

Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission
September 3, 2025, 5:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

Department of Planning and Community Development
Building 3, 2403 Courthouse Drive, Conference Room 110
Approved October 1, 2025

Officers: Chair, Christi Lyons; First Vice-Chair, Glenn Carwell; Second Vice-Chair, T.J. Morgan; Secretary, Bobbie Gribble
Members: Suzanne Camden, Harriet Frenzel, Richard Klobuchar, Vincent Lyons, Paul Morrisette, Florence Reese
Student Members:
Staff Liaison: Mark Reed

City Staff: Ellie Dauernheim
Student Leaders Member: Greyson Netter

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Commission is to advise the City Council and the Departments of Planning and Community Development and Cultural Affairs on all issues related to the preservation of historic buildings, structures and sites located in the City of Virginia Beach.

MISSION

The mission of the Commission shall be to preserve, protect and maintain the historic identity of Virginia Beach and the former Princess Anne County through a program of advocacy and increased public awareness and involvement.

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks/Announcements

The Chair, Christi Lyons, opened the meeting at 5:05 p.m. She read the Historic Preservation Commission's Purpose and Mission.

Ms. Lyons said that two students have been recommended to City Council to be the Student Member appointees for 2025-2026. She noted that one is Grace Curran, a Senior at First Colonial High School. She was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Ms. Lyons introduced Greyson Netter as the other recommended appointee. He is a senior at Kellam High School.

Ms. Lyons said their first Student Leaders Committee meeting will be in this building next Wednesday.

Mark Reed introduced new staff member Ellie Dauernheim. She is a Planner I. Mr. Reed said Ms. Dauernheim is a graduate of the University of Mary Washington with a B.A. in Historic Preservation. She served an internship with the City of Fredericksburg Planning Department. She serves as the Staff Liaison to the Historical Review Board and also works on projects for the historic preservation program. Mr. Reed said Ms. Dauernheim was a 2024 NAPC Forum Scholar.

Presentation - de Witt Cottage NRHP Nomination Update – Debra McClane, Architectural Historian

Mr. Reed introduced Debra McClane, who was in attendance to provide a presentation on the National Register of Historic Places nomination update that she recently completed.

Ms. McClane noted that partial funding for the update came from a CLG grant. She then explained the project tasks. They included:

- Updating existing information in the original nomination
- Expanding the narrative concerning the historic context and architectural importance of the cottage (looking at a bigger picture)
- Adding and expanding the National Register Criteria/Areas of Significance

Ms. McClane discussed the history of the ownership of the de Witt Cottage property.

Bernard Peabody Holland came to VB as a clerk with the railroad. He was soon named Acting and then General Superintendent of the Railroad. In his role he convinced the owners to switch from narrow to standard gauge so the trains bringing visitors to the oceanfront could run faster.

Mr. Holland also managed the Princess Anne Hotel, where he met his wife, Emily Gregory. He built the cottage for her in 1895 on the oceanfront. Unlike the other cottages, he built it of brick, perhaps as a statement of permanence for Virginia Beach.

Ms. McClane showed slides with early photos of the house that are held in the Virginia Wesleyan University archives. The earliest photos from 1897 show the brick was not painted originally. Ms. McClane pointed out several other differences from the building that exists today, including no dormers on the roof; all 4 chimneys are standing; and on the back of the house the wing is only one story.

Mr. Holland was very involved in political and governmental administration of the area. As early as 1903 he met with others about forming a charter for Virginia Beach. In 1906, the General Assembly granted the town charter. Holland was elected as the first mayor. He was very involved in creating infrastructure in the town.

In 1910, Mr. Holland retired from the railroad due to health reasons. He opened a store and his wife started the first library. In 1919 he started selling automobiles and he also opened a gas station. He remained active and lived until 1960...a few years before the city and county merged.

Dr. Mansfield said Mr. Holland personified the beach. The railway owners were in New York. He was the bridge between the “guys who could” and the needs of the community.

In 1904 the Hollands moved out of the brick house to a house across the street. In 1909 the de Witt family purchased it. The de Witts had 7 children when they moved in, then they had three more children, totaling ten. They had been renting the house seasonally before deciding to buy it.

