

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes

September 19, 2005
Salisbury, North Carolina

The Historic Preservation Commission for the City of Salisbury held a special meeting on Monday, September 19, 2005, in the Council Chambers at the City Hall, 217 S. Main St.

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Michael Young. He greeted and welcomed the persons in attendance.

In addition to Michael Young the following commission members were present: Raemi Evans, Ronald Fleming, Mike Fuller, Susan Hurt, Ann Lyles Jeff Sowers, Kathy Walters, and Wayne Whitman.

Michael Young informed the body that the purpose of the meeting was to provide the Commission with an opportunity to hear their views and to receive and assimilate information concerning case **#H-02-05: demolition of 117, 119, & 121 W. Fisher Street – First United Methodist Church, owner.**

Michael Young explained the duties of the Historic Preservation Commission. He stated that by law the Commission cannot prohibit demolition but can delay demolition for 365 days for the purpose of finding alternatives to demolition. No official action will be taken at this hearing, he said, but the efforts sought for alternatives will be discussed.

Michael Young gave the procedures to be followed during the meeting.

The meeting continued as follows:

**Case Summary and Local Context by Janet Gapen, City of Salisbury Planner II/
Preservation Commission Liaison**

Janet Gapen began by presenting the following basic facts surrounding the case which included the following:

- Buildings are in the 100 blk. W. Fisher St
- Buildings date back to approximately 1900-1910
- Buildings are located in the National Register District since 1975 and the Downtown Local Historic District since October 2001

Timeline

January 2005

Application submitted to the Commission for review for a Certificate of Appropriateness - Case tabled

February 2005

Request heard again – Certificate of Appropriateness issued; though opposed to the demolition, the Commission was required by state law to issue the Certificate with 365-day delay

March –April

Committee from HPC formed to monitor what was going on and to negotiate with the property owner and find other ways to seek alternatives to demolition

May 2005

The Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC)* met the church’s Building Committee

*DRAC is a committee made up of architectural and design professionals (not members of the Commission) who meet with property owners who propose a significant change such as new construction, significant additions to existing buildings or demolition.

July

Historic Salisbury Foundation provided an update to the Commission on their efforts to negotiate with the property owner

Aug-Sept

HPC committee had 4 meetings leading up to today’s meeting

January 16 2006 will be the end of the 365-day delay

North Carolina General Statutes

Janet Gapen read the statute to answer the question: “Why did the Commission not deny the request for demolition?” which states “A *Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition may not be denied except as provided in a specific section.*

She explained that the only provision is if a building can be determined to have statewide significance it may be possible to deny the demolition. The old County Courthouse and the Depot were noted as examples of such buildings.

Purpose of meeting

Janet Gapen informed the body that the purpose of the meeting was twofold – (1) to make it widely known to the public that significant buildings are threatened for demolition and (2) to seek alternatives. She read the following guideline from the Historic District Design Guidelines: *During the delay period the Commission should actively seek to negotiate with the owner or other interested parties to find a means of preserving the building or site and the Commission should make it widely known that significant buildings are threatened with demolition.*

Prevention of demolition in the future

Janet Gapen stated that the Commission has recently learned that there is a possibility that the North Carolina General Assembly could be petitioned for specific legislature to apply to Salisbury allowing the regulation of demolition in historic districts. She said the city of Statesville was able to secure House Bill 1020 this year which allows them to regulate demolition. The Commission has plans to consider a similar resolution for Salisbury.

Context for Preservation in Salisbury

Beginning with Salisbury's Mission Statement, Ms. Gapen presented a slide presentation to show the context of preservation in the city. She informed the body that in March 2001 the city's Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan called for a Downtown Local District to help insure that development and redevelopment would be supportive of the architectural and historical context that is vital to the economic success of downtown Salisbury. She spoke about the 3 vision statements of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to historic preservation.

In conclusion, Ms. Gapen presented slides of before and after shots of downtown businesses that illustrated preservation. They included: The Depot, the old Endicott Johnson Shoe Store at Center Court, The Stitching Post, The Empire Block (200 Blk. S. Main St.), The Oestreicher Building, 205 E. Council St. (former Flowers Bakery), F & M Financial Center (former Norman's Drapery), Council Street Commons (vacant building converted to office space and retail), F & M Trolley Barn, Waterworks Visual Arts Center, and Innes St. Drug.

The last slide presentation ended with a view of the buildings at 117, 119, & 121 W. Fisher St. Ms. Gapen ended her presentation with the following statement: **“And the question is: *Can these buildings become another of Salisbury's successes?*”**

In reference to a question from Michael Young who asked if the buildings had local significance even though not state-wide significance, Janet Gapen said, “they are considered contributing structures in the National Register District, which means they contribute to the overall fabric and integrity of the historic district.”

