

VIRGINIA BEACH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

March 3, 2021, 5:00 pm
Virtual Meeting via WebEx
Approved April 7, 2021

Present:

Officers: Chair, James Wood; First Vice-Chair, Sharon Prescott; Second Vice-Chair, Mac Rawls; Secretary, Bobbie Gribble

Members: Finnley Brakke, Sharon Felton, Richard Klobuchar, Hannah Levi, Ian Lichacz, Becky Livas, Lee Lockamy, Christi Lyons, Timothy Oksman

City Council: Rosemary Wilson

Staff: Mark Reed, Carolyn Smith

Presenter: Cathleen Rhodes

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Jimmy Wood. Mr. Wood noted that before he got the meeting started, he wanted to recognize that on February 19th we lost Jennifer Estes. He said Jennifer was dedicated to Princess Anne County and to Nimmo Church. He said her passing is a loss to her family and for those of us in Virginia Beach who also have a passion for history. Mr. Wood asked the Commission members and others present to take a moment of silence in her memory.

After the moment of silence, Mr. Wood asked Mark Reed to introduce the speaker. Mr. Reed introduced Cathleen Rhodes. He said she is a professor of Women's Studies and of LGBTQ studies at Old Dominion University (ODU). He noted that she received Research Grant program funding in FY20 to produce six (6) videotaped oral history interviews on LGBTQ history in Virginia Beach

Presentation – Virginia Beach LGBTQ Oral History Videos Research Grant Project

Cathleen Rhodes thanked the Commission for having her speak with them today and for providing the grant funding for her project. She noted that she teaches at ODU and is the Founder and Director of the Queer History Project for the Hampton Roads area.

She noted what is important about LGBTQ history is that it provides trajectory, although we need to acknowledge the timeline is not accurate since people have misconceptions. She said that it helps to predict the future. Finally, Ms. Rhodes said that it inspires change and history has the potential to create positive change.

Ms. Rhodes asked the question of, “Why does local LGBTQ history matter?” She said that local history reflects the reality that our lives are shaped by particular places and that our physical place in the world is a major determinant to how our lives are lived.

Ms. Rhodes said she conducted six (6) long format interviews of approximately an hour and a half. She said she interviewed Michael Berlucci, Ginger Jenkot, Allison White, David Palmer, Neva White, and Earl Jones. Ms. Rhodes noted that six interviews and five mini documentaries resulted. She said they were supposed to create three mini documentaries for the grant, but she and the videographer got so excited about the interviews that they created five.

Ms. Rhodes and Mr. Reed tried to share one of the mini documentary videos that was produced about public service with portions of interviews with Michael Berlucci and Allison White, but they were unable to get the sound to come through. The link to that film is:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1trsGvD6jJy5G3WF_MMmzdmRBGzoM37HI/view?usp=sharing

The link to all five mini documentaries is:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8095308>

Ms. Rhodes said that the interviews focused on Virginia Beach from the 1980s to the present. She said they provide an understanding of the LGBTQ history during that time for Virginia Beach. Ms. Rhodes said funding of the project recognizes that understanding and documenting LGBTQ activities is important to the City’s history and it shows important support for the diversity of Virginia Beach’s history from the Historic Preservation Commission. She expressed a special thanks for supporting this effort and the work that they did.

Jimmy Wood asked if are there any sites or locations in Virginia Beach that are historically significant to the LGBTQ community? Ms. Rhodes noted that Pride Fest had been held at Mount Trashmore. She said that there were several bars that served as the only place that the community could get together in a public place. She noted that Larkspur Village had many little store fronts including a church and the book store that she had previously discussed.

Mark Reed asked about the earlier period that wasn’t covered in the interviews. He said he thought there was an infamous raid at an oceanfront bar in the 1960s. Ms. Rhodes confirmed that there had been such a raid and several men were arrested as part of the raid. She said their names were published in the newspaper and people lost their jobs and families.

Ms. Rhodes noted that the Virginia Beach Public Library is also important to Virginia Beach’s LGBTQ history. She said in the early 1980s there was a controversy in the community that conservative groups did not want the free gay newsletter available in the library’s vestibule with other free papers. The result was that one paper was kept with the reference desk and patrons would need to request the copy to read.

Jimmy Wood thanked Ms. Rhodes for her presentation and for her work on the oral history interviews.

Approval of February 3, 2021 Minutes

Jimmy Wood requested the members to review the minutes of the February 3, 2021 meeting and provide any changes or corrections. Rick Klobuchar made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Christi Lyons seconded the motion to approve. The minutes were approved by acclamation.

