

HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION

Jonesborough Town Hall – Board Room
123 Boone Street, Jonesborough, TN
August 14, 2025 – 6:00 PM
Minutes

Members Present: Frank Collins, Rebecca Moss, Matt Kehn, Marcy Hawley, Herman Jenkins, Michael Kieta, Colton Brasure, Chad Hylton

Members Absent: Nita VanTil

Call to Order

Chair, Frank Collins, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Item I: New Business

421 W Main – Owners/Presenters: Robert Staple

Mr. Staple requested approval of color choices for the garage (carriage house) addition. The structure was previously approved on 10/10/24. The two-story part of the structure is board and baton 1x10 western red cedar with 1x2 baton. Trim and windows on the two-story side will be painted Sherwin Williams Iconic White. The one-story part of the structure is 1x8 plain bevel siding western red cedar with matching trim. Paint on the one-story part will be Sherwin Williams Stone Lion, doors will be painted Sherwin Williams Manor House, and the roof will be a standing seam metal roof, burnished slate color by Lyon Metal.

Motion: Rebecca Moss made a motion, seconded by Colton Brasure, to approve the request as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

213 E Main – Owners/Presenters: Karen & Larry Childress

Owners requested approval to install solid black solar panels on flat porch, roof, slope of rear roof, and slope of West side of roof. Panels on the flat porch roof and slope of rear roof would not be visible from nearby roads or adjoining properties. The panel on the West side of the roof are concealed by evergreen vegetation and would need careful observation to be able to view. There will be a total of 31 panels installed. The Childress' have spoken to neighbors and received no objections. The battery pack will either be installed on the back of the house or in the basement.

Motion: Matt Kehn made a motion, seconded by Michael Kieta, to approve the request as presented.

Discussion: There was discussion about if a stipulation should be made that if the mature trees ever die or need to be removed they would need to be replaced to screen the panels on the West side.

Motion passed unanimously.

Item IV: Public Comments

Jeff Gurley, owner of the Lollipop Shop, shared his concerns about how the recent controversy over "Yoda" not having a special outdoor use permit was handled. Mr. Gurley stated that the first communication he received about not having a outdoor use permit came from the Jonesborough Building Inspector. Mr. Gurley stated that the Building Inspector shared that there were complaints about Yoda. However, he would not reveal who made the complaints or share the nature of the complaints. Chair, Frank Collins, stated that Yoda was approved in October 2023 and that the Chair at the time instructed Mr. Gurley's that his next step was to apply for an outdoor use permit through the Town.

Addition to Agenda

Chair, Frank Collins, requested a motion be made to add to the agenda a request for a hanging sign for 105 Courthouse Square, The Smoky Grass Station.

Motion: Rebecca Moss made a motion, seconded by Colton Brasure, to approve the addition of sign approval for The Smoky Grass Station at 105 Courthouse Square as requested. Motion passed unanimously.

Item V: Advertising Standards and Guidelines Discussion:

The balance between the advertising needs of businesses and the maintenance of the historic character of Jonesborough is important. Consumers are drawn to Historic Jonesborough by our authentic historic atmosphere. Jonesborough's Advertising Standards and Guidelines for the H-1 and H-2 overlay zones are intended to help the business community of Jonesborough maintain and build the already viable harmony of commercial prosperity and historic preservation.

Over the past year, community members and businesses have expressed concerns about flashing lights and string lights displayed year-round in the windows of two businesses in our business district in the H-1 and H-2 Overlay Zones. The Jonesborough Municipal Code prohibits string lights and flashing/blinking lights. The HZC wants to help business owners during two holiday periods. The Historic Zoning Commission is proposing to add language to the Advertising Standards and Guidelines document to allow businesses in the H-1 & H-2 Overlay zone to display string lights during two well defined holiday periods. The Historic Zoning Commission also felt it would be prudent to add more clear and concise language about these items in the Advertising Standards and Guidelines for the H-1 and H-2 Overlay Zones. The following items are currently in town documents and apply to string lights, flashing lights, and other projected lighting:

Jonesborough Municipal Code (1991), Chapter 12, Business and Advertising Signs 11-1207. *Prohibited signs. The following signs are prohibited from being erected or maintained in any zoning district and in any area of the Town of Jonesborough:*

(1) Any lighting arrangement by exposed tubing or strings of lights, outlining any portion of a building or structure or affixed to any ornamental feature thereof.