Michael Young asked if the buildings would qualify for the 20% Federal Historic Investment Tax Credit. Ms. Gapen said they would likely qualify for tax credits.

Historic and Architectural Significance David Bergstone, Director of Architecture, Old Salem, Inc.

David Bergstone was sworn to give testimony.

In describing the buildings on W. Fisher St., Mr. Bergstone said they are an excellent example of cast iron storefront. He said 121 W. Fisher St. has one of the better uses of stone of any other building in downtown Salisbury. In addition, he said there is excellent brick work on the buildings especially around the openings, and top of the façade. He said if the paint was stripped decorative patterns and colors would probably be found.

Mr. Bergstone informed the body that the buildings were actually 2 buildings but one has been divided to use as 2 separate parts. They have residential, commercial and institutional uses, and have historic significance based on their use.

As slides were shown, Mr. Bergstone described each building separately.

He named the following historical uses of the building, noting that the list is only from a quick research, and by no means complete.

117 W. Fisher Street

Carolina Marable and Granite, 1910-1926; Carolina Feed; and City Hall, 1935-1962

119 W. Fisher Street

Salisbury Battery Service, Dry-cleaners, shoe shops, and Betsy Butch Children's Shop

121 W. Fisher Street

Grocers, Printing Company, and Salisbury Beauty School

Also named were several downtown business owners who lived in the upstairs of both buildings.

Slides were presented of other downtown buildings that showed some of the same details and brick work as the Fisher St. properties which included the Klutz Drug Store (Spanky's). He also noted that there are even new buildings that try to copy some of the same details.

Mr. Bergstone stated that in his initial exterior assessment of the building, he did not see any obvious problems with the buildings being reused. He recommended that the buildings be documented as they currently stand, and that structural reports be researched to identify the historic materials and changes to the storefront. Rehabilitation, he continued, is always a potential for the building as well as an adaptive re-use, though adaptive reuse would be a little more drastic. As an example, he said the change of a bank to a residence residential would be more an adaptive re-use than rehabilitation.

In closing, Mr. Bergstone informed the body of his preservation background.

Downtown Redevelopment Perspective

**Randy Hemann, Executive Director of Downtown Salisbury, Inc.
and Edward Norvell, Vice President of Downtown Salisbury, Inc.**

Randy Hemann was sworn to give testimony.

Randy Hemann stated that since the establishment of Downtown Salisbury, Inc. in 1980, they have worked to preserve and renovate properties in the downtown and to strengthen the economic development of the city totaling 82 million dollars in investment, a net gain of 924 new jobs, and over 275 building renovations.

In a slide presentation some of the buildings preserved were shown. Slides were shown of the Cheerwine Building, Klutz Drugstore, and the new Gateway Building at 210-214 E. Innes St., and the Chamber of Commerce.

He said it has always been a better option to preserve and renovate than demolition and then new construction, noting that 22 million dollars have been produced in preservation in the city within the last 6 years.

He further stated that through preservation a tax base has been preserved that helps keep the entire tax burden off of residents.

Mr. Hemann stated that the Downtown Salisbury, Inc. Board would like to see the expansion of the church to move forward but not at the expense of preservation and further economic development. The Gateway Building, he said, is an example that shows you can have expansion and new construction that is compatible to historic preservation.

Mr. Hemann continued by informing the body that the Downtown Salisbury, Inc. has voted to draft a resolution in opposition of the demolition of the buildings. He said, “we believe that they can be saved.” He further stated, “we are willing to work with that congregation to see that they develop solutions that would work for them and for their neighbors.”

In closing, Mr. Hemann suggested that the community get together to work out a solution that will work for everyone.

In response to a question from Michael Young who asked Randy Hemann if he believed that the buildings were imminently adaptable, Mr. Hemann said he believed they were for both 1st and 2nd floor use.

Preservation of Historic Resources
Jack Thomson, Managing Director of Historic Salisbury Foundation, Inc.

Jack Thomson was sworn to give testimony.

He began by stating that the Historic Salisbury Foundation, founded in 1972, is a private non-profit preservation organization that offers a wide range of services to the Salisbury community. He stated that the Foundation is responsible for saving nearly 90 structures in Salisbury, including many downtown. He named the following: the Bell Block at the corner of S. Main & E. Fisher St., The Salisbury Female Academy (Wrenn House) The Bell Tower, The First Reformed Church (La Cava) 106, 108, 110, 112 N. Main St., and The Salisbury Station – to name a few. He said the entire city of Salisbury has taken up the ethics of preservation. School children, he said, learn of the city’s history from walking the streets of downtown.

