

VIRGINIA BEACH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

March 6, 2019, 5:00 pm

Towne Bank Building, 2101 Parks Avenue, Suite 500

Approved April 3, 2019

Present:

Officers:

Chair, William Gambrell; First Vice-Chair, James Wood;
Second Vice-Chair, Sharon Prescott; Secretary, Bobbie Gribble;
Immediate Past Chair, Bernice Pope

Members:

Glenn Carwell, Jennifer Estes, Sharon Felton, Harriet Frenzel, Mac Rawls

Staff:

Mark Reed

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Commission is to advise the City Council and the Departments of Planning and Community Development and Museums on all issues related to the preservation of historic buildings, structures and sites located in the City of Virginia Beach.

MISSION: The mission of the Commission shall be to preserve, protect and maintain the historic identity of Virginia Beach and the former Princess Anne County through a program of advocacy and increased public awareness of involvement.

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks – Bill Gambrell

First Vice-Chair Jimmy Wood called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. He noted that there was no one in attendance other than Commission members so he welcomed the members that were present

Approval of February 6, 2019 Minutes – Bobbie Gribble

Mr. Wood asked if members had reviewed the minutes of the February 6 meeting. A motion was made for approval of the minutes as presented. Sharon Felton made the motion, which was seconded by Harriet Frenzel. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Meeting – Sharon Prescott

Sharon Prescott noted that plans are proceeding for the Public Meeting that the Commission will host on Wednesday, April 10th at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.

Ms. Prescott said there is a need for members of the Commission to help greet, sign-in, and provide handouts. Several members volunteered: Harriet Frenzel, Jennifer Estes, Lee Lockamy, Jimmy Wood and Bobbie Gribble. Ms. Prescott asked that volunteers please be there between 5:45 to 6:00.

Ms. Prescott noted that we have a full agenda and the timing will be tight. She said the only unconfirmed speaker on the agenda is Barbara Henley representing the Princess Anne County/Virginia Beach Historical Society. Mark Reed said he will call Mrs. Henley to confirm.

Ms. Prescott said we will talk about Preservation Month in May and promote the Pints for Preservation activities. She said we will be working on a public information campaign, which will include a press release and a short blurb for social media and sites like Next Door. Mark Reed will ask Rosemary if she will ask other Council Members to advertise the Public Meeting on their social media pages.

Bill Gambrell arrived and took over chairing of the meeting

African American Burial Grounds Network Act – Bill Gambrell

Mr. Gambrell said he wanted the Commission to know that there are efforts underway to legislate protections for African American grave sites. He noted that we have seen several recent issues come up in this area where African American cemeteries have been threatened.

Mark Reed noted that in the meeting packet is information about a bill that has been introduced in Congress that would establish a nationwide network for a database on African American graves and cemeteries (see Appendix 1). It potentially could result in grants being available to help preserve these sites. He said the bill was introduced by Congressman Donald McEachin of Virginia's 4th District. Mr. Gambrell asked Mr. Reed to send the bill to Commission members so they could read the language that was presented.

Sharon Felton thanked Mr. Gambrell and Mr. Reed for their support on the Shoveller Lane project. She noted that the owner was very cooperative and did move the graves. She said they had wanted to keep the family's remains in Virginia Beach, but there wasn't any room in the African American cemetery they had identified. The final resting place is in Suffolk. Ms. Felton noted that Edna Hendrix was also instrumental in achieving this positive outcome.

Committee Reports

Cape Henry Historic Site – Mac Rawls

Mac Rawls reported for the Cape Henry Historic Site committee. He noted that they met on Monday, March 4th.

He said the construction project is progressing well and should be completed mid-April (if the weather holds out). He noted that Preservation Virginia said the shuttle bus is working out quite well. Once the tower reopens, they will continue to inform visitors about the entirety of the site and its historic importance.

Mr. Rawls said on April 27th there will be ceremonies to commemorate the 412th Cape Henry Anniversary of the First Landing. It is sponsored by the Order of Cape Henry 1607. Mr. Rawls encouraged Commission members to please attend if possible.

