

**STAFFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**October 6, 2016**

The meeting of the Stafford County Historical Commission of Thursday, October 6, 2016, was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Vice-Chairman Anita Dodd in the ABC Conference Room of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anita Dodd, Barbara Kirby, Jane Conner, David Rodriguez and Ken Pitts

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Chichester and Ann Best-Rolls

STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth Davis

GUESTS PRESENT: Charma Carr and Hannah Phillips

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Dodd called the meeting to order and asked Mr. Pitts to call the roll.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Mrs. Dodd stated with five members present a quorum was established. She asked if there were any public presentations.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Carr stated she was a teacher at Stafford Elementary School and has lived in Stafford for her teaching career. With her was Hannah Phillips who is a Girl Scout and a senior at Brookpoint High School. She stated Hannah was going to be doing a Girl Scout Gold award project which involves a tree in the back of Stafford Elementary School. She stated she would like to make the Commission aware of the tree and perhaps the Commission could assist in finding out the historical significance. She stated the circumference of the tree is 226 inches around at 4 feet up, which would equal approximately 226 years old. She stated it was in good shape but it did need maintenance and was registered on the Virginia Big Tree Database in 2008. She stated in 2008 Charles Heath did all the work and the tree measured 214 inches in circumference and it was 96 feet in height. She stated some efforts have been made to protect the tree which allows the children to see the tree but not have access to it. She stated there is a dead branch approximately 8 feet from the bottom and if it came down while children were playing it might become an issue. She stated they can only control the area during the day, but the area is owned by the County and there are parks in the area. She stated if the historical significance was not already noted, perhaps it should be. She explained the tree stands alone and gave a description of the exact location behind the school.

Mr. Pitts asked the type of tree.

Ms. Carr stated it was a Southern Red Oak and there is a significant amount of erosion around the tree. She stated they have spoken to soil and conservation over the summer and they recommended they may be grants and asked if the County could help. She stated they were looking for guidance and would like to see the tree taken care of. She stated the tree was measured again over the summer, but it did not make the top 5, it is now number 9, but it was in the top 5 in 2008. She stated the database has changed over the years. In the past if a tree was removed or died it was no longer on the database, but now once it is placed on the database it remains there. She stated they would like to show the community that they wanted to invest in the tree. Because of the new subdivisions going in around the school most of the trees have been removed.

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Dr. Rodriguez stated the problem is no one is taking care of the tree and oak trees generally last over 600 years. He stated the tree is located in a bad place because a lot of water runs beside it. He stated it was suggested to put a fence around the tree and install much out to the drip line. He stated if the one branch falls on someone it may kill them.

Mrs. Kirby asked if the School Board was aware.

Ms. Carr stated the Principal has turned it into the School Board.

Mrs. Kirby suggested maybe some parents could appear at a School Board meeting and ask what is being done because of the safety issue.

Ms. Carr stated she did not want a community brawl over the tree.

Mrs. Kirby stated as a parent, if she thought that branch would hit her child or that it was dead, then they would pay more attention to it. But most of the parents probably have not seen the tree and they don't know.

Ms. Carr stated they do keep the children away from the tree.

Mrs. Conner asked who the Supervisor for that district was.

Mr. Pitts stated Aquia.

Mrs. Conner stated the Supervisor was Paul Milde, and he should be made aware.

Mrs. Dodd stated she spoke with Ms. Baker earlier because she was not going to be at the meeting and Ms. Baker gave her some information that may be helpful. She stated one was Stafford's own tree preservation information, which she passed on to Ms. Carr. She stated there were 3 designations for a tree and they are all designated by the Board of Supervisors. One was a Heritage tree, which means it has notable historic or cultural interest. A Memorial tree which means it commemorates a memorial, or a Specimen tree which is obviously for the type of tree it is. She stated one of the things that would need to be done was to decide which category the tree falls in and have the Board of Supervisors recognize it. She suggested speaking with an arborist and to be careful putting mulch too close to the trunk of the tree because it will kill the tree. She also suggested getting the school children involved in the tree and giving them some sort of a project or paper assignment about what history they think the tree has witnessed, in order for them to have a vested interest in the tree. She stated she thought the School Board should be involved and should pay for their Arborist and take the recommendations.

