

STAFF REPORT

ATHENS MUNICIPAL-REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

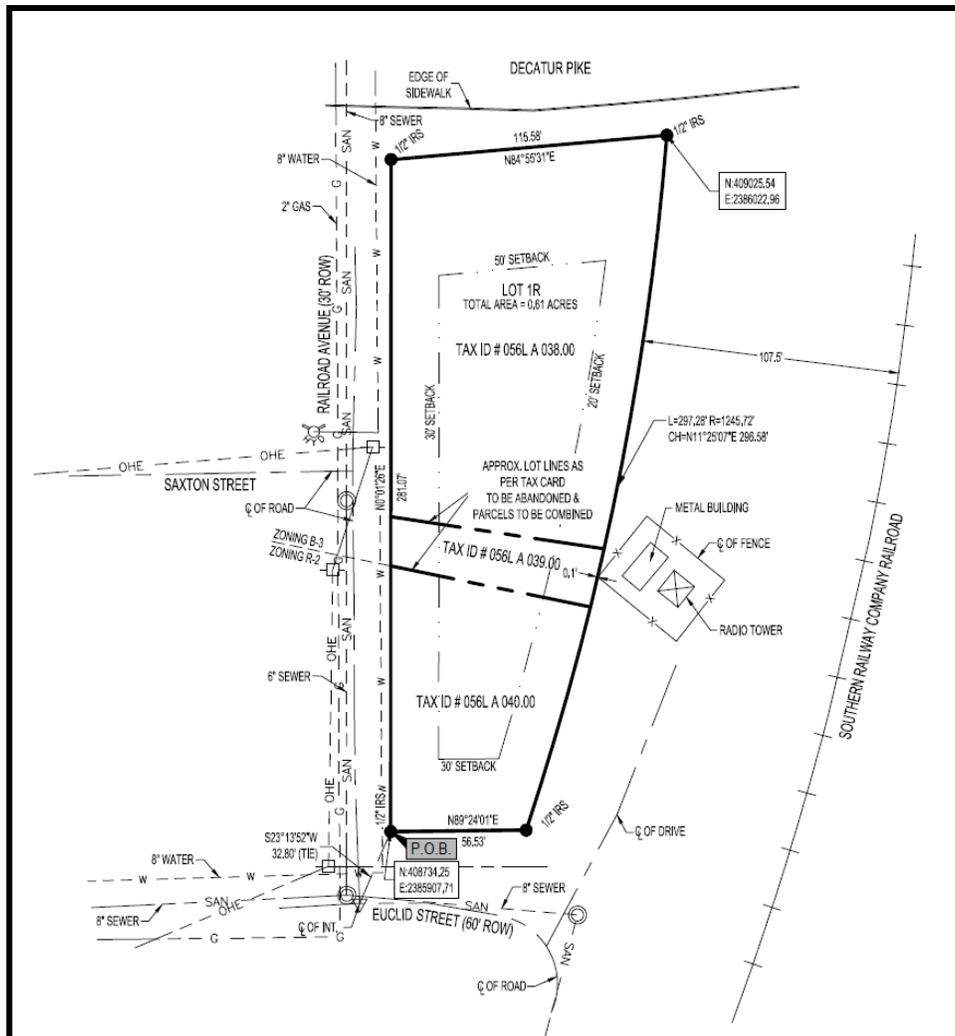
February 2, 2026

12:00 P.M.

