

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SECHEDULED MEETING OF THE
KINGSPORT HISTROIC ZONING COMMISSION

April 14, 2025

1:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Jewell McKinney
Dineen West
Jack Edwards
Joe Cross
Lindsey Nieuwland
Bob Grygotis

Members Absent:

Chip Millican

Staff Present:

Lori Pyatte
Ken Weems
Hannah Cincebox
Bart Rowlett

Visitors Present:

Michael Bare
Jennifer Hyder
Debra Kilgore-Street

Chairman Jewell McKinney called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. She welcomed everyone in attendance and provided an opportunity for all Historic Commissioners to introduce themselves.

The Chairman called for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Jack Edwards made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, which was seconded. The motion passed unanimously with a vote of 6 - 0.

Next, the Chairman called for approval of the minutes from the regular meeting on March 10th, 2025. Commissioner Lindsey Nieuwland made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded. The motion passed unanimously with a vote of 6-0.

Chairman McKinney inquired whether there was any old business to address. Staff indicated that there was none.

New Business:

2016 Netherland Inn Road- Demolition and New Construction of Townhomes (HISTR25-0067)

Staff opened the presentation with introductory remarks and stated they would later turn the floor over to Mr. Michael Bare, the property owner and developer. Staff explained that they had reviewed the construction history of properties within the Historic District and found that the most recent project was the Bank Barn at the Netherland Inn in 2008. However, this proposal marks the first instance of a privately owned property being considered for new construction within one of the City's historic districts—making it a significant milestone.

Staff reported that Mr. Bare received approval from the Kingsport Board of Zoning Appeals for a 41-foot maximum front yard setback. He is also scheduled to present his Zoning Development Plan to the Kingsport Planning Commission on April 17, 2025, as required for developments in the Planned Village

District. Additionally, the current structure is scheduled for a dilapidation hearing on April 22, 2025.

The existing building, constructed between 1910 and 1912, has been fully gutted. The proposed development includes eight townhomes facing the street, featuring pitched 8:12 roofs and individual rooftop outdoor living spaces.

Staff requested a two-part vote from the Commission:

1. Approval of demolition for the existing structure.
2. Final design approval for the new construction.

Mr. Bare addressed the Commission, noting the property's proximity to the Netherland Inn and confirming it was acquired about 16 months ago. He initially considered restoring the structure but determined that the cost was not feasible.

Design packets were distributed to the Commission, including architectural renderings, roof pitch specifications, and proposed exterior materials: Hardie plank or wood siding and white brick. In response to Chairman McKinney's question, Mr. Bare explained that the white brick would be used on the columns, with Hardie plank or white wood siding on the front façade.

Staff reviewed four exterior design concepts developed through ongoing discussions with the developer. Staff clarified that Concept 1 is the current proposal and that Concept 4 was an earlier version. They emphasized that the intent was to share the design evolution, showing how the project had progressed toward a more modern aesthetic appropriate for the historic district. Staff encouraged Commissioners to consider combining preferred elements from the various concepts into a final design.

Chairman McKinney remarked that while Concept 1 presents a clean appearance, it lacks the visual contrast seen in Concept 4. Vice-Chairman West expressed a preference for Concept 3. Commissioner Cross asked if the Netherland Inn would serve as a contextual reference for the design.

Commissioner Edwards asked how many units were planned; Mr. Bare confirmed there would be eight, each with individual rooftop access. In response to additional questions, Mr. Bare stated that each rooftop space would be approximately 900 square feet, with each unit measuring 36 feet deep by 20 feet wide.

Chairman McKinney opened the floor for motions.

Vice-Chairman West moved to approve Concept 3; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously (6–0).

Staff then requested clarification on whether this vote included approval for demolition.

Commissioner Nieuwland moved to approve the demolition; the motion was seconded and also passed unanimously (6–0).

Staff began the presentation by referencing the February 2025 meeting, during which the State informed us that a vote would be held regarding the nomination of Earles Drug Store to the National Register of Historic Places. We have since received all required documentation from the State, and the official vote is scheduled for May 16, 2025. Chairman McKinney opened the floor for motions.

At this time, staff is seeking a positive recommendation from the Commission to support moving forward with the National Register designation for this site.

