



Town of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina
Historic Preservation and Design Study Group
A Subcommittee of the Land Use and Natural Resources Committee of
Council

Thursday, March 17, 2022

Subcommittee met at 4:00pm, at Town Hall, 2056 Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been met. Present were,

Subcommittee voting members: John Winchester (Chair), Aussie Geer (Vice Chair), Eddie Fava, Elizabeth Tezza, Beverly Bohan, Rita Langley, and Manda Poletti. Michael Daly arrived at 4:07pm.

Staff: Joe Henderson, Planning and Zoning Administrator, Max Wurthmann, Building Official and Pamela Otto, Study Group Staff member

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Winchester called the meeting to order at 4:00pm, stating the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, and all voting members were present except for Christina Butler.

Media: None present

Public: Sixteen (16) members present, including Land Use and Natural Resources (LUNR) members Scott Millimet and Gary Visser, as well as Planning Commission member Mark Howard.

2. **Approval of Minutes from March 3, 2022 meeting.**

Motion: A motion was made to approve the March 3, 2022 meeting minutes by Ms. Bohan, this motion passed unanimously with a 7-0 vote.

3. **Items for Discussion.** Chair Winchester stated the meetings would have agendas but said that the miscellaneous items that come up that are not on

the agenda would be recorded by Vice Chair Geer to be possibly included on future agendas.

A. Schneider historic preservation survey. Henderson was tasked to give an overview of the survey. He mentioned the presence of Kat Kenyon at today's meeting, who was on Town staff when some of the survey work was done. Henderson said any time a historic preservation project was submitted to the Design Review Board (DRB), the survey is used to first determine if the property is historic and then what identifies the property as historic.

The initial survey was done in 1987 by the Preservation Consultants of Charleston, with David Schneider as the lead surveyor. Initially there were three hundred sixty (360) resources identified, among those residential and non-residential. Today there are an estimated two hundred fifty (250) to two hundred seventy-five (275) residential structures, along with multiple archaeological and military structures.

After the 1987 survey there was a post-Hurricane Hugo survey, to assess the damage to historic structures, of which many were wiped out. Thirteen percent (13%) of the historic structures were destroyed.

In 2003, a survey was conducted where multiple properties were re-evaluated, and forty (40) properties were added to the previous surveys.

In 2006, there was the National Register nomination, coinciding with the formation of the DRB in 2005. Thirty-six (36) properties were added at that time.

In 2007, another supplemental review was made of all properties sixty (60) years and older. One hundred thirty-six were resurveyed, and many properties were added to the historic designation list.

Henderson mentioned that the list is on the Town website at the request of some members of the DRB. He then showed an example of what the 1987 survey cards look like; they are typically four (4) to six (6) pages of information which details the name of the property, includes a photo, the

construction date, the shape and form of the structure, the National Register status, the historical data, and the post-Hugo damage assessment.

Henderson then gave an example of a traditional island resource, 2214 Middle St., explaining the difference between the traditional island resource and a Sullivan's Island Landmark is the level of alterations over time. The property mentioned had some alterations, so it made it a traditional island resource, not a landmark. That means there is more flexibility with the DRB when allowing modifications to the property. Ms. Poletti asked if traditional island resource meant they are not on the National Register. Henderson said that is correct. There are two (2) different kinds of designations; one is the National Register which is a federal listing that offers no local protections, the other is the local designation, protection provided by the DRB and Town staff, which says a historical property is either a traditional island resource or a Sullivan's Island landmark. Cindy Ewing asked how to judge the historical value of a property by the number system, one (1) to four (4), used in the study. Henderson said the code identifies what level of designation, "1" is a Sullivan's Island landmark, "2" is a traditional island resource. Henderson stated that from a Town staff standpoint, a property is historic, and on the list as a "1" or "2" and must go to the DRB to for approval of any changes to the property, or it is not historic. Categories "3" or "4" have been given that designation because they have been altered or destroyed. Chair Winchester asked for Henderson's opinion on whether there needs to be something done about the study list. Henderson said yes, it is time to review the study again.

