



**CITY OF SOUTHPORT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
SOUTHPORT FIRE HEADQUARTERS EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
1011 N. HOWE STREET, SOUTHPORT, NC 28461
January 7, 2026
4:00 PM
Minutes**

Present Members: Chair Charles Drew, Vice Chair Bonnie Bray, Jim McKee, Joanne Wesson, Katherine Hufham, Alexis Gore-Graves, Tal West, Josh Cline McGee,

Board of Aldermen Liaison: Karen Moststellar

Staff Present: Maureen Meehan, Planning Services Director; Penny Tysinger, HPC Planner; Scott Baillargeon, Deputy City Clerk

Absent: Bonner Herring

A. Call to Order

Chair Drew called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m.

B. Invocation

Ms. Gore-Graves provided the invocation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Drew led members in the Pledge.

Chair Drew noted that in the absence of Bonner Herring, the Commission Alternate, Katherine Hufham, would be voting.

D. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Vice Chair Bray and Seconded Mr. McKee to approve the agenda.

The motion carries unanimously

E. Approval of Minutes

- a. July 9, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes
- b. November 5, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes
- c. December 3, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chair Bray and Seconded by Mr. McKee to approve the Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes.

Mr. McGee expressed gratitude to Staff for the extensive work that had been done to craft the Historic Preservation Design Standards.

The motion carries unanimously

F. Public Comment

Sherol Lappala 316 W. Brunswick St.

Ms. Lappala spoke to the comments made at the Board of Aldermen meeting from July 28-Aug 6; and noted an error by an Aldermen in the comments provided to the Commission:

- “Everyone who has spoken during the meetings except one person has expressed that they were in favor of a historic district; however, they feel it is far too restrictive.”

And spoke to the error noting that it was an untrue statement and asked the Commission for clarity regarding what was meant; and shared that her hope was that the notes and comments obtained from residents are being received and understood correctly by both the Commission and the Board of Aldermen; and noted that those in the Historic District were in favor of an Overlay but were opposed to the restrictions outlined therein; and expressed gratitude to the Commission for their efforts to allow residents to speak and express their concerns.

Siegfried DeSmedt 319 W. Brunswick St.

Mr. DeSmedt Spoke to the recommendation made at a previous meeting; and expressed concern that his recommendations were not addressed; and reiterated the concerns made by Ms. Lappala; and suggested the Commission be an advisory board instead of a Commission with Quasi-Judicial proceedings; and that the district adopt less restrictive measures that could be addressed by a Planning Board; and emphasized that he and his neighbors in the Historic District oppose mandatory property rights restrictions; and noted that he feels that it has created more division among City residents; and that the Design Standards for the Historic District should be guidelines rather than Standards.

Vice Chair Bray asked Mr. DeSmedt to explain the issues he had concerns with regarding the Design Standards.

Mr. DeSmedt spoke to his issues concerning the Quasi-Judicial proceedings of the Historic Preservation Commission; property rights restrictions noting the September

3, 2025, meeting; and stressed that it was about the method implemented to ensure the Design Standards are delivered and practiced; and disagreed with the mandatory processes involved; and discussed the old Southport standards and asked if the City was in better shape than it was then; and spoke to the improvements that were made, but emphasized the restriction to property owner rights; and spoke to what the Historic District means to property owners; and the details of what can be done to fences and other like items and noted that having it contain Quasi-Judicial proceedings will serve to create further problems.

Vice Chair Bray shared those discussions the Commission had with the Board of Aldermen; and shared that the Board of Aldermen had asked the Historic Preservation Commission to review the recommendations; and spoke to the ordinance that was voted on to establish the Historic Preservation Commission.

Mr. DeSmedt spoke to September 2022, Board of Aldermen meeting; and noted that some of the Aldermen may not have known what they were voting for regarding the inclusion of Quasi-Judicial proceedings; and alleged a misinformation of claims, that all residents of the Historic District were in favor of the Standards, when in fact they were not in favor of the portion including Quasi-Judicial proceedings.

Chair Drew asked if there were any more speakers from the floor, there being none, he moved to the next item of consideration on the agenda.

