HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

September 25, 2025; 6:00 PM
Council Chamber, City Hall, 181 S. South Street

AGENDA

ITEM 1a. **Rollcall / Soundcheck**

ITEM 1b. **Oath of Office**

ITEM 1c. **Approval of July 24th, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

ITEM 2. **Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (Cont. File # PLCA202500275)**

- Ryan Pickens
- 522 W. Fourth Avenue
- Requesting retroactive approval for window replacements and changing frames and door molding from white to black.

ITEM 3. **Other Business**

- Subcommittee meeting if needed.

ITEM 4. **Adjournment**

All interested persons wishing to comment should appear at the public hearing. Individuals requiring special accommodations when attending this meeting and/or if this information is needed in an alternative format because of a disability, should contact the Human Resources Department, located in City Hall at 181 S. South Street, telephone (704-866-6786), fax (704-836-0022) or by email: Judy.Smith@gastonianc.gov. The Human Resources Department requests at least 72 hours' notice prior to the meeting to make the appropriate arrangements.

Historic District Commission

July 24, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Chair Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:02 p.m. on Thursday, July 24, 2025, at City Hall in the Council Chamber, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Andi Eddlemon and Commissioners Carol Hauer, Jeff Trepel, Josh Hauser, Kaitlyn Peeler, and Stephanie Hartman.

Absent: Commissioner Blair Propert.

Staff present: Charles Graham, Sushil Nepal, Jalen Nash, and Rebeca Mintz.

ITEM 1a. Roll Call / Sound Check
Chair Eddlemon opened the meeting, conducted a roll call, and declared a quorum.

ITEM 1b. Oath of Office
Chair Eddlemon stated that on June 3rd, 2025, the Gastonia City Council appointed Stephanie Hartman to the Historic District Commission. Ms. Eddlemon asked the new commissioner to join Rebeca Mintz, Secretary to the Historic District Commission, at the podium to conduct the Oath of Office. Mrs. Mintz conducted the oath.

ITEM 1c. Approval of May 22nd, 2025 Meeting Minutes
With there being no corrections or additions, Commissioner Trepel moved that we adopt the May 22nd, 2025, meeting minutes. Commissioner Hauer seconded the motion. The motion was passed (6-0).

ITEM 1d. Approval of June 26th, 2025 Meeting Minutes
With one correction to be made in Item #3 on the second page, seventh paragraph, Commissioner Trepel moved to adopt the June 26, 2025, meeting minutes as revised. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (6–0).

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500240) Cont.

- Ann Ownbey
- 509 S. Lee Street
- Requesting a COA for the after-the-fact renovation and repainting of the front porch.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Mr. Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated that this is a continued application from last month's meeting. He noted that the applicant requested a COA for the after-the-fact installation of a front porch roof covering. Mr. Nash stated that the Historic District Commission and the Board of Adjustment previously denied the application. The applicant is requesting a change in the application by repainting the porch.

Mr. Nash displayed the zoning map and stated that the home was built in 1951 and that the property is a contributing structure in the local York-Chester Historic District. He noted the property is zoned RS-8 and surrounded by residential zoning. Mr. Nash described the property as a one-story bungalow with frame construction, a hip roof, replacement windows, a single-leaf entry with a transom, a shed dormer, an inset screened porch, an interior chimney, a brick foundation, and weatherboards. Originally, it was a twin to 511 Lee Street.

Mr. Nash presented the key elements of the request and stated that the roof covering was added last year, and the cupola has been removed. A new roof covering has already been added. The previous COA application for the removal of that roof covering was denied at the March 28, 2024, meeting of the Historic District Commission. Following that decision, an appeal was made to the Board of Adjustment. That meeting was held on October 24, 2024, and the Board upheld the Historic District Commission's decision.

Mr. Nash displayed excerpts from the design standards and photos of the new front porch handrails, beams, and wind posts. The new color choice is black. Key standards include preserving original roof shapes, lines, and pitch, removing lean-tos and other inappropriate roof additions where feasible, and maintaining harmony with the neighborhood. Mr. Nash read the standards to the commissioners and displayed before-and-after pictures with the proposed new colors.

Commissioner Hauser asked if the handrails would remain red. Mr. Nash confirmed, “Yes.” Commissioner Hauser asked when the siding and shutters were replaced. Mr. Nash responded that he did not have that information available. Commissioner Hauser asked if the original application was denied and appealed, and this was an after-the-fact application. Mr. Nash confirmed, “Yes.”

Commissioner Peeler stated that she remembered the meeting where the application was denied as built and that the Board of Adjustment also denied it. She asked if, with that denial, the board was essentially reassessing the whole design. Mr. Nash responded that the applicant requires a new submittal, as the latest submission was for repainting, and the commission must consider it.

Commissioner Hauser asked if the original submittal was to be kept as is right now. Mr. Nash confirmed, “Yes.” Commissioner Hauser asked what the original roof covering looked like. Mr. Nash responded that there was none.

Commissioner Trepel noted that the application was denied because the structure was inappropriate, not because the color was wrong. Chair Eddlemon confirmed, correct, but in order to return to the commission after a denial from the HDC and the Board of Adjustment, a new submission must be presented.

Commissioner Hartman asked if the cupola was the peak in the middle. Chair Eddlemon confirmed, “Yes,” noting that a flat roof was installed and then the overhang added.

Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Nash to use Google Maps to display a street view of the twin houses before changes were made. Once the map was shown, Commissioner Peeler noted that the structure was quite large. Mr. Nash mentioned that the Google map was from 2019, showing the shutters in place, which addressed Commissioner Hauser’s earlier question regarding when the shutters were replaced.

With no further questions for Mr. Nash, Chair Eddlemon recognized the applicant, Ms. Ownbey, 509 S Lee St, Gastonia.