Mr. Carr stated she did not think it was the Schools Board's property, she believes it was County property.

Mrs. Dodd stated if it is on County property they need to talk to Mr. Milde and perhaps the School Board should be informed because they could be an advocate.

Mr. Pitts stated with the work that has already been done, he did not think it would be difficult to have the Board of Supervisors to give it a designation.

Mrs. Kirby asked if anyone knew who owned the property prior to the county's ownership.

Mr. Pitts stated no.

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Mrs. Kirby stated if you knew who owned the property prior to the time the School Board got it; you may find there would be something about that particular owner to add to the historic interest.

Ms. Carr asked if that would be in the County records.

Mrs. Dodd stated if they had trouble finding that information someone would help them. She also suggested they research it back as far as possible to find out all of the owners. She stated she felt it would fit in as a heritage tree.

Mrs. Conner stated it if was in fact 226 years old that would take it back to the 1790's.

Mrs. Dodd asked how the age was determined.

Dr. Rodriguez stated he was told you could not measure the age of a tree by measuring around because some trees grow more rapidly than others.

A brief discussion ensued concerning the age of the tree. Mrs. Dodd suggested that an arborist could possibly assist in determining the age of the tree.

Mrs. Conner asked Miss Phillips what she would be doing.

Miss Phillips stated her project would be placing mulch around the tree.

Dr. Rodriguez stated mulch could be a problem for a tree because of the things in the mulch. He suggested keeping the mulch 3 feet from the trunk and extend it to the drip line.

Miss Phillips stated after mulching she would install a better fence and install a few benches. She also wanted to put some information about the tree in the area also.

Mrs. Dodd stated one of the first things would be to get the heritage designation for the tree, which requires a little more information about the tree. After that information is obtained the Commission can petition the Board of Supervisors to have it designated as such. She stated there are 2 other trees in the county that could use the designation as well; one is in Pratt Park and the other in Willowmere Park. She asked Dr. Rodriguez if he would be willing to visit those other trees. She stated presenting all 3 trees at the same time may be a better case.

Mrs. Dodd stated Jerrilynn MacGregor may know some of the history of the tree also because she has just written 2 extensive books about the County.

Ms. Carr thanked the Commission for their help and time.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Civil War Database Update – Eric Mink, National Park Service

Mrs. Dodd stated Eric was not present.

Ms. Davis stated she did not have any information either.

2. Stafford Elementary School Heritage Tree

*Discussed during public presentations*

3. Shelton's Cottage Update

Ms. Dodd stated according to Ms. Baker there were over 400 visitors during the Yankee's at Falmouth and Ms. Clifton would like to plan a Christmas event at Shelton's Cottage. She suggested as discussed at the last meeting there should be some sort of management plan because who knows what will happen down the road and something needs to be in place before we get too far ahead for events that may occur there. She stated security was an issue since Ms. Clifton has placed antiques in the Cottage. She stated if events were going to be held there, they may want to install HVAC and how would that be installed without compromising the integrity of the building. She stated since Dovetail was the county consultant for this type of thing, she felt the Commission should ask Dovetail to put a management plan together.

Ms. Conner stated she visited Shelton's Cottage during the Yankee's in Falmouth event and she was impressed with the antiques placed in the building and the painting of the two rooms it was amazing. She stated you could really picture what it was like during that time period. She felt it should be seen by more people.

Ms. Dodd stated that having it open to the public will require certain things and she wants to make sure the resource is treated correctly in providing those things, whatever they are.

Ms. Kirby asked if a burglar alarm, cameras or lighting would be required.

Ms. Conner stated the county provided a generator and a wheelchair ramp to allow access to the building.

Ms. Dodd stated she was glad Ms. Clifton has taken this on and she was doing a great job. But there was still a need for a management plan.

