

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Growth Management Department



MEETING DATE:	June 7, 2023
PROJECT:	Campbell Chapel, A.M.E., 21 Boundary Street – Rehabilitation of a Contributing Resource
APPLICANT:	The Rev. Dr. Jon R. Black with James O. McGhee Architects, P.C.
PROJECT MANAGER:	Glen Umberger, Historic Preservationist

REQUEST: The Applicant, the Rev. Dr. Jon R. Black with James O. McGhee Architects, P.C., on behalf of owner, the Board of Trustees of the Campbell A.M.E. Church, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

COFA-04-23-017894. A Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic District to demolish the non-historic, non-contributing portion of approximately 2,307 SF, to allow the construction of a 1-story free-standing addition of approximately 608 SF, and to renovate the historic 1,780 SF Contributing Resource known as Campbell Chapel A.M.E. (Tax Parcel R610-039-00A-0080-0000) located at 23 Boundary Street, in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and zoned Neighborhood Center-HD.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY: Campbell Chapel A.M.E. is a one-story rectangular timber-framed vernacular Greek Revival style church building with full width portico on the façade, set on a series of brick piers. The siding is pine board and batten, and the windows are modern metal replacement windows. A non-historic square belfry, replacing an earlier belfry, surmounts the portico which houses the historic cast-iron bell. The metal gable end roof is 5-V tin. The sanctuary was extended in 1957 and a one-story, L-shaped concrete block addition was constructed on the southeast corner of the historic building in 1966.

Originally built in 1853 as the Bluffton Methodist Episcopal Church, the building survived the Burning of Bluffton on June 4, 1863 during the United States Civil War. In 1874, nine freedmen (Renty Fields, Jacob Chisolm, William Ferguson, Jeffrey Buncomb, William Smith, David Heyward, Christopher Bryan, Theodor Wilson, and William Lightburn) purchased the building for \$500.00 and organized the Campbell Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, named in honor of Jabez Pitt Campbell (1815-1891), the eighth bishop of the A.M.E. Church. The bell, today housed in the cupola, was purchased around 1874, about the time the new congregation completed major renovations. The building survived several catastrophic storms, including the Hurricane of 1893 and the Tornado of 1933. The congregation met here for worship until 2004 when they constructed a new church building next door.

The building was first surveyed in the 1994 *Historic Resources Survey of Bluffton* (Identified as 23 Boundary Street, Site #046-0087), and subsequently resurveyed in the *Historic Architectural Resource Survey Report* (October 2001); the *Survey of Historic Properties* (July 2008); and the *Town of Bluffton Historic Resources Update* (July 2019). Town Council designated Campbell Chapel A.M.E. as a Contributing Resource to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District in 2008. In addition, Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 29, 2019 for its association with the African American community in Bluffton during the Reconstruction Era (1861—1900). In 2022, a South Carolina Historical Marker honoring the history of the congregation was unveiled on Boundary Street in front of the church. On May 8, 2023, it was unanimously accepted into the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network which connects sites across the country which provide education, interpretation, and research related to the period of Reconstruction.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS:

Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.18.3 of the UDO in assessing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic District (HD). The applicable criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

A. Section 3.18.3.A. Consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures*.

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*

Finding: Based on the information and materials submitted, Staff believes this Standard has been met as the rehabilitated structure will be brought back to its historic configuration for use as a tourism destination and event space and will retain all of the defining characteristics of the Contributing Resource, its site and environment, and as such, this Standard has been met. Furthermore, the proposed demolition of the non-contributing, non-historic portion of the Contributing Resource and the construction of a 608 SF rear addition will ensure that the new use for the Contributing Resource will not have any negative impact on the defining characteristics of the Contributing Resource, its site and environment, and as such, this Standard has been met.

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

Finding: Based on the information and materials submitted, the proposed demolition is limited to the non-contributing, non-historic portion of the Contributing Resource, the removal of which ensure that the historic character of the Contributing Resource is retained and preserved. Furthermore, the rehabilitated structure will retain all defining features and spaces that characterize the Contributing Resource. The portico, windows, siding, trim, fascia, and soffit are being replaced with in-kind materials; the belfry will be reconstructed to the 1874 period; and the front doors will be retained and restored: all of which will retain the historic character of the Contributing Resource, and as such, this Standard has been met.