CONFERENCE ROOM

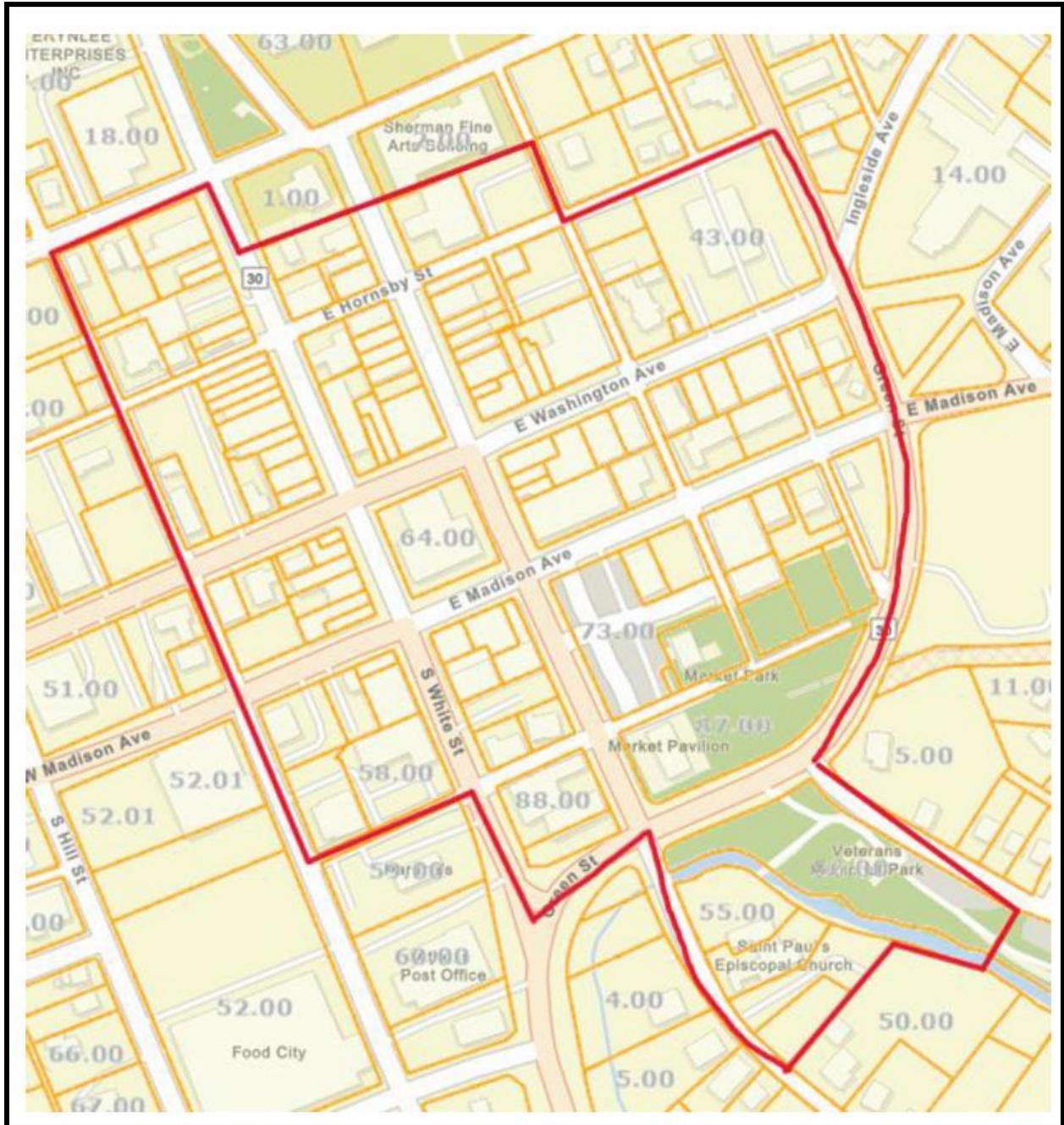
NEW BUSINESS

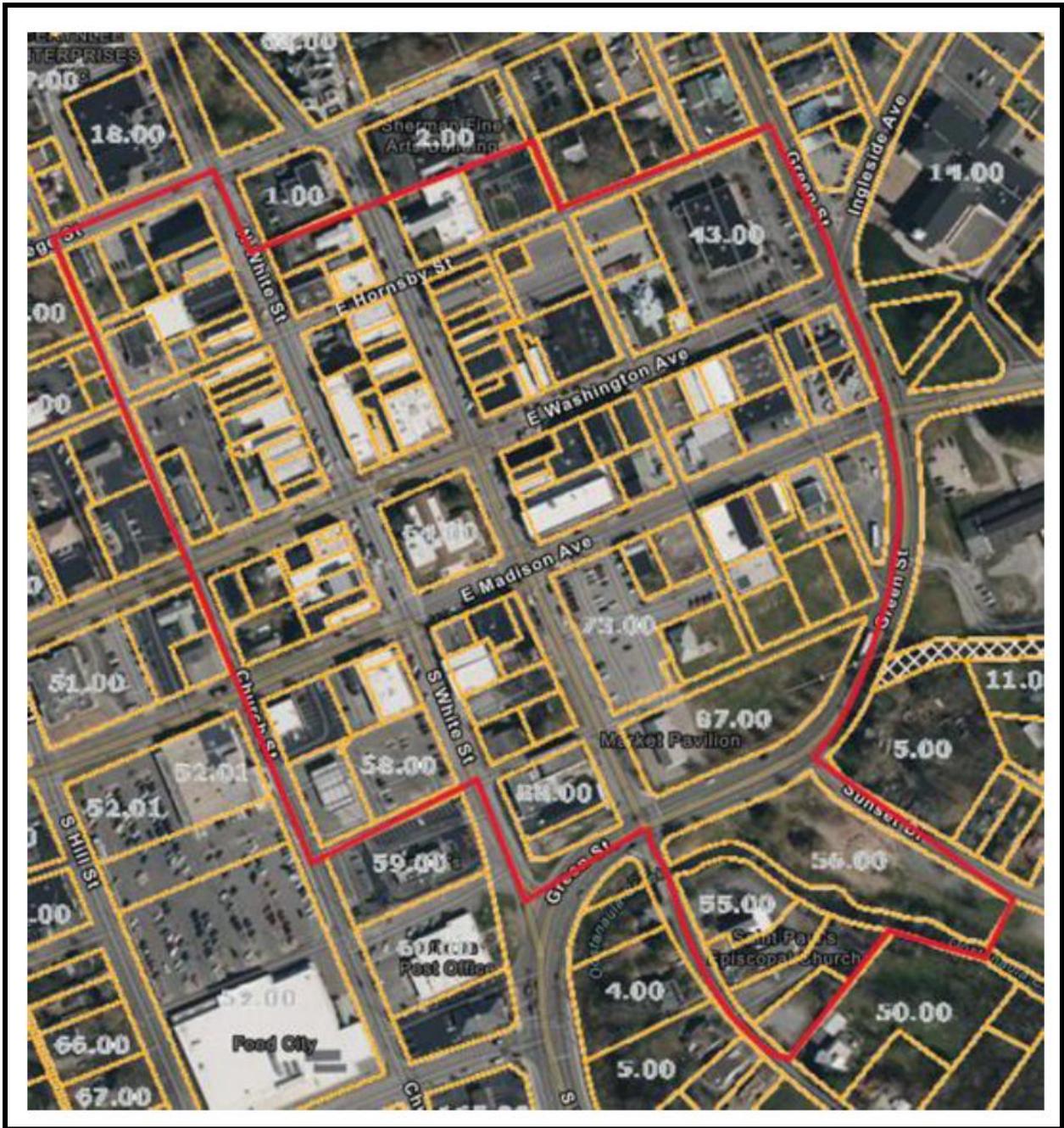
- 1. Public Comments and Final Plat approval for Porter Clark on property shown as Tax Map 056L Group A Parcels 038.00, 039.00 and 040.00 on the Tennessee Real Estate Property Assessment Data Website. The property is zoned B-3 Intensive Business District and R-2 Medium Density Residential and is located off Decatur Pike and the unopened Railroad Avenue Right of Way and contains 0.61 acres and three (3) lots.**



The plat has been reviewed by all departments and meets the requirements of the subdivision regulations. **Staff recommends approval of the plat subject to all signature certification blocks being completed and the plat being presented at the meeting.**

2. Public Comments, review and recommendation of the Athens Historical Preservation Committee proposed H-2 Commercial Historic Presentation Overlay in the B-2 Central Business District.