Chairman McKinney opened the floor for a motion.

Commissioner Nieuwland made the motion to give a positive recommendation; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. (6-0)

Historic Sign Placement- Review for approval (HISTR25-0069)

Staff reported that at the previous meeting, there was discussion about enhancing the visibility of Kingsport's Historic Districts through improved signage. Since then, staff has conducted a site review in coordination with the City of Kingsport Traffic Department to assess current signage and identify opportunities for improvement. The following recommendations were presented:

- **Rotherwood Historic District** *(Currently has no signage)*
 - Proposed: Two new signs
 - After the bridge at Big Elm Road / Netherland Inn Road
 - Just past the intersection of Canongate Road / Netherland Inn Road
- **Exchange Place Historic District** *(Currently has no signage)*
 - Proposed: Two new signs
 - Intersection of Orebank Road / Mitchell Road
 - Intersection of Orebank Road / Preston Park Drive
- **Church Circle Historic District** *(Currently has four signs)*
 - Proposed: Three new signs and removal of one existing sign
 - New signs at:
 - E. Sullivan Street / Commerce Street (on E. Sullivan)
 - W. Sullivan Street / Clay Street (on W. Sullivan)
 - New Street / Shelby Street
 - Removal: Existing sign on Commerce Street near City Hall
- **Old Kingsport Presbyterian Church & Cemetery** *(Currently has two signs)*
 - Proposed: One replacement sign

- Update and replace existing sign at the cemetery
- **Boatyard Historic District** *(Currently has two signs)*
 - Proposed: One new sign
 - Intersection of Netherland Inn Road / Riverwood Place
- **Main Street Historic District** *(Currently has one sign)*
 - Proposed: One new sign and one relocation
 - New sign at W. Main Street / Clay Street
 - Relocate existing sign closer to E. Main Street / Cherokee Street
- **Park Hill Historic District** *(Currently has one sign)*
 - Proposed: One new sign
 - Intersection of W. Wanola Avenue / Revere Street
- **Watauga Street Historic District** *(Currently has three signs)*
 - Proposed: One new sign
 - Intersection of Watauga Street / Piedmont Street
- **Broad Street Historic District** *(Currently has one sign)*
 - Proposed: One new sign
 - Intersection of Broad Street / E. Market Street

Staff will continue working with the Traffic Department on placement and installation logistics.

Commission approved to move forward with the sign placement.

217 W. Wanola Ave- Demolition by Neglect (HISTR25-0082)

Staff reported that in February, Ms. Debra Kilgore-Street raised concerns regarding the condition of the property located at 217 W. Wanola Avenue. In response, the Historic Zoning Commission voted to refer the matter to the City of Kingsport Building Department for further review.

Following the referral, a City building inspector was dispatched to assess the property. Included in the meeting packet is a copy of the Kingsport City Code related to Demolition by Neglect, along with the inspector's report outlining the property's current conditions. Based on this assessment, the property is considered to pose a fire hazard.

Staff noted that Building Inspector Hannah Cincebox is present to speak to her findings and answer any questions from the Commission.

Staff requested that the Commission proceed with the next steps in the Demolition by Neglect process by formally referring the case back to the City of Kingsport Building Department for action.

Commissioner Edwards asked for an update on the property owner's position. Inspector Cincebox stated that the owner has expressed an intent to sell the property but is currently dealing with personal family issues that have delayed any progress. She added that the property manager is aware of the condition and acknowledges the seriousness of the situation. Inspector Cincebox explained that the structure is a duplex, built in the 1920s. Because both units are structurally connected, if one side is deemed uninhabitable or subject to demolition, both would be impacted. She estimated that the cost to bring the property up to standard would range from \$50,000 to \$90,000, at a minimum.

Commissioner Edwards inquired whether the owner was aware that the City could move forward with demolition. Inspector Cincebox confirmed that the owner had been notified of the ongoing demolition by neglect case and understands the potential implications. Commissioner Nieuwland asked what options are available to the Commission, expressing concern about the high cost of repairs but acknowledging that rehabilitation may still be feasible. Commissioner Grygotis asked if the property taxes were current. Inspector Cincebox confirmed that the taxes are paid and up to date.