Commissioner Hauser suggested addressing the planting first, as it was part of the application. Commissioner Peeler stated she did not have a problem with the Sky Pencil Holly, except that the plant will add height to the already tall front porch, as they grow 9–10 feet.

Commissioner Hauer asked if the applicant had considered an awning instead. Ms. Ownbey responded that an awning would not be helpful, as she has 12 steps, and it would not extend far enough, which is why the porch pitch is so high.

Commissioner Peeler stated that the paint proposal does not help, as trying to blend the structure into the building by adding heavy black to the existing red makes it stand out more. Chair Eddlemon noted that it pulls the structure further from the context of the property; the inspirational cabin’s front porch design is distant from the historic neighborhood feel.

Commissioner Hauser noted that the front porch has a mountain cabin vibe and that the loss of the cupola is unfortunate. Ms. Ownbey stated that the cupola was removed because it was leaking. Commissioner Peeler noted the property is situated on a steep hill, making the front porch highly visible, and reiterated that it is not historically appropriate and is too large for the property.

Commissioner Hauer stated that, in her opinion, the black color makes the porch look worse. Ms. Ownbey stated that black was chosen to match the roof, gutters, and house shutters.

Commissioner Hauser stated that the large wooden columns create the mountain cabin effect, and reducing their size might make the porch less overbearing. Commissioner Trepel commented that painting it a combination of white and yellow might visually lighten it.

Commissioner Peeler stated that paint color does not address the actual issue, as the original application was after-the-fact, denied by the board, and this is now another after-the-fact review. Commissioner Hartman asked if a roof covering like this had been approved before. Commissioner Hauser noted a similar application was previously reviewed and denied. Chair Eddlemon stated that she does not want to provide recommendations, as that is not the board’s

role. Commissioner Trepel agreed but emphasized the desire to resolve this long-standing application. Chair Eddlemon noted that the application was denied based on structure, and the Board of Adjustment upheld the denial; a change in color does not alter the decision. Ms. Ownbey stated that the Board of Adjustment rejected the application due to a lack of inspection, not structure. Chair Eddlemon responded that the board has never approved such work before it was completed and must remain fair to all applicants. Commissioner Trepel noted that while these are valid counterpoints, the principle of "do not let perfect be the enemy of good" applies. Chair Eddlemon stated that the historic district has extensive standards, and that principle is valuable when guidelines or designations are absent.

Commissioner Peeler stated that a new design is needed to better harmonize with the neighborhood. Commissioner Hauser noted that more appropriate architectural details are required, including roof, roofline, column capitals, and trim.

With no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon asked if anyone was prepared to make a motion.

Commissioner Hauser moved to deny the application as submitted. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously denied (6-0).

ITEM 3. <u>Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500275)</u>

- Ryan Pickens
- 522 W. Fourth Avenue
- Requesting retroactive approval for window replacements and changing frames and door molding from white to black.

Chair Eddlemon recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated that the applicant was unable to attend tonight's meeting and he would like to request to be continued to next month's meeting.

With no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon asked the board if anyone felt prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Hauser moved to continue the application to next month. Commissioner Trepel seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. (6-0).

ITEM 4. <u>Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500296)</u>

- Joshua Brand
- 221 W. Fifth Avenue
- Requesting retroactive approval for exterior renovations and failure to meet COA conditions (#PLCA202200441).

Chair Eddlemon recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. Mr. Nash stated that this COA request is for 221 West Fifth Avenue. He explained that the applicant is seeking approval for after-the-fact exterior changes and for not meeting the conditions of a previous COA. Mr. Nash presented the zoning map and noted that the property is zoned RS-8 and surrounded by residential uses. He added that the home was built in 1926, is contributing to the York-Chester Historic District and read the property description.

Regarding the prior COA, Mr. Nash stated it was an after-the-fact review for removing shutters and painting the window trim black. That request was approved by the HDC on August 25, 2022, with the condition that shutters be replaced with black shutters of the same size and design and that the window trim be repainted white. He noted that in this new request, the applicant is asking to keep the window trim black while reinstalling shutters on the home.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Nash if the shutters would be new or original, and Mr. Nash responded that they would be new. Commissioner Hauser then asked if the new shutters would match the old ones in size, to which Mr. Nash replied that he did not have the measurements. Mr. Nash presented the relevant Design Principles & Standards for shutters and exterior colors, along with photos of the home from 2012 showing several missing shutters, followed by photos of the home in its current state.

Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Nash if windows and a screen door were also missing from the side porch, noting it looked different. Mr. Nash responded that there may be some repairs taking place, but he was unsure, and the applicant could address those questions.

Mr. Nash presented photos of the old shutters and the new shutters and stated that the new shutters were wood shutters.

Commissioner Peeler asked Mr. Nash, noting it might be a better question for Mr. Brand later, whether a homeowner would be aware of an active violation when purchasing a property, and if a realtor is required to disclose that. Mr. Nepal responded that, possibly, if the realtor knows. Mr. Nash added that he was unsure but did not believe disclosure was required.

Chair Eddlemon stated that it is unusual for a realtor to check for violations beyond what is immediately visible or to contact the county. However, when this application was denied in 2022, she personally emailed the realtor and copied Kim Wallis, a former City employee, to ensure there was documentation that the property was out of compliance. She noted she never received a response and later called the realtor directly, but again received no reply.

Chair Eddlemon emphasized that while there may be several parties who could share responsibility, the violation ultimately runs with the property. Commissioner Peeler stated that even though this is technically an after-the-fact application and the current owners did not complete the work, it has been known since 2022. Chair Eddlemon confirmed that was correct.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Nepal if a process could be put in place to prevent this situation in the future. Mr. Nepal responded that it may be more of a legal matter and deferred to Mr. Graham.