Two of the de Witt sisters stayed in the house until the late 1980s. The sisters wanted to preserve the house from being demolished. At the time there were four living de Witt sisters.

The sisters made a deed of gift to the Virginia Beach Foundation, which made an agreement to raise money for the restoration/ rehabilitation of the house and then gift it to Virginia Beach. The agreement included establishment of an annuity for the sisters to live on. The last sister Caroline de Witt lived until 2007.

The de Witt Cottage was transferred to Virginia Beach ownership in 1995. The City leased it to the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild, and they opened the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum on September 22, 1995.

Ms. McClane's research uncovered information about the hiring of domestic workers for both the Hollands and the de Witts. Much of the information was found in the day books that the de Witt girls wrote. The census from 1910 shows a servant living in the household.

In the 1930(s) the family decided to start letting out rooms for seasonal boarders.

Ms. McClane said there were several physical changes to the site that she included in the nomination update.

- Garden, 1993-1995 (Princess Anne Garden Club)
- Boast shed c. 1995 (replaced 1940s building)
- Library c1930 moved to present site 2003
- Mallards sculpture, Bronze 2006, David Turner
- Gazebo 2024

Archaeology was done on the site in advance of the gazebo construction. An archaeological assessment of the property was done by the James River Institute for Archaeology. Out of 17 excavated shovel tests, 13 had positive results for cultural material.

Ms. Lyons thanked Ms. McClane for her work on the project and for the presentation.

Presentation – Cape Henry Lighthouse – Will Glasco, CEO, Preservation Virginia

Ms. Lyons introduced Will Glasco as the next speaker.

Mr. Glasco thanked Ms. Lyons for the opportunity to speak with the Historic Preservation Commission. He said he is the new CEO of Preservation Virginia and noted that the Cape Henry Lighthouse is important to the history of Virginia and the United States. He said he wants to improve the facility and the visitor experience there.

Mr. Glasco said Preservation Virginia was begun in 1889. In 1930, Congress gifted the lighthouse to Preservation Virginia.

Mr. Glasco said they have recently completed the keystone arch repair for the lighthouse's doorway. Donations to repair the keystone arch were a combination of local foundation support and individual gifts. He said it was an \$80,000 project. He said the keystone was loose, and they had to put wood bracing around the doorway for a couple of years before it could be repaired.

Mr. Glasco said there is original construction stone on site, which they used for the project. He noted it is extremely unusual to have the original stone available. Preservation Virginia contracted with Dominion Traditional Builders, who are the experts on stone and masonry repair. They started in March using the original sandstone from the site. They recorded much of the rebuild, and Mr. Glasco said he would share that with the Commission when it is available.

A partnership for funding with DHR was matched with the Widgeon foundation, the Lighthouse Society Foundation, and others.

Mr. Glasco then provided updates about Ft. Story and base access. He said Preservation Virginia appreciates Captain Gray and his team.

Mr. Glasco said there are potentially more security changes for base access. He said foreign nationals might be denied entry going forward as real IDs are required. It is possible that civilians will be required to be chaperoned at all times while on base. Preservation Virginia is working on solutions to these new restrictions that are coming down from Washington.

Mr. Glasco reported on the planned lighthouse tower restoration project and thanked the Historic Preservation Commission and City of Virginia Beach staff for their assistance and support. It is expected go to bid by the end of this year.

Mr. Glasco went over the budget details. He said the initial budget was \$1,918,119 for the project. The A&E design fee was \$401,489. The estimated construction cost was \$2,005,555. He said they have raised \$2,224,495, so are almost \$200,000 short of meeting the project cost.

Mr. Glasco said they have learned a lot about the lighthouse. The cast iron stairwell and its brick cylinder appear to have caused many of the problems with the stone. The repairs that are going to be made will hopefully hold up for generations. They will address cracking on the outside, stone damage to the window surrounds, and work on the lantern room.

Mr. Glasco discussed the Keeper's Quarters at the new Cape Henry Lighthouse. He said they have had discussions about Preservation Virginia occupying the building for their programs. Will Glasco has spoken to Captain Gray about the Keeper's Quarters. It is hard to get a timeline from the military. They are doing studies about conditions of the buildings.