Mr. Rawls said there is some future potential for placement of a large artillery piece across from the lighthouse as a public display. He said there had been a LARK amphibious craft there, but it has been moved to Fort Eustis.

Mr. Rawls said that the committee is working with the Military trying to get them to talk about matters before rather than as they are taking place. He noted that they have been trying to set up a tour of the old train station and it keeps getting put off. The concern is the building will fall apart and the military will just take it down. He said that this has been heightened by the receipt of information about the proposed demolition of 12 buildings at Fort Story, 9 of which are homes that were part of the Cape Henry resort settlement. He said the Cape Henry committee will visit the site to gather more information and to express concern about the demolitions as warranted.

Mr. Rawls said it is his understanding that the Coast Guard has removed the new lighthouse from the surplus property list. The intent is not known, yet. Mr. Rawls said he will set up a meeting to determine the reason behind this.

Historic Preservation Month – Sharon Prescott

Ms. Prescott said we have a commitment from three local micro-breweries to support our Pints for Preservation activities. She said Mr. Reed is working on finalizing the beverage coaster design and order.

Ms. Prescott said that the committee would like all Commission members to invite their friends and neighbors to attend the "happy hour" events at the microbreweries and to support the effort.

She said they are hoping for a series of articles in the local newspaper. There will be a press release about May being Historic Preservation Month and the activities associated with it.

Ms. Prescott noted that the Students meet on Monday and hopefully we will hear the final details for the Scavenger Hunt. She also noted that the Historic Homes will work with us. It is hoped we will have an opportunity to get publicity for the 300th Anniversary of the Thoroughgood House.

Historic Recognition – Katie Paulson

Katie Paulson was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Reed said that the Cooke-Royster Cottage on Ocean Front Avenue has submitted an application for listing on the Register. He noted that they are waiting for Mrs. Brock to get back in town so they can schedule the committee's site visit.

Student Leaders – Brianna Perez, Victoria McQuay

Brianna and Victoria were unable to attend today's meeting.

Threatened Buildings – Jennifer Estes

Jennifer Estes noted that the committee looked at three old beach cottages on 37th Street at the request of the property owner, who wants to preserve them. She noted that she couldn't attend because she can't do steps, but she has driven by the three cottages. Bill Gambrell, Bernice Pope, Mac Rawls and Mark Reed attended the meeting. The three cottages on 37th Street are owned by the Koch Family, who also own the Cutty Sark Motel.

Mr. Gambrell noted that the Koch Family is looking at doing some extensive renovations; however, they want to retain the three cottages. He said it is hard to save something like this, there are limited incentives. It is the Commission's job to see if there is anything we can do.

Mr. Reed said he feels that tax credits are the key. He said Paige Pollard would be able to help them with this.

There was a discussion of how to protect historical homes when the land is worth much more than the building and those real estate values are rising.

- Mr. Rawls asked about the potential for a Historic District down there. Mr. Reed said this is possible and could be done.
- Bernice Pope said she is excited that we have been asked to be involved. She said she will be meeting with Paige Pollard and the owner.
- Mr. Rawls suggested the City purchase easements on certain properties with the owner's approval. He noted the city does have an agricultural easement program that is working.
- Mr. Gambrell suggested looking at other cities and how they are handling preservation despite the high price of land.
- Mr. Wood noted that with the agricultural easement the property is all contiguous. With the property at the beach it would be extremely expensive, probably prohibitive.
- Mr. Rawls said we need a couple of attorneys and real estate people. We would have to do this selectively. It would only apply to properties we feel are worth preserving.
- Mr. Gambrell said he agreed. He said it would be smart to fold it into Ms. Estes' committee at this time.
- Mr. Reed said that preservation incentives are the key.
- Glenn Carwell asked how we get business owners involved with hotels offering houses. He noted the Cutty Sark is offering these houses as an option.

Project Updates – Mark Reed

Mark Reed provided several project updates.