Mr. Graham stated he did not believe a process could be added, as staff cannot impose additional requirements on realtors through the ordinances. Commissioner Hauser then asked if this is technically a code violation. Mr. Graham confirmed that it is, but explained that such violations are not filed as liens or recorded. He added that, while it may be possible to consider ordinance amendments requiring denial records to be filed with the Register of Deeds, to his knowledge, this is not currently done anywhere.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Graham if the HDC could file a lien. Mr. Graham responded that the ordinances do not currently provide for that type of lien, so it would require ordinance amendments, if possible.

Mr. Graham explained that civil citations are issued after an application is denied and the violation is not corrected. A notice of violation is then sent, with a timeframe to comply or reapply outlined in the ordinances. If compliance is not met, civil penalties take effect.

He noted that these penalties are not automatically filed as liens. While they can eventually be foreclosed under the law, the City typically waits until the amount is large enough to justify the cost of filing a lien and pursuing foreclosure in court. He added that for just a few hundred dollars, the legal costs would exceed the recovery, so as a practical matter, the City does not usually pursue foreclosure.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Graham if it would be possible to record something, such as a notice of the denial or violation, in the Register of Deeds so that a new buyer, realtor, or anyone involved would be aware of it without it being a lien.

Mr. Graham responded that this is essentially what he is suggesting, but noted that the ordinance would likely need to be amended to require this so that property owners are properly notified.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Graham who would draft the ordinance amendment. Mr. Graham responded that he would draft it. Commissioner Hauser then asked if the board would need to formally request it. Mr. Nepal responded that staff can draft the amendment, but it would still need to go through the Planning Commission and then the City Council for approval.

Chair Eddlemon added that even after all that had been discussed, as a realtor, she is not required to check the records when representing a buyer. She stated she is not required to check permits. Mr. Nepal asked if a realtor is only required to disclose a violation if they are aware of it. Chair Eddlemon responded yes, if they are aware or if it is considered a material fact. She explained that in her opinion, this violation is a material fact because it could impact a buyer’s decision, similar to discovering an unexpected HOA fee after moving into a neighborhood with no HOA.

Discussion ensued regarding possible future text amendments to record COA denials with the Register of Deeds and ways to ensure home buyers are aware that a property is in a Historic District.

Mr. Nepal asked Mr. Nash if Gaston County's GIS website indicates when a property is in a Historic District. Mr. Nash responded yes, and Chair Eddlemon added that it is also disclosed in the MLS.

The board then discussed the legal course of action if a realtor fails to disclose this information to a potential home buyer.

With there being no further discussion or questions for the Planning Staff, Chair Eddlemon recognized Joshua Brand of 221 W. Fifth Avenue, Gastonia, NC. Mr. Brand stated for the record that he knew he was moving into a historic district. He explained that this was a worst-case scenario because an offer was made on the home, and then a COA review identified a violation. He noted that during the review, the previous owner had claimed the home had already been sold, but Mr. Brand had documentation showing the sale occurred after the prior COA denial.

Mr. Brand stated that while he knew he was buying a historic home, he did not know to check for existing violations. At the time of his purchase, there would not have been any violation visible to him. He added that, in his opinion, there was nothing that could have been done to prevent this situation.

Chair Eddlemon asked if the board had any questions for the applicant. Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Brand about the history of the shutters, noting that during the last review, there was some knowledge of where the original shutters were located. Mr. Brand responded that he knows where some of them are. He added that he only has one shutter of the appropriate size for a window he plans to restore.

Commissioner Trepel asked if that shutter was the one shown in the staff's presentation. Mr. Brand confirmed that it was the only one of that size. He further explained that he has two other pairs of shutters, but they are for a different window that is not in an ideal location for the back bathroom. Additionally, he has a set of door shutters that are narrow and eight feet tall to match the door height.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Brand if he would need to purchase all new shutters. Mr. Brand confirmed and noted that he included a quote in his application for new shutters that match the existing style. Commissioner Hauser asked if he would be willing to hang the proposed shutters upside down. Mr. Brand responded that he wants to resolve the previous COA and address the violation, emphasizing that approval would stop any civil enforcement related to this issue. Chair Eddlemon clarified that what the board decides and what is actually complied with are separate, but if Mr. Brand follows the approval, the matter of shutters and paint would be considered closed for the HDC. Mr. Brand added that since the original documentation dates back to the August 25, 2022 COA, and a front porch issue has now been added to the violation, he is concerned about how far back enforcement can go and how to prevent additional issues once this is resolved.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Brand if there was a front porch issue when he purchased the home. Mr. Brand responded that he was not sure, but the violation letter he received included the front porch as a violation. Chair Eddlemon explained that this is exactly how separate issues are handled. Resolving the paint and shutters closes that matter, but if new issues arise, such as doors or a tree, those would be treated as separate matters. Mr. Brand asked for clarification on this point.

Mr. Nash asked Mr. Brand if he was currently making repairs to the side porch. Mr. Brand responded that the front porch had already been enclosed when he purchased the home, and it was extremely hot, so he removed the windows.

Chair Eddlemon explained that removing the windows was an exterior change that required a COA application. Mr. Brand replied that he understood and was willing to address any issues, but questioned why this was being added to an already complex situation.

Commissioner Peeler explained that it is considered a violation because exterior work was done without COA approval.

Commissioner Hauser asked if the porch renovations were included in the COA under review. Mr. Nash responded that they were not.

Commissioner Hauer asked if the board was only addressing the violation related to the window trim and shutters. Mr. Nash confirmed yes.

Mr. Nash clarified that essentially, if the windows and screen door on the side porch are not replaced, it is still an open violation, though not related to the issues being reviewed tonight. He noted that the violation letter only addresses the violations currently documented on the property.

Commissioner Peeler asked Mr. Nash if there were essentially two violations. Mr. Nash confirmed yes, there are two violations.