Public Input

Chair Winchester mentioned correspondence the Study Group had received about the Schneider Study. Battery Gadsden sent a letter strongly supporting a new study (attached **Exhibit A**). Mike Walsh also sent a letter stating the Schneider Study is seriously flawed and in need of a review. Kat Kenyon agreed that the study is very flawed, with later reviews being not completely thorough. Mr. Millimet asked if the DRB can issue fines. Henderson stated that Town staff would write the citations. Mr. Millimet feels that enforcement is critical. Ms. Clark asked if the updates, the ones removing some items from the list, were done by the same company or in house. Henderson stated David Schneider was part of Preservation Consultants of Charleston and worked on the study in 1987 and 1990.

Schneider then left and continued to work for Sullivan's Island for the subsequent reviews.

Ms. Langley said there are a lot of good things about the Schneider Study, but also some things that need work. Ms. Coste how a 1987 survey can tell how many of the remaining, post-Hugo properties are still worthy of being on the list or should be removed. Henderson agreed, stating that after Hurricane Hugo there was no DRB and no staff to oversee much of what went on with renovations or demolitions. Ms. Coste mentioned a lot of properties were just sold after Hurricane Hugo so there is no way to know how many historic structures were lost. Henderson said that is why there is a need reassess the historic properties and consolidate all of the surveys into one resource. It was asked if there is an approximate date that defines something as historic. Henderson said sixty (60) years or older is the typical benchmark. Ms. Poletti specified that it must have significance as well. Chair Winchester asked if the Study Group thought the Schneider study needed to be redone or can it be used as it is. Ms. Tezza stated that the study should not be thrown out but updated and reviewed. Chair Winchester agreed the study is useful but it is flawed and people lack confidence in it. Mr. Visser pointed out any motion made should include improvements to categorization. Ms. Ewing felt any study should start with the most historic structures and work through the rest next. Ms. Coste asked how many structures were on the original study, Henderson said three hundred sixty (360) properties were identified as historic in 1987. Ms. Coste then asked how many properties are listed today. Henderson said it is estimated to be at two hundred seventy-five (275) "1" and "2" rated residential properties. He also said this is why the list needs to be re-evaluated and consolidated into a master list. Such a list would be a great help to Town staff.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Tezza to recommend a review and update of the Schneider study, including a review of all structures listed as "1" and "2" to start and also review the criteria for historic designation, but the recommendation is not limited to these items; seconded by Ms. Langley.

Discussion

Ms. Poletti feels the Schneider study is not as detailed as is needed, and incorrect in some areas, but it is a good starting point. She also stated that the South Carolina Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) website has a list of recommended consultants they prefer people use for historic projects and that might be useful as

well. Mr. Daly said that the DRB saved many structures but the feel of the historic cottages was ruined by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood regulations requiring the raising of homes. The DRB is the strongest protection the Town for historic homes. Ms. Geer agreed and said now is the right time for another survey. Ms. Bohan said a designation needs to be added to historic homes to educate the public and prohibit the people from thinking they could hide a historic house within a larger structure. Mr. Fava supports a revision of the Schneider study as it does not reflect the current state of historic properties and the updates were probably not thorough. Ms. Tezza asked if the motion should be amended to include a designation. Ms. Poletti asked what the designation would look like. Ms. Bohan said similar to the Charleston Carolopolis award, attached to the home and put up by the Town.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Tezza to recommend a review and update of the Schneider study, including a review of all structures listed as “1” and “2” to start, a review of the criteria for historic designation, and the motion was amended to include a suggestion to pursue some type of historic designation for certain properties identified as historic as a “1” and “2”; seconded by Ms. Langley. This motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

B. Historic review process and standards. Chair Winchester asked Ms. Bohan and Henderson to provide their expertise and describe the process and standards of historic renovations or restorations. The goal is to see if the standards or process needs to be improved. Henderson summarized how staff and the DRB have been working on the process over the past 5 years by increasing training for DRB members, making changes to the application, and also changing the permitting procedure, including enforcement. The DRB application has gone from four (4) pages to ten (10). All initial requests to the DRB automatically require a conceptual review. This is important because it is at the discretion of the Board to grant final approval. Now all projects are required to have a conceptual review with staff as well in a pre-application meeting. If this staff review is not done, Henderson will inform the Board that the project is not informed by the regulations. There are two (2) main projects that come before the Board, non-historic and historic. If it is a non-historic, the project is before the Board to request increases in the zoning standards. The project is required to justify that request. Historic projects are required to identify how it meets the historic

preservation standards, that come directly from the Secretary of Interior standards. On the application is a space where the project manager or architect can tell how they meet these standards. Another recent change by the Board is that a project must justify how the design is more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. They must prove that they deserve the increases they are requesting. The application process is very intense but if done correctly, the Board is very informed about the project in question. There have also been several changes in the permitting procedure, the contractor is required to provide a narrative to the DRB of how everything will be built on site.