Cavalier Shores National Register Nomination

Mr. Reed noted that this was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Registry in December and it was delayed getting to the National Park Service (NPS) due to the federal government shutdown. He said that it now has been received by NPS and it is on the pending list. The review should happen in the next 30 to 60 days.

Carraway House Archaeology

Mr. Reed said he had sent out a link to the Beacon article (see Appendix 2). The report concluded that the cemetery is probably in its original location. He has checked with DHR and they feel if the building is moved again (because it was moved once) - it would not likely have an adverse effect on its potential for listing in the National Register.

Mr. Reed noted that dendrochronology would be a great thing to pursue with this building. He has seen in the rafters that there is bark edge wood, which increases the potential to be able to date when the wood was cut. He said that Matthew Laird did the documentary research for the house and study also recommends dendrochronology as a next step.

Meeting of Three Commanders Marker Dedication

Mr. Reed noted that this turned out to be a great event despite some unseasonably cold weather. He said that the NATO Commander brought several uniformed officers. They looked great standing next to the Revolutionary War re-enactors that were there.

Mr. Reed noted that Eric Hodies of the Beacon attended. He also said that VBTV filmed the event.

Archaeological and Architectural Survey Projects Southern Half

Mr. Reed said he met with Councilperson Barbara Henley about both projects. Mrs. Henley is okay with the archaeological project.

Mr. Reed noted that we are submitting a cost share grant application to DHR for this project. DHR has done a preliminary review and said the application looks thorough. It is now in the Virginia Beach budget office working its way through approvals. He said DHR is excited about having five days of shoreline assessment as part of the project. If the grant is awarded, DHR will manage the project.

Mr. Reed said he is finalizing the Scope of Work for the architectural survey. He will then meet with Mrs. Henley's history group at the Senior Resource Center to get their input.

Mr. Gambrell asked about the Cavalier Hotel easement document. Mr. Reed said he is expecting to receive the draft report soon.

Historic Properties Glimpse – Mark Reed

March Historical Review Board

Mr. Reed provided a brief overview of items that are on the Historical Review Board's agenda for their March meeting.

- Sign for Rose Hall District (3145 Virginia Beach Blvd) – This is a commercial sign that the property owner wants to enlarge from 6 to 8 feet in height. Materials, lettering, etc., would remain essentially the same. Mr. Reed feels it is not much of a change.
- Municipal Center in Courthouse District - changing street lights to LED. The City is changing light poles to LED, which will require a new lantern fixture. Mr. Reed showed the existing and the proposed fixtures and they look pretty much the same. Mr. Reed said staff was likely going to recommend approval.

Weblin House

Mr. Reed stated that this project did not go to the Planning Commission in February. He said it is expected to be on their agenda in April. He noted that it was discussed at the January Historic Preservation Commission meeting. After the discussion it was determined there would not be an adverse effect from the demolition of existing agricultural structures and the proposed new residential construction. The milk barn will be refurbished for dwelling units. The silo(s) will be refurbished.

Mr. Reed noted that the City of Virginia Beach recently received a FOIA request for all correspondence from 2016 to the present regarding the Weblin House rezoning. That means that they received a copy of the letter that the Preservation Commission chair had sent to the Planning Commission chair regarding the proposed project. Bill Gambrell received an email from the person who did the FOIA request asking the Commission to review the project again.

There was some general discussion and questions regarding the project. Mr. Reed said there will be no more than 14 units. There was some concern expressed about the quality and appearance of the new construction. Mr. Reed said that DHR holds an easement on the property and they would be expected to hold the project to reasonably high standards. They are the ones requiring the single story construction that has the appearance of an agricultural structure.

Mr. Reed spoke to what “no adverse effect” terminology means. He feels that these units will have no adverse effect on the Weblin House being a historic property listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Gambrell said he will write, with Mr. Reed’s help, a letter saying the Commission believes the project will not adversely effect the historic nature of the Weblin House, but that is not an endorsement of the project.

