

**Charles B. Aycock Neighborhood Association**  
**Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**  
July 29, 2013

**The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was held on Monday, July 29, 2013 at Sternberger Artist Center. Meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by President Linda Fusco. Sara Farnsworth was in attendance to take the minutes.**

**Present:** Linda Fusco, Sara Farnsworth, Mindy Zachary, Shawn Wriede, Christina Cantrell, Betsey Horth, Joe Kilpatrick

**Absent:** Bert VanderVeen

**Guests:** Neighbors Walt Bilous, Bob Coltun, John Mandrano, and Matthew Thomas; Stefan-leih Geary and Mike Cowhig of City of Greensboro; Guilford County Commissioner Ray Trapp; Benjamin Briggs and Parker Huitt of Preservation Greensboro Development Fund; Carl Myatt, Jack Sharp, and Harry Boody of Collaborative for Preservation & Energy Conservation

- 1. Board membership:** Linda Fusco reported that Khalil Perilstein and Jon Mitchell have resigned from the board. Board members agreed to wait to fill the vacancies via the August 6th regular elections.
- 2. President's Report:** In the interests of time, Linda Fusco distributed the President's Report to board members in advance of the meeting for review. The report was approved unanimously by the board during the meeting. President's Report items included:
  - i. Leftwich Tunnel area landscaping contract:** After Great Atlantic was selected at the June board meeting for installation of new plantings near the Leftwich tunnel, the realization was made that the quotes reviewed and approved did not include the costs of maintenance for the planted area. Linda procured quotes for maintenance of \$900/year from Great Atlantic and \$0/year from Dunlap. Linda asked for Dunlap to match the same plant types/sizes quoted by Great Atlantic for planting in the area and received a quote of \$850 from Dunlap, versus \$765 planting costs for Great Atlantic. Total prices for installation and first-year maintenance: \$850 Dunlap, \$1665 Great Atlantic. Motion was made and seconded via email to **switch from Great Atlantic to Dunlap for planting/maintenance at the Leftwich Tunnel. Motion was approved** with eight existing board members voting in favor via email on 7/10/2013 and one non-response.
  - ii. Tree Inventory Project:** Report distributed via email included proposed Work & Fee Schedule and amendments from William H. Lock and Associates for the Aycock Historic District Tree Inventory. The inventory will include the trees along the Fisher access ramp. It will include only the magnolia trees at the Dunleith site, and the trees on the west side of Chestnut (forested area near railroad tracks) will not be included. All other trees 4" DBH or larger in the historic district will be included. In addition to the tree survey, the work will include making recommendations for maintaining trees' health, treating endangered trees, removal of hazardous trees, planting new trees in suitable locations, and proactively pruning trees in conflict with power lines. A workshop will be held to communicate this information to the neighborhood. Cost estimate for the project was \$24,250. Motion was put forth and seconded via email on 7/9/2013 to **authorize up to \$25,000 of MSD funds for the**

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**tree inventory project** based on the estimate provided. **Motion was approved** via email voting on 7/9/2013, with eight in favor and two non-votes.

3. **Secretary report:** Minutes from the June 24, 2013 board meeting were approved.
4. **Treasury report:** Christina Cantrell distributed the Treasury Report to board members in advance of the meeting in the interests of time, and it was approved during the meeting. The report shows a balance of \$8,402.61, of which \$3,943.77 is in escrow. \$74.15 was received for newsletter ad payments.
5. **Historic Preservation (COA's):** Board members reviewed **COA application #1672, 614 5th Ave.**, for replacement of siding, bathroom window, and front door, installation of skylights, and removal of two trees. Board members expressed concern that the application lacked adequate detail and illustrations of the proposed changes, and that some of the changes may not meet historic district design guidelines. City officials Mike Cowhig and Stefan-leih Geary in attendance were familiar with the structure, the application, and some aspects by which it may not coincide with the guidelines, such as the proposed replacement of all siding instead of selective replacement of only deteriorated siding, and the use of materials such as "Hardie" board siding and a new PVC window. The house is located in an area in need of revitalization and is undergoing much-needed major rehabilitation and conversion from multi-unit back to single-family. Board members expressed a desire to support the efforts of the homeowner and confidence that the city and the HPC will help them to work out areas of concern in their application. Motion to **support the application with considerations similar to those of the city staff** was **approved unanimously**, with current HPC member abstaining.
6. **Preservation Greensboro Development Fund proposal for 740 Chestnut Street:** Benjamin Briggs, Executive Director of Preservation Greensboro Inc., presented his organization's proposal for the 740 Chestnut Street property, a long-vacant and deteriorating structure which has been offered to the Aycock Neighborhood Association by its current owner, Children's Home Society. Briggs outlined the history of Preservation Greensboro Inc. and its previous work with the Aycock Neighborhood Association, and described the organizational structure, purpose, expertise, and past successes of the nonprofit Preservation Greensboro Development Fund, which works to problem-solve historic properties, taking on "problem buildings" that are not otherwise handled by the general market. PGDF takes ownership of properties and puts in place a preservation easement, then seeks to sell properties to those who will rehabilitate them. The easement would mean that forever more, future owners would need to touch base with PGDF before they could make changes to the building, and that the building could not be torn down. PGDF's board consists of members in real estate, law, banking, finance, construction, and preservation. Briggs explained that they are well-equipped to handle taking on the difficult aspects of properties like 740 Chestnut, including marketing expertise, having an insurance company happy to insure abandoned properties, having the ability to help potential homeowners to intelligently review options, etc.