Mr. Howard asked where these changes were initiated. Henderson stated they have been learned from some DRB approved projects that went badly. Ms. Poletti asked why the application lists ten (10) preservation standards in part D1 of the application, when only the first eight (8) are preservation standards and the last two (2) are rehabilitation standards. Henderson stated that in the zoning ordinance gives the Department of Interior rehabilitation standards because if it comes before the DRB, it is a rehabilitation. A straight preservation project does not need to come to the DRB.

There are four (4) treatment strategies outlined in the Secretary of Interior guidelines; preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. Ms. Bohan stated that all projects involving historic structures will involve at least one of the strategies. She said that the DRB meets on site at these historic properties to ascertain how and what changes will be made before they consider approval. Ms. Bohan said that Craig Bennett, of Bennett Preservation Engineering PC, was hired to be a consultant to advise the Board. She also said that it was difficult to make an informed decision until the applicant gives their presentation at the DRB meeting. Mr. Howard asked when an addition becomes historic, using the example of a 1920 addition onto a home built in 1890. Henderson said the DRB makes the determination of what is significant or not and, as Ms. Bohan stated, a historic rehabilitation project can evolve from its approval due to age of the structure and the harsh barrier island environment. The example given was the Fort Moultrie auto garage, an eighty (80) year old addition was removed in order to help with the restoration of the original structure. Ms. Ewing is not sure if members of the DRB are the right people to make the distinction of what is historic. Henderson stated that several things are used to determine what can be done

to a historic structure. The architect must give their justification of photos, evaluations of building material but the Board also goes out on site. For example, the Junior Officers Quarters has well documented alterations. They originally had single story porches, but in the 1930s a second story porch was added. Those second story porches would not be removed because they are a prominent, well-defined historic characteristic of these structures; however, at the same time lean-to structures were added to the back of these buildings. The DRB has allowed the removal of these lean-tos because they weren't very prominent, and it allows a give and take with the DRB.

Chair Winchester believes that the process that has evolved over the last ten (10) years is a good process, but wants to know if there are things that can be done to improve it. Mr. Millimet wants a historical preservation expert as a resource to the DRB, relieving the pressure on the DRB. Ms. Bohan says they have hired someone, Craig Bennett, because the Board wanted more information. They approached Mayor Pat O'Neil to request the funding to hire him and he was found by Henderson. He has been advising the Board for the past nine (9) months and is at their disposal at any time. He writes reports and walks properties with the Board. Ms. Bohan assured everyone that the DRB was doing everything they could do to preserve historic structures. Ms. Ewing feels the DRB just approves all requests coming to them. Chair Winchester wants to know where the process failed, at the decision process or the ordinance itself. Ms. Coste feels that the DRB has become political. Chair Winchester concluded that the process and standards are there but there might be problems with the execution. Ms. Tezza said the members of Boards and Commissions are very well trained, by Joe and annual training requirements. She felt some just might not agree with the decisions that are made. Ms. Poletti said she has been through the DRB process and feels they were more restrictive in some instances than SHPO. She feels that the DRB does the best possible job that can be done and that they are why the historic properties have been preserved.

4. **General Public Input.** Chair Winchester mentioned letters received from Mike Walsh (**Exhibit B**), Battery Gadsden (**Exhibit A**), and Joy Morris (**Exhibit C**). He also mentioned a letter from Chris Kronzer referencing rear setbacks and swimming pools (**Exhibit D**). Chair Winchester said he is available after the meeting if anyone has anything to discuss with him.

5. **Discussion of next meeting's agenda items.** Chair Winchester mentioned that the first agenda item for the next meeting will be the third item on the agenda for today's meeting that was not discussed; size, mass, and scale of historic resources. He also suggested that the next item be incentives.

Mr. Howard stated that he had been asked by the Battery Gadsden Board Director to read the letter submitted by Battery Gadsden. He then read the attached letter, **Exhibit A**, out loud to the assembly.