Old Business

Mr. Reed noted that the CLG ARB Workshop on August 8 in Smithfield still has 15 slots left for. He said that Section 106 is on the agenda which the Commission does oversee. Bill Gambrell, Bernice Pope and Jennifer Estes asked Mr. Reed to register them for the workshop.

Bill Gambrell said he has been asked to serve on the Board for ViBe. He said he would be a non-voting member and was asked to help bring a historic preservation perspective to the group.

Mr. Gambrell said he was also asked by Ms. (Councilperson Rosemary) Wilson, Mr. (Rick) Klobuchar and Ms. (Harriet) Frenzel to serve on a committee regarding the Francis Land House interpretation question. He said the City Manager has determined that the WWII portion of exhibit will be on the second floor and the first floor will retain the current historical artifacts and interpretation. He said the offices will be removed from the second floor. The basement will be insulated after they take care of the moisture damage. Mr. Gambrell said the Friends of the Virginia Beach Historic Houses agreed with the compromise.

New Business

Mac Rawls suggested we create a relationship with the new editor of the Beacon. He said we should try to get a monthly history article printed.

Mr. Rawls also reported another interesting historical event. He noted that, in Thalia, there is a beautiful old house where the Madame who owned a prostitution business used to live. The person who owns that house is going to do a presentation to the Thalia Civic League on April 15th at 7:00 p.m. at the church across from Thalia Elementary. Mr. Rawls invited the Commission to attend.

Sharon Felton said that as an elected School Board member she takes great pride in the fact that the “SAPLINGS” (Students and Parents Learning Intellectual Growth Strategies), a Virginia Beach City Public Schools program, take advantage of the Virginia Beach historical houses, She said she is concerned about the ‘ploy’ of using Historic Houses and the WWII program for schools and SOL(S). And she appreciates the VBHPC being an educational entity toward culture responsiveness using the city of Virginia Beach historic artifacts.

Mrs. Felton informed the Commission that on March 16th, the African American Cultural Center will have their “Portraits from a Place of Grace” exhibit. All African American Neighborhoods will be featured. Over 100 people came out and did a testimony about their neighborhood. Sharon encouraged the Commission to get out and view it. She noted that our grant program was instrumental in getting some of this information.

Mr. Reed handed out volunteer recognition pins from the City to Bill Gambrell and Sharon Felton for their service on the Commission.

Adjournment

- Next Meeting, Wednesday, April 3, 2019, 5:00 p.m., Towne Bank Building, Suite 500

#preserveVB

“Protect It, Preserve It”

Appendix 1



The African-American Burial Grounds Network Act

Background

Cemeteries and burial sites are places of tribute and memory, connecting communities with their past. Unfortunately, many African-American burial grounds from both before and after the Civil War are in a state of disrepair or inaccessibility due to overgrowth of vegetation, crumbling structures, and other challenges.

There is no official national record or database for African-American burial ground locations, and the location of many sites is unknown. As a result, the family members and descendants of those interred there are unable to visit these sites to honor and remember their ancestors. Too often, abandoned burial grounds and cemeteries are discovered when construction projects inadvertently disturb human remains, slowing or halting completion of those projects and creating distress and heartache within the local community.

The presence and location of historic African-American burial grounds should be chronicled, and there should be coordinated national, state, and local efforts to preserve and restore these sites for future generations. African-American burial grounds are an integral component of the heritage of the United States. Creating and maintaining a network of African-American burial grounds will help communities preserve local history while better informing development decisions and community planning.

The African American Burial Grounds Network Act

The Adams-McEachin African American Burial Grounds Network Act creates a voluntary national network of historic African-American burial grounds. This legislation also establishes a National Park Service program, in coordination with state, local, private, and non-profit groups, to educate the public and provide technical assistance for community members and public and private organizations to research, survey, identify, record, and preserve burial sites and cemeteries within the Network.

- Creates a voluntary, nation-wide database of historic burial grounds, with the consent of the property owner, that relate to the historic African-American experience.
- Provides technical assistance to local public, private, state and local partners to research, survey, identify, record, preserve, evaluate, and interpret these burial grounds.
- Establishes educational materials for community members, local groups, and schools about African-American burial grounds.
- Makes available grants for local groups to research, survey, identify, record, and aid in the preservation of sites within the Network.