Ms. Conner asked if it should be tied into the opening of other structures.

Ms. Dodd stated each structure has its own issues and problems and ways to solve those problems. She stated one specific document to cover everything in Falmouth would be difficult. At this point in time a management plan was needed for this specific building.

Ms. Kirby made a motion to go forward with this and look at the possibility of a management program of some sort and ask the County what could be done or who should do it.

Ms. Conner seconded.

The motion passed 5-0 (Mr. Chichester and Ms. Best-Rolls were absent).

Ms. Dodd asked if she just needed to let Kathy know what was decided.

Ms. Davis stated yes and she was taking notes as well.

4. Falmouth Historical Marker Revision

Ms. Dodd stated any comments on the Historical Marker revision had to be turned in to Ms. Baker by September 1<sup>st</sup>. She stated she did not think there were any corrections or comments. She found out it was the sign in front of the Magistrates Office that was being replaced.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. Falmouth Master Interpretive Plan Implementation

Mr. Pitts asked why Belmont was not included.

Ms. Dodd stated she did not know but felt it could be added.

Ms. Davis stated anything could be added to the mapping application.

Ms. Dodd stated she finished the write up and passed it to the Commission members and asked them to review it. She stated it was her understanding that the information in the report done by the management company was going to be added under a “further information link” and people could view.

Ms. Davis stated that was correct. She stated she took the interpretive plan and created a map for it. When you click on “see more”, it would take you to the exact page of the site.

Ms. Dodd suggested that not be done because some of the information was very cryptic and seemed to take things out of context and in some cases were not accurate. She stated there were certain reports that have been done concerning some of the buildings in Falmouth that should be attached and Ms. Baker could provide a list. She stated it was her understanding the County was digitizing all hard copy reports and suggested the copies that were not going to be kept go to the libraries.

Ms. Davis agreed.

Ms. Dodd asked the Commission again to review what she had written and it would be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Bloomington Signage/Flyers

Ms. Dodd stated the Commission had already approved the signage and pamphlet and the next step would be cleaning the area up so you could actually see what the sign and pamphlet were talking about. She stated she asked Ms. Baker to have a representative from Parks and Recreation at the next meeting so they could discuss the process. She stated there was nothing to discuss for item 7 and no additional presentations by the public.

7. Proposed Ordinance O06-47 – July 18, 2006 – Archaeological Surveys & Investigations

ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Ms. Dodd stated she had a few things left over from the last meeting. She stated there was a suggestion to include a site map for Sanford Burgess and that has now been included in the report. Mr. Pogue was currently working on a budget for proposals and a timeline. She stated the other item was a report on the cemetery at Abberly that was received.

Mr. Pitts asked if there were 27 graves.

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Ms. Dodd stated there were twenty-something. She stated the report was amazing and they were able to determine, based on the graves that were tested, they were all African American except one that was part African American and part Caucasian and they appear to be post-Civil War. She stated if anyone had any interest in the report she was sure Ms. Baker could get a copy for the Commission members. She stated the marker has now been placed on the gravesite.

Mr. Pitts asked where the bodies were moved.

Ms. Dodd stated they were reburied at the Register Chapel Baptist Church cemetery on the hill. She stated it was a very nice marker if anyone wanted to go by and take a look. She stated there was one child that had a doll with her. All of the artifacts, remains, and some examples of the markers were buried with them.

Ms. Dodd stated she, along with Linda Belles and Barbara Flack, went around the county yesterday taking pictures of Stafford County stores and schools that were still standing. She stated they passed England Run North of Berea Church Road, which was the location of a stone barn foundation that she believes was constructed by Quakers. She stated when the development went in, she had Mr. Kendall, a stone mason who lives in Falmouth, come out and do some repair. She stated it looked very nice and showed pictures of what it looks like today and stated she was very upset.

Ms. Kirby asked who was responsible.