3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

Finding: Based on the information and materials submitted, the proposal meets this Standard as no additional or conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings are being proposed.

4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

Finding: While there have been several changes to the building over time, not every change has acquired historic significance and shall not be retained and preserved. For example, neither the rear extension to the Sanctuary nor the rear addition have acquired historic significance and shall not be retained and preserved. Furthermore, the proposal to remove the current belfry and replace it with a more historically appropriate one, as determined by photographic evidence, would be appropriate. As such, this Standard has been met.

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

Finding: Staff finds that based on the information and materials submitted, that the proposed replacement of the c. 1874 belfry using remnants of original belfry framing materials, visual evidence of construction techniques, and examples of craftsmanship will permit the preservation of this distinctive architectural feature, which will meet this Standard. However, the current 5-V metal roof is a distinctive finish that characterizes the Contributing Resource and as such shall be preserved by replacement with in-kind materials and accordingly replacing the current metal roof with wood does not meet this Standard.

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new*

feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Finding: The Applicant proposes to recreate the jib doors under one double-hung window on each of the north and south elevations, based on the remains of original jambs, styles, and framing elements discovered *in situ*, which will permit the replacement of these unique and rare missing features, and as such, this Standard has been met. However, since there is no documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence of exterior shutters submitted as part of this application, the installation of shutters are not permitted unless additional documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence becomes available to support the installation of shutters.

7. *Deteriorated Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

Finding: No chemical or physical treatments have been proposed as a portion of the application; therefore, this Standard is not applicable.

8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

Finding: No digging beyond that required for the foundation is proposed. Should any archeological resources be discovered during the project, Town Staff must be notified to determine if any mitigation measures are needed.

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

Finding: Town Staff has found that the proposed 608 SF rear addition is differentiated from the old and is compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features and protects the historic integrity of the property and its environment and, as such, this Standard has been met.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

Finding: Town Staff has found that the proposed 608 SF rear addition appears to be designed in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and

integrity of the historic resource would be unimpaired, and as such, this Standard has been met.

B. Section 3.18.3.B. Consistency with the principles set forth in the *Old Town Master Plan*.

Finding. The application is consistent with the principles set forth in the *Old Town Master Plan*. The *Old Town Master Plan* states, “The built environment, in particular the historic structures scattered throughout Old Town, should be protected and enhanced.”

The rehabilitation of the Contributing Resource, if done in a manner which meets the criteria set forth in Section 3.18 of the UDO, as outlined above, will enhance the District by protecting one of the most visible and architecturally significant structures within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

C. Section 3.18.3.C. The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.

Finding. If the conditions below are met, the proposed rehabilitation of the Contributing Resource will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5:

1. Section 5.15.6.J. Roofs and Gutters. For roofs, metal, standing seam or 5-V Crimp 24” maximum spacing, panel ends exposed at overhang is permitted. The Applicant proposes replacing the roof of the Contributing Resource with wood shingles which is not a permitted material and therefore does not meet this Design Standard. Furthermore, the proposal to install a membrane roof on a portion of the rear addition does not meet this Design Standard as it is not an approved material. The Applicant specifies that the “the employment of a membrane roof requires the use of a parapet to conceal from eye-level view the membrane, flashing, and vents, and to direct water towards collection box, thus eliminating the visual clutter of gutters and downspouts on the addition.” As wood shingles and membrane roof are not permitted materials under the UDO, the HPC will need to determine the appropriateness of the use of this type of roofing material.

D. Section 3.18.3.D. Consistency with the nature and character of the surrounding area and consistency of the structure with the scale, form, and building proportions of the surrounding neighborhood.

Finding. Town Staff finds the nature and character of the project to be consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding area. The structure is an existing Contributing Resource whose mass and scale must be retained. With the proposed demolition of the non-historic, non-contributing rear addition, the recreation of the historic belfry and front portico, and the addition of a new, smaller rear addition, the rehabilitated

Contributing Resource will be consistent with the scale, form and building proportions of the surrounding neighborhood. As such, the proposed rehabilitation is appropriate.

- E. Section 3.18.3.E. Preservation of the existing building's historic character and architecture.