Mr. Thomson continued his presentation by speaking on the spectrum of preservation in order to illustrate that saving the buildings is not a grand undertaking. The buildings are ornate and modest and speak to the history of Salisbury - “significant buildings but a modest sized project with incredibly significant positive results for the public and private sector.”

Michael Young asked Mr. Thomson if the church decided to sell the buildings, would there be people interested in purchasing them. Mr. Thomson said the Foundation has been approached by several persons interested in the purchase of the building; however, there are lots of other options as well. He said, “Yes, it can be resold; yes, it can be used by the church in a multitude of different ways.”

Finding Alternatives to Demolition Gray Stout, AIA, Stout Studio/Architecture

Gray Stout was sworn to give testimony.

Gray Stout stated that he would be speaking about alternatives to demolition and possible reuses of the existing building for the church’s needs.

He presented a slide presentation to show different views of possible alternatives which included the following renderings:

1. A Porte-Cochere placed at the corner of Fisher St. & Church St., with a new building using the same brick and windows of the existing church that could house some of the church’s space needs; thereby, leaving the W. Fisher St. buildings for someone to develop or for the church to use.
2. The Porte-Cochere in the corner with a one way drive-thru connected with a covered walkway back to restrooms and bride’s room which would tie back into the existing church. A new building would house the choir room, parlor, restrooms, and storage. In the middle would be a courtyard columbarium type space between the new building and the existing sanctuary.

He noted that the buildings do look unattractive as they stand right now but there is a lot of beauty behind the ugly paint color, and with a little imagination there could be a significant change.

In addition, he presented renderings to show more detailed possibilities for the 2nd floor of the buildings which also included the use of an elevator connector to the existing church.

Gray Stout ended his presentation by saying that the possibilities that the church has are very exciting.

In response to a question from Michael Young, Gray Stout said that in his opinion the church has lots of options.

Comments from the Neighborhood and Business Leaders

Michael Young asked that all comments be kept as brief as possible, and that all speakers be as courteous as possible.

The following persons were sworn to speak:

1. **Edward Clement, 310 S. Ellis St.**
“After decades of progress, we don’t need to go back now.”
2. **Dave Collins, 109 Ashton Lane, First Methodist Church Building Committee Chairman**
“Our church is the most significant structure on the block. We are not proposing to destroy the fabric of Salisbury; we are proposing to add something to the fabric of Salisbury.”
3. **Anne Lyles, 409 E. Bank St.**
Read resolution from the Brooklyn South Square Neighborhood Association
Ms. Linda Edmondson, President
4. **Janie Allen, 100 W. Innes St., Mural Preservation, Inc.**
“Seek ways to reuse the building.”
5. **Richard Huffman, 228 W. Bank St., Member, Board of Brooklyn Southsquare Neighborhood Association and Historic Salisbury West Square Neighborhood Association**
“Urge that the church continue its prayerful consideration in determining alternative uses for these buildings.”
6. **Barbara Perry, 131 W. Bank St., Chairman, Community Appearance Commission**
“If at all possible for the church to consider adaptive reuse we would appreciate it because if they can do it then someone will also.”
7. **Jean Owen, 315 W. Horah St.**
“I want the church to get their needs met..... I really do think, because I’ve seen people act in this town and other places, that when you act with an open mind you can get just what you want and everybody can be happy.”
8. **Bud Mickle, member of First United Methodist Church for 40 years, Chairman of Trustee Board for 8 years, and member of Historic Salisbury Foundation**
“I really hope that our church will slow down and not consider demolition in January and let some time past until the church can settle on what its going to do.
9. **Mark Perry, 131 W. Bank St.**
“I hope we can prevail upon First United Methodist Church to not demolish those buildings but to try to weed them into the fabric of what they already have so that we can all be good neighbors to one another.
10. **Mary James, 727 S. Fulton St. - Moved to Salisbury about a year ago because of its historic nature – found it on the internet.**
“We can’t have a suburban church in a downtown perhaps plans just have to be compromised so that their needs are satisfied and those of the community and the rest of their neighbors..”

11. Katie Temple, 314 W. Marsh St., former president of Residents of Olde Salisbury speaking on behalf of the neighborhood.

“If we allow these buildings to be demolished it would set precedence for much more demolition in years to come.”

12. Thomas Griffis, Pastor, First United Methodist Church

“Congregation has and will continue to be a good neighbor in this community. Congregation will continue to explore avenues and options that will enable us to meet the facility needs with our congregation safely and adequately today and for the years to come. We are not finished yet with our final design. I am confident that we will find avenues and ways to work with the residents of this community to continue to provide those fingerprints of history that will serve the community for years to come.”

