

**Historic District Review Board**  
**Special Session**  
**Work Session**  
**June 26, 2007**  
**1:00 P.M.**

In Town Council Chambers, Chairman Russ Dunton called to order the Special Session followed by a Work Session for the Historic District Review Board. In addition to Chairman Dunton, present were Melvin Dudley, Dianne Davis and Jan Neville. Also present were Town Planner Jason Pruitt, several members of the Planning Commission and one member of the Public.

Chairman Dunton stated there was one order of business left from the last session. At that session, Leon Parham representing the owners of 7 Strawberry Street shared a proposal for renovation of the property. The proposed renovation would restore the architectural design to the original look.

**Motion made by Dianne Davis, seconded by Melvin Dudley and unanimously approved to accept the application as presented.**

Chairman Dunton then closed the business portion of the meeting and turned the session over to Camille Bowman of the Historic Resources.

Ms. Bowman introduced herself as representing the Tidewater Regional Office and as the statewide coordinator for the Certified Local Government Program. She congratulated the Town for joining the Program and stated that Cape Charles was the 31<sup>st</sup> locality in the state to become certified. Ms. Bowman then began an overview of historical preservation. She stated the first efforts were made by a group of women in 1895 to protect Mount Vernon, and that in 1931, Charleston, SC was the first city to create protective ordinances. In the early 1960's, federal grant monies were made available to restore and rehabilitate decaying areas causing developers to overlook the historical qualities of buildings and historic areas. This caused the National Historic Preservation Act to be passed in 1966.

Ms. Bowman then explained the purpose and goals of the Preservation Act and how they filter through to state and local government entities. She stated that even if a home is registered in the National Historic Register, there is nothing to prevent the owner from changing the structure, design or color. What would help to maintain the original historic character would be ordinances passed by the locality. She explained that the National Historic Register is a planning tool for the Federal Government in allowing the Army Corps of Engineers or Highway Departments certain leeway when building roads, etc.

On the State level, Ms. Bowman explained the National Historic Register allows for tax incentives and Planning Grants. She then explained the Easement Program which is meant to protect the agriculture and farm areas.

Due to a question posed by Melvin Dudley, a discussion opened concerning the Rosenwald School and how to protect it historically. Ms. Bowman explained that even if a property owner says they do not want their property to be listed on the National Register, the property could still be nominated to the Federal Government as an eligible property.

Ms. Bowman addressed the CDBG question that Block Grant money must be used in compliance with the Historic District Guidelines. She explained that CDBG money passed through HUD must also comply, but HUD does not explain that to the communities.

Certified Local Development – Ms. Bowman stated there were 140 architectural review boards in the state of Virginia, only 31 of which were involved in the Certified Local Government Program. She listed the qualifiers and the benefits of being involved in the program. Qualifiers would include following the Secretary of the Interior Standards, training the Board members annually and updating the local Historical survey (any structure 50 years old or older qualifies and should be documented). Benefits include taking advantage of the grant program - 10% of all federal funds allocated to the State go first to the Certified Local Governments, about \$66,000 each year. She explained the funds could be used for training, to update surveys, to update guidelines and many other purposes. She underscored the grant process was highly competitive. Ms. Bowman suggested if the Town was not already involved in a Main Street Program, that it would be wise to participate. The program works to produce a strong historical heart and offer marketing and promotions to help strengthen the historical area.

Training – Ms. Bowman indicated there were many opportunities around the State for training. Specifically she mentioned the annual conference slated for September 23 – 25 in Staunton, VA. She reviewed the agenda items; one item of particular interest was affordable housing. Also of interest was the Historical tradesman.

Chairman Dunton addressed the need to incorporate neighborhoods that had been left out of the original survey. Ms. Bowman agreed they need to be surveyed. She pointed out archeology is also part of the historic programs.

New Materials – Architectural Preservation – Ms. Bowman pointed out that the early builders understood materials and built structures to last generations. Today's attitude has changed; owners care only for the time they will be occupying the structure. Today's materials also do not last; fast growth wood is softer and does not weather well. She mentioned a building must breathe to pass the moisture throughout. If trapped, the moisture will cause deterioration, termites and mold.

New metal roof systems – Ms. Bowman explained the new systems use smaller pans than historic metal roofs. She also mentioned that the metal did not allow for ventilation against the joist structure trapping heat and causing deterioration. The metal roofs also trap fire not allowing it to "chimney". Slate and tile can last hundreds of years. The historic type of tin shingles is still available.

Masonry – Historic mortars were made with oyster shells; therefore elastic. If they cracked, they healed themselves. Portland cement as used in today's market is not elastic and does not heal itself. Hardiplank is made of portland cement; it does not breathe; however, most historic districts allow hardiplank.

Plastic/vinyl – Ms. Bowman stated under sunlight the material fades and becomes brittle. The material traps moisture and leaks toxic gases.

Paint colors – Under this topic, Ms. Bowman stated tastes change. Each architectural period had its own designs and color standards. She mentioned the qualities of lead based paint and that is can be encapsulated rather than removed.

Insulation – Ms. Bowman stated there was a right way and a wrong way to install and use insulation. She mentioned blown insulation would not be advisable because it would not allow a building to breathe. She reported that plaster was the best insulation available.

Two other items discussed in detail follow: 1) If you do something to the building, be sure you can undo it; repair rather than replace. There are craftsmen available that know historical standards; 2) If an addition to a structure is proposed, be sure it can be clearly identified in a manner where it could be remove with no damage to the original structure; 3) Any structure or portion of a structure that is 50 years old or older would be considered significant. Metal windows from the 50's are significant; 4) To be eligible for tax credits windows may not be replaced – they must be repaired. For energy efficiency, storm windows are suggested.

Chairman Dunton voiced a concern over structures in Town that have deteriorated to such a degree that it sometimes makes it difficult to handle proposed applications. He asked whether it was better to let the structure further decay or whether to approve a proposal that did not completely meet historical guidelines. Ms. Bowman suggested full documentation showing the guidelines and showing what was approved ~~how the structure was to conform~~ (rev. 7-17-07) was the best alternative. She stated it was not good practice to approve just what people can afford if it did not meet the historic guidelines. She emphasized all decisions should be tied to the guidelines to be defensible decisions.

**Motion made by Melvin Dudley seconded by Jan Neville and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting.**

---

**Chairman**

---

**Town Clerk**