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TOWN OF WARRENTON

“Historically Great - Progressively Strong”

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Historic District Commission Regular Meeting February 23, 2015 Minutes

The Historic District Commission regular meeting was called to order on Monday February 23, 2015 at 5:30 PM, at the Warrenton Rural Fire Station by Richard Hunter. Attending were Board members: Richard Hunter, Bob Shingler and Joan Arbuthnot. Also attending were Robert Davie, Town Administrator, Kimberly Harding, Commissioner and Rose Derring and Cheryl Coffman, citizens. Guest speakers were Laurie Williams and Mitch Wilds of the NC State Historic Preservation Office.

Richard Hunter introduced the guest speakers. Laurie Williams began by presenting best practices for local historic district commissions. These best practices include: having good design guidelines, sticking to the guidelines, educating the public, managing new construction in the district and making proper motions with detailed findings of fact. Ms. Williams offered several suggestions for publicity which include: newspaper articles, once-a year mailings, web-based information, a brochure for real estate agents and brown street signage indicating the extent of the district. Ms. Williams inquired as to the number of newer buildings in the commercial, historic district. Richard Hunter indicated that no more than 30% of the buildings were newer (1950 or later). Others agreed, indicating a similar percentage for the residential portion of the district. Ms. Williams indicated that some towns have broken down there districts into several types based on periods of history.

Robert Davie inquired as to the role of the guidelines and if they were just guidelines or should be adhered to consistently and accurately. Mitch Wilds responded that the commission should strictly adhere to the guidelines.

Laurie Williams presented an exercise for the Commission to practice. A motion worksheet was handed out and a roof replacement example discussed. Ms. Williams offered best practices when considering COAs, which include: giving the commission time to reflect, allowing the owner time to speak as well as the opposition and holding a quasi-judicial process that will stand up in a superior court.

Mitch Wilds offered further best practices. A major consideration should be the “integrity of the property”, which is measured by the amount of authentic, original materials that are still present. A question was posed: how much of a structure can be replaced and yet still be labeled historic? Mr. Wilds referenced a series of Preservation Briefs issued by the National Parks

Service and available online. Reasons to consider substitute material for a renovation include: the unavailability of original material, unavailability of artisans, the poor condition of the original material, building code changes and the cost of material.

Richard Hunter asked about standing seam metal roofing. Mr. Wilds showed a series of pictures of unacceptable modern metal roofing that appears more industrial than historical. While historical-looking material may at times be more expensive, replacing residential roofing with industrial-looking roofing would not be acceptable to the NC State Historic Preservation Office. Robert Davie asked if the guidelines call for wooden windows, must the commission require wooden windows. Mr. Wilds responded that the commission must adhere to the guidelines as adopted in local ordinances.

Richard Hunter presented an ordinance from Edenton, NC that deals with Demolition by Neglect. It was briefly discussed and adoption encouraged by the guest speakers.

Cheryl Coffman briefly discussed the COA for Emmanuel Episcopal Church, which would remove portions of a chimney.

The COA for 305 Halifax Street (known as Whitsom, now the Woodson home) was discussed. Trees have been cut down prior to submitting a COA and receiving approval from the Commission. Remediation alternatives were suggested by Mitch Wilds which included: creating a more detailed site plan of proposed improvements, paying for an update of the National Register district by the homeowner, putting special conditions on the proposed improvements.

With no further business the meeting adjourned.