

**ANNUAL REPORT OF
THE NEW CASTLE COUNTY HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD
FOR 2013**

**To: The Hon. Thomas P. Gordon, County Executive, New Castle County
The Hon. Christopher Bullock, Council President, New Castle County
Members, New Castle County Council**

From: Barbara E. Benson, Chair, Historic Review Board

Dated: August 4, 2014

FUNCTION OF THE HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD

The Board's function is outlined in the *New Castle County Code*:

Section 40.30.330. Historic Review Board. [UDC]

The Historic Review Board shall consist of nine (9) members who shall be residents of the County and who shall be appointed by the County Executive in consultation with the County committee on historic preservation and with the advice and consent of a majority of County Council. The terms of office shall be four (4) years, provided that the terms of the members other than the chairman shall be established in a manner that two (2) shall expire each year. The County Executive shall appoint one (1) member as chairman who shall serve at the pleasure of the County Executive. One (1) member of the Historic Review Board shall be an architect and one (1) shall be from the field of historic preservation. Seven (7) members shall be individuals who have demonstrated a concern in the field of historic preservation, have some knowledge of the County's history, or have reasonable knowledge of historic architecture or construction techniques. The Historic Review Board shall have the following powers and duties.

- A. Delineate the boundaries of and recommend to County Council for confirmation those districts which the Historic Review Board determines merit a historic designation pursuant to the criteria set forth in Section 40.15.110. Historic district boundaries shall include all properties closely related to and bearing upon the character of the district, and the buildings, structures, sites and objects located therein.**
- B. Conduct and maintain an ongoing survey of the County for the purpose of developing a comprehensive inventory of buildings, structures, sites, objects, districts, landscapes and/or scenic landmarks of historical, architectural, cultural, archaeological or educational benefit. This inventory will be available to all County departments and for public review in the office of the Department during regular business hours.**
- C. Cooperate with and enlist the assistance of the State Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs and other interested agencies, organizations and individuals, both public and private, in developing and maintaining the survey set forth in Subsection B.**
- D. Review and act upon all applications for the granting of permits required under Section 40.31.280 in a timely manner.**
- E. Make recommendations to the County Executive and County Council, and to the Department and the Planning Board, concerning the use of grants, gifts, and budgeting appropriations to promote the preservation of buildings, structures, sited, etc., of historic importance to the citizens of the County. The Historic Review Board shall make recommendations to the County Executive and County Council that the County purchase buildings, structures, sites, or objects of historical significance where private preservation is not feasible. The Historic Review Board shall also make recommendations, as appropriate, the the County acquire facade easements, conservation easements, development rights or any other property investment that would promote preservation.**
- F. Advise the public on preservation when technical assistance is requested in order to increase public awareness of the value of preserving historic properties.**
- G. Adopt rules of procedure and regulations, and establish such committees as the Historic Review Board shall also keep minutes and records of all proceedings which shall be available for public review in the office of the Department during regular business hours.**

- H. Assume whatever responsibilities and duties that may be assigned to it by the County Executive and the State under certified local government sections of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Copies of these regulations may be reviewed in the office of the Department during regular business hours.
- I. Advise any County department or agency concerning the effect of its action, programs, capital improvements or activities on property that meets the criteria set forth in Section 40.15.110.
- J. The Historic Review Board shall be responsible for identification and/or confirmation of demolition by neglect or an illegal demolition of a building, structure or object located within a historic district or meeting the criteria to be included in a historic district.

Section 40.15.010. Applicability. [UDC]

This section describes the responsibility of the Department of Land Use to forward certain land use applications to the Historic Review Board.

Section 06.03.020. special guidelines for work done on historic structures. [Building Code]

This section describes the Historic Review Board's role in reviewing demolition permits and building permits for historic structures.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The Board holds public hearings on the third Tuesday evening of every month with support from the Department of Land Use. The Board's business meeting is typically held on the first Tuesday evening of every month. From January 2013 through December 2013 the Board held nine (6) public hearings. The following list shows the type and number of applications heard by the Board:

Land development plans affecting historic resources: 2

Demolition permits for historic buildings: 3

Architectural design review for projects affecting Historic Overlay districts: 1

Only one demolition permit was held for the entire nine-month period, and that with the agreement of the applicant, Delaware Wildlands, which actively engaged in seeking a solution to save a house that dated to 1760. The nine-month period, not completed until 2014, allowed the applicant, concerned preservationists and citizens to engage in discussion and investigation of the potential for moving the structure with the assistance of the Board. At the end of the hold, no feasible preservation plan emerged, so the applicant went forward with demolition. During that period, though, the house was documented by the University of Delaware's Center for Historic Architecture, so the information on the structure will be available for future researchers.

One presentation on materials salvaged a decade ago as part of a demolition negotiation finally came to a happy conclusion. In 2003, an agreement was reached to save the beautifully colorful terra cotta tiles from the Oldsmobile dealership on Governor Printz Boulevard. Fittingly, They are now part of the new Department of Motor Vehicle building on Wrangle Road.

The Board's modest workload reflected the recessionary trend of the past four years. The new year has shown more robust activity for the Board.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Board currently has one vacancy because of the resignation of Perry Patel. Even one vacancy at times presents quorum issues. I am concerned that delays or cancellations of meetings does not reflect well on the Board or County government generally.

Three members currently serve with expired appointments:

Stephen Johns (expired 5/26/13)
Raphael X. Zahralddin (expired 9/22/13)
Kenneth Freemark (expired 7/27/14)

The Board's Rules of Procedure and hearing agendas are located on the Department of Land Use website at this address: [http://www.nccde.org/landuse/Historic Review Board](http://www.nccde.org/landuse/Historic_Review_Board).

HRB legal counsel: Judy Mitchell