Staff clarified that, in alignment with Commissioner Nieuwland's comments, if the Commission determines the property meets the criteria for demolition by neglect, a formal vote would initiate the next step—referral to the City of Kingsport Building Official for a hearing. Any city-led action, including funding, would ultimately require approval from the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Inspector Cincebox added that, while the exterior of the structure does not appear severely dilapidated, the interior conditions are significantly degraded. She confirmed that the property meets the criteria outlined in Section 114-654 – Prevention of Demolition by Neglect.

City Attorney Bart Rowlett advised that the Building Department's authority under the standard dilapidation hearing procedure is limited. However, the demolition by neglect process allows the City to require the owner to make repairs. If the owner fails to comply, the City has the ability to complete the repairs and file a lien against the property for reimbursement. The property owner also retains the right to file a hardship claim during this process.

Chairman McKinney asked whether the current owner had inherited the property. Inspector Cincebox confirmed that it was inherited. MS. Kilgore added that the property has been unoccupied for over ten years, dating back to when she last lived there.

Inspector Cincebox reviewed her inspection report with the Commission, affirming that the property meets the standards outlined in Section 114-654.

Commissioner Edwards expressed support for moving forward with the process, emphasizing that the property owner should remain informed and involved throughout each step.

Chairman McKinney asked if that statement was being offered as a motion. Commissioner Edwards confirmed it was.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously (6-0).

Other Business:

240 E. Main Street (HISTR25-0071)

Staff reported that the applicant is seeking approval to replace the existing garage door windows, install storefront trim, and apply a window tint. According to staff, the proposed tint would be similar in appearance to the one currently used at The Mustard Seed Café.

Staff Reports:

Signage Question:

Staff noted that during the previous meeting, the Commission discussed signage and whether there was any authority to regulate “offensive” signs. Staff mentioned that they had consulted with City Attorney Bart Rowlett and invited him to attend this meeting to provide guidance to the Commission.

Vice-Chairman West brought up a recent application for signage featuring an African shield design, noting that it did not align with the historic character of the district. She then questioned how the Commission could regulate signage with imagery that may be considered inappropriate for a historic area—for example, a cannabis leaf. While she acknowledged that zoning code includes square footage restrictions for signage, she asked how the Commission could reject signage that may be seen as offensive or inconsistent with the area's historic character.

Attorney Bart Rowlett advised caution in attempting to regulate signage based on the perception of offensiveness, stating that doing so could raise legal concerns. Instead, he recommended focusing on regulations rooted in “time, place, and manner,” which are generally considered more defensible and enforceable.

Commissioner Nieuwland inquired whether the African shield-themed design would fall under signage regulations or be considered an architectural feature. Attorney Rowlett responded that there are existing regulations concerning modifications to building façades, especially in historic districts. Commissioner Nieuwland then asked whether there is a clear distinction between what constitutes signage and what is considered an architectural element on a building façade.

Public Notice about Historic:

Staff noted that during the last meeting, Commissioner Nieuwland raised a concern about the public's lack of awareness regarding the historic zones and the Historic Zoning Commission. In response, staff coordinated with the Communications Department, which has since published a post on Kingsport Alerts. Commissioners were encouraged to like and share the post on Facebook to help spread the word. Additionally, staff reported that they have spoken with the Kingsport Times News to provide information about the Commission as well as the Earles Drug Store.

Patton Store- 2018 Netherland Inn:

Staff noted that during the last meeting, Commissioner Edwards requested an update. In response, staff reported they had followed up with Assistant City Manager Jessica Harmon, who stated that she is currently finalizing engineering work on another project with Steve Wilson. Once that project is complete, their focus will shift to the Patton Store.

Broad Street- 152-160 Broad St:

Staff noted that during the last meeting, Commissioner Millican requested an update. In response, staff reported that they had followed up with Assistant City Manager Jessica Harmon, who indicated that the City is currently working through the court process. There is a potential buyer interested in rehabilitating the structure; however, at this time, there are no details available regarding the proposed design or timeline. Additionally, Bart informed the Commission that an appeal has been filed in Chancery Court.

With no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jewell McKinney, Chairman