Chair Eddlemon clarified that if everything is resolved tonight and something new is changed in the future, that would be a new issue, but it would not affect the windows and shutters addressed tonight. Mr. Brand responded that all he wants to do is get this resolved. Mr. Nepal added that the best course of action is not to do anything new without applying for it and obtaining COA approval.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board what other questions they have for the applicant.

Commissioner Hauer asked Mr. Brand if the shutters he proposes are the same width and height, and if they would fully cover the windows when closed. Mr. Brand responded that the photo he provided with the application shows the exact shutter he plans to build for the appropriate windows on the home.

Commissioner Hauer asked Mr. Brand if he plans to reinstall the shutters with the cross design to match the previous shutters. Mr. Brand responded “Yes”.

Mr. Brand stated he provided the quote for the shutters, noting that they are $900 a pair and are the appropriate size. He added that they are made of cedar, but he had not sent a photo of a completed shutter to Mr. Nash previously because he just finished them within the last day or so. Mr. Brand then presented a photo of the new shutter, which matches the design of the previous shutters.

Mr. Brand stated he would like to discuss another proposal. He noted that while there has been discussion that all windows need shutters, not all windows can accommodate them. He proposed installing shutters on the six main front-facing windows in the center section of the house and continuing to pursue shutters for the three office windows on the side of the house facing S. Lee Street and the driveway. He added that he has already secured the wood for the front six shutters. Discussion ensued over which shutters would have the new shutters installed.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Brand about the window to the right on the wing when looking at the house from W. Fifth Avenue. Mr. Brand responded that he would not be installing a shutter on that window, explaining that he cannot afford to put one on it. Discussion then ensued over which window would not have new shutters installed.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Brand if he was referring to the six windows on the main body of the house in the front, but not on the side wing. Mr. Brand responded correct and said that he would love to put the same shutters there, but it is a significant expense. He added that if the COA allowed a longer timeframe, he could install the shutters, but he was unsure how long the COA is valid. Commissioner Hauser clarified that the COA is valid for six months, and the work just needs to be started within that period, which Mr. Brand would be doing.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Brand about the three shutters that face S. Lee Street. Mr. Brand responded that yes, those would be part of a secondary shutter installation, along with the other secondary shutters.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Brand if he planned to install more shutters on the back side of the house. Mr. Brand responded that he did not intend to add shutters on the backside unless he had a significant windfall. Commissioner Peeler added that she believes some neighboring houses, like the one next door, also do not have shutters on the back.

Commissioner Peeler asked Mr. Graham that once someone starts work within the six-month timeframe, how long they are technically allowed to continue the approved work. She asked if, for example, someone starts within six months but is still working five years later, what the time limit would be.

Mr. Graham responded that he did not recall an exact timeframe outlined in the ordinance. He explained that applicants are required to start within six months, and after that, courts generally expect work to be completed within a reasonable time. He added that it would not be acceptable for a violation to continue for five years.

Mr. Nepal responded that typically, applicants have six months to start work, and staff checks are periodically, but they would not let it go beyond a year or two. Mr. Nash added that he usually checks within a year.

Chair Eddlemon noted that the timeframe is roughly a loose year. She added that the board has been trying to get this applicant here since they bought the house, and they have been working on this issue since being informed it was still a problem.

Commissioner Hauser mentioned that Mr. Brand bought the house in 2012, which only had a single shutter on the side facing S. Lee Street, so he does not believe Mr. Brand owes more than that. He added that Mr. Brand is installing shutters on the front of the house, where some were missing in 2012.

Chair Eddlemon asked whether the shutters were missing because they fell off and the house was about to be sold to an investor, or if they were never installed, noting that these are two very different scenarios.

Mr. Brand added that there is no doubt the house originally had shutters on all the windows, but he has no idea what happened to them when they came down. Discussion then ensued over the fate of the previous shutters.

Commissioner Hauer stated a second concern regarding not having shutters on some of the windows. She noted that the black trim stands out even more without the shutters and added that while she is not saying she dislikes the look, it is not appropriate for this neighborhood. She emphasized that there are no other approved homes in the area with windows featuring black trim.

Mr. Brand responded by asking according to whom and how far back.

Commissioner Hauer then asked if he sees other houses in York-Chester with black window trim. Mr. Brand responded that he has only lived in the neighborhood for three years.

Mr. Brand asked the board if the window trim had been white, and he submitted a new application to paint it black, what would the outcome be.

Commissioner Hauer and Commissioner Peeler both responded that it would be denied.

Mr. Brand asked why, noting that according to the standards on page 27, Appendix C, and page 41 for exterior color, there is an approved set of trim colors, a body color for the home, and guidelines for using two or three colors on a house, including body, trim, and accent.

Chair Eddlemon responded that this is why there are seven board members, because if decisions were based solely on the black and white wording in the ordinance or standards, it would be rigid. Many decisions are subject to interpretation and considered case by case, and in this instance, painting the trim black is not appropriate for this historic district.

Discussion ensued over interpretations of the ordinance.

Commissioner Trepel stated that he feels putting the black shutters on greatly integrates the windows and, with the shutters, reduces the visual impact of the black trim. He added that he would probably vote to support the application without requiring the window trim to be repainted white.

Chair Eddlemon asked Commissioner Trepel how he felt about the windows that would never receive shutters, noting that the shutters help harmonize the other windows.

Commissioner Trepel responded that he would propose including the right-hand window on the front and the three windows on the side as part of the shutter package. He clarified that not all of them would need to be installed at the same time and suggested leaving the back windows as they are.

Commissioner Peeler asked the board a question, noting that in Charlotte, there are many white homes with black trim. She asked at what point, since both black and white are neutral colors in the guidelines, do we consider it acceptable or period-appropriate.

Chair Eddlemon responded that it is not period-appropriate and added that the applicant is already in violation by having done it without approval, so the question is about an existing violation.

