



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT
CITY OF SOUTHPORT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
March 5, 2025
4:00 PM**

Minutes

Members Present: Charles Drew, Tal West, Bonnie Bray, Rick Pukenas, Josh Cline-McGee, Jim McKee [Phone for a portion of the meeting]

Members Absent: Bonner Herring, Joanne Wesson, Jim McKee, Alexis Gore-Graves

Staff Present: Penny Tysinger, Historic Preservation Commission Planner
Maureen Meehan, Planning Services Director
Tori Deviney, Deputy City Clerk

Liaison: Karen Mosteller for Robert Carroll

A. Chair Drew called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM

B. Chair Drew led the Invocation

C. Chair Drew led the Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Pukenas and seconded by Mr. McGee. ***The motion passed unanimously with all members voting in favor.***

E. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of the February 5, 2025 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting
Chair Drew announced that members Bonnie Bray and Tal West would serve as full voting members for the duration of the meeting.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting was made by Mr. Pukenas and seconded by Ms. Bray. ***The motion passed unanimously with all members voting in favor.***

F. Public Comment

None

G. Old Business

1. Final Review of Draft Design Standards

Ms. Tysinger guided the Commission through the review. She noted that members had received a document summarizing comments made on the design standards and the consultant's responses and revisions. Comments that had been addressed were marked with strikethroughs; additional notes were provided in red.

She began with a review of Ms. Bray's comments, which appeared first in the document. For the comment concerning the "Foreword" section, the consultant had struck through the entire section, indicating it had been addressed and removed in response to the feedback. Ms. Tysinger reminded the group that Ms. Bray's comments had largely been based on her previous presentation slides, and that Ms. Radford, the consultant, had been tasked with responding to and incorporating those suggestions into the text. This document served as Ms. Radford's formal response and implementation.

Moving into the Table of Contents, Ms. Tysinger detailed several items:

- **Item 2a and 2b** were struck through in the document, indicating that they had been resolved. These items related to identifying specific sections—such as exterior lighting, driveways, on-street parking, and signage—which had been clarified and are now listed under updated page numbers (notably page 20). Ms. Radford had also made sure the Table of Contents was revised to reflect these changes accurately.
- **Item 2d** was a suggestion to consider relocating the section titled *Protecting Southport's Historic Character* from its original placement on page 21 (within the "History and Architecture" section beginning on page 26) to earlier in the document. The consultant responded by moving that section forward to page 11, positioning it next to the statement of purpose and goals. This adjustment was made to highlight the City's preservation goals more prominently in the document.
- **Item 2e** noted inconsistencies in page numbering, particularly starting from section 1.9. Ms. Radford had preemptively identified this issue and updated the page numbers throughout the document for consistency.
- **Item 2f** concerned redundancies found throughout the text. These were addressed across the full document to improve clarity and reduce repetition.
- **Item 2g** referenced inconsistent naming conventions used in the Table of Contents. Ms. Radford corrected these discrepancies to ensure uniformity throughout the document, particularly with labeling of sections and headings.

In the Introduction section, Ms. Tysinger noted that both **Items A** and **B** were marked as addressed. For **Item C**, which related to content found on page 11, the suggestion was to clarify the information to make it easier for the public to understand the necessary steps to take in various preservation or application processes. Ms. Radford responded that she would include hyperlinks in the final digital version of the document to guide users to the appropriate sections, forms, or resources. This enhancement is aimed at improving usability and reducing confusion, particularly for those less familiar with the design review process.

Finally, the last part of the section being reviewed referred again to **Item C** from a later section of the document. Ms. Tysinger noted that Ms. Radford had updated this content to consistently reflect the City's official preservation program and that all links and references would be embedded in the final online version of the design standards to support ease of

access and navigation.

Ms. Tysinger addressed sections **D**, **E**, and **F**, confirming that all three had been resolved and marked accordingly by the consultant. In particular, **Item F** had been rephrased for clarity, and Ms. Radford indicated she understood the concerns that had been raised.

Item G was also noted to be addressed, with Ms. Radford confirming that relevant sections would be linked appropriately in the final digital version of the document. For **Item H**, the consultant had provided a satisfactory response, and **Item I** raised the issue of inconsistent capitalization when referring to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The inconsistency appeared in the last two paragraphs on page 78. Ms. Radford clarified that “Statewide Significance” should be capitalized, as it is an official designation indicating that a property has been recognized at the state level.

Items J through **M** were all struck through in the markup, meaning they had been addressed in the updated version. **Item N** involved revising the phrasing regarding accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The original text in the last paragraph of the introduction on page 9 used the term “handicap access.” Ms. Radford deleted the term but opted not to replace it with “handicap accessibility.” Ms. Bray commented on the phrasing, stating her intent was to emphasize that it is not the “access” that is handicapped but rather the term should reflect access *for* handicapped persons.

