



Rowan's Original Gateway.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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Spencer Historic Preservation Commission

FY 2021-2022 Annual Goals

The Spencer Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) met virtually on Monday, March 15, 2021, for its annual goal-setting workshop. Commission members engaged in a broad discussion about their goals for FY 21-22. On Monday, April 19, the Commission reviewed and affirmed its annual goals and conducted a prioritization exercise to identify high-priority goals. The Commission's stated goals are outlined below, followed by a list of highest-priority goals. These goals and priorities will guide the HPC in the year ahead.

▪ **Update COA Application & Instructions**

- The Commission will adopt a new and revised Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application. The new application form will provide more information to the applicant up-front to reduce ambiguity and confusion about the process. The new application form will clearly communicate details about submittal requirements, HPC meeting times, quasi-judicial procedure, and answers to other frequently-asked-questions.
- The Commission and staff will continue to clarify the application and review process for the public and will improve overall customer service to Spencer's Historic District.

▪ **Improve Overall Transparency & Communication**

- Planning staff will work to improve overall accessibility and transparency of HPC-related information on the Town's website. This will include using the website to post meeting agendas, notices, minutes, and case reports, as well as application instructions and helpful guidance, such as sample site plans and sample application forms.
- Planning staff will explore the feasibility of installing temporary Zoning/Notice of Public Hearing signs in the front yards of COA applicants. The signs would include a case number and staff contact information for the public to learn more about the project in question. This is a best practice across many communities with local historic districts, including Salisbury and Concord.
- The Commission will improve overall communication with Spencer's residents, including residents outside of the historic districts, through social media, mailers, and special events, and possibly "welcome packages" to new historic homeowners.
- Strategies for communication may also include posting signs outside properties for sale in the historic district. The purpose of these signs would be to notify prospective buyers that they are buying into a local historic district and there are certain standards that apply. The Commission will explore the legality and appropriateness of such a strategy with the town attorney.
- The Commission will explore compiling historic information on Spencer, including a photographic inventory, and making such information more accessible to the public.

- **Develop a Social Media & Public Engagement Strategy**
 - The Commission and staff will explore strategies to develop a better and less adversarial relationship with the community. Ideas include improving the existing Facebook page (currently managed by Chair Jacquelyn Jensen). The Facebook page could be used to share information about the Town’s historic preservation program as well as general interesting educational facts and snapshots of local history.
 - The Commission and staff will explore sending special mailers to historic property owners, such as brochures and other helpful guidance materials like the new Quick Reference Guide.
- **Organize Special Training for Commission Members**
 - Staff will organize special training for the Commission with an emphasis on quasi-judicial procedure and the rules on ex parte communication. Options include inviting a guest speaker for a virtual or in-person training session. Staff will also compile relevant reading material for the Commission.
 - The Commission will also focus on maintaining compliance with all applicable state laws for preservation commissions, including how decisions should be carried out.
- **Seek Certified Local Government (CLG) Status from SHPO**
 - The Commission will explore the requirements of entering the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program with the N.C. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- **Adopt Standards for New Construction**
 - The Commission recently updated its Historic District Design Standards but did not adopt standards for new construction. The Commission will establish a sub-committee whose role it will be to draft standards for new construction. This committee will also periodically review and make recommendations on improvements to the Standards.
- **Conduct a Retrospective Review of Approved COAs**
 - The Commission and staff will facilitate a retrospective review of approved Certificates of Appropriateness to determine whether projects were carried out as approved. The purpose of this review will be to determine if any projects were carried out in a way inconsistent with submitted plans and to determine if any projects were not completed and need a new COA. Staff will gather necessary documents to facilitate this review.
 - For any COAs that were not completed as approved, staff will follow-up with property owners to determine the status and whether a new COA is required.
- **Institute a Certificate of Completion Process**
 - The Commission and staff will explore instituting a Certificate of Completion to formally “close” approved COAs after the work is completed.
 - The Commission will also explore the feasibility of assigning a timeframe for completing a project at the time a COA is approved, based on the proposed scope of work. Staff will explore using new permitting software to receive alerts on any projects coming up against the assigned timeframe. Staff will also explore including a section on the COA application asking the applicant how long they expect the project to take.
- **Recommend adoption of a new Historic Preservation Incentive Grant Program**
 - The Commission will develop a proposal for the Town to adopt a new Historic Preservation Incentive (HPI) Grant Program focused on exterior repairs to historic

properties. The program would provide financial assistance to homeowners for stabilization and repair of deteriorated materials and architectural elements.

- **Improve Partnerships with Other Town Boards & Commissions**
 - The Commission will explore partnering with the Planning Board, the Community Appearance Commission (CAC), and/or other community-oriented groups, on special joint projects. For example, the CAC and HPC may choose to establish a joint committee to review and approve application for downtown façade grants.

High Priority Goals:

- Conduct a retrospective review of approved COAs and institute a follow-up Certificate of Completion process using new code enforcement and permitting software;
- Improve overall communication and outreach with the public and education of Spencer’s history and of the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review process;
- Implement a new Historic Preservation Incentive Grant Program;
- Provide training to Commission members on quasi-judicial procedure and ensure compliance with such requirements;