



Historic Resources Board

Staff Report (ID # 14844)

Report Type: Approval of Minutes **Meeting Date:** 10/13/2022

Summary Title: HRB Draft Minutes August 25, 2022

Title: Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of August 25, 2022

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Historic Resources Board (HRB) adopt the attached meeting minutes.

Background

Attached are minutes for the following meeting(s):

- August 25, 2022

Attachments:

- Attachment A: HRB Draft Minutes August 25, 2022 (DOCX)



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING
MINUTES: August 25, 2022
 Council Chambers & Zoom
 8:30 A.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Caroline Willis; Vice Chair Pease, Board Members Michael Makinen, Margaret Wimmer, Gogo Heinrich, David Bower and Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz (arrived late)

Absent:

1. Adoption of a Resolution Authorizing Use of Teleconferencing for Historic Resources Board During Covid-19 State of Emergency

Board Member Heinrich moved to approve the Resolution. Seconded by Vice Chair Pease, the motion carried (5-0) by voice vote.

Oral Communications

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz joined the meeting.

City Official Reports

2. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Vice Chair Pease is added to "not attending" for the September 8th meeting.

3. Update Regarding Historic Resources Inventory Update

Ms. French reported that progress with the contract situation is not what they would wish it to be due to certain things that have to happen when City contracts are for more than a certain amount. The contract is being finalized and she hoped they might potentially be able to launch the next week. Staff is working with a couple of consultants. The scope/tasks include a historical resources reconnaissance survey update; facilitation of designation of properties to the Historic Inventory; participation in community meetings and other outreach; and attendance at public meetings. Ms. French estimates multiple HRB hearings and at least one Council meeting. Another consultant is helping with tasks such as preparing notices, conversing with each property owner and preparing staff reports. Both consultants will work closely with Ms. French.

Board Member Bower asked if the process would include a review of Mid-Century Modern buildings. Ms. French stated not at this time. The survey authorized by Council was limited to those identified as constructed prior to 1948, identified in the last survey as National Register Eligible, and those more recently identified as California Register Eligible. Board Member Bower was disappointed the scope was not larger, as it seems to be a missed opportunity to get a huge number of buildings with potential to be registered. Ms. French replied that the focus is the at-risk homes constructed prior to 1948. The risk is that ministerial permits can quickly wipe those out if not acted upon. She acknowledged there are larger tasks and mentioned the grant opportunity that passes by every year, a Modern Era Context statement, that they could consider submitting next year during the grant cycle.

Chair Willis felt they need to start building with the first step being the direction Council has given them. The properties are already identified, the research done. This is the first building block, and she is excited it is starting. She felt the next step is to get their existing inventory online, to clarify what they have, and what they are looking for going forward. She felt putting properties identified more recently on the web without having their existing inventory there would be confusing. She hoped to find volunteers from the Board to work on this. Inventory sheets need to be retyped. Chair Willis felt that a Board task for this fall should be developing a system for updating the existing inventory and getting it online, after which they could move on to Mid Century.

Board Member Bower responded that his sadness is that they have had a grant proposal ready to go to do a Mid Century Modern review, which the Council does not move forward. He stated that he felt Council might move it forward if staff would move it to Council, but it is not going anywhere. It is partially free money, and he felt they would have a very good chance. They have been trying to move on this for more than three years. Some Mid Century houses are coming up on 70 years old, which is not insignificant.

Chair Willis thought this was a good point and asked if Ms. French could update them on staffing potential for projects. Ms. French said this is the entire issue. She cited the Great Resignation as affecting staffing and ability to move things forward. There are candidates in the process, and she noted there were interviews the past week for two Associate Planner positions, but the problem is cost – cost of housing, cost of living – and not being able to offer enough money for people to make the change. Chair Willis wondered if the Board could speak out in terms of salaries. Ms. French thought this would not be appropriate but said there is recognition of the staffing shortage.

Chair Willis reiterated Board Member Bower's disappointment at not being able to add Mid Century Modern properties, update the existing inventory and add the new batch of properties under current discussion. She said they could benefit greatly from someone who had significant time to coordinate those three efforts. She felt this is a foundational block to the Historic Preservation program. While using consultants is great, there are ownership issues, and they would benefit from a staff person who has significant time to devote to these efforts. Ms. French said that such tasks are included in the scope of the second consultant.

Chair Willis asked when the consultants come onboard if there would be an opportunity to meet with them immediately. Ms. French said they could form a subcommittee of members who could have bi-weekly meetings with them, and she would be happy to set that up. Chair Willis thought especially in the beginning, it would be important to talk about the Board's concern and about what they feel is unique to Palo Alto. She asked the Board Members who would be interested.

