

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF GRANVILLE
CITY OF OXFORD**

**2016 ANNUAL REPORT of the
OXFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**

TO: Mayor Jackie Sergeant and the Oxford Board of Commissioners

On behalf of the Oxford Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), I present this Annual Report to update you on the activities of the HPC from February 2015 through February 2016, and to share with you the goals for the coming year.

Our Commission presently has one (1) vacancy and consists of the following six (6) members:

Anthony F. Armento, Chairman
Richard Thomas, Vice-Chairman
Kelly Collins-Schram, Secretary
Christine Sims, Treasurer

Joan Roberson, member
Cathy Weaver, member

Treasury report = \$8,690.75

Activities from February 2015 – February 2016:

- The HPC reviewed 28 COA applications (19 in prior year; an increase of 47%) affecting 21 properties and consisting of 48 separate projects:
 - 12 projects were approved administratively as Minor Works
 - 36 projects were formally reviewed; of these, 34 were approved and 2 denied (1 denied request submitted a modified application that was approved);
- 3 HPC members and the City Planning Director attended a training session in Greensboro in March. 4 HPC members attended a training session in Salisbury in September, presented by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (of which the Oxford HPC is a member). This session was also sponsored in part by the Oxford HPC. Participation in these training sessions enables the HPC to maintain its designation as a Certified Local Government, a designation awarded by the State Preservation Office (SPO) in September 2014 based on standards of performance achieved by the HPC. Topics covered at the two training sessions included meeting procedure, COA review, architectural plan review, and opportunities for funding of historic districts;
- HPC Liaisons were appointed to the both the Downtown Master Plan and the Bicentennial Committees, as part of the HPC's goal of engaging with other committees working to enhance the community;
- A partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department was begun, for the development of Historic District Walking Tours, as part of the HPC's goal of enhancing the appreciation and enjoyment of Oxford's architectural heritage;
- The HPC website was completely redesigned and updated to be more informative, enjoyable, accessible, and effective in communicating information about the HPC, the COA procedure, and the Historic Districts (www.oxfordhpc.org);
- The 4th Annual HPC Stewardship Award, and the Annual HPC Photo Contest, were conducted, with award winners being announced in May 2015;

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- The first HPC planning retreat was held in October. The retreat was a half-day session and was inspired by the annual retreat held by the Board of Commissioners, and was very successful. The retreat was facilitated by an experienced historic preservation professional local to our area, and was attended HPC members, the City Planning Director, and by a staff member of the SPO. The retreat included a review of purpose and of current activities, and a brainstorming session focusing on both short- and long-range goals;
- The HPC was awarded a grant of \$12,000 from the federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), after submission of a successful application to the SPO, which administers the grants. The award was made possible by the City of Oxford having achieved Certified Local Government status. The funds were awarded for the revision of the Design Guidelines, which is the document used by the HPC to assist in the evaluation of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, to make them more accessible, informative, and helpful.
 - Since the awarding of the HPF grant, former HPC chair Susan Wicker was appointed as project manager, and requests for proposal were prepared and distributed by the SPO to qualified consultants. The firm of Johnson, Mirmiran and Thompson was selected to assist the HPC in the project, and the HPC has begun working with them.
 - An important component of the revision of the Design Guidelines is the solicitation of input from affected property owners. An initial public meeting scheduled for February 15, but that was cancelled due to inclement weather, has been rescheduled for March 17, and will be held in the Thornton Library at 7:00 pm that evening.
 - It is also important to note that the terms of the HPF grant require participation in funding of the project by the local government, and the HPC is deeply grateful to the Board of Commissioners for its support of this very necessary project;
- The HPC worked together with a property owner who had received approval for demolition of an historic property, subject to the 365 day delay provided by NC General Statute and by local Ordinance, to identify an outcome that would permit the preservation of the structure as well as the owner's objectives. The property owner was extremely gracious throughout the process, allowing the HPC to bring experts to assess the building and also to bring parties interested in preserving the structure to view it. I am very pleased to report that another resident (a newcomer to our community) has recently acquired the property, and that restoration of the property has commenced, and both parties were commended by the HPC for their noteworthy citizenship.
- The HPC remained in touch with the staff of Preservation North Carolina (PNC), regarding its effort to identify a buyer of the Brown-Watkins property on College Street. Throughout the year, there has been strong interest in the property by people who are capable of undertaking and completing a restoration project of this magnitude. I am very pleased to report that PNC is working now with two very strong applicants, who are local to our area, and has also begun the legal process of taking possession of the property from its present owner.
- Finally, HPC officers were elected, and goals for the coming year were set, in January 2016.

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(Continued)**

Goals for the coming year at this time include:

- Carrying out the revision of the Design Guidelines, with a required completion date of July 2016;
- Conducting the 5th Annual HPC Photo Contest, and issuing the 5th Annual HPC Stewardship Award, in May 2016;
- Hosting two educational seminars: the first with the general public, to review the new Design Guidelines after the completion of the revision project, and the second with property owners and contractors, to describe preservation techniques and evaluation of choices in color, material, and design;
- Distilling information developed for educational meetings into a format that can be effectively implemented as outreach sessions with other local associations;
- Assisting in the staging of historic homes that are available for purchase;
- Maintaining and developing relationships throughout the community that can assist in the promotion and enjoyment of the Historic Districts;
- Researching the option available to the HPC of creating a revolving fund, that would permit flexibility in response to opportunities or challenges concerning historic properties;
- Conducting informal meetings with HPC members of other cities throughout the state, to identify activities undertaken in their communities that have been successful in the preservation and enhancement of their historic districts.

In closing, I would like to say that it is a privilege serving the City as a member of the Oxford HPC. Also, I want to extend my gratitude to the Mayor and to the Commissioners, and to Planning Director Cheryl Hart, for their support in the preservation of the City's historic structures.

On behalf of the Oxford Historic Preservation Commission, I submit this report.

This the 8th day of March, 2016.

Anthony F. Armento, Chairman
Oxford Historic Preservation Commission