

MINUTES

ATHENS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DECEMBER 4, 2025

3:30 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Laura Lenoir
Jona Garrett
James Fries
Chairperson Shawn McKeehan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Timberly Guffey
Jordan Curtis
Kim Cochran-Graham

OTHERS ATTENDING

Anthony Casteel
Tyler Boyd

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of November 6, 2025, regular meeting minutes

The minutes of the September 4, 2025, regular meeting, were read and approved on motion by Laura Lenoir; seconded by Jona Garrett; vote – unanimous

NEW BUSINESS

1. Reschedule January's regular monthly meeting due to it falling on New Year's Day

There was a discussion on changing the meeting date in January due to the next meeting being on New Year's holiday. It was agreed to reschedule the meeting for the following Thursday on January 8, 2026.

MOTION: To reschedule the next Athens Historic Preservation meeting for January 8, 2026, due to the normal meeting time falling on the New Year's Holiday.

MADE: Laura Lenoir
SECOND: Jona Garrett
VOTE: Unanimous (4-0)
MOTION PASSED

2. Downtown overlay- survey for property owners

Chairperson McKeehan talked about the survey and asked if they wanted one question or two questions.

Mrs. Lenoir asked what the two questions would be.

Chairperson McKeehan said, "Do you support the creation of a Historic Overlay District. Yes or no; let them answer. It will be sent to each of the owners of the affected properties. There will not be multiple surveys for those who own multiple properties. Do they want to do a survey with one question per person who owns one property or more.

Mrs. Garrett asked if there were two questions, what would they be.

Chairperson McKeehan said they passed the motion with one question.

Mrs. Garrett said that is better anyway.

Mr. Casteel said they need to recommend something to Council or they don't need to. That is it.

Chairperson McKeehan said they promised to do a survey. Once they get the survey, back, they will see what the percentage is, and they will make that decision after that. If they get the survey results back before the January meeting, they will decide at that meeting.

Mrs. Lenoir asked if the survey is going to determine their opinion.

Chairperson McKeehan said it does not have to, but they said they would do a survey, and they would stay true to their promise.

Mr. Casteel said the thing they must look at is they are trying to ask the current landowners what they should do with our downtown. What Council asked was, look and see what Athens needs for downtown. It is not what the business owners need, it is what the City of Athens' needs. He feels it should not take this long. Last year he was talking to Council Advisory about this. They have been pushing this around for over a year. What they need to look at is what does Athens need. He said they tried in 2006, 2012, and this is going to be their last chance to save anything downtown. If it does not happen this time, with all the due diligence they have done, there will be no historic district. There will be no reason to have a historic district because downtown everyday is deteriorating. There comes a time when you can't worry about the majority of those people. You have to worry about what Athens needs. This is about what City Council directed them to look at. If there is a part of downtown this Board feels like they can save and turn into a historic district, then that is what they should do.

Chairperson McKeehan said in January, he will have talked to Tyler again. Tyler is going to talk to the Board of the college and if they are totally on board, they will have to draw them back in. He thinks there is nobody here to cause any problem. There was some discussion as to why TWU was reluctant to get on board with this. They are more receptive now. They sent a representative to the last meeting, Blake McCaslin. He was going back to the board. Otherwise, it will be presented the way it is now.

Mrs. Garrett asked who promised them they would do a survey.

Chairperson McKeehan said they promised them. The Board. Two different times they were promised.

Mrs. Garrett said, number one, they keep circling around this. Number two, if they do a vote...

Chairperson said either way, they are going to offend someone.

Mrs. Garrett said she feels like what Mr. Casteel said, they need to do it or don't do it. They are giving them hope by filling out a survey.

Chairperson McKeehan said they have not heard from some people.

Mr. Casteel said they probably still won't hear from them. Until they get one hundred percent participation, they will still be in the same boat they are in right now.

Chairperson McKeehan said this dies at the next meeting. If they don't vote yes or no, this will die at the next meeting.

Chairperson Lenoir asked why they were required to get one hundred percent participation.

Mr. Casteel said they are not. They were just saying that is the goal of any questionnaire.

Chairperson McKeehan said there was some false rumor that the last meeting was cancelled, and some people did not get to attend. He's not sure where that came from. They didn't send anything out and the city didn't send anything out.

Mr. Casteel said, if they were doing the survey, they would send one letter to each owner with one vote.

Chairperson McKeehan said Mrs. Cardin said there will be a letter sent with a link to the survey. It will be done by New Year's Day, and they will have a week to tabulate the vote.

There was discussion about the area it would cover.

Mr. Casteel said Mrs. Cardin already has the question.

Chairperson McKeehan said no. They just came up with it a second ago.

Mrs. Garrett said she has concerns about the survey, because like Mr. Casteel said, this is their one shot.

Mr. Casteel said he would not say it's their one shot.

Mrs. Garrett said it is better than kicking the can down the road further and further. When is it going to stop. She said they are not going to make everybody happy. The chances of this becoming an even bigger messed up thing, in her opinion, is pretty great. She does not know who promised, the word, "promised them". That is a dangerous word, because you are roped into it now. Yes, the community gets a say, but they are sitting on this board for a reason, to make decisions and not people please. She does not think she is ok with that survey thinking about it now.

Chairperson McKeehan said the Board said on two occasions at the info sessions they would do a survey.

It was agreed that they would do the survey.

There was further discussion.

Mr. Casteel asked what the question would be.

Chairperson McKeehan said, "Do you support the creation of Historic Overlay District."

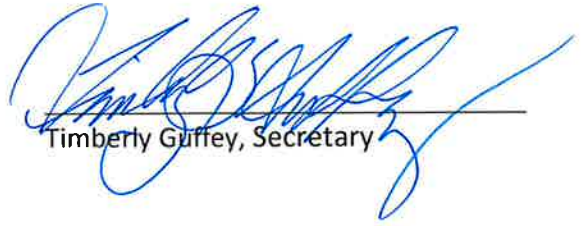
Mr. Casteel said this is what he wrote, "Do you support the creation of Historic Overlay Preservation District in the Central Business District of Athens?" It is short and to the point and nothing hidden in it. It is up to the Board.

Everyone agreed on the question.

The meeting was adjourned.



Shawn McKeehan, Chairperson



Kimberly Guffey, Secretary