Briggs discussed the intriguing history of the structure and aspects of its design that make it unique.

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He found a picture of the house in the 1920s in Craftsman style. However, based on the “I-house” floor plan and design elements within the structure, he believes it was built in the 1890s.

Briggs address several concerns brought up by board members if the neighborhood association were to accept the property from CHS and transfer ownership to PGDF as proposed. He said PGDF would select a buyer/builder with a solid restoration plan and seek a letter from a lending institution showing that they’re able to take on the project so that it makes progress and doesn’t get bogged down for years due to lack of financial resources. He stated that if they have options, they would choose an owner-occupant buyer, and in some properties they have mandated that. He said the property would definitely be rezoned as single-family, and board members agreed that they would stipulate rezoning to single-family if a transfer of the property to PGDF were to take place. When asked the extent to which PGDF itself would maintain or improve the property, Briggs said the emphasis would be on performing needed repairs to shore up the property and prevent further deterioration, such as immediately fixing roof leaks, but that other major alterations to the property would probably be undertaken by a buyer, not PGDF. When asked about PGDF’s marketing plan and concerns that some PGDF properties are not well-marketed, Briggs discussed the potential buyers who are passionate about historic restoration and come to the organization looking to restore old properties. As a nonprofit, he said they would be able to price the property low, and people want to live in Aycock.

- 7. Carl Myatt Team Proposal for 740 Chestnut Street:** Architect Carl Myatt, General Contractor Jack Sharp, and Energy Consultant Harry Boody of Collaborative for Preservation & Energy Conservation presented a new concept plan to allow for both preservation of the original structure and building of a new energy-efficient home on the 740 Chestnut property. He had previously presented a plan for two new energy-efficient homes on the lot to members of the 740 Chestnut ad-hoc committee in a special meeting, but presented the new plan in light of board members’ interest in preserving the original historic structure. The plan would involve subdividing the lot into two and having Preservation Greensboro move the historic structure onto one lot, while Myatt’s team built one new energy showcase home on the other lot. His plan would require that the neighborhood negotiate with Preservation Greensboro to remove the existing portions of the building other than the original/old residence, which would be moved to its half of the lot. A driveway would be shared between the two homes. The new energy home would be pre-sold to a homebuyer prior to construction. Its target size would be 1,400 SF one story, and its target cost would be \$200,000 to \$250,000. After receiving the land/buildings from CHS, Aycock would need to have PGDF do the moving/removing of the existing buildings, have the lot divided into two lots, provide PGI with their lot, and provide the Collaborative with a lot used for collateral which would be costed and the amount paid to Aycock upon closing of the energy house sale. The Collaborative would work with the neighborhood to make sure that the house fits the neighborhood.
- 8. Additional 740 Chestnut Street Options.** The board discussed other options for the 740 Chestnut property which have been explored by the ad-hoc committee studying the issue, including:

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- A. **Do nothing.** (I.e. do not accept the property from Children's Home Society.)
- B. **Demolish house and create pocket park.** Would require use of MSD funds for substantial cost of demolition and deeding property to the City for maintenance.
- C. **Restore house for use as a community center with community garden.** Would require substantial investment and would not be eligible for MSD funding.
- D. **Sell As-Is** via a realtor. Value of property is hard to determine, as house is an anomaly in the neighborhood in its current condition. Aycock would ensure that property is rezoned as single-family or put in place deed restrictions to that effect.
- E. **PGDF Proposal to restore.**
- F. **Carl Myatt Proposal 1 to demolish, subdivide, and develop** as two energy-efficient homes.
- G. **Move, subdivide, and develop** according to the second Carl Myatt team plan, entering into agreements with the parties mentioned in options E and F.