(7) Any animated sign that by movement or by other method or manner of illumination, flashes on or off, winks, strobes, blinks with varying light or color intensity.

String lights and flashing lights directly behind a display window are considered to be advertising.

The Advertising Standards and Guidelines for the H-1 and H-2 Overlay Zones include the following items that apply to the same type of lighting under Advertising Standards:

(2) Advertising of all kinds should be compatible with the style and historic period of the building, as well as the business.

(3) Signs and other forms of advertising must relate to, rather than obscure, clutter, or disrupt design features of the buildings or parts of buildings to which they are attached or applied.

(6) While satisfying the legitimate needs of commerce, advertising should not clutter the streetscape nor interfere with the views of buildings or other signs.

To add clarity to the Advertising Standards and Guidelines regarding lighting, the Historic Zoning Commission proposed to add Section 8 (below) to the Advertising Guidelines.

8. Projected Images, String Lights, and Flashing Lights

1. Projected images or signs on a building are not allowed.
2. String lights on the exterior of businesses or directly behind business display windows are not allowed. **Exceptions for string lighting as long as they are not flashing or blinking are allowed during the following holiday periods – Christmas from the day after Thanksgiving to January 2, and Independence Day from June 28 to July 11.**
3. Flashing lights on the exterior of businesses or directly behind business display windows are not allowed. Exceptions will not be allowed.

6. Portable Signs and Exterior Furnishings

The HZC would like to change the Standards and Guidelines to limit the size of portable signs to no more than 42" tall and 24" wide. The Standards and Guidelines currently allow sandwich boards that are 48 inches tall and 28 inches wide. At this time, all approved sandwich boards displayed in the H-1 & H-2 overlay zones are 42 inches or smaller. There is one sandwich board displayed that is 43 inches that has a white backing and was never approved. Between the Chester Inn and Noelle, there are currently 14 sandwich boards that are displayed during busy business times.

In August of 2024, the HZC approved an item that "Portable Signs shall not contain white backing, such as dry ink whiteboards and white chalkboards." At the time the HZC decided to grandfather in two sandwich boards that had dry ink white boards with a sunset period that is now set at July 2026.

6C – Location

The Commission also plans to add specifications to the location of portable signs: Portable signs displayed in front of adjoining buildings must be uniformly placed in front of each building (same distance from the building and curb). The business owners shall work together to determine the placement of sandwich boards as long as the other conditions set forth in section 6C are met.

Over the past ten years, members of the community have expressed concerns about a business that leave large numbers of sale items outside when the business is not open. The Advertising Standards and Guidelines address exterior furnishings and portable signs. However, the same sections do not specifically mention items for sale. To add clarity to the Advertising Standards and Guidelines regarding outdoor displays of items for sale, the HZC is seeking input on adding Section 9 (below) to the Advertising Guidelines:

9. Outdoor Display of items for Sale

1. Items displayed outside of a business shall follow the same guidelines and requirements as provided in Section 6. Portable Signs and Exterior Furnishings.

All business owners and business property owners in the H-1 & H-2 overlay zones were invited by letter to attend the meeting to have an open conversation and share their input on the proposed changes. Nine merchants representing seven businesses were in attendance. Merchants and the Commission had open dialogue.

Open discussion:

