African Americans in Alamance County. Dr. Baldwin provided some background

history on the start of African American schools in Alamance County, many of which were not county-run initially. When the schools came under the premise of the county a great number of those children came to Graham. She stated that she made a copy of her aunt's high school diploma, provided in the packet, which might have been the second year that there was a high school in Graham. She stated that they referred to the school as Graham Colored School at that time. For another aunt, who graduated in 1945, it was referred to Graham Negro. By the time she, Leo, and Wesley graduated they referred to it as Graham High School. Dr. Baldwin stated that she went to the Register of Deeds and there was a two-room colored school on that property, adjacent to the site, which was bought in 1927. She stated that if you read in Dr. William Vincent's work and many other works, there was no high school for African Americans in Graham until 1927. The Graham school opened in 1931, but it was not certified then. They received certification in 1937, so the first class graduated in 1938. Dr. Baldwin stated that as we look today and we talk about education and the gaps in education, this site is quite significant. Before that school, people lived as far as Snow Camp, Rock Creek, Mebane, and if they wanted a high school education in the 1920s, they had to go to Burlington, but it still wasn't a four-year education. Dr. Baldwin stated she thinks the original Graham High School was torn down around the 1970s; she was not able to find a specific date. But when you think about the geographical area, a great percentage of county students came to Graham High School.

Ms. Friddle noted that that was a long way, and asked if the students boarded nearby. Ms. Baldwin responded that they had buses. Ms. Friddle stated that Cedar Cliff school and Woods Chapel were near her house and she has been very curious about Woods Chapel. Mr. Crowson stated that he went to Woods Chapel first through fifth grade, and then they closed Woods Chapel and they went to Graham in the sixth grade. He added that the floor they had in the Woods Chapel church was part of the floor in the old Graham High School that was torn down. Mr. Braxton stated that he was showing his age but he remembered those school buses. Ms. Smith stated that she knows they have discussed the marker quite a bit and settled on Graham High School for the title and asked if they didn't want to call it Graham Negro High School or Graham Colored High School, as she knows in 1940 it was officially Graham Colored High School, so it would definitely designate it as an African American educational facility. She added when she looked at the application and read "Graham High School" she thought of the school that is still standing, rather than the old school. Mr. Baldwin stated that they had thought about that, and it had three names, but they looked at the last diplomas received from that school, and at the time it was Graham High School. Dr. Baldwin stated that she felt this Commission would have more insight on how it should be designated. She noted that she wrote in the text that the original building housed Graham Colored High and elementary school. And in another portion of the text, she referred to it as Graham "Negro" High School to make the designation clear. She added that she would be fine with either title, but when they were growing up there was no real separation. Mr. Cheek asked what year they opened Graham High School over on Trollinger Road. The Commission discussed the opening dates and history of various high schools in Alamance. Mr. Cheek suggested "The Original Graham High School," rather than using the term Colored or Negro in the title. Dr. Baldwin asked what the white school here on N. Main Street was called. Mr. Dalton stated it was North Graham Elementary, which he attended, and the high school was Graham High School. Dr. Baldwin noted that it would be

the original Graham High School. Mr. Cheek suggested sitting down with the school board and figuring out what is right. Ms. Friddle stated that she made the same mistake as Ms. Smith when she saw the application, she thought to herself that Graham High School is still there. Ms. Price noted that the marker will be at the site when you drive by, so when you see the sign "Graham High School" you know that it refers to the high school at Ray and Gilbreath Streets. Dr. Baldwin added that at the time they were in school it was Graham High School, and that was what was in all the papers, telephone books, and the city directory at the time. The Commission stated that they were in favor of the marker, but just needed clarification on the title and the text. Ms. Smith offered some specific edits to the text of the marker, and asked if the text should include what was on the site between 1921 and 1931. Dr. Baldwin stated that from her understanding a two-room elementary school was there, serving ages 1 through 8.

Motion: Mr. Cheek made a motion to postpone taking any action on this application until the next month; it was seconded by Mr. Dalton.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Price clarified that what the HPC wants to see is what the school board is okay with having as the heading for this marker. The Commission agreed that was the case. Ms. Price asked who was going to accompany the Baldwins to the next school board meeting. Mr. Cheek and Ms. Friddle offered to help. The Commission thanked Dr. and Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Crowson for their time and their passion.

Consider Applicants for Vacancy: Ms. Price informed the Commission that Ms. Stephens submitted her resignation due to medical issues, and her term was through December 2014, so this seat was to finish that term and after which the applicant could be reappointed for a new three-year term. Ms. Friddle asked if there were any questions for Mr. Balan. Hearing none, she called for a motion.

Motion: Mr. Braxton made a motion to recommend to the County Commissioners that Ravi Balan be appointed to the Commission; it was seconded by Mr. Mickey.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

IV. Discussion Items

Local Landmark Designation in Graham: Ms. Price reminded the Commission that there has been some confusion over whether the County HPC or the Graham Historic District Commission has jurisdiction to designate local landmarks within the historic district downtown. She informed the Commission that she attended the February 26th meeting of the Graham Historic District Commission, and they voted to take over jurisdiction of historic preservation planning throughout the city and ETJ. Mr. Cheek asked what that would mean for historic marker and National Register applications. Ms. Price replied that the County HPC would still see applications for historic markers, as Graham does not have a marker program. Because Graham is currently not a Certified Local Government, the County would continue to review National Register nominations.

Board Training Opportunity: Ms. Price stated that staff would like to have board training for the Commission members at some point in the future, and she wanted to get a sense of whether the Commission preferred to do the training during one of their regular meeting times, during another weeknight or on a Saturday. The Commission discussed the opportunity and came to the consensus that a regular meeting time would work best. Ms. Price stated she would follow up with the trainer and try to schedule it for the April or May meeting.

V. Announcements & Updates

Staff Updates: Ms. Price informed the Commission that Pat Bailey's recognition plaque will be presented at the next County Commissioners meeting on Monday, March 17th at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Price passed around draft introduction and township history pieces written by Carole Troxler for the Architectural Inventory and asked Commission members to look them over and provide her with any feedback as soon as possible.

Ms. Price passed around information about an event called "From Engagement to Activism: Public History as Civic Responsibility" to be held at N.C. State in Raleigh on April 5, 2014. She stated that it would count towards the CLG Educational Requirement and asked Commissioners to let her know if they planned to attend.

Committee Updates & Commissioner Announcements: There were none.

VI. Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Cheek moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m.; it was seconded by Mr. Dalton.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,



Aspen Price
Clerk to Alamance County Historic Properties Commission