Commissioner Trepel stated that approving this application would supersede the existing issue.

Chair Eddlemon responded that she understood but emphasized that approving it could set a precedent.

Commissioner Peeler added that the board discusses trim and color at every meeting and noted that for fairness and consistency, all applicants should be held to the same standards in harmony with their home and neighborhood. She acknowledged the difficulty of the situation but stressed that allowing one exception could encourage others to bypass the rules.

Commissioner Trepel responded that he was not sure if such issues would really happen again, but understood Commissioner Peeler's point.

Chair Eddlemon and Commissioner Peeler both replied that similar situations have already happened and are happening now with this application.

Commissioner Trepel added that he believes the black shutters help harmonize the windows. He agreed that the right-hand front window and the side windows should be included, while the back windows are not sufficiently visible from the street to be a problem. He concluded that with the black shutters, the appearance would be appropriate.

Discussion ensued regarding the previous after-the-fact violation and the current violation under review.

Commissioner Trepel asked if it was known whether the prior owner had removed the shutters. Chair Eddlemon responded that yes, the prior owner took them down, and then someone allegedly took a few of the remaining shutters. She added that a few were left, and although Commissioner Propert was not present, he knew who had taken the remaining shutters.

Commissioner Hartman stated that she really appreciated Mr. Brand's efforts to replicate the shutters.

Mr. Brand emphasized that if he were not customizing the shutters himself, it would be impossible for him to afford the cost of ordering customized shutters. Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Brand if he was modifying pre-made shutters or building them from scratch. Mr. Brand responded that he is building them from scratch. He added that he believes it is appropriate to include the cross design, noting that the $900 per pair quote attached to his application did not include that design, which is why he chose to build them himself.

Discussion ensued regarding the open porch renovation violation on the subject property, which was not part of the current application under review and will need to be addressed in a new COA.

Chair Eddlemon asked Commissioner Hauser if he was making a formal motion or simply presenting an option. Commissioner Hauser confirmed that it was his motion and moved to approve the application as submitted, with the understanding that work will begin within six months, as required, and that shutters will be installed on all nine of the discussed windows—the six on the front and the three on the wing—within 12 months, with no change to the existing paint. Commissioner Trepel seconded the motion. The motion died with a 3–3 split vote. Mr. Graham clarified that the motion had failed and the board would need to entertain a new motion.

Commissioner Hauser asked the board if anyone was prepared to make another motion. Commissioner Hartman then asked Chair Eddlemon, Commissioner Hauer, and Commissioner Peeler if the black trim was the reason they were hesitant to approve Commissioner Hauser's previous motion.

Chair Eddlemon responded that for her, the issue was the black trim. She explained that while she could support the shutters, she could not support the trim. Commissioner Peeler added that her concern was not necessarily with this particular house but with the broader impact on the neighborhood. If the board began approving white houses with black trim, she worried it would encourage more homeowners to follow the same trend, which is currently popular on television shows and in new construction in Charlotte. She emphasized that such approvals would risk eroding the historic character of the neighborhood, pointing out that similar changes are already evident in nearby historic areas like Belmont.

Commissioner Hauer agreed with Commissioner Peeler's comments and stated that her main concern was also the precedent such an approval would set. Commissioner Peeler stated she likes the look of the black window trim, just not for this neighborhood. Chair Eddlemon and Commissioner Hauer agreed.

Mr. Brand stated that the only trim color referenced on the original prints of the home is black.

Chair Eddlemon added that we cannot pick and choose when it comes to the historic nature of the home. If the original trim color was black, then we would also need to install shutters on the entire house for consistency. She emphasized that finding a middle ground is necessary, but she does not think black trim is appropriate for the neighborhood. She noted that historical references to trim could be unclear, such as doors or other features, so the board can only address changes that were not previously approved.

Mr. Brand responded that black is the only color referenced and that it specifies painting the chimney trim black.

Chair Eddlemon added she doesn't have anything to propose at this point and asked the board if anyone had other options for a motion. Commissioner Hauser and Trepel stated their opinion is the same.

Commissioner Trepel stated he believes a motion is needed from the members who voted no.

Commissioner Peeler asked if the commission accepts black trim on these windows, would everyone be okay with future applicants coming forward wanting their house white with black trim and being approved because it was approved previously.

Commissioner Trepel responded that just because it gets approved for one property does not mean it will for another.

Commissioner Peeler agreed but noted that this property is on a prominent corner and is a standard style, like many colonials in the neighborhood, and questioned whether approving this would set a precedent.

Commissioner Hauser responded that if someone has a white house with black shutters and wants black trim, he would not have an issue with it. Commissioner Trepel agreed, adding that each application must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Chair Eddlemon agreed that every application must be evaluated individually, but added that during many meetings, the board has reminded applicants not to compare with other houses because approval history is not always known. She emphasized that the purpose of the historic district is to preserve homes, not just follow trends, and the board must consider precedent carefully.

Commissioner Trepel noted that the application we tabled before the subject application next month involves a different kind of house, but still presents a black trim issue.

Commissioner Hauer stated she could be more flexible on the shutters and would be okay with starting on the front and side if the trim were painted and the black on the back removed.

Commissioner Trepel added that he does not think Mr. Brand should ever be forced to put shutters on the back.

Commissioner Hauer agreed, but noted that if there are no shutters on the back, the contrast would be less pronounced if the window trim were white.

Commissioner Hauser stated he would be surprised if a walk through the neighborhood in 1925 revealed a single house without black trim.

Mr. Nash added that the month after this application was denied in August 2022, Kim Wallis reached out to the State Historic Preservation Office about black window trim as an appropriate color, and they responded that it was. He said he could do the same thing again.

Chair Eddlemon responded that while it may be appropriate for historic homes, the question is whether it is in harmony with the neighborhood. She noted that many things that are acceptable in other historic areas, like Charleston, do not necessarily fit in their neighborhood.