- The Town owns the majority of the sidewalks downtown, making it necessary for merchants to apply for an Outdoor Use Permit through the Town. Outdoor Use Permits are required for sandwich board signs, benches, tables/chairs, along with any other items that sit on the sidewalk. The Outdoor Use Permit relates to safety, ADA compliance, and maintaining a five-foot walking path. The permit allows the town to verify the merchant's insurance covers sidewalk displays in order to limit the Town's liability. The permit application is one page and there is no fee. HZC approval for a Certificate of Appropriateness is the first step. Many items also need a building permit or an outdoor use permit which is obtained from the town.
- Two merchants stated that downtown merchants have recently been struggling to get foot-traffic downtown. One stated this is a national trend. Both made the point that store window displays and lighting help draw people downtown.
- Chairman stated that the HZC wants to help business owners, by allowing string lights during certain holiday periods and is seeking their input. If we can agree on the timeframe for these holiday periods, the Chairman can present this to the town to see if the Municipal Code can be changed to allow exceptions during certain holiday periods.
- Two in attendance expressed frustration about town restrictions on window lighting. The Chairman reiterated that only string lights and blinking/flashing lights were not allowed by the Municipal Code and by the HZC's Advertising Standards and Guidelines. He displayed photos of Gabriels' Christmas as being a great example of using lighting that is not string lighting or flashing lighting. He also showed photos of the three businesses that currently have string lighting and flashing lighting. After showing photos of the amount of the light pouring into the street by the Tennessee Tales bright string/wavering light display, the business owner stated that he knew he was pushing the limit with his display. He also stated that it was challenging to light the window display because there was not a lot of room behind the window. The other two displays shown were Jonesborough Antiques and Mauks. The Chairman stated that that Antique Store and Mauks have beautiful displays behind the blinking or string lights and that the blinking lights do not add to the appeal of the display. One merchant stated that this was the opinion of the Chairman and some merchants may like flashing lights as they attract attention to the business.
- Merchants asked about extending the proposed Christmas holiday timeframe for displaying String lights. The HZC proposal of allowing string lights from Thanksgiving to January 2 was discussed. One merchant asked for January 15. Another asked for February 15. The Chairman agreed to consider this and stated the HZC would further discuss before making a proposal to the town. Merchants and Chairman noted that January is the darkest month of the year and allowing string lights in store windows could help light downtown. Two merchants stated the lighting would help with Chocolate Fest.
- Commission member asked the merchants about what attracted them to Jonesborough as a place to start your business? It was implied and acknowledged that Jonesborough's history and charm brings businesses and their customers to Jonesborough. The flashing lights get attention, but in our opinion they are not the reason why customers come to Jonesborough.

- Mr. Ponder requested that a business owner/JAMSA member be appointed to the HZC Board to allow for more open conversation and collaboration between HZC and the downtown merchants. Chairman pointed out that we have five Jonesborough business owners on the commission, one who owns buildings downtown that house three businesses. Another Commissioner has a booth at the Antique Store. Chairman stated he would follow-up to see if any HZC members were currently JAMSA members. We will explore having an HZC member attend JAMSA meetings in the future.
- Sandwich boards that don't meet the updated portable sign criteria but were previously approved will be allowed to continue to display their sandwich boards until July of 2026. Chairman specifically asked the owner of Gabriels and Tennessee Tails about the dry erase white board signs for these two businesses. Gabriel would prefer to keep them. He stated one business chose the white dry erase boards because a previous employee was allergic to chalk.
- Items placed for sale on public sidewalks should only be displayed when the business is open. Currently, this is only an issue with one business further down West Main Street. The HZC agreed that Chair, Frank Collins, should consult with the town manager and or attorney about addressing a situation that has been persistent for over ten years.

Item I: New Business (continued)

105 Courthouse Square – The Smokey Grass Station Owner: Zachary Green

Cindy Brewer, representative for The Smokey Grass Station, presented the 3' wide x 2' tall outdoor hanging sign. The sign is aluminum with a vinyl overlay. Pictures of the sign show the sign bright white, and the Commission suggested matching the background of the sign to the trim color (muted white). The sign will be placed over the door with a metal bracket. The HZC advised there must be 7 ½ feet of clearance from the bottom of the sign to the steps.

Motion: Matt Ken made a motion, seconded by Herman Jenkins, to approve The Smokey Grass Station outdoor sign at 105 Courthouse Square contingent on the sign meeting the height guidelines and matching the background of the sign to the building's trim. Motion passed unanimously.

500 W Main – Owners: Mark and Brenda McIntosh Presenter: Frank Collins

Owners requested approval to replace the cement stoop at the back door with a 10'x10' wood deck made of pressure treated lumber. There will be metal rails between the wooden posts. The deck will stretch to the rear right side of the house. The deck will not be visible from West Main Street.

Motion: Rebecca Moss made a motion, seconded by Chad Hylton, to approve the request as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

121 W Main – “Jackson Theatre”

Presenter: Frank Collins

Request to replace the two boarded up windows on the East side of the building. The two windows will match the upper front windows of the Jackson Theatre which have black frames and two glass panes. The archway with the existing windows will be retained.