In response to a question from Michael Young who asked if the church would consider holding off demolition until the funds are raised, Rev. Griffis said, *“I cannot speak on behalf of the Building Committee; I do not anticipate demolition in the first 3-6 months of the coming year or even past those months.”*

When Michael Young asked if when the church was forming its growth objectives were the objectives of the community and the neighborhood also adequately addressed, Rev. Griffis said, *“.....The Committee has been attempting to address the facility needs of the congregation.”*

Michael Young also asked Rev. Griffis if the interests of the neighborhood and the community were also the church’s interest. He replied, *“Yes, in that the design that has come before us, again, a preliminary design, attempted to bring to the neighborhood and to the community a design was in keeping with the overall architectural structure of the church, and in that way would enhance the community, the neighborhood, in which the church is placed.”*

In response to Michael Young’s question - *“as this plan is being further developed do you believe it might be apropos to have some of the folk from the community or the neighborhood comment as they are being developed,”* Rev. Griffis said, *“I think that’s entirely appropriate, and I think our congregation would be amendable to that.”*

Jeff Sowers asked Rev. Griffis if he would consider letting someone make a presentation to the whole congregation; he responded, *“that is something that we certainly could present to the Building Committee and to the members of the congregation.”*

Rev. Griffis further stated, *“At this point, I don’t think we are closing any doors. I think we are on the front end of this program.”*

(At this point Rev. Griffis left the meeting for another appointment.)

Ken Rufty, Marsh St., asked the following question – *“Have the church members voted on the project or is it a Building Committee and Church Council issue where they have kind of steered it, and this is the direction they are taking it?”*

In the absence of both the Pastor and the Building Committee Chairman, Michael Young informed Mr. Rufty that the applicant for the demolition was the Building Committee.

Joanne Smith, a member of the Building Committee, was present and sworn to speak.

Ms. Smith stated that the project has not been voted on yet and said, “that will be on down the road.” She said, “we have tried to meet with members of the church in small groups; we’ve had their input.”

In response to Michael Young who asked Ms. Smith if the church had seen a final plan, she said, “No, this is just a preliminary plan, just suggestions right now.” She further stated that there has not been a date set for demolition.

13. Jeff Smith, owner, ERA Glover Realty, 210 E. Innes St.

“The attractiveness of this city is in the heart and soul of this community. It is strong in not destroying these buildings. I strongly urge that the church, the Building Committee and Ms. Smith, really take the time to listen to what is being said today and a better solution be brought.”

14. Edward Norvell, 128 S. Fulton St. (family owns 202 S. Main St.)

“I hope that this church will respect the neighborhood and the historic city that they live in and preserve these buildings. The greatest fear that the neighbors have is that the church will demolish the buildings and then later not build anything in their place.”

15. Susan Griffis, 1717 Colony Road, First Methodist Church member

“There were 25-30 church members present tonight to hear what the community has to say. I would ask, if it can be arranged, for Historic Salisbury to come to the church and present options. It would be very helpful to the membership of the church to say, ‘here is our suggestion to renovate these buildings or to reuse these buildings, this is what it would cost.’ That would be very helpful to us.”

16. Martha Hawkins, 408 S. Fulton St., Local Realtor

“If we tear down those beautiful buildings, we are doing a real, real injustice....They are really special.”

17. Whitney Peckerman, 120 E. Innes St., owner of the old Flowers Bakery Building

“A large portion of why we chose Salisbury is because of the Historic District and the town’s commitment to the arts. “I would hope that the church members would think about what, not so much the bricks or whether they are beautiful buildings, which they are, but what happened, what lives were lived in those buildings and what memories are there.”

18. Davis Cooke, 210 S. Jackson St., owner, 111 W. Bank St.

I am encouraged by the idea that the church does not have any final plans and are still open to working with members of the community. There are lots of ways to accomplish what they want to accomplish and what they need to expand their facility without unnecessarily creating ill-will within the community.

With no other persons coming forth to speak, Michael Young closed the public hearing.

Michael Young informed the body that a total of 8 emails had been received from persons who could not attend the meeting urging the church to reconsider the demolition plans. In addition, there was one email from a member of the church.

Closing Statement

In a closing statement, Michael Young spoke his appreciation to the presenters – David Bergstone, Randy Hemann, Jack Thomson, and Gray Stout for participating in the meeting. He said, “It appears that many, many people and organizations are working hard to see that the First United Methodist Church can meet its objectives while preserving an important piece of our community tax base and our history for future generations.”

He also thanked the First United Methodist Church members for their attendance.

Michael Young continued with appreciation extended to city staff, especially Janet Gopen; also, to Vice-Chairman Jeff Sowers and the committee members who helped to organize the meeting, and then to all preservation advocates which included everyone who came to the meeting.

Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Michael Young, Chairman

Judy Jordan, Secretary

