

Historic District Commission

March 27, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Chair Eddlemon called the meeting of the Historic District Commission to order at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, March 27, 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, and Kaitlyn Peeler

Absent: Commissioners Josh Hauser, Blair Propert, and Marty Murphy

Staff present: 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: Approval of January 23rd, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Trepel moved to adopt the meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. With there being no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 1c: Approval of February 27th, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Trepel moved to adopt the meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. With there being no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 2. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202400601 Revised)

- Frances Smith
- 412 S. Chester Street
- Requesting approval for the construction of a new one-story garage.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff's presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented.

Mr. Nash stated that the first item on the agenda tonight is located at 412 South Chester Street and involves a proposal for a one-story garage. He noted that this request is a continuation from last month's meeting.

A zoning map was presented, and Mr. Nash stated that the home was built in 1924. He noted that the property is considered contributing to the local York Chester Historic District. It is zoned O-1 CUP (Office Conditional Use Permit) and is bordered by residential zoning to the south and west, with office zoning to the north and east.

Mr. Nash then presented the key elements of the request. He explained that the proposal includes a 320-square-foot garage with a double brick foundation. The design features gable roofs on the left and right elevations, and hipped roofs on the front and rear elevations when viewed from West Fourth Avenue.

Mr. Nash stated that the garage door will be a 12-foot by 7-foot frame garage door, and the entry door will measure 3 feet by 7 feet. He added that the applicant plans to use fiber cement siding, vented vinyl soffit, and trim. The color of the garage will match the home, which is white, and the roof will also be shingled to match the existing home.

Mr. Nash also presented the related Design Standards applicable to the project.

He noted some of the board's requests from the February 27 meeting, which included a need for more clarity on the orientation of the garage—there was confusion regarding the previous site plan—and a visual example of the garage door, which has now been provided.

Mr. Nash mentioned that when the request was originally presented in February, it included a window. However, the window has been removed from the current design because insurance will not cover its replacement.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash to clarify which direction the right elevation faces. A discussion followed regarding the orientation of the garage in the revised site plan. Mr. Nepal clarified that the right elevation faces Fourth Avenue.

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Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Nash if he was clear on the orientation of the garage, or if it would be better to use Google Maps to view the property. Mr. Nash responded that he was clear on the orientation and provided further clarification for the board.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash, for clarity, on whether the revised design includes any windows. Mr. Nash responded that there are no windows included in the new garage. Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Nash if the previous garage had windows. Mr. Nash responded, “Yes.”

Mr. Nash presented the Google Map of the property. With there being no further questions for the Planning Staff, Chair Eddlemon recognized Francis Smith at 412 S. Chester Street, Gastonia, NC.

Chair Eddlemon asked Ms. Smith if she had any additional commentary regarding her project. Ms. Smith responded that much of the information has been repeated. She explained that the garage was initially damaged in August when a tree fell on it. A second tree—originating from the property located at 310 West Fourth Avenue—fell on the garage shortly afterward. As a result, the garage had to be demolished, and the demolition was approved by the board in September.

Ms. Smith stated that she has been working to rebuild the garage since then, but insurance coverage has been limited. While the original structure included an apartment above the garage, the insurance will only cover the garage itself. She noted that this is why the new design does not include a window and only includes the garage and roof.

She emphasized that the replacement would match the original in every way: same location, same color, and the same garage door. Ms. Smith stated that she is simply trying to rebuild the structure that was previously there.

As a flight attendant, Ms. Smith noted that not being home regularly raises safety concerns, especially now that people are aware of her schedule with no garage. She expressed her desire to have the garage rebuilt for both practical and safety reasons.

Commissioner Trepel stated that he was somewhat concerned about the lack of windows in the new garage. Ms. Smith responded that there is no longer an apartment on the second floor of the garage, which is why windows are no longer included. She added that the original garage did not have windows on the ground floor. Commissioner Peeler stated that the absence of windows did not concern her as much, noting that the garage is set far back on the property and is well-screened by existing vegetation.

Commissioner Peeler asked Ms. Smith if the pitch of the new roof would match that of the previous roof. Ms. Smith responded that the pitch would be slightly higher to emulate the roof of the original garage.

With no further questions for Ms. Smith, Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 3. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500051)

- George Kast
- 615 S. York Street
- Requesting a COA to expand the kitchen by incorporating the existing screened-in porch square footage at the right rear of the home.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented, and Mr. Nash introduced the property zoning map. He explained that the property is located on a corner lot and that the porch in question is situated at the right rear of the home, near the end of the driveway. Mr. Nash noted that the location of the porch was one of the questions raised during the previous subcommittee meeting.