Finding. Based on information and materials submitted, Staff finds that the existing building's historic character and architecture will be preserved.

- F. Section 3.18.3.F. The historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the structure including the extent to which its alteration or removal would be detrimental to the public interest.

Finding. Based on information and materials submitted, Staff finds that the historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the Contributing Resource will be preserved by the demolition of the non-historic, non-contributing rear addition, the construction of a non-intrusive rear addition, and the rehabilitation of the historic structure with the recreation of the missing historic belfry and reconstruction of the historic front portico, therefore this will not be detrimental to the public interest.

- G. Section 3.18.3.G. For an application to demolish, either in whole or in part, any Contributing Structure, the Historic Preservation Commission shall consider:

1. The existing and historical ownership and use and reason for requesting demolition;

Finding. The Campbell Chapel A.M.E. has been owned continuously by the Trustees since 1874 and has been used by the congregation since that time. In this application, the non-historic, non-contributing portion of the Contributing Resource, constructed in the 1960s as a fellowship hall and kitchen space is proposed to be demolished in order to return the Resource to its original historic appearance and future use as a tourist destination and event space associated with the church. Retaining the 1960s-era rear addition will not accomplish this goal.

2. Information that establishes clear and convincing evidence that:

- a. The demolition of the structure is necessary to alleviate a threat to public health or public safety.

Finding. The Applicant states in their narrative (Attachment 4) that the project, in part, "will remove the latter additions which have produced structural and environmental impacts to this historic [Contributing Resource.]" Accordingly, Staff finds that the demolition of the non-historic, non-contributing portion of the Contributing Resource is necessary.

- b. No other reasonable alternatives to demolition exist.

Finding. The Applicant believes that the demolition is necessary in order to restore the Contributing Resource to its historic configuration and therefore, Staff finds that there are no reasonable alternatives to demolition in this case.

- c. The denial of the application, as a result of the regulations and standards of this Section, deprive the Applicant of reasonable economic use of or return on the property.

Finding. Denial of the application for demolition may not deny the property owners reasonable economic use and return on the property, therefore the Contributing Resource should be rehabilitated as proposed in this Application in order to provide the Owner with a reasonable economic use of or return on the property.

- 3. Section 3.18.3.H. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

Finding. The Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACTIONS:

As described in UDO Section 5.15.1, Old Town Bluffton Historic District Intent, the regulatory requirements, design guidelines and materials are not intended to “discourage creativity or force the replication of historic models” but to set forth a framework in which the diversity that has always characterized Bluffton can continue to grow. It is the charge of the HPC to assess the interpretation of these guidelines as they pertain to applications using the established review criteria.

As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2 of the UDO, the Historic Preservation Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Approve the application as submitted by the Applicant;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted by the Applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff finds that with the conditions noted below, the requirements of Section 3.18.3 of the UDO have been met and recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the application with the following conditions:

1. Per Section 3.18.3.A., the current 5-V metal roof is a distinctive finish that characterizes the historic structure and as such shall be preserved by replacement with in-kind materials or per Section 5.15.6.J., the HPC will need to make a determination for the appropriateness of the use of wood roof shingles as a substitute for permitted roof materials on the historic Contributing Resource;
2. Per Section 3.18.3.A., since there is no documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence of exterior shutters submitted as part of this application, the proposed replacement of these missing elements does not meet the Secretary of Interior's *Standards*, and the installation of shutters would be inappropriate;
3. Per Section 5.15.6.J., the HPC will need to make a determination for the appropriateness of the use of a membrane roof as a substitute for permitted roof materials on the proposed 608 SF rear addition;
4. Per Section 3.19., landscape has not been reviewed as part of this application and future review may be required should work be proposed beyond the scope of this application; and
5. Per Sections 3.10 and 3.18, a Development Plan is required to complete site changes to the stormwater, parking layout, circulation, etc., that exceed the scope of work being reviewed under this Certificate of Appropriateness – HD.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location Map
2. Zoning Map
3. Application
4. Narrative
5. Restoration Plans
6. Addition Plans
7. Site Plan
8. HPRC Comments, dated May 3, 2023
9. Applicant Comment Letter, dated May 10, 2023
10. Applicant Comments, dated May 10, 2023