Commissioner Peeler stated that, looking at the pictures, the trim as it currently stands is not harmonious. Some windows are still fully white while others are black, which makes it difficult because it's inconsistent.

Commissioner Trepel responded that he doesn't think the two small dormer windows on the roof need to be black.

Commissioner Peeler clarified that she isn't saying it would look better or worse either way.

Commissioner Trepel added that the little inconsistency doesn't bother him.

Commissioner Hauser asked Commissioner Peeler what she thought if all the trim were black.

Commissioner Hauer stated she wouldn't support it. Discussion ensued over which windows currently had black trim and white trim.

Commissioner Trepel asked Commissioner Hauer if she could provide some clarity on what she meant by having flexibility on the shutters. Commissioner Hauer responded that many homes in the neighborhood do not have shutters on the back of their homes, where shutters were originally installed, and only have shutters on the front and sides. She stated that the issue she has with this option is how much the black trim would stand out on the rear elevation without shutters, but she would be more flexible with this option if the window trim were repainted white. Commissioner Trepel responded that he doesn't believe they would have any flexibility to require Mr. Brand to install shutters on the rear since there weren't any installed prior to the violation. Discussion continued over the recommendations the board could give.

Chair Eddlemon asked the board if anyone felt prepared to make a motion or if there was any further discussion.

Commissioner Peeler asked Mr. Brand if the windows with white trim on the rear elevation from 2022, when the violation occurred, remained white today. Mr. Brand responded that one of those windows had to be removed during purchase, so it is no longer there, but the windows in the upper dormer remain white, a basement window on the rear elevation remains white, and the trim on the screened-in porch where windows were removed also remains white.

Commissioner Peeler stated that regardless of what color is decided on, she just wants to see harmony with whichever color is chosen.

Chair Eddlemon asked Commissioner Peeler if she was prepared to make a motion. Commissioner Peeler responded that she was not, as she is still struggling with the black and white trim.

Commissioner Trepel asked Commissioner Peeler if she would have voted yes on the previous motion had it included that the windows with white trim be painted black. Commissioner Peeler responded not necessarily, but said it would make her feel a little more comfortable if the trim matched. She added that there is a point to asking for these homes to be harmonious within themselves and with the neighborhood.

Discussion ensued over options for a motion.

Commissioner Hauer asked the board what the opposition was to changing the black trim to white.

Mr. Brand responded that his opposition, as the homeowner, would be to that change.

Mr. Graham suggested closing the public hearing so the board could discuss the options among themselves. Chair Eddlemon asked the board if closing the public hearing would be necessary.

Commissioner Hauer responded no, because she would like to hear all options from both the board and Mr. Brand.

Commissioner Trepel responded that he didn't think it was necessary, but added that he believes the black shutters will harmonize very nicely with the black trim.

Commissioner Hauer asked Commissioner Trepel if he thought it was historically appropriate for that house to have black trim. Commissioner Trepel responded that he didn't find it the slightest bit offensive and believes it is appropriate.

Discussion ensued over the discrepancies in the Principles & Design Standards regarding appropriate trim colors for Colonial-style homes.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash if he had consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office on whether black trim was an appropriate historic color. Mr. Nash responded that he had not, but Kim Wallis had, and the answer was yes. He added that black trim also helps hide the imperfections and deterioration of older wooden windows.

Discussion continued over the Principles & Design Standards.

Hearing no further discussion, Commissioner Peeler moved to approve the application as submitted, with the conditions that the windows with white trim be repainted black and that custom wooden shutters with a cross design, painted black, be installed. Commissioner Hauser seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was approved 4–2, with Chair Eddlemon and Commissioner Hauer opposed.

ITEM 5. <u>Other Business</u>
No other business.

ITEM 6. <u>Adjournment</u>
There being no other business, Chair Eddlemon adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

_____	_____
Kaitlyn Peeler, Chair	Rebeca Mintz, Secretary
Historic District Commission	Planning Department

HDC Application for COA (Long Form)
City of Gastonia Planning Department

Submitted On:
Jun 20, 2025, 05:54PM EDT

Historic District Commission

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

Major Work - Long Form

Property Street Address:	**Street Address:** 522 W Fourth Ave **City:** Gastonia **State:** NC **Zip:** 28052
Applicant's Name:	**First Name:** Ryan **Last Name:** Pickens
Applicant's Mailing Address:	**Street Address:** 522 W Fourth Ave **City:** Gastonia **State:** NC **Zip:** 28052
Applicant's Email:	ryanpickens2002@gmail.com
Applicant's Primary Phone Number:	8034129019
Are you the Property Owner?	YES
Name of Business (if applicable):	

Major work items require a Certificate of Appropriateness and must be approved by the Commission prior to the issuance of a zoning permit. In general, these are items which involve a change in the exterior appearance of a structure or landscape and that are more substantial in nature than minor work items, including but not limited to the items listed below.

Choose the item(s) best suited to your request:	Replacement of architectural details when there will be a change in design or materials from the existing ones

Exterior Alteration of Existing Structure

Describe clearly and in detail all exterior architectural alterations to be made. Drawings, photographs,	

specifications MUST accompany this application, and any other graphic information deemed appropriate. Include information on materials, paint colors, and, if necessary, information on and location of significant, large trees on site, parking areas, etc.	Damaged/Defective exterior windows replaced. three front two windows changed exterior frame color from white to black. front door molding changed from white to black due to window frame being directly connected to it originally. gutters changed from white plastic to black aluminum
Materials submitted with Application:	Photos
Upload Photo File(s):	Front of house before replacement.webp Front of house before replacement.webp

Applications without the abovementioned attachments or that do not provide a clear description will be considered incomplete and will not be processed until all pertinent information is provided.

I hereby give Planning staff and/or Historic District Commissioners permission to enter the property to collect information specific to this request.