At the behest of board members, Mike Cowhig and Stefan-leih Geary of the City of Greensboro clarified the potential role that the city might play. Geary thought that if Aycock gave the property to the city, then MSD funds could be used for any pre-development costs (i.e. demolition). The property would then be returned to Aycock.

Board members discussed many of the pros and cons of the variety of options presented in the context of the variety of priorities for our neighborhood. Betsey Baun suggested the creation of an evaluation matrix that would establish the criteria that are important to each board member and look for commonalities. **ACTION ITEM for Betsey Baun: Create a matrix for evaluation of the 740 Chestnut Street options under consideration.**

9. **Cultural Landscape Report:** Mindy Zachary reported on the proposal and cost estimate for a Cultural Landscape Report for the neighborhood. Glenn Stach of Stach, PLLC had presented the proposal at a separate meeting held on July 13th to which all board members were invited. (Stach was unable to attend the regular board meeting.) The Cultural Landscape Report proposal grew out of the board's desire to address the longstanding flooding/drainage problems in a section of the alleyways between Summit Avenue and Park Avenue, and the requirement from the city that if MSD funds were to be used to study a study on the alleys that it must be on the history and development of all the alleys in the neighborhood and not just the alley section about which there is a concern, as MSD funds must be used for the benefit of the entire neighborhood. City official Stefan-leih Geary consulted with Jeff Adolphsen at the State Historic Preservation Office for examples of what type of report or study may need to be conducted. Adolphsen suggested that we consider conducting a Cultural Landscape Report and gave the name of a consultant in North Carolina, Glenn Stach, a Preservation Landscape Architect based in Asheville, as someone local to contact for more information as there are few consultants with this skill set.

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Mindy explained that a Cultural Landscape Report would take into account more than just the alleyways and that the neighborhood would get more out of it than just addressing the alleyway problem. In Stach's view, a Cultural Landscape Report must take a more holistic approach, studying the past and present of all features of the neighborhood, including its design, layout, streets, curbs, traffic patterns, former streetcar usage, alleys, sidewalks, other infrastructure, etc. It would study the detailed history of the origins and evolution of the entire neighborhood, and record historic district features, analyzing their character versus what is present today. It could serve as the document of record for making preservation-based decisions about the future of the historic district. Mindy distributed a memo from Stach showing how the proposed Cultural Landscape Report project would align with the 12 action items of the Strategic Plan for the Aycock Neighborhood. Stach's proposed Cultural Landscape Report would incorporate a special emphasis on the alleyways, including a subsurface utility investigation of district alleys which would be subcontracted out by Stach to a civil engineering/surveying firm, Allied Associates. The engineers would use ground penetrating radar and camera scopes "within the portions of alleys still readily accessible to the public" to investigate the subterranean features of our alleys, including pipes, etc., according to Stach's proposal. The cost provided by Stach for the proposed Cultural Landscape Report was \$48,195.

Concerns were expressed by Stefan-leih Geary and some board members. Geary brought up thoughts expressed to her by Adolphsen, the state historic preservationist who had suggested contacting Stach, that the project proposed by Stach may be more expansive than the neighborhood had originally desired and more expansive than he had thought it would be. She recommended that the board decide what it wants: Just a more narrowly focused landscape plan and civil engineering to tell us what to do with the alleys, or whether we want to study all aspects of the entire neighborhood as an academic exercise that may produce interesting and useful information. She made the point that we have been considering a restoration project for the alleyways but have not been considering a study or a restoration project for the entire neighborhood. She also advised that to make an alley restoration project a reality, it would likely take more MSD funding to do so; she thought a Cultural Landscape Report would most likely serve as a building block and would need to be expanded upon with further planning/engineering. Some board members expressed concerns about the cost of the proposed study and its potential value in light of the significant funds expended on other studies, charrettes, and plans conducted over the preceding years by the neighborhood, and expressed the desire to investigate other options that might narrow the focus towards more directly addressing the alleyway issues.

Other board members expressed the view that we currently have no historic basis for infrastructure plans such as the Summit Avenue Corridor improvement plans, that this study would allow us to make more informed preservation-based decisions for the future, and that it would help us to preserve, control, and stop the deterioration of our neighborhood's landscapes. In discussing whether the scope of work could be narrowed to focus on the alleys it was Stach's opinion that a Cultural Landscape Report could not be narrowed because it requires major historical research into the neighborhood's cultural landscape as a whole.

A motion was put forth to **move forward with the Cultural Landscapes Report proposal.**

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Motion was **approved**, with **four in favor** and **two opposed** (one board member having departed before adjournment).

**Meeting adjourned at 9:22pm.**