Glenn Carwell talked about his vision for a visitor center at Cape Henry similar to the one at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

Mr. Glasco said he feels a vision that everyone is working toward is needed. His primary plan is to work toward building relationships. He wants to know what the Commission would like to see at this site with the knowledge that access is being restrained.

Approval of June 4, 2025 Minutes

Ms. Lyons asked the members to review the minutes of the June 4, 2025 meeting. T.J. Morgan made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Rick Klobuchar seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Project and Program Updates

Mr. Reed provided various project and program updates.

He provided updates on projects partially funded through CLG grants. The fiscal year 2025 grant projects include three NRHP nomination updates, and Mr. Reed noted that the Commission had just had a presentation on one of them. He said all three projects have been submitted to DHR. The expectation is for all three to be on the December 2025 DHR Boards agenda.

Mr. Reed said the fiscal year 2026 CLG grant will help fund a NRHP nomination update for the 1903 Seatack Life Saving Station/U.S. Coast Guard Station. The grant award is \$8,775 and the City's match is also \$8,775. Mr. Reed said the Grant Agreement has been received and it is on the September 16 City Council agenda.

Mr. Reed provided updates on the several projects supported through state Cost Share grant funds. The fiscal year 2024 project to prepare a Historic Context for Post-World War II Suburban Development has been completed. Mr. Reed and Ms. Dauernheim distributed printed copies to each member.

Mr. Reed said the fiscal year 2025 project to survey Doyletown and Queen City, and to provide a summary report about each neighborhood, is continuing. The consultant is in the process of completing the VCRIS survey forms.

Mr. Reed said the fiscal year 2026 Cost Share project is to research and prepare a Developers and Builders Historic Context and will include the survey and historic context for 1955 and 1959 areas annexed by Norfolk. The grant award is \$10,000. Norfolk's match amount is \$20,000 and the Virginia Beach match amount is \$30,000. This project will build on the recently completed historic context study.

Mr. Reed provided an update on the Newsome Farm Cemetery property. He said he has received the report from the City Attorney's Office. The conclusion is that certain heirs of Daniel and Sylvia Smith have ownership of the parcel containing the cemetery. No heirs have been located as part of this process.

Mr. Reed discussed the next steps. He said he will need to:

- Coordinate with Public Works Real Estate to initiate City department and administration review for acquisition
- If City administration supports acquisition, take it forward to City Council
- If Council Approves, work with City Attorney's Office to proceed with the condemnation process

Mr. Reed said the process requires extensive advertising and an appraisal. The City Attorney estimated \$10,000 to \$15,000, which is likely to be paid from HPC funds. Mr. Reed noted that the HPC has invested \$35,809 in research, recognition, and planning projects for Newsome Farm Cemetery. He asked if the Commission supports moving forward with these steps.

Dr. Morgan made a motion for staff to move forward with these next steps. The motion was seconded by Florence Reese. There was no discussion. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Annual Public Meeting

Christi Lyons reminded everyone that the Commission's Annual Public Meeting is coming up on Wednesday, November 5. Since it is scheduled in place of a regular meeting, attendance is required.

Ms. Lyons and Mr. Reed reviewed the draft agenda for the meeting. Ms. Lyons said she wants to make sure those attending understand what the Commission does. Mr. Reed said he is waiting for confirmation from Michael Worthington that he will be able to make a presentation on dendrochronology. There will be updates on accomplishments of the historic preservation program and activities of the Student Leaders Committee.

Ms. Reese asked how the meeting would be advertised. Mr. Reed said they used to do a paid advertisement in the Virginian-Pilot's Beacon, but that publication is no longer produced. He said it will go out on the City's social media and that he sends an email to everyone that has attended in the past.

Dr. Morgan asked if he could set up an event on Facebook like he had for the Historic Preservation Month activity. Mr. Reed said he could do that from his private account.

Historic Properties Glimpse

Mr. Reed said there are no items for the Historical Review Board's agenda in September.

