THE MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

AUGUST 20, 2018

A regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Monday, August 20, 2018 at 5:30 P.M. in the conference room at City Hall.

Members present: Blanche Hailey

Jean Harrington

Everall Peele

Marianne Aiken

Charles Yarbrough

Members absent: George Underwood

Beth Pulliam

Louise Price

Staff present: Debbie Galloway, Planner

The meeting was called to order by Chair Blanche Hailey.

**SET MEETING AGENDA:**

There were no additions to the agenda and the agenda was set.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of a regular meeting on June 18, 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.

A questions was asked about the book price being lowered to $30. It was noted that the price for on-line purchases included shipping.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH STEEPLE.

Mrs. Galloway said she had drafted a letter, at the Commission’s request, to the State Historic Preservation Office, requesting that they initiate proceedings to remove the Church from the National Register, due to the steeple replacement. The letter read as follows:

Ramona Bartos

Administrator and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

NC State Historic Preservation Office

4617 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699

Re: First Baptist Church

Eden, NC 27288

August 17, 2018

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Dear Ms. Bartos:

The First Baptist Church in Eden, NC was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. As stated in the National Register nomination statement of significance:

The 1886 First Baptist Church is the only surviving example of the Gothic Revival style in the community dating from the nineteenth century.

The nomination goes on to discuss the building’s architectural significance, which is the basis for the National Register listing, including the church’s Stick Style decoration. The nomination points out the distinctive design of the open belfry and pointed steeple, including their treatment and proportions, as key elements of the building’s design.

In the spring of 2018, the church made the decision to replace the original steeple (which was apparently in need of repair) with a generic, vinyl-clad steeple, which is not in keeping with the architectural style of the church building. The Historic Preservation Commission, along with the Eden Preservation Society and Claudia Roberts Brown from the SHPO, wrote letters strongly encouraging the church to reconsider their decision to replace the steeple, pointing out the historical and architectural significance to the building. Some members of the Historic Preservation Commission spoke personally with church leadership expressing concerns over the decision and urging the church to explore other options, to no avail. In the early summer of 2018, the First Baptist Church removed the original steeple and replaced it with the generic model.

At the June 18, 2018 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission voted to recommend that the First Baptist Church be removed from the National Register, feeling that removing this most important architectural feature has compromised the historic integrity of the church building.

Therefore, we, the undersigned members of the Historic Preservation Commission, hereby make formal recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Office that proceedings be initiated to consider removal of the First Baptist Church of Eden from the National Register of Historic Places.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair Hailey said that in her research, she had found that the church was not just Gothic Revival, but also Colonial Revival. She said she had talked with someone from the church who told her that they [the church] had been told that the steeple replacement would not jeopardize the National Register designation. She said that local attorney Joe Maddrey, a member of the church, had contacted the SHPO before they proceeded with the replacement. Chair Hailey said she was told by the SHPO that it is very rare for a building to be removed from the National Register.

Mrs. Harrington said she had talked with at church member who told her the church “got permission” from the SHPO. She said this was not true. She said they must have standards.

Mrs. Galloway said the SHPO would require photos both inside and outside of the building to submit the request.

Mrs. Harrington made a motion to submit the letter. Mrs. Aiken seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

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Mrs. Galloway said the staff would also send a staff report to the SHPO and that they would not recommend removal of the church from the National Register. She said that staff did not believe that changing the steeple was enough to warrant removal from the National Register.

Mrs. Harrington said she was “shocked” by this and that she did not understand. She said it was the Commission’s duty to preserve the historic standards. She said the church did not follow proper procedure in making this decision, and that the church vote was improper. She said she had personally called church members, and that a majority of the members did not support the decision.

Mrs. Galloway said how the church arrived at their decision is not relevant to the Commission. She said the Commission can still voice their concern to the SHPO and that the staff recommendation did not carry any more weight than the Commission’s recommendation. She said ultimately the State is responsible to initiate action, and that the Commission can only make a recommendation.

Mrs. Harrington said she was very disappointed in the staff, and that it is the Commission’s duty to save and preserve, and to maintain the historic integrity of the community.

**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