G. Old Business

a. Updated Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards

Chair Drew spoke to the work put into the Design Standards and outlined the draft and its changes; and noted that many of the changes are highlighted and/or stricken and opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Vice Chair Bray noted a concern on page 12 (of the document) to remove the sentence under the heading of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA):

- “Landscaping and changes to natural features such as tress, creeks, creek banks, and riverbeds are also subject to HPC review (pg. 12).”

And noted that pg. 51(of the document) to 1.5.7. needs to be rewritten to support the language as stated:

- “Freestanding signs must be low-mounted and must not obscure pedestrian views. No more than one (1) freestanding sign shall be allowed per street frontage. Freestanding pole supports should be simple and unobtrusive in design. Freestanding signs in the Central Business District ~~may not be appropriate~~ **are not allowed** (pg. 51).”

and asked for the lines to be clarified; and noted the language throughout as being less restrictive; and emphasized the clarity of the paragraph added to the Introduction; and shared gratitude for the work that had been put into the draft Design Standard.

Mr. McGee expressed gratitude to Staff for the work completed on page 36 to take away a necessity for COA and noted that it was no longer under Quasi-Judicial proceedings.

HPC Planner Tysinger noted that it was done by Staff not the Planning Board and affirmed that it was not under a Quasi-Judicial proceeding.

Ms. Gore-Graves emphasized that after review of the proposed changes in the language of the Design Standards determined they were more guidelines than standards; and delineated between guidelines and standards; and shared that the current Design Standards are more akin to guidelines until someone wants to build and then it becomes more rules; and expressed concern for the number of historic homes that have been lost both throughout Southport and the surrounding area within the proposed Overlay; and those historic homes that have been replaced by large, out of character styled homes.

Chair Drew agreed with Ms. Gore-Graves and shared that he did not feel that Southport has been changed for the worse; and asked for other comments; and shared his questions with Staff; and spoke about the Historic District Overlay and the effort to establish a Local Historic District; and inquired of Staff if there was a law or ordinance on the books that would prohibit a box store to be established on either Moore or Howe Street; and inquired if there was a special zoning ordinance that could be established other than a Historic Preservation Commission.

Planning Services Director Meehan shared that the Overlay would not change the use of the district; and noted that a fast food restaurant could be established in the Historic District, but would be restricted in design, not having a drive-thru and other like things; and spoke to the standards that restrict what structures that can be erected in the Historic District; and to the houses and designs that could be allowed within the Historic District; and to the options for an advisory board other than a Historic Preservation Commission; and noted that the statutes prohibit zoning for residential properties, and the Design Standards ensure that the character and look of the Historic District is preserved.

Chair Drew inquired if there is a special zoning that could be utilized; and noted that 160 other historic districts exist throughout the state; and inquired why it is that Southport cannot have one.

Planning Services Director Meehan spoke to the special zoning that could be utilized to ensure historic preservation and shared that one was not available in the sense that they were speaking about due to residential and commercial

properties; and assured the Commission that the Historic Design Standards are the best plan to preserve the historic character of Southport.

HPC Planner Tysinger spoke to the differences regarding the zoning impacts between a Historic District and other Zoning Districts; and stated that the Overlay serves to preserve the City's heritage and design standards.

Chair Drew noted that he had received comments that the Overlay would increase costs to residents within the Historic District; and shared that if alternative products were allowed it might reduce costs and alleviate the concerns that many have voiced within the Historic District.

HPC Planner Tysinger spoke to the current home prices; and noted the disparity among the cost of homes, but emphasized that the features allowed in the homes increased home values; and referenced the myriad designs and costs associated with windows as an example, noting that the cost disparity among homes are due to the features included in them.

Chair Drew inquired about tax incentives from the state for historic preservation of homes located within the Historic District and Overlay.

HPC Planner Tysinger shared the rules for becoming a Certified Local Government Historic District; and noted that the City is only seeking to establish a Local Historic District; and emphasized that to reach the goal of becoming a Certified Local Government Historic District would need to be implemented in steps; and that there were incentives given to cities that reach the Certified Local Government Historic District standard, but noted that to achieve that goal, and obtain those incentives, comes with more restrictions and extensive training for the Board of Aldermen.