Chair Eddlemon asked who had attended that subcommittee meeting. Commissioner Peeler responded that she, along with Commissioners Hauser and Trepel, were present.

Mr. Nash then presented the key elements of the request, stating that the proposal is to enclose a 4'5" by 3'4" area (approximately 15 square feet) on the right rear side of the home, near the driveway. The enclosure will feature cedar shingle siding to match the existing exterior of the home. No windows will be added, and the siding and trim will match the existing materials.

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Mr. Nash presented the related Design Standards for this project and highlighted the standards he considered most relevant. Under Section B, it states: "Remove front porch infill to restore the original facade. In general, enclosing side porches to create interior space is discouraged; however, rear yard porch enclosures are permitted."

Mr. Nash presented the building plans submitted with the application.

Commissioner Peeler asked Mr. Nash if the cedar shingle siding would be actual cedar. Mr. Nash responded yes, I believe so.

With there being no further questions for Mr. Nash, Chair Eddlemon recognized George Kast at 615 S. York Street.

Mr. Kast and Chair Eddlemon discussed how the existing space is the size of a small closet and unusable.

Commissioner Trepel asked Mr. Kast if the door and screened-in porch to the right of the small screened-in area he is enclosing going to remain. Mr. Kast responded "Yes".

Discussion ensued on whether or not this small area was visible to the street.

With no further questions for Mr. Kast, Commissioner Trepel moved to approve the application as submitted. Commissioner Hauer seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 4. Public Hearing – Certificate of Appropriateness (File # PLCA202500116)

- Bart Knight
- 409 W. Sixth Avenue
- Requesting a COA to replace the front door, remove the front door transom window, and replace two windows at the right rear of the home.

Chair Eddlemon opened the public hearing and recognized Jalen Nash, Planner, for the staff presentation. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application was presented. Mr. Nash noted that a COA application for this property was approved at last month's meeting for fencing. The current request before the Commission includes replacing the front door, removing the front door transom window, and replacing two windows on the right side of the home.

Mr. Nash presented the property zoning map and stated that the home was built in 1924. He noted that it is a contributing structure to the local York-Chester Historic District, is zoned RS-8, and is surrounded by residential zoning districts.

Mr. Nash presented the key elements of the request and stated that the applicant is requesting to remove the existing front door and replace it with a six-light, 36" by 80" door. He noted that the applicant also plans to remove the transom window above the front door, as it was improperly installed and is currently broken. Mr. Nash added that, if you've driven by the home, you may have noticed bright blue tape holding the window together.

Mr. Nash stated that Mr. Knight contacted staff and mentioned that he is renovating the kitchen, and the window in question is located directly above the kitchen sink, potentially conflicting with certain building code requirements.

Commissioner Trepel responded that a window above a kitchen sink is generally allowed. Mr. Nash reiterated that the removal was said to be related to building code compliance, but he was unsure of the exact reasoning. A discussion followed regarding possible building codes or other factors that might necessitate the removal of the existing window.

Chair Eddlemon asked Mr. Nash if any documentation had been provided by the general contractor or the County's Building Department confirming that the window must be removed. Mr. Nash responded that no such documentation was provided, and noted that Mr. Knight, who is also the general contractor for this project, was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Nepal stated that, given the applicant's absence, he recommends continuing the application to the next meeting.

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Commissioner Trepel suggested the possibility of approving the front door replacement and revisiting the window components at the next meeting. Mr. Nepal responded that while the board could issue a partial approval since many elements of the application are interconnected and the applicant will likely need to return regardless, it would be best to continue the entire request. He further stated that moving forward, if the applicant will not be present, the item should be removed from the agenda.

Commissioners Trepel and Peeler asked Mr. Nash to contact the applicant to clarify the reasoning for removing the transom and right-side window, as well as to provide the dimensions for the proposed new windows.

With no further questions for the Planning Staff, Commissioner Hauer moved to continue the application. Commissioner Peeler seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

ITEM 5. Other Business

Mr. Nash stated that a subcommittee meeting is not needed. Commissioner Trepel noted a correction in the February 27th meeting minutes on page 9, fifth paragraph from the bottom, where it was recorded that the motion had died 1–5 (Commissioner Trepel for), but it had actually died 2–4 (Commissioners Trepel and Hauser for). Mr. Nepal discussed possible solutions to reduce the number of after-the-fact violations the HDC receives. Lastly, Mr. Nash updated the board on some open violations in the neighborhoods, and Mr. Nepal informed the board that a list of these violations will be provided at the next meeting.

ITEM 6. Adjournment

With there being no further discussion, Chair Eddlemon adjourned the March 27th, 2025 meeting of the HDC at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andi Eddlemon, Chair
Historic District Commission

Jalen Nash – CZO, Planner
Planning Department