Ms. Tysinger stated Ms. Wesson’s comments had been a restatement, with no new content or changes. Chair Drew had no suggested changes. Mr. McKee’s recommendations had all been incorporated. As for the Historical Society’s input, Ms. Tysinger explained that the comments had been submitted in handwritten form, which presented a challenge due to their light ink and overall legibility. She and the consultant still needed time to review and transcribe these comments together, but she assured the Commission that they were unlikely to result in any significant changes to the overall content or direction of the standards.

The “Site and Setting” section had been assigned to Ms. Graves, but no comments had been received at the time.

She then turned to Ms. Bray’s comments regarding the “Disaster Preparedness and Prevention” section. Ms. Bray had raised concerns about rights-of-way design issues and recommended consulting the state design standards for guidance. Ms. Tysinger noted that while rights-of-way matters typically fall under City authority, the consultant had used the State model in incorporating elements of resiliency planning. She acknowledged that the resilient cities framework had been compared to the State’s model and appropriately integrated into the standards. However, she emphasized that matters involving rights-of-way may exceed the scope of the Preservation Commission and are more appropriately handled at the City level.

Ms. Bray asked for clarification, inquiring if the referenced materials were from the booklets previously distributed to the Commission. Ms. Tysinger confirmed that they were and continued.

Returning to the other comments, Ms. Tysinger clarified that the issue on page 47 regarding railroad ties had been addressed. She then reviewed the second paragraph of that section, which underscored that the design standards should be viewed as a “living, breathing document” that can evolve over time in response to technological changes and

the introduction of new materials. The consultant added language to support the inclusion of substitute materials for the sake of sustainability and design flexibility. She referenced guidance from the National Park Service which allow for the use of substitute materials on historic structures exteriors.

In section 3.1.1, additional language had been added to address property setbacks. These updates referenced the UDO and clarified the use of terminology, especially surrounding “contributing structures.” The consultant struck the term “contributing structure” from this section after noting that only structures within the National Register district (not the local district) are eligible for federal and state tax credits. Furthermore, it was clarified that current setbacks are not always consistent with the historic character of the district. This issue will be addressed through the UDO update and the City’s comprehensive land use plan.

Section 3.1.4 was revised to include a suggestion to contact City Planning Officials if archaeological or architectural features are suspected on a property. Ms. Tysinger explained that this kind of advisory language could be added as a condition during the approval process. However, she reminded the Commission that these are *design standards*, not ordinances. Many determinations would still be made case-by-case during public hearings, where findings of fact and any special conditions could be applied.

Finally, in section 3.3.2, the consultant added language to the end of the first sentence, specifying that the evaluation of building elevations should apply to views from public streets and waterways. The reference to “press board siding” was deleted, and the section now includes allowances for substitute materials such as vinyl, aluminum, and fiber cement siding. These materials are considered acceptable on additions as long as they help differentiate new construction from the historic portions of a building.

Discussion centered around Section 3.3.2 of the draft standards, which addresses acceptable materials for new construction and additions. The topic was raised by Mr. McGee, who expressed strong concern over the language that he stated explicitly prohibited the use of vinyl and metal building materials. He began by questioning how this blanket exclusion aligns with current conditions in Southport’s Historic District, especially in commercial areas where metal storefronts, metal roofing, and aluminum architectural elements are already in use.

Mr. McGee referenced his review of National Park Service rehabilitation standards, pointing out that these federal guidelines do, under certain circumstances, allow the use of substitute materials like clad windows—particularly on secondary elevations not visible from the public rights-of-way. He explained that even buildings seeking federal and state tax credits might be permitted to use such materials, provided they do not compromise the integrity of the primary façade. He emphasized that the Department of the Interior acknowledges evolving technologies and materials in preservation work.

He further noted that Southport’s Historic District is unique in that it includes both residential and commercial buildings, unlike other cities, such as Charlotte, where Historic Districts are often exclusively residential. This mixed-use character necessitates a more flexible approach. He advocated against blanket prohibitions and called for latitude and case-by-case review, especially for commercial properties where some architectural metal or modern siding may already exist or be contextually appropriate.

Ms. Bray agreed, saying that the absence of clear differentiation between residential and commercial standards was confusing. She predicted that without more refined language, the Commission would encounter frequent challenges from applicants seeking Certificates of Appropriateness—especially when existing commercial buildings are visibly clad in the very materials the standards seek to prohibit. While those may be grandfathered in, she stressed it would be difficult to justify their presence while denying similar requests for nearby additions.

