

COURTHOUSE SQUARE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Be it remembered that the Courthouse Square Preservation Commission did meet for a reconvened session on Wednesday, May 12, 2010, at 6:00 p.m. on the second floor in the courtroom of City Hall with the following members present:

Jim Pryor, Chairman
Theresa Flautt
Donna Gottshall
Will Lewis
Mike Overstreet

Tiffany Smith, Consultant
Katrina Hourin, Assistant City Planner
Alicia Thompson, Secretary

The following Commissioners were absent:

Phil Bailey
Andy Phillips

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Pryor.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Pryor asked if there were any necessary modifications to the agenda. The following revision was made to the agenda: that Case #049 is withdrawn. There being no further modifications to the agenda, Chairman Pryor asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda.

Motion was made by Commissioner Lewis and seconded by Commissioner Overstreet to approve the amended agenda.

All present voting aye.

The motion was approved.

Public Hearing for Case #050A & #050B – 1006 Jefferson Avenue. Jeff Williams of Williams Engineering came before the Commission representing Seeker Properties, LLC seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove and relocate an existing structure located at 1006 Jefferson Avenue. Mr. Williams informed the Commission that the request for removal was previously approved in 2007. He also presented the Commission with letters of support from the property owner Deanna Denny and stated that Habitat for Humanity has agreed to take structure if it is removed. Mr. Williams read Section 54-26(e) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and answered the following elements:

e. Applicants that have received a recommendation for demolition shall be permitted to receive such demolition permit without additional commission action on demolition following the commission's recommendation of a permit for new construction. Permits for demolition and construction shall be issued simultaneously. For commercially zoned property, the commission may issue a certificate of appropriateness for demolition without requiring a simultaneous certificate of appropriateness for new construction after evaluating the historic

resource inventory, considering a recommendation from the historic preservation consultant or city planning official and finding each of the following elements:

1. The resource is not individually, architecturally, culturally, and/or historically significant. *Mr. Williams argued that the resource is not individually, architecturally, culturally, or historically significant due the fact that the survey from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History listed the structure as noncontributing due the extensive alterations.*
2. The resource does not contribute to the architectural character of the district. *Mr. Williams argued that structure does not contribute to the architectural character of the district due to the vast number of modifications done on the structure causes it to be noncontributing.*
3. The removal of the resource will not negatively impact neighboring property values. *Mr. Williams argued that the structure will not negatively impact neighboring property values due to the fact that three sides of the property is joined by property owned by the City of Oxford and the remaining side is joined by Larry's Barbershop. Mr. Williams also answered that the property owner of Larry's Barbershop is in support of the project.*
4. The resource is not difficult or impossible to reproduce because of its texture, design, material, detail, or unique character. *Mr. Williams argued that the structure would not be difficult to redesign or reproduce because of its texture, design, material, detail, and unique character.*
5. The removal of the resource will not impact the structural integrity or character of the surrounding structures. *Mr. Williams argued that removal of the resource would not impact the structural integrity or character of the surrounding structures due to the fact that parking lots owned by the City of Oxford exist on three sides and one business is located to the west.*
6. The removal of the resource does not alter or diminish the statement of significance for the establishment of the preservation district where the property is located. *Mr. Williams argued that the removal of the structure would be replaced with an ancillary product that would resemble the parking lot of the nearby Lafayette County Chancery Building. Mr. Williams also presented letters of support from the City of Oxford's Convention & Visitors Bureau and FNC Park.*

Mr. Williams further discussed what his client was hoping to accomplish on the site. Mr. Williams presented the Commission with a landscaping plan for the proposed parking lot and discussion was made regarding the number of trees to remain on the site. Commissioner Overstreet asked Mr. Williams if the site plan for the proposed parking lot had been before the Oxford Planning Commission. Mr. Williams answered and replied that the Oxford Planning Commission has tabled a decision on approval of the site plan until the next meeting. Mr. Williams further informed the Commission that a traffic study has been conducted to determine the need for a crosswalk. Mr. Williams also informed the Commission that the Oxford Planning Commission requested that his client consider a crosswalk in the plans. Lengthy discussion was made regarding the potential safety and traffic issues. Commissioner Lewis expressed comments that safety issues were not under the purview of the Courthouse Square Preservation Commission. Commissioner Overstreet expressed concerns about the timeline of construction for the proposed hotel site. Mr. Williams informed the Commission that his client was willing to accept contingencies with approval of the application. Mr. Williams further stated that the structure would not be removed until all the necessary approvals have been received. Chairman

Pryor expressed concern that the structure should not be removed unless construction of the proposed hotel had begun. Historic Preservation Consultant Tiffany Smith informed the Commission that no building permits for the proposed hotel site would be issued until the proposed parking issues have been resolved.

Jerry Mills, Attorney, came before the Commission on behalf of Seeker Properties, LLC and asked that the Certificate of Appropriateness be approved subject to any named conditions allowing his client some leeway with the site plan. Commissioner Flautt asked about the timeline for the proposed project. Stefano Capomazza answered and replied that the proposed hotel would be constructed first; followed by the removal of the existing structure; and the parking lot to be constructed last.

Tom Freeland came before the Commission and spoke on the criteria listed in Section 54-26(e) of the Oxford Historic Preservation Ordinance. Mr. Freeland argued that the resource was significant because the structure was an 1895 wood frame house with old trees on the lot. Mr. Freeland also spoke about the size of the existing trees on the lot and stated that the old house softens the look of Jefferson from the street view. Mr. Freeland also argued that the structure does contribute to the architectural character of the district and encouraged the Commission to look at the structure independently. Mr. Freeland further asked the Commission to deny the request, but stated that if the request were approved that the Commission put pretty strong teeth into the conditions.

Mr. Williams rebutted and addressed Mr. Freeland's concerns regarding the old trees on the site. Mr. Williams stated that the two large trees on the site would remain and that only five other trees would be removed. Mr. Williams also added that the trees to be planted on the site would meet or exceed the requirements of the City of Oxford's Landscape Ordinance.

Rebecca Moreton, Allen Alexander, and Gregory Lowe came before the Commission and expressed their opposition to the removal of the structure to make way for the proposed parking lot. Each asked the Commission to deny request for Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the structure.

Mike Bridge came before the Commission and expressed his support for removal of the structure to make way for the proposed parking lot. Mr. Bridge asked the Commission to approve the request for Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the structure.

Commissioner Overstreet added that the character of the neighborhood has changed and evolved over the years. Chairman Pryor stated that the Commission has to look at the edges and carefully balance the situation. He also added that the Courthouse Square Historic Preservation District is located in the Downtown Business District and therefore the structure is not a residence. Chairman Pryor reiterated that several businesses have been housed there.

Commissioner Lewis commented and stated that he is in favor of preserving the town's history but he does not believe that removal of the structure would negatively impact neighboring property values.

Commissioner Lewis spoke in support of the removal and motion was made by Commissioner Lewis and seconded by Commissioner Overstreet to approve the request for Certificate of

Appropriateness to remove the structure located at 1006 Jefferson Avenue with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant provide the Commission with the specific relocation of the structure;
2. That the relocation be commensurate and subject to the construction of the proposed hotel;
3. That the Commission be provided with a photograph of the structure to be removed;
4. The method of moving the structure;
5. Statement of need of proposed structure;

The vote was as follows:

Pryor	Aye	Flautt	Nay
Gotshall	Aye	Lewis	Aye
Overstreet	Aye		

The motion was approved.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.