The discussion on the potential downtown historic district began over a year ago. After the first recommendation, the City Council requested that the Historic Commission do more public outreach and revise the boundary. Since then, the Commission has discussed the matter at length. This includes holding two informational meetings, one of which included a panel discussion with panelists from the State of TN Historic Commission, Cleveland, Sweetwater and Loudon. Downtown property owners within the proposed district were mailed notices making them aware of both of these meetings in which the potential downtown district would be discussed in detail. Notices about the meetings were also posted on social media and in the DPA. These informational meetings each had around 25 members of the public in attendance. Members of the public were able to ask any questions they may have and voice their support or opposition. After

the most recent informational meeting in November, a survey was mailed to downtown property owners asking if they support the creation of a historic zoning overlay in the downtown area. Of the 77 surveys sent, 21 responses were received. 8 votes were in favor of the creation of the historic district, and 13 votes were opposed. This equates to 27% response rate with 61% opposed and 39% in favor. This is not a survey that shows the true feelings of all 77 property owners and should be treated in your decision-making as not being a survey of statistical significance. In addition, state laws that govern zoning do not require surveys or voted percentages in any form or fashion to establish the need for any type of zoning regulations. Not that public opinion doesn't matter, it certainly does, but the legislative board of the Athens City Council has all power to regulate zoning matters in the city as they see fit. Staff did not receive any additional comments or questions after the survey was mailed out. Having done over a year of outreach and education with members of the public, the Commission decided on their January 8th, 2026 meeting to recommend the district to the Planning Commission.

Below is the data from the existing residential H-1 Overlay district 2019- Present:

2019- 9 COA applications submitted, 9 approved
2020- 17 COA applications submitted, 17 approved
2021- 22 COA applications submitted, 22 approved
2022- 11 COA applications submitted, 11 approved
2023- 7 COA applications submitted, 7 approved
2024- 12 COA applications submitted, 11 approved
2025- 5 COA applications submitted, 5 approved

Total since 2019- 83 applications and 82 approved

The above data equates to a 98.79% approval rate, which shows the willingness of the Preservation Commission to accommodate the exterior work landowners have requested in accordance with the design guidelines.

Whether this Commission Recommends approval, denial or some other alternative that would create a situation to send it back to the Athens Historical Preservation Commission for revisions, this can only be accomplished if City Council wants to proceed with the recommendation. This will move to the next City Council meeting with whatever recommendation is voted upon, just like any other rezoning/zoning ordinance amendment this Commission has been asked to consider.

Please see Draft AHPC minutes from January 8, 2026, and all approved minutes of 2025 concerning the H-2 Overlay District work of the AHPC on the following pages

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 8, 2026

3:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Jona Garrett
James Fries
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan
Timberly Guffey
Perry McCowan (New Council appointee)
Kim Cochran-Graham

MEMBERS ABSENT

OTHERS ATTENDING

Nora Cardin

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of December 4, 2025, regular meeting minutes

The minutes of the December 4, 2025, regular meeting, were read and approved on motion by Laura Lenoir; seconded by Jona Garrett; vote – unanimous

OLD BUSINESS

1. Downtown Historic Overlay

a. Results of property owner survey

Mrs. Cardin explained that there was a survey that was sent out to all of the downtown property owners. It was a one question survey that said, “Do you support the creation of Historic Preservation District in the Central Business District of Athens?” There was a link on the survey and a QR code. Seventy-seven surveys were sent out and twenty-one were completed. They had eight yeses and thirteen nos. She said she did not have any other feedback from anyone other than those twenty-one submissions.

Chairperson McKeehan asked if the property owners that owned multiple properties downtown received one survey.

Mrs. Cardin answered yes, they only received one survey. There are 120 parcels in the proposed district, and 77 surveys were sent out.

Chairperson McKeehan said it's time to move forward. It has been a year.

There was further discussion about the property boundary, and the number of people who responded.

Mr. McCowan asked if they could meet the people face to face.

Mrs. Cardin explained to Mr. McCowan that they already had two informational meetings over the past year, with the last being November. There were between 20 and 30 property owners at each meeting. They had experts on the panel and let property owners ask questions. Those meetings were held before they sent out the survey.

Mrs. Cardin also talked about Mr. Casteel addressing in the last meeting. That the current property owners may not own the property forever, and that this is about what is best for the property itself. It is about the downtown district, what they want for the downtown, and what the city wants for the downtown area.

Mr. McCowan said he is concerned about the people who own it now, and what they will say about how they may have been treated. He is concerned about how they put it out there.

Mrs. Cardin explained that from them it would be recommended to the Planning Commission, and the public would have an opportunity to voice their opinions or concerns to the Council if the Planning Commission recommended it to them. This is not the end all be all. Should they decide to recommend it, the Planning Commission would have to recommend it to City Council and City Council would have to also hold public hearings before it is put in place.