6. **Adjourn.** There being no further public discussion and no new business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:43pm.

Motion: A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Tezza; seconded by Vice Chair Geer. This motion passed unanimously, 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Otto



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Battery Gadsden Cultural Center

Position Statement on Historic Preservation

Battery Gadsden Cultural Center ("BGCC") is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, dedicated in part to preserving the civilian and military history of Sullivan's Island.

As part of our historical emphasis and with the assistance of historian Roy Williams, we have produced a video, *Architectural Gems of Sullivan's Island*, highlighting particular houses on the Island that depict life as it used to be.

The film shares unique perspectives of times long past. It was, and is, very educational – and sparked a passion within BGCC for preserving as many of these houses as possible.

We recognize the surging real estate prices on the Island, with many purchasers interested primarily in demolishing or subsuming the existing structures into new construction. However, we also recognize the unique opportunity we have, through thoughtful zoning and permitting, to preserve many, if not all, of these structures, as separate buildings.

All of us on the BGCC board have watched with dismay as houses are demolished and replaced. We hear, "Oh, those aren't designated historic", or some other explanation.

Therefore, we as the Board of Battery Gadsden Cultural Center would like to state our position as clearly as possible:

- We strongly recommend a re-survey of all houses on the Island to be done by a professional, paid, outside expert, with historic designations for all houses that fit the criteria that would come from that outside consultant's survey.
- We believe there should be a stated emphasis, reinforced with zoning law changes and DRB/BZA backup, that the default Sullivan's Island position is that structures are to be preserved as-is, perhaps with non-historic additions removed.
- Zoning laws should be turned on their heads to encourage two structures per lot for historic homes, rewarding, not penalizing, square footage on the "new house" for preservation of the "old house".
- We recommend that those granted the right to build said new houses affirm that they will maintain the historic structure, repairing it as necessary.

Respectfully,

Battery Gadsden Cultural Center Board of Directors

Battery Gadsden Cultural Center is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the culture of art and history on Sullivan's Island.

Pam Otto

From: Mike Walsh <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 2:15 PM
To: Pam Otto
Subject: Input for committee meeting.
Attachments: BGCC Position Statement Historic Preservation001.pdf

CAUTION: > This email originated from outside the Town of Sullivans Island. Do not click links or open attachments unless you have verified the sender and know the content is safe.

Fellow HRDSG Members,

With apologies in advance, I'm sending you some personal views on the topics you'll be discussing on Thursday when I'm out of town. I'm also attaching a position statement from those of us at Battery Gadsden Cultural Center.

Following my comments at the last meeting regarding the Schneider studies I've come to learn a lot more about those surveys. Despite the Schneider work having been considered our "Bible" up to now, I believe it to be seriously flawed and deserving of demotion to less than "biblical" status. In short, I believe we need a new study of the homes on this island done by a paid professional historic property researcher, preferably with ties to our area, yet someone who is completely objective and unbiased. I've given John Winchester some thoughts on who that expert might be. I'm sure there will be other suggestions. That's all I'll say on that topic for now.

John had also posed the question at the last meeting of what's "bubbling up" in the community. What are people talking about in relation to preserving historic properties. Among the people I come in contact with, the complaint I hear the most is allowing new owners, architects and builders to take a "historic" home, strip it down to the studs, elevate it, move it, add to it, and then call the two or three remaining 2X4's historic. This has happened multiple times right here in our neighborhood. (I photographed the process on one house as it took place, but I really don't want to use that here because this is really not due to the ill intent of these neighbors.) However, despite the architect calling the process an "historic rehabilitation" or "historic restoration" or "historic treatment", in most instances those terms are a real stretch.

As you may know, Battery Gadsden Cultural Center for several months has been putting out a notice of each DRB meeting listing the historic structures that are being considered that month and educating readers on how they can see the plans and comment to the DRB. We also point them to the DOI standards, emphasizing standards number 2, 9 and 10. Personally, I don't see how most of what has been done to our historic homes would ever meet standard 10. Instead, we see repeated examples of "destruction by envelopment." Again, that term is what I hear from my friends and neighbors. I wholeheartedly agree with them.

I won't drag this out. I believe you get the gist of these comments. I believe you'll hear more of this commentary at upcoming meetings from members of the public.

Thanks. Look forward to seeing you again on the 31st.