He reported that the City Council had approved the sale of the C & P telephone property at 302 22nd Street on August 12.

Old Business

Under Old Business, Mr. Reed asked the Commission to approve an updated budget from what they had provisionally approved in June. He noted that their packet has both the budget approved in June, as an appendix to the June minutes, and the revised budget (see Appendix 1) he is requesting their approval for this evening. He said the only adjustments are under Professional Services due to the changes in the grant awards we received. Mr. Reed said it changes the NRHP update with the CLG grant from \$16,000 to \$8,775; the Historic Context project from \$25,000 to \$30,000; and the Other from \$6,500 to \$8,725. He said the changes reflect the actual grant awards received and the corresponding match requirements.

A motion was made by Dr. Morgan to approve the revised budget for FY26. Dr. Klobuchar seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Reed provided an update on the Historic Preservation Month support for Cape Henry Lighthouse. He said the report from the Lighthouse's Museum Store sales is that they sold 137 pint glasses at \$10 for a \$1,370 contribution. They also sold 24 Save the Lighthouse posters at \$5 each for an additional \$120.

Ms. Reese asked about the donation from Shorebreak. Dr. Morgan said the check from Shorebreak is ready for pick-up and Ms. Lyons is going to pick it up. The check is for \$648.09. Mr. Reed said the Commission raised \$385 at the event itself. He said since 2019 the Commission has raised \$12,000 to \$14,000 for the Lighthouse during Historic Preservation Month.

New Business

Under New Business Mr. Reed brought up an issue with state Historical Highway Markers in Virginia Beach. He showed a slide of the Cape Henry Railroads marker (KV-24) that is located near the Cape Henry Lighthouse. He said he was dismayed to see the condition of the marker when he was there for National Lighthouse Day in August.

He said the Cape Henry Railroads marker was dedicated on August 5, 2017. It was the second marker sponsored by the HPC to be unveiled. The slide showed significant damage to the paint and aluminum after only 8 years.

Mr. Reed contacted DHR and they in turn contacted the manufacturer. Their response was the marker finish is guaranteed for 5 years. Routine cleaning and inspection are recommended. They said regular cleaning will extend the finish expectancy beyond its 20+ year lifespan. Refurbishing damaged markers is possible, and the manufacturer said KV-24 can be refurbished for \$1,040.

Mr. Reed said that staff recommends we undertake the refurbishment. He also said staff recommends we initiate an assessment of the condition of state markers in Virginia Beach and develop a maintenance plan and a refurbishment plan for markers that need that service. He said staff can initiate the condition assessment this fall.

Suzanne Camden made a motion for the KV-24 marker to be refurbished for the cost of \$1,040. Dr. Carwell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Reed said he and Ms. Dauernheim will do a condition assessment of each marker and begin to develop a maintenance plan and a refurbishment plan for each marker.

Dr. Klobuchar informed the Commission that the Francis Land House will reopen on the 15th and 16th of November.

Adjournment

Ms. Lyons said the next meeting will be on October 1 at 5:00 p.m. She adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Appendix 1

FY26 City of Virginia Beach Budget Planning and Community Development Historic Preservation Program

Non-Personnel Operating Budget – 100.204.1110.605520 **Total – \$89,158**

Training for Historic Preservation Commission and Historical Review Board (CLG requirement)	\$ 1,500
Historic Markers and Signage	
• NRHP Historic Districts Identification Signs	\$ 22,000
• Local Historic Marker – Nike Missile Site	\$ 3,500
• Courthouse Signs/Plaques	\$ 5,000
Public meetings	\$ 2,000
Research Grant Program	\$ 5,000
Historic Preservation Month Promotions and Activities	\$ 2,500
Miscellaneous small purchases, such as plaques	\$ 158
Professional Services	
• NRHP Nomination Updates (CLG Grant)	\$ 8,775
• Historic Context (Developers, Builders, and Realtors)	\$ 30,000
• Other	\$ 8,725
Total	\$ 89,158

Grants

Certified Local Government 2025-2026	\$ 8,775
Survey and Planning Cost Share Program	\$ 10,000
Total	\$ 18,775

9/03/2025