

**Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission
Year-End Report to the City of Elkins
December 16, 2009**

The Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission had a busy and productive year during 2009.

Membership

The Landmarks Commission members include Carol Schuler, President; Phyllis Baxter, Vice President; Ellen Spears, Secretary; Logan Smith, Treasurer; and Dr. David Turner.

Strategic Plan

The Commission worked with the State Historic Preservation Office and independently for several months to develop a strategic plan, which will guide its actions and policies for the next five years. The plan identifies opportunities for the Elkins community and key leadership objectives for the Landmarks Commission. Most importantly, the plan includes a new mission statement and goals, which are noted below. The complete plan is attached to this report.

EHLC Mission:

To serve the City of Elkins by providing local leadership, education, governance and advocacy to preserve our historic places and revitalize our community.

EHLC Goals:

- *Create a culture of preservation within our community.*
- *Function as an integral part of Elkins City government and a respected partner in all matters related to preservation and planning for historic structures and districts.*

We believe that fulfilling our mission and goals will greatly contribute to the economic development of our community and enhance the quality of life of residents and businesses.

New by-laws were also developed as part of the strategic planning process. Those by-laws are also attached.

Darden House Complex Management Plan

The Landmarks Commission developed a Management Plan for the Darden House Complex, which includes the house, carriage house, and garden. We sought public input during the planning process and put together a plan which addresses proposed uses, lease policies and marketing, physical needs of the properties, a financial analysis, and implementation. The complete plan is attached.

The commission further identified a mission statement and goals for managing the Darden House, as noted below:

Darden Management Mission:

To manage the Darden House Complex to support historic preservation, promote Elkins' heritage, and provide community benefits.

Management Goals:

- *To encourage historic preservation by example and by providing information, resources and support.*
- *To strengthen community organizations, heritage tourism, and downtown revitalization.*
- *To sustain the complex by generating income for operations and to help with maintenance.*

Web site/Marketing Materials

Thanks to an in-kind donation of more than \$6,000 of services by 5:15 Creative, the Landmarks Commission was able to launch a full featured Web site in 2009. The site includes a content management system that allows commission members to maintain the site themselves. Site revisions and development are ongoing. The site is located at www.historicelkins.org.

A new logo and letterhead have been created to be consistent with Web site design elements.

Darden House Porch Project

A \$10,000 special allocation from the City of Elkins as well as a \$20,000 grant from the State Historic Preservation Office is funding the rehabilitation of the Darden Porch. The porch was badly deteriorated due to past water infiltration. EHLC has been keeping the Municipal Properties Committee informed. Status:

- Project scope defined with SHPO
- Hiring of contractor Brian George through state-approved competitive bid process
- Removal of all rotted wood/demolition
- Leveling of roof
- Reseating of roof rafters (in progress), which had slipped over time (105 years)
- Leveling of floor. Porch had settled up to six inches in places.
- Addition of new piers under porch (in progress). These will be concealed.
- Sourcing of SHPO-specified ceiling and flooring lumber: clear pine for ceiling, locust for flooring.
- Sourcing of SHPO-approved metal roofing.
- Have encountered delays due to far more extensive rot and settling than could be identified before demolition, as well as a change in personnel at the State Historic Preservation Office.

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National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference

In October, Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission member Logan Smith attended the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Nashville, TN. He was able to do so through a scholarship from the State Historic Preservation Office and support from EHLC and the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area.

Logan attended seminars on Green Preservation, Historic Building Assessment, Preservation Commission Planning, Section 106 Review, Multi-media marketing for heritage tourism, and the National Trust Grant Programs.

Partnerships and Support of Other Organizations

- Davis & Elkins College: The Landmarks Commission was invited to consult with D&E President Buck Smith on exterior improvements to Halliehurst. We contacted historic architect Michael Mills, who provided color schemes to EHLC which we shared with President Smith. These colors were chosen, and are based on historic evidence of original paint colors from the Halliehurst files, as well as period-appropriate schemes from the late 19th century.
- Kump House: As the Certified Local Government organization for the City of Elkins and sponsor of the Kump House development grant, EHLC continues to support this project by serving as a financial agent for the grant. We also have participated in meetings with the Department of Highways seeking mitigation for widening of the intersection of Randolph Avenue and 11th Street.
- C-Hope: EHLC provided written support to the State Historic Preservation Office for the national register nominations for First Ward and Riverside Schools. These nominations were successful.
- On Trac: Two members of EHLC are actively involved in On Trac. Secretary Ellen Spears is director of the On Trac program and President Carol Schuler serves on the design committee.
- AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps volunteers are helping the EHLC accomplish its goals. Partnering with this program will help make valuable preservation resources available to citizens throughout the community.

National Register Additions

Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission supported the nominations of two new National Register Historic Landmarks in Elkins: First Ward School and Riverside School.

Historic Structures Database

The Landmarks Commission is working with an AmeriCorps volunteer to create a database of the national register structures within the municipality of Elkins. We have begun with the Wees Historic District and will follow with a similar project for the Downtown Historic District and individually listed landmarks in the city. This information will be used for corresponding with and educating property owners as needed and documenting changes in our national-register listings, such as in the

case of demolition. The database will be searchable and we hope to add to it over time, with historic information, photos, etc.

Preservation Resource Center

In keeping with the missions of both EHLC and the Darden Management Plan, EHLC is developing a Preservation Resource Center on the first floor of the Darden House. An AmeriCorps volunteer is creating the center, researching a list of reference materials that could be valuable to property owners and historical researchers. The center will be open to the public during specified hours, providing a kind of “reading room” for preservationists and those looking for more information on Elkins’ preservation community.

Wees Historic District Period Lighting/Streetscape Project

EHLC voted to work with Region VII to select a Design and Engineering firm for a period lighting project in the Wees District with the intent of seeking Transportation Enhancement Grant funds to implement the project. The City of Elkins Finance committee voted in favor of EHLC and the City of Elkins submitting a letter of intent to apply for a TE grant, which has been accepted. The Grant application is due January 15.

The selection committee, which includes Danny Satterfield, Jennifer Giovannitti, Suellen Gross and Carol Schuler has selected a firm: EG&G. They were selected through a stringent ranking process recommended by Region VII. EG&G is currently developing a pilot project plan which will serve as the basis for the TE Grant Application. They will present their concepts to Elkins City Council on January 7. A 20% cash match is required for this grant. We are applying for \$200,000. One private corporate commitment of \$2,000 has already been received. The Wees Neighborhood Board has also committed \$500 toward the match. Further financial support from the City and other organizations is needed.

Pending Grants

A grant in support of developing the Preservation Resource Center is pending with the State Historic Preservation Office.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carol Schuler

Carol Schuler, President, EHLC

Attachments:

Strategic Plan, By-Laws, Darden Management Plan, Intent to Apply