Property Permission:	YES with notification either by email or phone

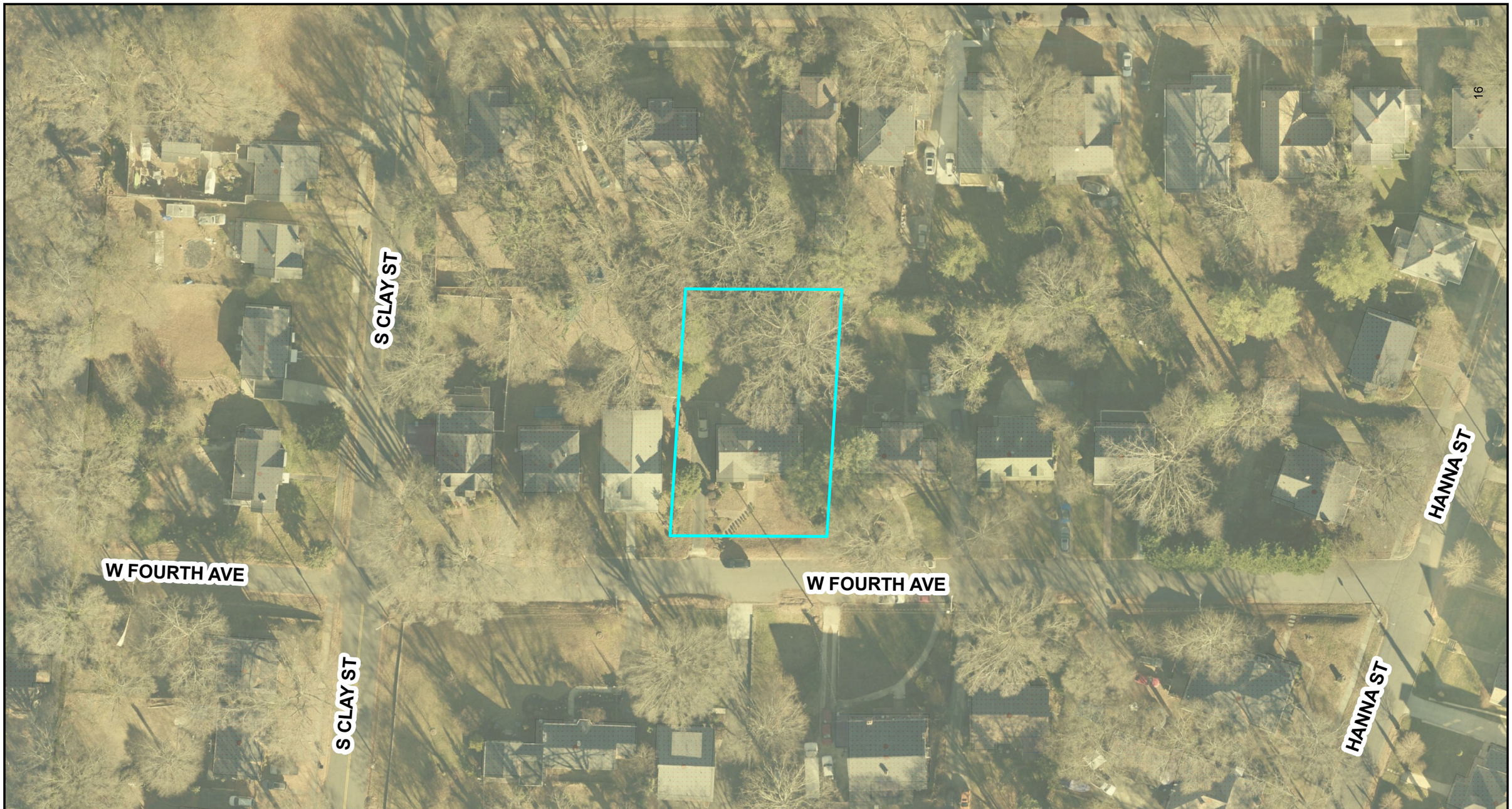
Applications to be heard by the full Historic District Commission must be received at least fourteen (14) business days prior to the regularly scheduled meeting, which is the fourth Thursday of every month.

I understand my application must be received at least fourteen (14) BUSINESS days prior to the regular scheduled meeting.	YES

Signature Data	First Name: Ryan Last Name: Pickens Email Address: ryanpickens2002@gmail.com

Signed at: June 20, 2025 5:53pm America/New_York

Date Completed:	**Month:** 6 **Day:** 20 **Year:** 2025
Receipt	HDC-LongForm-60-06202025
User's Session Information	IP Address: 71.75.3.77 Referrer URL: https://www.gastonianc.gov/



HDC Case #PLCA202500275
522 W. Fourth Avenue

York Chester Historic District

GASTONIA NC
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Planning Department

1:800

STAFF REPORT FOR
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA)
Continued HD# PLCA202500275
September 25, 2025

APPLICANT: Ryan Pickens

PROPERTY LOCATION: 522 W. Fourth Street

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: Ryan Pickens

REQUEST: The applicant is seeking an after-the-fact Certificate of Appropriateness for window replacements and changing frames and door molding from white to black.

Property Description

- One-story structure with brick and vinyl siding, side-gable roof, and a projecting front-gable bay. Features include 1/1 sash windows, a single-leaf entry door, and a flat-roofed entry porch supported by a square post.

Findings

- The building was built @ 1953
- The property is considered *Contributing* to the local York-Chester Historic District
- The property is zoned RS-8 Residential and surrounded by other residential zoning
  The applicant states that the damaged or defective exterior windows were replaced out of necessity.

Key Elements of Design

1. Three front-facing windows had their exterior frame color changed from white to black. (Light pattern did not change)
2. Front door molding was changed from white to black, as it was originally connected to the adjacent window frame.
3. Gutters were replaced, changing from white plastic to black aluminum.