Endorsements

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Coalition for American Heritage, Society for American Archaeology, Society for Historical Archaeology, American Anthropological Association, Association of Black Anthropologists, the Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society Inc., Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Preservation of African American Cemeteries Inc., American Cultural Resources Association, United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, Save Our Heritage Organization, Preservation North Carolina, Preservation Virginia, Enrichmond Foundation, Florida Public Archaeology Network, Preservation Maryland, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, Illinois Archaeological Survey, the Wake Forest Historical Museum, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Virginia Humanities, the Council of Virginia Archaeologists, Black Genealogy Research Group of Oklahoma, River Road African American Museum, River Road African Burial Grounds Coalition, Shadow Lawn Memorial Gardens Maintenance & Perpetual Care Association, Preserve Arkansas, Northwest Arkansas African American Heritage Association, and Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

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Appendix 2

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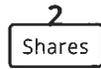
Dig at Carraway House yields few artifacts in city-funded investigation

By Eric Hodies
Correspondent
Feb 22, 2019



Eric Hodies/For The Virginian-Pilot

Fragments of glass, ceramics and bricks were among the artifacts uncovered, most dating to the 20th century.



A 1772 Spanish coin was discovered in August at the Carraway House, near the intersection of Princess Anne Road and South Witchduck Road.

The building, possibly the oldest surviving frame house in Virginia Beach, and its proximity to the historic town of Kempsville raised the possibility of more discoveries from centuries past.

Hoping to unearth more clues to the past, the city funded an archaeological investigation of the .8-acre property. Williamsburg-based James River Institute for Archaeology completed the project in January and recently released a 77-page report.

The Carraway House, likely built by James Carraway in 1734, was relocated to its present site in 1962, just east of the colonial port of Kempe's Landing.

The house was in the Carraway family for more than 200 years and is currently the office of Home Realty, a property management company owned by Laura Wenslaff.

The search for artifacts began with ground-penetrating radar, followed by shovel testing every 25 feet.

Three days of fieldwork by project archaeologist Sean Romo and his team yielded dozens of artifacts — mostly ceramics, glass bottles and building materials. Many dated to the 20th century, with a handful of fragments dating back to an earlier period.

Those seeking greater clues to historic Kempsville may be disappointed, as no 18th-century coins or other significant artifacts were found.

The Carraway family cemetery in the southwest corner of the property contains eight marked graves, dating from 1899 to 1977. Radar indicated there are more graves than are currently marked.

Archaeologists believe the unmarked graves probably predate the known graves and were marked with wooden materials that are no longer present.

Radar also was used to discount a long-rumored tunnel entrance near the cemetery. Archaeologists added that the high water table would have made any kind of tunnel impractical.

“Many 18th-century homes have talk of a tunnel — maybe to hide from Indians or to stash goods — but very few can be corroborated,” said Mark Reed, the city’s historic preservation planner.

“I’m still not convinced,” said Wenslaff, citing eyewitness accounts of the tunnel. “They just looked in the wrong spot.”

Historic maps and aerial photographs suggest that no one lived on the property before the 1960s, which reduced the chances of a major discovery.

“For archaeologists, the treasure is in our trash,” said Reed.

No further investigations of the Carraway House are planned, and all artifacts will be returned to Wenslaff.

The property has been on the market for two years, listed at \$425,000.

“I would love to see the city buy it and keep it as part of historic Kempsville,” said Wenslaff.

The city conducted another archaeological investigation nearby, at the time of the project to realign Princess Anne and Kempsville roads. Though some bricks and stoneware from the 1700s were found, Reed remains hopeful that significant artifacts are still waiting to be discovered.

“There’s bound to be something big somewhere, but for now historic Kempsville remains largely a mystery,” he said.

Eric Hodies, ehodies@hteam.net



Eric Hodies

Eric Hodies is a freelancer writer who lives in the Kempsville area of Virginia Beach.

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