

SECTION 1 COMMISSION PROCEDURES.

1.1 Obtaining A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a permit that a property owner receives indicating that a proposed exterior change has been reviewed and approved by the historic preservation commission for consistency with established historic district standards. A COA is required for any type of building exterior alteration, new construction, relocation, demolition, utility installation, placement of vending machines and other street furniture in public areas, dock installation, and substantial landscaping. No COA is required for interior modifications or the ordinary maintenance or replacement "in-kind" of a property feature. Replacement "in-kind" refers to the replacement of damaged or deteriorated building or site features with the same design and material so that the integrity of the original design is maintained.

Upon consideration of exterior work, contact the Administrator at (910) 326-4428 to determine if a COA is required. Applications for a COA may be obtained from the _____, between _____ and _____, Monday through Friday. Contact the Administrator for assistance with the application process.

1.2 Completing and Filing the COA Application

After obtaining a certificate of appropriateness application form from the Town of Swansboro, it is important that the form be filled out completely. Proposed changes should be clearly explained in a narrative scope of work and presented in sufficient detail with accompanying photographs, drawings, and materials lists. These application components are important in helping the commission evaluate the proposal request promptly. Once the COA application has been completed, it, along with the supporting materials, must be returned to the town Administrator not less than 14 working days prior to the regularly scheduled meeting of the Swansboro Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC). A fee to cover administrative and legal notification costs is charged to all applicants. This fee must be paid at the time of application submission.

1.3 COA Application Review and Processing

Once a completed COA application has been received by the town, it is reviewed by the Administrator for compliance with all applicable town zoning ordinances and codes. Applications that are not in compliance with zoning and other town code provisions will be returned to the applicant and will not be forwarded to the commission for review. Applicants should note that additional permits may be required (e.g., building permit, CAMA permit, or Army Corps of Engineers approval). Early consultation with applicable permit agencies is advisable so that the impact of requirements on the COA proposal may be assessed. The commission may choose to delay consideration of an application to consult with applicable federal, state, or local agencies. This is particularly important when the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (NC-SHPO) is asked to review and comment on the project as part of a required environmental review process.

Upon completion of local zoning and code review, the Administrator will forward the applications to the SHPC for review and action. Notification of the meeting date, time, and place will be sent to the applicant and adjoining property owners by mail no less than seven (7) working days prior to the meeting. Attendance at the meeting by the applicant or his/her representative is required should any questions or concerns regarding the project arise. The failure of the applicant or the applicant's representative to attend a meeting may result in unnecessary delay if the SHPC fails to obtain information deemed necessary to make an informed decision. Any interested party is also welcome to attend the meeting or to review the application at town hall prior to the SHPC hearing.

Most certificate of appropriateness applications are reviewed and decided upon the day of the meeting. The commission must issue or deny a COA within 60 days after a completed application has been filed, except when the time limit has been extended by mutual agreement between the applicant and the historic preservation commission or more time is needed to obtain comments from other federal, state, or local agencies involved in the permitting, funding, or approval of the project. All commission decisions are furnished in writing and mailed to the applicant within 30 days of the meeting. There will be two identical certificates mailed - one for posting and one for records. The mailed Certificate of Appropriateness must be visibly displayed at the project site during the entire duration of the project.

Once issued, a Certificate of Appropriateness is valid for six months and may be renewed at the written request of the applicant. An approved COA may also be transferred to a new property owner if that owner certifies in writing that he has reviewed the approved application and agrees to comply with all of the terms and conditions of the COA.

An approved or pending COA application may be modified by a written request from the applicant to the commission. The request should include a description of the proposed changes, as well as drawings, a site plan, and other appropriate documentation if necessary. If the Swansboro Historic Preservation Commission finds that the modifications constitute a substantial change from the previous application, a new application submission will be required and all public notification procedures will be followed.

1.4 Treatment of "Minor Works" Projects

In an effort to expedite the review of Certificate of Appropriateness applications, the Swansboro Historic Preservation Commission recognizes that certain proposed building and/or site changes are minor in nature and will have no discernible impact on the special character of the building, site, and district. Given this, the SHPC has instituted a category of exterior activities known as "minor works" that may be undertaken without review by the commission. These projects must be consistent with the SHPC's standards and approved by the Minor Works Committee. "Minor works" activities do require the submission of a completed Minor Works COA application form. (Note: The town does not provide notice to adjoining property owners for a "minor works" submission.)

The following is a list of exterior work items that fall under the “minor work” category:

- Installation of “full-view” storm or louver wooden storm doors or “full-view” metal storm doors with baked-on paint finish;
- Installation of metal storm windows with baked on paint finish and horizontal dividers that are in alignment with the horizontal meeting rails of the original upper and lower sashes;
- Installation of half-round gutters and downspouts made of copper or with painted finish;
- Fence installation in rear yards or other areas not visible from the public view;
- Installation of window air conditioning units, window fans, and TV antennas ;
- Installation of skylights and solar collectors in areas not visible from public view;
- Installation of HVAC units and other mechanical equipment in areas not visible from public view;
- Removal of existing incongruous synthetic siding if original siding exists underneath; and
- Installation of private walkways or back yard patio areas (decks not included).

Note: The Minor Works Committee shall forward a “minor works” item to the SHPC for full review if the activity does not fall directly into one of the above categories or is inconsistent with the commission’s established standards.

1.5 Pre-Application Review of Projects

Property owners considering projects in the Swansboro historic district are encouraged to take advantage of free technical advice and design assistance provided by the SHPC prior to the submission of a Certificate of Appropriateness application. This pre-review, usually held with a preappointed subcommittee of the commission during the regularly scheduled work session, may help expedite the review process because it familiarizes the applicant in the early stages of project development with the applicable standards that will be used to evaluate the project proposal. It also gives commissioners an opportunity to discuss the project concept informally and identify issues that may be of concern. Informal meetings to become familiar with the SHPC’s design standards may be arranged by contacting the Administrator. The Administrator can determine if a preapplication review is needed. However, a preapplication review is required for any exterior project involving:

- New construction (excluding accessory structures under 500 square feet).
- Any exterior building or site alteration involving a cost of more than \$10,000.

Property owners requesting a preapplication review should provide commissioners with photographs of the subject property showing existing conditions and preliminary drawings indicating desired changes. A site plan of the property should also be furnished. This information is necessary to facilitate a reasonable discussion of the project. Preapplication review materials shall be submitted to the Administrator at least fourteen (14) working days prior to the meeting of the preapplication review subcommittee.

(Ord. 2005-O3, passed 3-15-2005; Am. Ord. 2021-O3, passed 5-24-2021)