Chairman Drew sought clarification, asking if Mr. McGee was advocating for allowing vinyl and aluminum siding on commercial buildings only. Mr. McGee confirmed that he was not proposing unrestricted use, but instead recommended allowance on a case-by-case basis, particularly when the material replicated or extended an existing commercial design. He emphasized that this approach would not compromise residential standards but would acknowledge Southport's architectural diversity.

Mr. West and Ms. Meehan joined the discussion, clarifying some of the language and intent behind the controversial section. Ms. Meehan explained that Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 pertain specifically to new construction and additions, not to changes made to existing buildings. She noted that other parts of the standards addressed exterior changes—including roofing, trim, windows, and storefronts—more comprehensively and with flexibility. She acknowledged that terminology may be contributing to confusion, suggesting the section might better be labeled as relating to "siding materials" rather than general "materials," which implies a broader exclusion.

Mr. McGee pointed out a particular concern with the line in Section 3.3.2, which reads: "The use of vinyl and aluminum building materials is not allowed." He and others in the room agreed this language was too rigid and misleading.

Chair Drew summarized the issue by stating that if someone were constructing a new building or addition—whether residential or commercial—and used vinyl or aluminum siding that is visible from the street or waterway, the current standards would prohibit it. Ms. Meehan confirmed this is how the section currently reads, but emphasized that each COA (Certificate of Appropriateness) is reviewed individually, and exceptions can be made depending on context.

Mr. McGee reiterated his key concern—that the guidance needs to reflect the Commission's intent to allow flexibility in commercial applications. He advocated for simply adjusting the language in the section to reflect that such materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis, much like smooth fiber cementitious siding, which the consultant had noted could be allowed in certain instances.

Ms. Bray suggested inserting a qualifier clause "unless." She and Mr. McGee stressed that this would preserve the Commission's ability to approve or deny based on context, without undermining the overall integrity of the design standards.

Chair Drew also expressed support for adding flexibility to the language, pointing out that the Commission needs discretion during commercial reviews and that overly restrictive language may cause confusion for future Boards.

Ms. Meehan asked for clarification on the desired wording change. She offered a suggestion to rephrase the statement to something like, "Vinyl and aluminum materials are

not permitted in new construction or additions except where determined appropriate by the Commission for commercial or non-residential use on a case-by-case basis.”

Ms. Tysinger confirmed that this could be added and would maintain consistency with how the Commission approaches COAs. Mr. McGee agreed, saying the proposed rewording addressed his concern without weakening the design standards. Chairman Drew noted the importance of crafting clear language now so future Commissions would understand the intent behind the standards.

Ms. Meehan confirmed she had captured the revised phrasing. The group agreed to move forward on that point and resumed their review of the remaining sections.

The discussion resumed with Sections 3.3.4 through 3.3.6 and continued into 3.6.1, which included a suggestion to add a second sentence recommending the use of landscaping to screen mechanical and electrical equipment as well as non-conforming structures from public view. The consultant’s comment indicated this was likely redundant, as all new construction must comply with the UDO regardless, and the design standards function as an overlay.

Mr. McGee asked if the UDO contained specific language regarding landscape screening. Ms. Bray referred to Section 3.6.1 in the draft, which mentioned protecting mature trees but did not address screening specifically. She felt Mr. McGee’s sentence made the standard clearer. Ms. Meehan confirmed that page 69, Section 2.9.1 of the design standards did, in fact, include language directing that utilities and meter boxes be located to the side or rear and be screened from public view, typically using landscaping or fencing.

Section 3.7.5 was discussed next. The proposed revision stated that additions using substitute materials could be approved so long as they were not visible from public streets or waterways and that screening may be required. The consultant ultimately deleted this addition, clarifying that all additions must meet the standards set for exterior materials, including wood siding, trim, and ornamentation.

Section 3.7.6, which addressed residential additions, was left unchanged as the consultant determined that the existing standards already allowed adequate flexibility.

Section 3.7.7 had been revised and marked as addressed.

Section 3.8.1, regarding decks and handrails, was updated to include a new sentence stating that alternative decking and handrail materials are subject to HPC (Historic Preservation Commission) approval. In addition to revising this section, the consultant added four new standards related to decking materials to provide better guidance.

The Commission then reviewed Section 1.3.1, which proposed adding a sentence reminding applicants to check with planning officials about any lighting standards that may have changed or been adopted. Lighting should comply with the Southport Street Light Policy, if applicable. Mr. McGee noted that this essentially served to remind applicants to talk to staff, and Ms. Tysinger added that this coordination is already built into the COA process. Ms. Meehan reiterated that pre-application meetings are encouraged for all applicants, even minor works, to ensure proper alignment between the UDO and the design standards.