MOTION: To recommend to the Planning Commission the creation of a Historic Overlay District in the downtown Central Business District.

MADE: Laura Lenoir

SECOND: Jona Garrett

There was discussion.

Mrs. Lenoir wanted to know if the Planning Commission would know about the survey results.

Mrs. Cardin said she will be at the meeting and can make them aware.

Mrs. Lenoir said if they don't do something soon, there will be nothing to preserve.

Mrs. Cardin said that only a few of the mailed-out surveys were undeliverable. The information was obtained from Tennessee Property Data. They were delivered to the registered property owners. This Commission has done what was asked of them by the City Council.

There was a discussion about TWU and that they still did not want to not be in district.

There was a vote taken.

VOTE: Unanimous
MOTION PASSED

NEW BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers

The meeting was handed over to Mrs. Cardin for the election of officers.

Mrs. Lenoir nominated Shawn McKeehan for the office of Chairperson. It was seconded by Mrs. Garrett. Mr. McKeehan accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. All were in favor.

Chairperson McKeehan nominated Laura Lenoir as Vice Chairperson. It was seconded by Mrs. Garrett. Mrs. Lenoir accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. All were in favor.

Mrs. Lenoir nominated Mrs. Garrett for the office of Secretary. It was seconded by Mr. McKeehan. Mrs. Garrett accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. All were in favor.

The meeting was turned back over to Chairperson McKeehan.

2. Certificate of Appropriateness request- 618 Ingleside Avenue- for replacement of damaged siding, replacement of exterior stairs, and reconstruction of retaining wall.

Mrs. Cardin said the Roses were replacing wood siding on the back and west sides of their home due to water damage. Mrs. Rose said it was new siding installed in the previous renovation and was not the original and it made it susceptible to water damage. She showed them pictures. They are also replacing the stairs facing Blount Street. They took the stairs and retaining wall out to replace due to water issues. The new stairs will be same material. They are replacing the parking pad with concrete pavers resembling cobblestone or brick in order to help with the durability and drainage issue. She said that Mr. Rose put a disclaimer at the bottom that none of these features were original to 1894 structure. They are necessary to correct drainage issues, safety risks, prevent water intrusion, and enhance the overall appearance. There was more discussion on areas that were being renovated. All the proposed work and work being done does meet the design guidelines.

MOTION: To approve the Certificate of Appropriateness request as submitted.

MADE: Laura Lenoir

SECOND: Jona Garrett

VOTE: Unanimous
MOTION PASSED

Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson

Jona Garrett, Secretary

MINUTES

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DECEMBER 4, 2025

3:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Jona Garrett
James Fries
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Timberly Guffey
Jordan Curtis
Kim Cochran-Graham

OTHERS ATTENDING

Anthony Casteel
Tyler Boyd

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of November 6, 2025, regular meeting minutes

The minutes of the September 4, 2025, regular meeting, were read and approved on motion by Laura Lenoir; seconded by Jona Garrett; vote – unanimous

NEW BUSINESS

1. Reschedule January's regular monthly meeting due to it falling on New Year's Day

There was a discussion on changing the meeting date in January due to the next meeting being on New Year's holiday. It was agreed to reschedule the meeting for the following Thursday on January 8, 2026.

MOTION: To reschedule the next Athens Historic Preservation meeting for January 8, 2026, due to the normal meeting time falling on the New Year's Holiday.

MADE: Laura Lenoir
SECOND: Jona Garrett
VOTE: Unanimous (4-0)
MOTION PASSED

2. Downtown overlay- survey for property owners

Chairperson McKeehan talked about the survey and asked if they wanted one question or two questions.

Mrs. Lenoir asked what the two questions would be.

Chairperson McKeehan said, "Do you support the creation of a Historic Overlay District. Yes or no; let them answer. It will be sent to each of the owners of the affected properties. There will not be multiple surveys for those who own multiple properties. Do they want to do a survey with one question per person who owns one property or more.

Mrs. Garrett asked if there were two questions, what would they be.

Chairperson McKeehan said they passed the motion with one question.