Motion: Matt Kehn made a motion, seconded by Herman Jenkins, to approve the request as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

125 W Main – “Stage Door”**Presenter: Frank Collins**

Request to remove the plexiglass storm windows from the exterior of the lower two windows. Currently there is no plan of adding plexiglass to the interior of the window.

Motion: Matt Kehn made a motion, seconded by Michael Kieta, to approve the request as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman noted that a new sandwich board recently appears on E Main along with two corrugated plastic signs behind the windows for that business. The advertisement was for an electrician and a roofer. Neither of the signs or the sandwich board were approved. Chairman sent an email to the company on the sign to determine if they have a staffed office where customers can visit while they are open or if the signs are displayed just to advertise the business. He also relayed the appropriate process for signs and sandwich boards.

Commissioner Matt Kehn noted that our guidelines currently say that a sandwich board can only be displayed when the business is Open. He asked about businesses that are technically Open, but an employee is not on site. He recommended we add more clarity to this item as the HZC would interpret a location being Open only if an employee was on site and able to see customers.

Item II: Old Business**106 Fox St. – Central Christian Church****Update from Chair, Frank Collins**

The church had considered moving one of their three air units to the front of the building which would have been more visible from Main St. and Fox St. After discussion, they have decided to keep the air unit in the same location behind the church.

137 E Main – First Class Floral Design**Update from Chair, Frank Collins**

Prior to the meeting Frank Collins and the owner discussed the large wooden frame that was stored in front of the building that is occasionally used for decorations and the possibility of storing the frame in another location when not in use. The owner has since relocated the frame.

Item III: Expedited Approvals**500 W Main – Owners: Mark and Brenda McIntosh**

Request to repaint all the white surfaces on the main house the same color of white. Request to replace the front walkway with white cement matching the previous material and color. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

309 W Main – Owner: Sydney Donovan

Request to replace porch roof with standing seam metal roof. Color would be light gray. The porch roof was originally a standing seam metal roof, and the original two layers revealed a galvalume roof and a light gray color. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

121 W Main – “Jackson Theatre”

(Front of Building) – Request to make any stucco repairs required and repaint beige stucco area with matching color. Replace missing (broken) upper windowpanes. Three windows are broken. Paint four beige windows and six blue windows with matching colors. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

125 W Main – “Stage Door”

(JRT Alley) – Request to remove and replace the old and missing lap siding on the end of the west wall with 21 rows of siding that matches the existing pine siding on the rest of the building in the JRT alley. Request to replace the temporary green fascia board at the top of the siding with permanent fascia trim material. Request to paint West side of building in the JRT alley the same yellow color. Request to paint the nine windows on the West side of the building in the JRT alley the same white color. All colors will be matched, and Sherman Williams paint will be used.

(Front of Building) Request to paint wood surfaces in front of the building with one coat of the same color. Request to paint the upper windows in front of the building with two coats of paint the same color as the lower part of the building. Request to paint the black sign bracket, lower sign brace, and the four bracket rods, the same black color with enamel paint. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

125 ½ W Main – “Jonesborough Repertory Theatre”

Request to paint the siding on the upper front of the JRT building the same color. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

100 W Main – “Storytelling Center”

Request to paint exterior perimeter trim, door trim, and window trim, the same color. Color will be matched. Will repair rotted wood under the second-floor deck. In doing so, there may be a need to replace a small amount of visible wood with the same material. Expedited approval granted by Frank Collins and Colton Brasure.

Item VI: Property Designation Committee – No update/discussion.

Item VII: Demolition by Neglect Update – No update/discussion.

Item VIII: Future Items – No update/discussion.

Item IX: HZC Database with Maps – Working with Glenn to make sure maps are corrected to display the existing H-1/H-2 boundaries before we publish the database.

Item X: Commissioner Comments

Michael Kieta spoke with the owner of 239 E Main. They are currently recovering from surgery so everything is on hold.

Item XI: Approval of Minutes – July 24, 2025 Minutes

Motion: Rebecca Moss made a motion, seconded by Herman Jenkins, to approve the July 24, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair, Frank Collins, adjourned the meeting.