Chair Drew inquired if there were any City of Southport incentives that could be afforded to homeowners and if the Board of Aldermen could vote to provide a grant to citizens within the Historic District to preserve a home.

Planning Services Director Meehan spoke to the laws that govern grants; and noted that the City would not be able to provide a grant but shared that there could conceivably be private groups or grassroots programs to research.

Mr. McKee noted that tax incentives must follow the guidelines of the secretary of state; and spoke about the nuances of those laws and regulations.

Chair Drew asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Mr. McGee noted that the Commission has changed the language throughout the Design Standards allowing for a more subjective (as possible) interpretation of the guidelines to alleviate the concerns of homeowners; and recommended having those homeowners seek a seat on the Historic Preservation Commission; and shared the details of the Historic Districts standards implemented in Chapel Hill NC.

Ms. Wesson spoke to Mr. DeSmedt's comments and shared that the Commission hopes to preserve the historic character of the City; and spoke to the amount of change the City has underwent in the last six years; and to the number of changes that have occurred over her 36 years in Southport; and noted that the Commission are the stewards of the City for historic preservation, but emphasized that the Commission does not want to burden homeowners with exorbitant costs such as a mandatory use of Hardie Plank; and asked residents for flexibility and allow for the Commission to adopt the Design Standards; and that the Commission does not wish to see the City be developed into another Myrtle Beach; and the need to preserve the integrity of the town.

Chair Drew suggested the Commission take the Design Standards draft home and scrutinize the details and convene in February to vote on a recommendation to Board of Aldermen; and asked if the Commission agreed with that request to make a motion to table the vote for today; and asked Mr. DeSmedt to pose his question to the Commission.

Mr. DeSmedt spoke about the hardship of insurance; and asked if any update could be provided regarding the outcome of the decision.

Chair Drew shared that he did not foresee any issues with insurance; and stated that he hoped the Commission would have an answer in February.

Ms. Hufham noted that she had contacted her insurance agent and noted they shared that there would not be an increase in her insurance premiums.

Vice Chair Bray shared that she had also contacted her agent and received similar news, no increase in insurance premiums.

Chair Drew contacted the insurance department and had not heard back from them yet but shared there may not be a major issue with insurance and was awaiting a written response to confirm.

Ms. Lappala asked if Staff could go through the existing Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and review it for items such as "muted colors", "signage",

and other like language that could be applied to both the Commercial and Residential Design Standards.

Planning Services Director Meehan spoke to the UDO and shared more information concerning new construction versus existing structures.

Ms. Lappala reiterated the concerns previously stated; and shared additional concerns regarding the UDO in relation to the existing language; and spoke to Zoning and implementing what the UDO stipulates that can obtain the desired outcome without having more layers of bureaucracy; and thanked the Commission for allowing residents to voice concerns.

A motion was made by Ms. Bray and Seconded by Ms. Gore-Graves to table any action on the Updated Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards to allow for extended review by members of the Historic Preservation Commission until the next scheduled regular meeting in February before moving to the Board of Aldermen for adoption.

Chair Drew asked for any discussion; and shared that the Commission was doing its best to find a compromise; and the value of citizen comment.

The motion carries unanimously

Planning Services Director Meehan asked the Board to double-check the notes to capture everything.

H. New business

I. Other Business

J. Announcements

Chair Drew shared that the next regular scheduled Historic Preservation Commission Meeting would be held at The Southport Fire Headquarters Emergency Operations Center; and introduced the new Board of Aldermen Liaison, Lowe Davis; and asked that a new section be placed on the Agenda under Public Comment for Aldermen Davis to speak; and shared that the Southport Historical Society will host a play in February at the Southport Community Building; and will be followed by a Gospel Extravaganza at the church for a Black History Symposium scheduled for the afternoon; and noted that the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee Meeting has scheduled a celebration march, followed by light refreshments for Sunday, January 18 at 3 p.m.

City Planner Tysinger shared the “Living Voices: Lunch with History” scheduled for February 15, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. and tickets for the event are available online.

K. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn by Mr. McGee, Seconded by Mr. McKee, to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carries unanimously at 5:11pm

X 
Charles Drew
Chair

X 
Scott Baillargeon
Deputy City Clerk