Mrs. Garrett said that is better anyway.

Mr. Casteel said they need to recommend something to Council or they don't need to. That is it.

Chairperson McKeehan said they promised to do a survey. Once they get the survey, back, they will see what the percentage is, and they will make that decision after that. If they get the survey results back before the January meeting, they will decide at that meeting.

Mrs. Lenoir asked if the survey is going to determine their opinion.

Chairperson McKeehan said it does not have to, but they said they would do a survey, and they would stay true to their promise.

Mr. Casteel said the thing they must look at is they are trying to ask the current landowners what they should do with our downtown. What Council asked was, look and see what Athens needs for downtown. It is not what the business owners need, it is what the City of Athens' needs. He feels it should not take this long. Last year he was talking to Council Advisory about this. They have been pushing this around for over a year. What they need to look at is what does Athens need. He said they tried in 2006, 2012, and this is going to be their last chance to save anything downtown. If it does not happen this time, with all the due diligence they have done, there will be no historic district. There will be no reason to have a historic district because downtown everyday is deteriorating. There comes a time when you can't worry about the majority of those people. You have to worry about what Athens needs. This is about what City Council directed them to look at. If there is a part of downtown this Board feels like they can save and turn into a historic district, then that is what they should do.

Chairperson McKeehan said in January, he will have talked to Tyler again. Tyler is going to talk to the Board of the college and if they are totally on board, they will have to draw them back in. He thinks there is nobody here to cause any problem. There was some discussion as to why TWU was reluctant to get on board with this. They are more receptive now. They sent a representative to the last meeting, Blake McCaslin. He was going back to the board. Otherwise, it will be presented the way it is now.

Mrs. Garrett asked who promised them they would do a survey.

Chairperson McKeehan said they promised them. The Board. Two different times they were promised.

Mrs. Garrett said, number one, they keep circling around this. Number two, if they do a vote...

Chairperson said either way, they are going to offend someone.

Mrs. Garrett said she feels like what Mr. Casteel said, they need to do it or don't do it. They are giving them hope by filling out a survey.

Chairperson McKeehan said they have not heard from some people.

Mr. Casteel said they probably still won't hear from them. Until they get one hundred percent participation, they will still be in the same boat they are in right now.

Chairperson McKeehan said this dies at the next meeting. If they don't vote yes or no, this will die at the next meeting.

Chairperson Lenoir asked why they were required to get one hundred percent participation.

Mr. Casteel said they are not. They were just saying that is the goal of any questionnaire.

Chairperson McKeehan said there was some false rumor that the last meeting was cancelled, and some people did not get to attend. He's not sure where that came from. They didn't send anything out and the city didn't send anything out.

Mr. Casteel said, if they were doing the survey, they would send one letter to each owner with one vote.

Chairperson McKeehan said Mrs. Cardin said there will be a letter sent with a link to the survey. It will be done by New Year's Day, and they will have a week to tabulate the vote.

There was discussion about the area it would cover.

Mr. Casteel said Mrs. Cardin already has the question.

Chairperson McKeehan said no. They just came up with it a second ago.

Mrs. Garrett said she has concerns about the survey, because like Mr. Casteel said, this is their one shot.

Mr. Casteel said he would not say it's their one shot.

Mrs. Garrett said it is better than kicking the can down the road further and further. When is it going to stop. She said they are not going to make everybody happy. The chances of this becoming an even bigger messed up thing, in her opinion, is pretty great. She does not know who promised, the word, "promised them". That is a dangerous word, because you are roped into it now. Yes, the community gets a say, but they are sitting on this board for a reason, to make decisions and not people please. She does not think she is ok with that survey thinking about it now.

Chairperson McKeehan said the Board said on two occasions at the info sessions they would do a survey.

It was agreed that they would do the survey.

There was further discussion.

Mr. Casteel asked what the question would be.

Chairperson McKeehan said, "Do you support the creation of Historic Overlay District."

Mr. Casteel said this is what he wrote, "Do you support the creation of Historic Overlay Preservation District in the Central Business District of Athens?" It is short and to the point and nothing hidden in it. It is up to the Board.

Everyone agreed on the question.

The meeting was adjourned.



Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson



Kimberly Guffey, Secretary

MINUTES

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

OCTOBER 2, 2025

3:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Jona Garrett
Kim Cochran-Graham

MEMBERS ABSENT

Justin White
Jordan Curtis
Timberly Guffey
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan

OTHERS ATTENDING

Nora Cardin

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. **Approval of September 4, 2025, regular meeting minutes.**

The approval of minutes was not done, due to the lack of a quorum.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Discussion of historic overlay downtown and November 6th informational meeting**

Details for the November 6, 2025, meeting were discussed.

Mrs. Cardin said she was planning to send the letters out the following week. She said they talked about adding a "frequently asked questions" and that Mrs. Lenoir thought it would be good to send it with the letter rather than hand it to them as they come in the door. She said she put four questions on there and if there was anything they wanted to add to that, let her know. She went over the "frequently asked" questions.

Mrs. Cardin said Sam Moser from Sweetwater and Lane Tillner from the State of Tennessee are coming to the meeting. She is working on getting someone that is involved with a Main Street that has a downtown historic district. She said Sandra Kinney from Main Street (Athens) sent out an email to all her contacts and the only person who responded was someone from Columbia. If she were to come, they

would have to pay her travel fees. They may just have Mrs. Kinney be their Main Street representative on the panel.

Mrs. Lenoir asked who was going to give the introduction and talk about why they are interested in the historic district.

Mrs. Cardin said she would think Chairperson McKeegan.

They discussed some things Chairperson McKeegan should talk about during the introduction.

They talked about having Mr. Moser from Sweetwater say a few things before the panel discussion.

Mrs. Cochran-Graham said she thinks all the introductions should be made at the front end.

All present agreed.

Mrs. Cardin talked about letting them submit questions beforehand, they will go over them, and they will ask the panel the questions.

Mrs. Garrett said she knows a couple of people in Cleveland. She asked exactly what kind of person they were looking for.

Mrs. Cardin said she thinks Mrs. Kinney and Chairperson McKeegan want someone who represents a downtown main street and has a downtown historic district.

Mrs. Lenoir asked if one of the goals of Main Street is partly preservation.

Mrs. Cardin said yes.

Mrs. Cardin said Sam Moser has an architect that works for his firm that could speak as well. She (Abigail Lane) minored in historic preservation from Tulane. He said she could come and sit on the panel.

They thought that was a great idea.

Mrs. Cardin asked if they had any other questions they thought might need to be added to the letter.

Mrs. Lenoir said there may be questions about demolition.

Mrs. Lenoir talked about somewhere in the guidelines, it states that people can have a consultation meeting when they are thinking about their application. She said they want them to know that they have put time into this and want to guide them in this.

Mrs. Cochran-Graham asked who can vote, the people who own the buildings downtown.

Mrs. Cardin said it would really be however they want it. They could send a survey, and the owners would be able to have one vote. At the end of the day, they aren't required to do a survey to show support of the district, so they can decide how they want it done.

Mrs. Lenoir said they do it to gain public support.

Mrs. Garrett said she would give Mrs. Cardin Nicolas Lillios's contact information as a possible panelist.

There was continued discussion, and the meeting was adjourned.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) request for Laura Lenoir- 500 E. Madison Avenue- for replacement of front porch columns.**
 - a. Owner Comments**
 - b. Public Comments**

This agenda item was not addressed due to the lack of a quorum. Mrs. Cardin said they may be able to administratively approve it. She would check on it.



Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson



Timberly Guffey, Secretary

MINUTES

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MAY 1, 2025

5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Timberly Guffey
Kim Cochran-Graham
Jordan Curtis
Jona Garrett
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Justin White

OTHERS ATTENDING

Nora Cardin
Anthony Casteel

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of April 3, 2025, regular meeting minutes.

The minutes of the April 3, 2025, regular meeting, were read and approved on motion by Laura Lenoir; seconded by Jordan Curtis; vote – unanimous

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion of historic overlay downtown.