For Section 2.4.3, the standards for windows and doors, a third sentence was added stating: “Windows clad with metal or vinyl that match the original dimensions and detailing as closely as possible and meet the standards of the National Park Service may be allowed.” Ms. Tysinger confirmed that the consultant revised Section 2.4.2 and added new content following 2.4.3, which emphasizes that replacement doors or windows must not reduce the size of the original opening. The HPC would need to determine whether the proposed change complies with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards as part of its findings of fact.

Mr. McGee returned to a key point from earlier in the meeting: that federal guidelines allow substitute materials on secondary elevations. He stressed again that the document should reflect this allowance. Ms. Meehan acknowledged that this is handled case by case, and under the Commission’s quasi-judicial authority, discretion may be applied depending on the entirety of the application.

Ms. Meehan clarified that visual similarity and proportional dimensions are often more important than the specific material used, particularly when a substitute material replicates the original closely enough to meet the preservation goals. Mr. West and Ms. Bray agreed, noting that flexibility exists for window replacements so long as the visible result maintains historical character. Mr. West added that modern window manufacturers now offer custom sizes, so sizing concerns are less of a constraint than in the past.

Ms. Tysinger proceeded to Section 2.6.7, which relates to painting previously unpainted foundations. The consultant questioned whether the standard was out of place or misnumbered. Mr. McGee raised a concern: what happens when 30% of a foundation is damaged and the replacement material doesn’t match the original? Should painting the foundation to create visual continuity be allowed? While acknowledging that this was a fine-detail question, he emphasized it would come up eventually. Chair Drew agreed and said that, like many issues, this would be evaluated during a hearing, and the Commission would likely approve painting in such cases if it created a consistent appearance.

Ms. Bray recalled previous conversations noting that painting certain older foundation materials can cause damage, which is why the standard exists. However, all agreed that case-by-case discretion should prevail, especially where necessary to preserve overall architectural harmony.

The Commission next reviewed Section 2.9.4, which relates to window air-conditioning units. The revised language clarified that installing AC units in primary facades of historic buildings is inappropriate. Ms. Tysinger transitioned to Mr. Pukenas’ comments, noting that many were intended to formalize the tone of the language—replacing phrases like “should” with “shall” or “will.” However, the consultant advised against this, cautioning that such wording changes could shift the standards from guidelines to regulations, which was not the Commission’s intent.

Mr. Pukenas mentioned a concern with Section 2.1.2, which referenced replacing lost shingles. He felt the example was too casual or imprecise. Again, the consensus was that such matters would be judged case by case during public hearings and did not warrant revision at this time.

Ms. Tysinger then asked the Commission for final feedback on the overall document. She

reminded them that historical references and the glossary were still being added and would be completed before final publication.

Chair Drew opened the floor to comments.

Mr. Pukenas expressed full support for the revisions and recommended moving forward quickly.

Mr. McGee echoed that sentiment.

Mr. Bray stated she was very proud.

Mr. West agreed, saying the document needed to move to the Board of Aldermen without delay.

Chair Drew then called for a motion to adopt the final draft of the Design Standards with the corrections made. **Mr. West made the motion and Ms. Bray seconded it. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Meehan proposed after consulting with City Manager Saldo, sending the finalized draft to the Board of Aldermen as an informational item ahead of a formal presentation in April, giving both the Board and the public adequate time to review the content. She clarified that the Planning Board would eventually review the proposed overlay, although the standards themselves are a stand alone document, not embedded in the UDO.

Alderman Mosteller recommended targeting the April 7 Board of Aldermen meeting on a Monday for the presentation, noting that it would be helpful for as many Commission members as possible to attend, since they were most familiar with the details of the document.

Chair Drew confirmed the plan and asked for any final questions before closing the discussion. None were raised.

H. New Business

1. Local Designation Report (Draft)

The Local Designation Report Draft was not available at the time of the meeting, as the consultant had not yet completed it.

I. Other Business

1. Updates on Down-Zoning Law

Ms. Tysinger provided an update on House Bill 24, noting that the Board of Alderman had adopted a Resolution in support of the bill. While the bill remains in the same position in the House as it was approximately 30 days ago, many communities continue to advocate for local acts that involve their counties and municipalities.

J. Announcements

Chair Drew announced the next meeting will be April 2, 2025

K. Adjourn

Chair Drew asked if there was a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Mr. Pukenas and seconded by Mr. West. ***The motion passed unanimously with all members voting in favor.***

Adjourned at 4:53 PM

X 

Charles Drew
Chair

X 

Tori Deviney
Deputy City Clerk