Mike.

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"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

---- Dorothy Parker, American poet, writer, critic and satirist

Exhibit C

Dear Historic Preservation Committee,

Owning a historic property or buying a historic property on Sullivan's Island has many challenges. These challenges should be reviewed, and changes made so that all residents of the island are treated fairly. It comes down to property values, historic restoration/preservation and generational living/aging in place.

There are several main issues when one is considering buying a historic property. Does the property have an ADU and how has it been preserved? What will the DRB allow for continued preservation and can a family grow within the space. Should the family need to sell the property at some point does it make sound financial sense to own a historic property. With the current town ordinances, it makes zero sense to own historic property...much less spend the absorbent cost to restore one. If the present ordinance isn't changed, historic properties will continue to dwindle on the island. After all new construction is easier to build, less expensive, and allowed more square footage than a historic property. I've owned 3 new construction homes on the island and 1 historic property, so I make these comments from a point of personal history, not conjecture.

Specifically, owners of historic properties are limited in overall square footage when an ADU is on the property. As everyone on the island has noticed, properties values have skyrocketed and in South Carolina property is valued by the total square footage. With the present guideline, the historic property owner can be punished because the main home on the property is limited in size. Although, all properties on Sullivans are reviewed by the DRB, those without an ADU or historic are given ***considerable favor on the overall allowable square footage***. Whereas those that own historic properties are almost punished throughout the prolonged DRB process.

How exactly is this punitive? Let me provide an example.

A new construction home can easily be 5000 square feet and basically sail through the DRB. Whereas a historic property with an ADU of 1000 square feet is limited regarding the size of the main home to 3200 square feet.

This is where the present guideline/ordinance is punitive to the Historic property owner. Although, an ADU is very desirable, it also can be a deterrent for historic property ownership when the value of the property is looked at carefully. In a re-sale, most people want to "live" in the main home and the ADU is for guests or possibly rental. Given the escalation of property values on the island, it's highly unlikely that a main home of 3200 square feet vs a main home of 5000 square feet isn't valued very differently. After all, the square foot price is what drives value on the island and the main home is the value closely reviewed in a re-sale. It's easy to see that a difference of approximately 2000 square feet is quite significant. With recent sales activity posting square footage pricing around \$1200 - \$1500 /square foot for interior homes, this can be as high as a \$2.4 to \$3 million dollar difference for the property value depending on the price per square foot.

From: Bridget Welch
Sent: Monday, March 7, 2022 8:38 AM
To: Pam Otto
Subject: FW: Rear Setback Study/Change Request - Sullivans Island LUNR Committee

Bridget Welch
843-883-5730

-----Original Message-----

From: Chris Kronzer <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 8:16 AM
To: oneilp <oneilp@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Scott Millimet <smillimet@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Gary Visser <gvisser@sullivansisland.sc.gov>
Cc: Bridget Welch <bwelch@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Justin Novak <jnovak@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Bachman Smith <BSmith@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Greg Hammond <ghammond@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Kaye Smith <ksmith@sullivansisland.sc.gov>; Chris Kronzer <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Rear Setback Study/Change Request - Sullivans Island LUNR Committee

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Dear LUNR Committee -

I believe I have personally spoke to each of you in the past about the LUNR committee looking into changing the rear setback requirements from 25' for smaller interior lots where only one side of the lot has street access to allow pools to be built away from homes, at ground level and closer to rear property line. Currently, the rear setback is 25' and this request is to alter that to 6' or thereabouts for lots where rear property lines adjoin another property and are less than 0.35 acres.

This change will encourage homeowners on the smaller lots to build pools at ground level and better utilize their land versus building homes with larger footprints where the pool is above ground and essentially attached to the home. By doing so, this will better manage outside noise for those homes located close together since pools will be at ground level and allow for privacy. Lastly, once studied I believe you will find that this change ultimately encourages pool designs that protect our historic character and better align to the overall vision of Sullivans Island.

The request is focused at smaller lots (approximately < 0.35 acres) where the rear property line does not adjoin a street, marsh, ocean or other public land. This change will encourage owners to proportionally better utilize their land, encourage smaller building footprints and provide privacy for all neighbors.

Please let me know the process and next steps for this request to be evaluated, studied and potentially implemented.

Sincerely

Chris

Chris Kronzer