Historic Preservation Strategic Plan Public Input Meeting

Mark Reed said he wanted to take a few minutes to review the public input meeting that had been held on February 23 for the historic preservation strategic plan. He noted that there were ninety-one (91) registrants and over fifty (50) attendees.

Mr. Reed asked for impressions from those that attended. Timothy Oksman said he was impressed by it and thought the questions were sensible. Bobbie Gribble said that it was a great job by those running the meeting. Jimmy Wood commended the city staff and Commonwealth Preservation Group that worked on it.

Mr. Reed asked if anyone had trouble connecting. Ms. Gribble said that two members of the Historic Kempsville Citizens Advisory Committee were unable to connect.

Mr. Reed said the next step will be an online survey that should be live by April. He said they will be using input from the virtual public meeting to help inform questions for the survey. He asked Commission members, "What do we need to ask in the online survey?"

Committee Reports

Historic Preservation Month

Sharon Prescott reported for the Historic Preservation Month committee. She said the Planning department director has approved the purchase of glassware. She noted that staff is doing the initial coordination with the partner breweries.

Historical Register Review Committee

Mark Reed reported for the Historical Register Review Committee in Katie Paulson's absence. He said that an application had been received and processed for 149 Pinewood Road, a 1920s residential building known as "The Pines." He noted that it was originally built as a summer home for a Norfolk judge and it is a good example of a residential structure from that timeframe.

Mr. Reed said that the committee had a site visit on February 12 and then completed their evaluation sheet scoring. He said the listing on the Virginia Beach Historical Register was approved.

Student Leaders Committee

Finnley Brakke reported for the Student Leaders Committee. She said the committee met virtually on February 10th. The members are working to complete their Clio entries. They are also working on producing a “Seashore State Park” YouTube video.

Ms. Brakke said they have put together a Scavenger Hunt for May. They are also looking at the possibility of creating a Lynnhaven House walking tour for You Tube. She noted that their next meeting will be March 10.

Project Updates

Historic Preservation Planner Mark Reed provided several project updates.

Historic Preservation Program Strategic Plan

Mr. Reed noted that they are working on developing a Public Input online survey. He said Commonwealth Preservation Group has put together a draft and they will try to get it out in two to three weeks.

Historic District Design Standards and Review Guidelines

Mr. Reed said Commonwealth Preservation Group is wrapping up site visits to all of the districts this week. He said the wet weather in February put them behind on accomplishing the site visits. He noted that there will be a Steering Committee meeting in the next couple of weeks and they are working on putting together a property owner/public meeting near the end of March.

National Register Nominations Seatack and L & J Gardens

Mr. Reed said that for the L&J Gardens project there were four (4) proposals and for Seatack they received three (3) proposals. They have two separate committees to evaluate the proposals. He said the Evaluation Committees have met and prepared questions and requested clarifications. These are being sent to top two (2) proposals for each project. Mr. Reed noted that the National Park Service needs to review the selection process and approve selected firms. He said it is expected that they will have both projects under contract in April.

Oceanfront Resort Motels MPD and Jefferson Manor Motel Apartments Nomination

Mr. Reed noted that both the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) and the Nomination are now available on the DHR website. These items are on the State Review Board agenda for March 18 at 10 a.m. It will be a virtual public meeting and registration is now open if anyone wants to attend.

deWitt Cottage Archaeology

Mr. Reed said the field work has been completed for the archaeology at the deWitt Cottage and the final report has been received. He said that 466 prehistoric and historic artifacts were discovered on the site. This included 30% from the post 1895 occupation period and 70% from fill layers that were deposited prior to construction. He noted that the archaeological report clears the way for the gazebo to be constructed as proposed.

Woodhurst Neighborhood PIF

Mr. Reed said the PIF submittal is pending. He noted that the DHR staff evaluation team meets next on March 25, so he is aiming for that date.

Historic Properties Glimpse

Mr. Reed reviewed some items that are coming up on the next meeting of the Historical Review Board on March 17.

2437 North Landing Road in the Courthouse Historic and Cultural District. This is in the former Fresh Fare Café building. The business going in there is Astraea Coffee Café. He said they will be installing a new sign, doing some repainting with a new trim color, and installing new light fixtures.

2693 Annapolis Circle in the Courthouse Historic and Cultural District. This proposal is for installation of a whole house generator. The house was constructed in 2017 and the surrounding buildings are the same era.

Royal Farms Convenience/Gas/Car Wash in the Nimmo Church Historic and Cultural District. Mr. Reed said that staff will have to work with them to adjust the proposed design that was submitted. They basically submitted a typical Royal Farms design for a convenience store, gas pumps, car wash. Mr. Reed said he had suggested they look at the McDonalds in the Courthouse district to see how to change a corporate design to fit better in a historic district.

