The Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Harlem, Georgia met for their Regular Meeting on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at the Public Safety Building at 6:30 p.m. with Chairman Herbert Flick presiding.

Present: COMMISSION: Chairman Herbert Flick, Vice Chairman Diane Holland, Commissioner Scott Eremus and Commissioner Bill Speer; STAFF: Community Development Director David Jenkins, City Clerk Leona Holley, and City Attorney Adam Nelson; ABSENT: Commissioner Lynda Morris; MEDIA: Stephanie Hill, The Augusta Press.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Flick at 6:30 p.m.

The Invocation was given by Commissioner Speer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Eremus.

Approval of the Agenda: Commissioner Speer made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented; 2nd by Commissioner Eremus. The motion carried with Commissioners Eremus, Holland, and Speer voting in the affirmative.

Approval of the Minutes: Vice Chairman Holland made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 9, 2023, Regular Meeting as written; 2nd by Commissioner Eremus. The motion carried with Commissioners Eremus, Holland, and Speer voting in the affirmative.

Continued COA Applications: None.

New COA Applications: None.

OLD BUSINESS:

Digital Historic Districts/Properties Map: Mr. Jenkins reported Columbia County GIS has moved to a new office and they are still in the process of setting everything up. Mr. Jenkins will be visiting the GIS office on Monday and will check on the status of the digital maps for Harlem.

Brick Colors Continuum/Painting Virgin Bricks: Mr. Jenkins reported staff is working on modifications to the ordinance for brick colors/painting virgin brick that the city council has asked for. The Secretary of the Interior and the State Historical Preservation Officer have recommendations on not painting brick; there are no mandates. The Mayor and Council are the final body to make decisions on painting virgin brick. The HPC can make a decision on a Certificate of Appropriateness; if someone wanted to appeal against the decision it would go to the Mayor and Council. City Attorney Nelson explained there are questions and concerns from HPC and Council on the painting of virgin bricks; this is an opportunity for HPC to let council know they have concerns.

Mayor Roxanne Whitaker was present at the meeting and Chairman Flick asked if she would address the Commission regarding the ordinance on brick colors/painting virgin bricks. Mayor Whitaker explained to
OLD BUSINESS (cont’d):

**Brick Colors Continuum/Painting Virgin Bricks (cont’d):** The Commissioners that Council did not reject the ordinance on the brick colors and painting of virgin brick; the ordinance just needs “fine tuning.” The ordinance is coming a little late because the only building that has not been painted downtown is where Southern Branches and MC Furniture is located. She has concerns on why limit to painting virgin brick and not the care of all the brick buildings. Vice Chairman Holland stated the painting of virgin brick applies to commercial buildings and historical homes. Mayor Whitaker stated she was not aware this ordinance included residential homes. She suggested having an application process for anyone that wants to paint their building to come before HPC to explain what they want to do and to have a color palette for suggestions of color. Mayor Whitaker suggested having a representative from the HPC come to the council meetings when an ordinance is coming before council to answer questions that council might have. Mayor Whitaker stated she would like to maintain the quaint and historical feeling of downtown Harlem. She appreciates the time and effort the Commission puts into the ordinances, and she feels the HPC is valuable.

Mr. Jenkins stated direction from the mayor and council is to work on the definition, color palette, murals, and residential and commercial buildings clarification for the ordinance. Commissioner Speer asked Mr. Jenkins to bring back to the Commission what the percentage of commercial buildings and residential homes are virgin brick within the historic district. Commissioner Speer and Vice Chairman Holland expressed their appreciation to the Mayor in explaining the reasoning the decision was made on the ordinance by Council.

City Attorney Nelson explained when the state created the Historic Preservation District ordinances, they specifically excluded the term exterior paint alterations from material change of appearance. City Attorney Nelson stated we, as a government cannot tell a person what color they can or cannot paint a building, we are under state law. The HPC is putting a regulation in place, the HPC can allow a variance and the goal is trying to maintain the historic nature of these areas.

NEW BUSINESS:

**Historic Properties Survey Update:** Mr. Jenkins reported the city has a historic property survey. The cost to do an updated survey for the Historic District is $20,000 - $30,000. Mr. Jenkins stated the budget process will be coming up in October. There was discussion on why the survey is needed, and if the city could receive grants for the survey. Mayor Whitaker explained if a grant is received the city must make a payment in advance, then the city is reimbursed once the project is completed. Commissioner Speer suggested having students from a college of architecture come in to do evaluations of the properties and recommend which buildings meet the historical criteria. Chairman Flick asked for Mr. Jenkins to add the survey into the budget. Mayor Whitaker stated we must consider what the value of the survey and is the homes contributing to the value of Harlem.

**City Attorney Report:** N/A
Staff Report:

Mr. Jenkins reported:
- Couch Consulting is changing the name of the business and will be adding a monument sign. Staff has approved the sign.
- Harlem Baptist Church is continuing to work on starting a day care and per state law a fence is required around the playground area (a consultation went before HPC in October 2022).
- Mr. Jenkins stated a book on Before and After Federal Disasters is available if anyone would like to check it out. It explains the process in working towards renovating and restoring historic buildings.

Chairman’s Comments: Commissioner Speer thanked the Mayor for attending the HPC meeting and answering questions. Mayor Whitaker responded if anyone has any questions or concerns to give her a call.

With there being nothing further before the Commission for discussion, Vice Chairman Holland made a motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Commissioner Speer. The motion carried with Commissioners Erems, Holland, and Speer voting in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley
City Clerk