Chairperson McKeehan opened the meeting up by welcoming all those in attendance and he also mentioned Dr. Tillner being on Zoom. She would be observing the meeting and would be available if needed to answer any questions or concerns they may have. He mentioned the list of benefits they received coming in. He said that since the last recommendation they narrowed the district. Property owners within the new proposed district were sent letters, as well as those who are on the outskirts that might be interested in being included. If they get sense from the meeting that there is broad support, they will move forward by recommending to the Planning Commission as they did with the last district. If not, they will take the concerns back and possibly reconfigure the district. He discussed the link to the Guidelines that was in the letter.

Chairperson McKeehan opened the floor to the public.

There was a lengthy question-and-answer session between the public and members of the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned.

Those who were in attendance: Joseph Gordon, Kelley Gordon, Thomas Coates, Kristin Coates, Deloyn McDonough, Stuart McKinney, Christian Medders, Mike Stevenson, Glen Whiting, Fred Burke, Richard Pupard, Sharon Johnson, Emmett Johnson, Lisa Mayfield, Scottie Mayfield, Julie McKeehan, David McKeehan, Tom Hamilton, Daniel Red, Hugh Willson, Keith Price, Joyce Price, Judith Hamilton, Beth Gandy, Jackie Newman, Larry Eaton, Patti Greek and James Greek.



Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson



Timberly Guffey, Secretary

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

APRIL 3, 2025

3:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Timberly Guffey
Kim Cochran-Graham
Jordan Curtis
Jona Garrett
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Justin White

OTHERS ATTENDING

Nora Cardin
Anthony Casteel
Chris Disch
Mike Stevenson
Jody Harrison
Frank Clark

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of March 6, 2025, regular meeting minutes

The minutes of the March 6, 2025, regular meeting, were read and approved on motion by Laura Lenoir; seconded by Timberly Guffey; vote – unanimous

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion of historic overlay downtown

Mr. McKeehan said they need to set a date for this info session and decide what it should look like.

Mrs. Cardin said she and Mr. Casteel talked about this. She talked to Dr. Tillner about coming to speak like she did at the first meeting. She said she is willing to come back and do a presentation. She and Mr. Casteel also talked about doing a Q&A session and letting the downtown business owners ask questions. She said Mr. McKeehan mentioned that Sandra from Main Street was willing to speak as well. Doing a Q&A with them and opening up the floor would be good because some of them have already seen the presentation. It is up to the Commission.

Mrs. Lenoir asked if they could give them an overview before they do questions.

Mrs. Cardin said yes. She is also sending out a letter with details and where they can find the guidelines before the meeting. She said Dr. Tillner sent her the presentation and she sent a copy to Sandra who in turn emailed it to all her contacts downtown. They can also have it up at the meeting and talk about the benefits.

Mrs. Lenoir asked about showing pictures.

Mrs. Cardin and Mr. Clark said yes.

Mr. McKeehan said that Mrs. Guffey mentioned having it after 5:00. Maybe 5:30.

They agreed that the May 1, 2025, regular meeting would be moved to 5:30 from 3:30. They would do ro'll call, approval of minutes, and then that would be new business.

Mr. McKeehan asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

Mrs. Cardin said they would move the regular meeting from 3:30pm to 5:30pm, still at the same location and she would send out a notice to all property owners so they will know they are doing this.

MOTION: To move the regular scheduled meeting from 3:30pm to 5:30pm, at the same location, with Mrs. Cardin sending out notices to the property owners so they can be made aware of the meeting.

MADE: Laura Lenoir

SECOND: Jona Garrett

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION PASSED

Mrs. Cardin said they send out annual letters to the property owner regarding information about the Historic District. She will use that letter as a template for the letter that will be sent to downtown property owners. It was decided that she will send all the information they need for guidelines, the map, and her contact information. They will be informed before the meeting. Mr. Clark will do social media posts, The Morning Fax, and to the DPA (Daily Post Athenian).

There was continued conversation about the buildings downtown.

An unknown person asked if there would be any changes to guidelines they have already.

Mrs. Cardin said no, not at this time.

Mrs. Tillner said that the State is in the process of putting together training for realtors who have property listings in historic districts.

Mrs. Garrett talked about a previous discussion she and Mr. Casteel had about meeting with realtors in the area and giving them a packet pertaining to the historic district.

Mrs. Tillner said her office would be happy to assist with that.

The meeting was adjourned.


Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson


Timberly Guffey, Secretary