THE MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

May 7, 2018

A special meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Monday, May 7, 2018 at 5:30 P.M. in the conference room at City Hall.

Members present: Blanche Hailey

Jean Harrington

Everall Peele

Marianne Aiken

Beth Pulliam

Louise Price

Members absent: Beth Pulliam

George Underwood

Staff present: Debbie Galloway, Planner

The meeting was called to order by Chair Blanche Hailey.

**SET MEETING AGENDA:**

There were no additions or changes to the agenda. The agenda was set.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of a regular meeting on April 16, 2018 were presented to the Commission. Mrs. Aiken made a motion that the minutes be approved. Mrs. Peele seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

LEAKSVILLE MALE ACADEMY.

Mrs. Price reported that the Academy property was to be auctioned by the Rockingham County Tax Department the following week on May 14. She noted that this is a significant property and she felt the Commission should make an effort to acquire the property. It was noted that the Commission had tried solutions before to save the property, to no avail. It was noted that the rental house on the property is not habitable. Mrs. Price said she had spoken with Mr. Mark McClintock at the tax department as to what would be required to acquire the property. He told her they would need to cover legal fees, etc. Mrs. Price had also spoken with attorney Matt Smith, who said that a bid of $1,500 would probably be reasonable.

There was discussion about the property and the historic significance of the property. Mrs. Galloway showed current photos of the property. It was noted that the academy building is severely deteriorated at this point.

Chair Hailey asked if the Commission did acquire the property, would it be owned by the City.

Mrs. Galloway replied that it would be owned by the City.

MINUTES – APRIL 16, 2018 – PAGE 2

Mrs. Galloway said that while it was a noble idea to try to save the Academy, the reality was that even if the Commission could purchase the property, they did not have the money it would cost to demolish the house, repair the Academy and clean up and maintain the property. She said the City requires property owners to keep up their property and the City could not own a property in this condition without doing what is necessary to bring it into compliance. She said it would cost several thousand dollars to tear the house down and clean up the property, not including what it would cost to secure and repair the Academy. She said she did not believe the Council would agree to the purchase of the property.

Mrs. Price asked if allowances could be made, due to the significance of the property.

Mrs. Galloway said no.

There was discussion about whether the Eden Preservation Society could take ownership of the property. It was noted that the EPS did not have the money to purchase or rehab the property.

Mrs. Price said they could raise money from benefactors, and she referred to the money that had been raised privately to repair the wall at the Governor Morehead Park. She suggested that if they could purchase the property, that the City allow a reasonable amount of time to put a plan in place to clean up the property and address the issues with the Academy building. She suggested a year as a reasonable time.

Mr. Yarbrough asked who would have liability for the property.

Mrs. Galloway said the City would be liable. She said part of the reason the City had not pursued action before now what because the property is historic. But she said they could not own the property and allow it to remain in this condition.

Chair Hailey said they had to be realistic and look at the cost.

There was further discussion about costs and the possibility of restoring the property. There was discussion about what it would take to secure the property, including putting up a fence.

Mrs. Price made a motion to bid up to a maximum of $1,500 to acquire the property, with an additional $1,500 to be taken from the book fund to secure the property, with the City allowing a grace period of one year for the Commission to secure and clean up the property and to develop a plan of action for the property. Mrs. Aiken seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

Mrs. Galloway said she would talk to the City Manager, but she was not at all certain that the Council would agree to this proposal.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra W. Galloway, Administrative Assistant

to the Eden Preservation Commission

Attest:

Blanche Hailey, Chair