Cavalier Hotel

Mr. Reed said he wanted to bring another issue to the Commission's attention. He said the City holds a Green Space Easement on the Cavalier Hotel lawn. The Cavalier initiated construction in the easement area without requesting approval. They are constructing a catering prep area and are planning to install artificial turf at the top of the hill.

Mr. Reed said in the language of the easement, the main consideration is that any project does not cause the listing in the National and State Registers to be revoked. The easement also contains language that prevents any new structure from blocking the view of the Cavalier from Atlantic Avenue. DHR has been asked to review the project and determine if it will have an impact on the register status of the property.

Jimmy Wood said we need to get clarity from the City Attorney's Office on the review process and who is responsible for the oversight.

Mac Rawls suggested that Mr. Wood should send a letter to Bruce Thompson regarding the concerns of the Commission with a copy to Council. He said we need to move quickly no matter which direction.

Tim Oksman suggested that Mr. Wood should discuss this with the City Attorney.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Committee for Underrepresented Communities

Jimmy Wood stated that at the last Executive Meeting we were discussing creating a Committee for Underrepresented Communities. This was brought to light with some of the grants we have been awarding. He said we would like to look at our Communities in new ways. He noted that our concern is that unless you are a member of that community you may not know anything about areas that need preservation.

Mr. Wood said he has talked with Sharon Felton about chairing this committee. He said it should include representatives of the Black, Native American, Filipino, & LGBTQ communities, and others, to highlight those areas. He noted that Ms. Felton will get a group together that represents the wide history of our city.

Sharon Felton said she feels this committee will do great things and she is proud to serve. Lee Lockamy and Becky Livas volunteered to be on the committee from the Commission.

Threatened Buildings and Sites Committee

Mr. Wood noted that Jennifer Estes had been the chair of this committee. He said Mac Rawls has volunteered to lead this committee.

Mr. Rawls noted that originally it was the Threatened Buildings Committee. He said it is designed to be our ready reserve team to be on issues that pop up. In addition, Mr. Rawls pointed out that we have a number of cemeteries that have historic significance, a suggestion was mapping and documenting it.

Sharon Prescott said the History Committee under Barbara Henley has done extensive research on cemeteries in southern Virginia Beach. We should see what they have done to not duplicate efforts. Perhaps they can do a presentation for the Commission.

Mr. Rawls said we should watch over our historic resources. They need us to be watch dogs. We also need to see if there are any that we have overlooked. He said we need to be able to find ways to make the public more aware of historically significant things in the city.

Mr. Wood said if anyone is interested in joining in the efforts of this group, please let him and Mac know.

Newsome Farm Cemetery PIF

Mr. Reed noted that this is a historically African American cemetery located in the northern half of Virginia Beach, not far from Newtown Road/Diamond Springs Road. He said it is part of the Newsome Farm neighborhood. An issue is it does not have any ownership, and it appears to not have had an owner since the 1880s. Mr. Reed noted this came to his attention because Code

Enforcement contacted him and wanted to know who to bill for the mowing etc., that they had been doing there.

Mr. Reed said that the architectural surveyors looked at it in 2018. They felt it would need more investigation. He said the Civic League has committed to maintaining the cemetery for now. The concern is the Civic League will have turnover and it is uncertain how long that commitment will continue. He said this arrangement may not solve the problem long term.

Mr. Reed said that historical recognition might help to raise the profile and generate more community interest. He said he recommended to the Executive Committee that we support a PIF to develop a statement of historic significance to make a case for it being on the National Register. If the Commission is in agreement, we would add it to our list of projects.

Becky Livas suggested if we know someone who has relatives that are buried there it might help to give it more significance. Sharon Felton asked if we could look at headstones to identify family members. Rosemary Wilson suggested talking with Louis Jones.

Councilperson Rosemary Wilson asked about the Old Telephone Building and what is its status. She said she felt there should be preservation protections for it. Mr. Reed said he has a draft staff report in process that requests making it a Historic and Cultural District. He said he needs to review and edit it and get it to his supervisor and to his Department Director. Then it would go to the City Council.

Jimmy Wood said he walked the site with Councilmember Tower and Bernice Pope a few months ago and he seemed supportive. He said it sounds like with Councilmember Wilson's support it might go through.

Mark Reed noted that he has now taken on the responsibilities to be the staff lead for the Historical Review Board.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

The next meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be on Wednesday, April 7, 2020, 5:00 p.m. It is expected to be a virtual meeting via WebEx.

Submitted by:

Bobbie Gribble
Secretary, VBHPC