EXCERPTS FROM THE DESIGN STANDARDS:

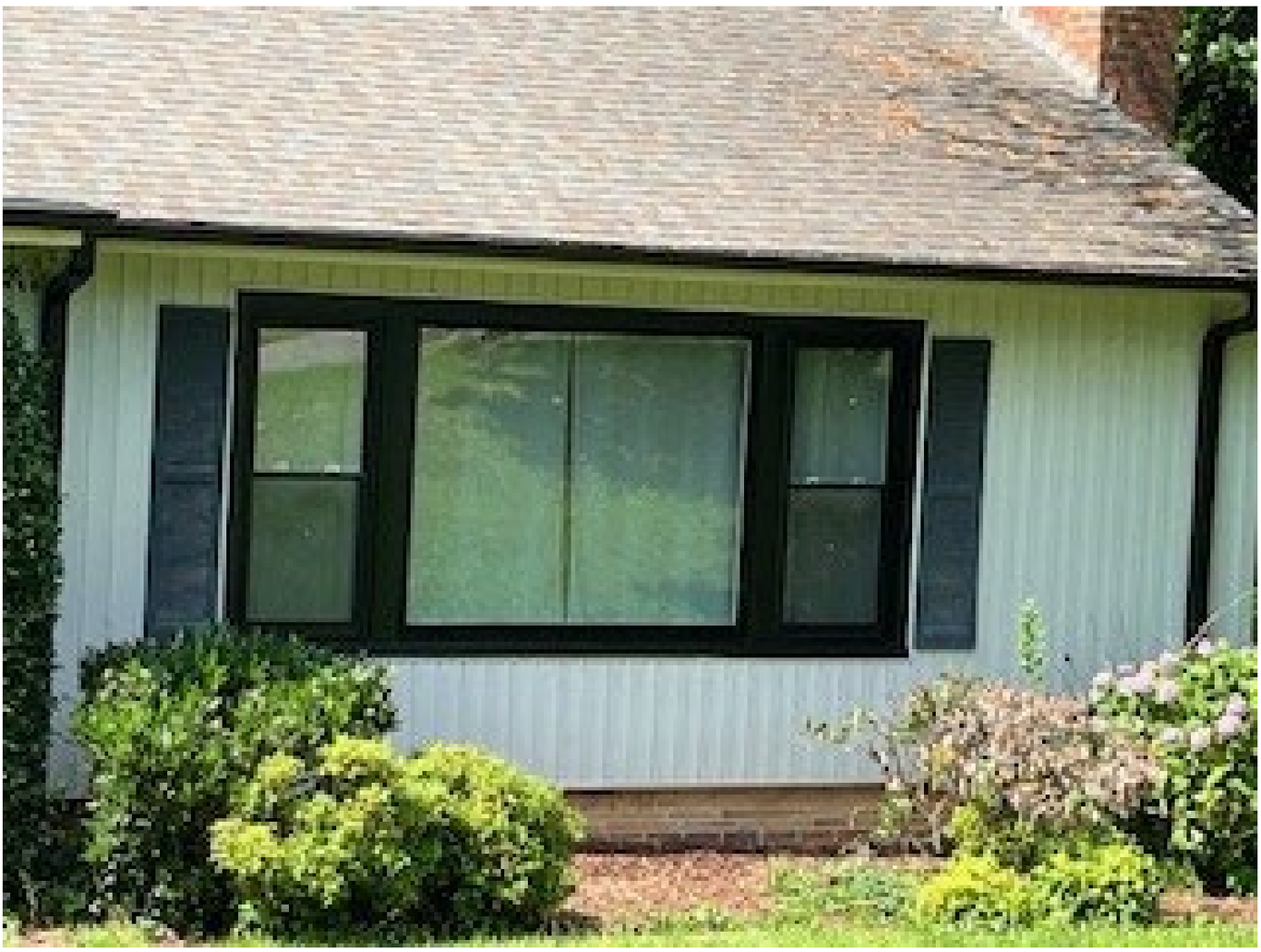
Fenestration (Windows, Doors) (Page 24)

a) Retain and preserve existing historic windows and doors, including their functional and decorative features, such as frames, sashes, muntins, sills, heads, moldings, surrounds and hardware.
b) Replacement of an entire window or door is to be considered only if repair is not feasible. If the details of a window or a door, such as casing, muntins, or tracery, are deteriorated and must be replaced, the original character of the building and the window or the door is to be used as a guide.
c) Retain existing window and door openings and details including window trim, sash, glass, lintels, sills, grid/ muntin pattern, shutters and hardware.
f) Do not introduce new window and door openings into the principal elevations, or enlarge or reduce window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes, or introduce inappropriate window types such as louvered; retain the existing size of window panes and sash. Changes such as these damage the scale and proportion of the building.
g) Install storm windows and doors that are painted white or match the house trim color, or place storm windows on the inside. Do not obscure the outline and appearance of the original doors and windows or remove trim with the installation of storm doors and windows.
h) Refrain from installing new window or door features such as aluminum storm and screen window combinations that require the removal of original windows and doors or the installation of plastic, or metal strip awnings, decorative shutters, plate glass, sliding glass doors, bronzed glass, colored plastic panels and modern picture window arrangements when they would alter the character and appearance of the building. Locate modern windows and doors which are part of an improvement project for leisure space, such as sliding glass doors, inconspicuously, such as at the rear of the house.

Exterior Colors (Page 27):

Paint colors can enhance the historic nature of a building, especially when proper contrasts are used in the paint scheme. Trim and foundations should be visually differentiated from the main body of the structure…

f) Do not utilize excessively bright colors, large expanses of shiny metal, or highly contrasting colors.

Jalen Nash

Jalen Nash, Planner – CZO
Planning Department