Ms. Dodd stated it belongs to the HOA and they are not taking care of it. She stated this was something that she personally had something to do with and it was very upsetting to her. She stated she received the HOA information from Ms. Baker and she would like the Commission to write a letter to them, include the picture and try to get them to do right by the resource. She stated it was an extremely important resource in Stafford County and there are very few remnants of the Quakers that were here in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. She stated the quarry for the stone was about a quarter of a mile to the south of the building.

Ms. Kirby stated she would make that motion.

Ms. Dodd stated when the building was originally passed over to the HOA there was no vegetation around it at all except grass. She stated there are vines that cover one side and you can't tell the condition.

Ms. Kirby stated that was a shame because it was a beautiful building.

Ms. Dodd stated it was unique to Stafford County, there are not a lot of bank barns, this seems unusual based on Stafford's topography.

Dr. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5-0 (Mr. Chichester and Ms. Best-Rolls were absent).

**REPORTS BY COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Pitts stated when they finished the road project in Falmouth they put up the beautiful sign and most of the shrubbery died.

Ms. Conner stated Ms. Baker said VDOT was going to replace them after the winter.

Ms. Kirby asked Ms. Dodd if they could check on that.

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Ms. Dodd stated yes.

Mrs. Dodd asked if anyone had anything else and stated they had to address the Pratt Park Management Summary.

Ms. Conner stated she worked with Linda, who was the artist who created the African American wall of history at the Rowser building. She has been hired by Stafford County Schools to put a wall of history going up the brand new wall at the new Stafford High School. It would be from the 1930s to present day. She stated Linda went through all the photographs that Mr. Conner had and has been doing research. She stated Linda went to the Rappahannock Heritage Center to get photographs also and now has over 300 photographs that she will be putting on the wall.

Ms. Kirby asked if it was an interior wall.

Ms. Conner stated yes and it was going up the steps as you walk into the building. She stated it will have people who graduated from there who made a mark in history.

Ms. Dodd stated Ms. Baker wants to know if the Commission wants someone from Utilities to attend the next meeting to talk about the management plan and what to do with any artifacts. Did the Commission want to keep the artifacts or have them go to the State?

Ms. Kirby stated she would hope we would keep the artifacts so that when the time comes and someday we get a museum. She stated she did not mean to keep everything, but if there was something of note it would be nice to keep.

Ms. Dodd stated storing artifacts was a big issue. She stated the State has little or no room and the County certainly does not have a really good place to keep them. She recommended looking at the artifacts and if there is anything worthy of keeping.

Mr. Pitts asked if the Parks would store them.

Ms. Dodd stated they have the same problem. She did not have an issue asking them to take them on, but thought they might have the same response. If a good home cannot be found and there is nothing there that warrants keeping them, she stated reburying was an option.

Ms. Conner suggested contacting the National Park Service.

Ms. Dodd asked if the Commission wanted a staff member to come and talk to them.

The Commission agreed.

Ms. Dodd stated Ms. Baker was already going to ask someone from Parks and Recreation to come and she asked Ms. Davis if Ms. Baker would ask someone from Utilities to attend also and pass on the suggestion concerning the artifacts if the Park Service does not want them, then the Commission will readdress the issue.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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Ms. Conner stated at the very top it notes that she left at 4:08 and at the bottom it says the meeting adjourned 4 minutes later at 4:12. She asked if it was necessary to state she checked out 4 minutes early.

Mr. Pitts moved it be struck from the minutes.

Ms. Davis stated she did not have a copy of the minutes and asked if someone could mark them up and she would take them to Ms. Baker.

Ms. Dodd stated on line 207, she would like “and was amused by the fact” removed. She stated she probably said it but did not think it was good to be in the report. On line 222 there should be an “s” added after the word “developer”. On line 206 she would like to have “Mrs. Dodd had little hope since most developers never respond” deleted. Lately, it has been much better.

Ms. Kirby made a motion for approval with corrections.

Mr. Pitts seconded.

The motion passed 5-0 (Mr. Chichester and Ms. Best-Rolls were absent).

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.