

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 BUISNESS

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