

County of Prince Edward
Board of Supervisors
Agenda Summary

Meeting Date: November 15, 2012
Item No.: 15
Department: County Administration
Staff Contact: W.W. Bartlett/Sarah Elam Puckett
Issue: First Baptist Church

Summary: Attached for your consideration is a letter from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources concerning the proposed nomination of First Baptist Church to the Virginia Landmarks Register and for recommendation to the National Register for Historic Places. The Board is being asked to comment on the nomination, if it so chooses.

Attachments: Letter from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Recommendation: Authorize the County Administrator to send a letter to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the Board of Supervisors' strong endorsement for the proposed nomination.

Motion _____
Second _____

Campbell _____
Gantt _____
Simpson _____

Cooper-Jones _____
Jones _____
Wilck _____

Fore _____
McKay _____



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

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Secretary of Natural Resources

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November 9, 2012

Mr. Wade Bartlett
County Administration Office
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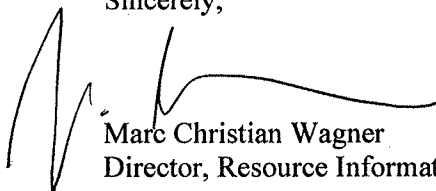
Re: First Baptist Church, Town of Farmville, Prince Edward County, VA

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

The Department of Historic Resources, Virginia's historic preservation office, has received a completed nomination for the above referenced resource. The DHR is planning to present the proposed nomination to the Virginia State Review Board and the Virginia Board of Historic Resources for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places and for inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register.

For your review and comment, a copy of the draft nomination as it is to be presented to the Boards on **Thursday, December 13, 2012**, will be accessible at DHR's website, <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/boardPage.html>. Your comments will be forwarded to the SHPO Director and the Boards along with the nomination for consideration. Should you have any questions regarding the nomination or the register process, please call me directly at 804-482-6099.

Sincerely,



Marc Christian Wagner
Director, Resource Information Division

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First Baptist Church, Farmville, Prince Edward County, DHR File #144-0027-0167

Constructed ca. 1855 and ca. 1895, First Baptist Church is located in downtown Farmville at the southeast corner of South Main Street and 4th Street. The load-bearing masonry building is a modest example of Late Gothic Revival architecture. Built on a full basement, the one-story church is a nave plan with a rectangular footprint and is oriented on a roughly east/west axis, with the primary façade facing west. An altar area is within a telescoping hipped-roofed projection at the east (rear) end of the building. The front-gabled roof is covered with metal. Character-defining features include a square tower centered on the primary façade, pointed arch windows with stained- and milk-glass panes, a primary entry with double leaf doors topped by a pointed arch transom and, on the interior, original wood pews and beaded board wainscoting. Overall, the building retains a high level of integrity.

First Baptist Church is historically significant because of the direct association between First Baptist under the pastorate of Reverend L. Francis Griffin and the Robert Russa Moton High School strike on April 23, 1951, and the subsequent racial integration of Prince Edward County schools. Called by Rev. Griffin, hundreds of striking students and their parents met twice at First Baptist Church within two weeks of the strike, on April 25 and May 3, and agreed to support an NAACP lawsuit to desegregate the Prince Edward County schools. Filed on May 23, 1951, at the federal court in Richmond as *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia*, the Moton School suit became one of five cases consolidated into the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the United States Supreme Court, on May 17, 1954, that outlawed public school segregation. Following the Moton student strike and the Supreme Court decision, Prince Edward County, in an unprecedented action, closed its public schools on September 10, 1959, and kept them closed until 1964 to avoid integration. Consequently, black students in Prince Edward County received no public education from fall 1959 until fall 1963, when First Baptist pastor Rev. Francis Griffin headed efforts to establish a privately funded and administered Free School Association that opened on September 16, 1963, and provided one year of education for most black students. Only after the May 25, 1964, Supreme Court decision in *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, which ordered that all Prince Edward County schoolchildren receive equal public school education, did Prince Edward County open integrated public schools for all students on September 8, 1964. First Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, with the following Areas of Significance: Education, Ethnic Heritage: African American, Law, Politics/Government, Religion, and Social History. The property also is eligible under Criterion B for its association with Reverend L. Francis Griffin. The property meets Criteria Consideration A, as its historical significance is derived from its direct association with pivotal events in the county school system's desegregation. The property also meets Criteria Consideration G, for events that occurred less than fifty years ago but that are of transcendent importance in the history of Prince Edward County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The period of significance for First Baptist Church is 1951 to 1964, encompassing the activities of Reverend L. Francis Griffin, the church congregation, and local students and residents to integrate Prince Edward County's schools. First Baptist Church still stands as the place of worship for its predominantly African American congregation.