Vice Chair Pease had questions about how the letter will be composed and vetted for content, accuracy, readability, understandability, before being sent out and was interested to know how that process would work. Chair Willis thought they had talked about identifying ten property owners with a variety of perspectives and interests who could help refine the questions and answers, the letter, and general direction. She asked that Board Members email her with any ideas about who those people could be.

Chair Willis, Vice Chair Pease and Board Member Heinrich volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Ms. French said when the contract is official, they will have the two consultants come and address the Board. Board Member Heinrich asked what the timeline might be. Ms. French responded that hopefully they will have the contract soon and she can meet with the consultants and start on a staff report to present to the Board, although they could potentially put a free form discussion with the Board on the agenda. Chair Willis thought that would be great.

Chair Willis asked if Council's direction to update the inventory pertained specifically to residential properties. Ms. French said at the time the focus was on SB 9. They knew there were other properties on the eligible list, but the impetus was related to the SB 9 event. Nonresidential property is subject to discretionary review, so they are protected by CEQA. Chair Willis said she feels strongly that they should take the city properties on the list – especially ones that are not controversial or not at risk – and put them on the inventory. The City should step up and say this is something they support. She would like to have a subcommittee to talk to Public Works or Real Estate or whoever is in charge of these buildings, representing the City, and move forward on these. It might point out some of the issues with residential ones and could make it clear that this is important to the City, beyond SB 9 considerations, but because they want to protect their historic properties. She said in her mind this is basically in regard to the Water

Tower and the Pumping Station. The research has been done and not much has been done to the properties in the last 20 years. One is already in a park setting. The other is park adjacent. It would simply be a matter of going to the proper department to see if they have any objections to this.

Seeing no volunteers for a subcommittee, Chair Willis said she may try to round up a group to start this process. Ms. French said she could obtain the list of properties that are City-owned on the eligible list and share it with the Real Estate Department and let them know of Chair Willis' interest in meeting with them.

Chair Willis said they need to take positive steps to get the community interested again. She suggested putting things on the National Register, going all the way with them, so they would know when a homeowner asks about it. It could clarify the procedure for everyone. Ms. French wondered if it would involve a trip to Washington, D.C.

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if there are non-residential properties which would be covered in the consultant's scope of work. Ms. French responded that the 130 properties identified are the focus. The thought was to launch this portion and then sometime further down the road the process would be better established. Some of the properties are not City-owned. For example, 321 California.

Board Member Pease asked for clarification that residential includes multi-unit. Ms. French responded that she believes the 130 are single-family, that are not as protected. Multi-family has to go through the architectural review process, a discretionary process. They could be folded in as they get past the first set or two, but it will take time.

Darlene Yaplee, Palo Alto resident living on Waverly Street, University South, commented that she is a prospective homeowner on the list of 130. She said she had commented at the May 12 HRB meeting, encouraging efforts to make information for prospective historical property owners understandable and relevant to their expected questions, and transparent. She was pleased to hear that the Board is looking at including 10 people to help review the list of 130, to help review and create the content. She stated that she is happy to volunteer for that, and she thanked the Board for all that they do. Chair Willis stated they appreciated her comments and will put her on the first batch of callers for the inventory update.

Approval of Minutes

4. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of July 14, 2022

Board Member Bower moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Seconded by Vice Chair Pease, the motion carried (7-0) by roll call vote.

Subcommittee Items

Board Member Questions, Comments or Announcements

Chair Willis invited comments from the Board Members.

Board Member Wimmer commented on the subcommittee for the President Hotel paint colors that Board Member Heinrich, Board Member Bower and she had gone out and reviewed and had given feedback. She asked if there is any new information on that. Ms. French thought that an email had been sent the day before summarizing what has transpired so far and asking a few questions. Board Member Wimmer did not receive the email. Ms. French said she would forward it. Board Member Bower reported that the subcommittee is still working on the colors.

Board Member Bower questioned Ms. French about the Hostess House. Former Council Member Karen Holman had sent an email to the Crescent Park Neighborhood Association saying that the property was on a list of potential housing sites. He has been out of town but wanted to know if it came before the Council, and what happened. Ms. French advised that Ms. Holman presented to the Council the prior Monday regarding her concern. She did not recall the outcome, but she will get back to the Board on it. Board Member Bower wanted to bring this to the attention of the Board. The MacArthur Park Building is a National Registered building just next to the train station on University Avenue. The notion is that because the building was moved more than 100 years ago, it should be moved again and the property developed. This last came up in 2012 when Stanford University and John Arrillaga proposed to build a lot of housing and a performing arts center there that didn't go anywhere. It would have also required complete renovation or demolition of the overpass, which is potentially an historic structure in itself as it appears to be the first

overpass, according to Dennis Backlund, a former planner. He was hoping that this consideration goes away because it is inappropriate for a historic registered building, and it would lose its historic register status by moving it.

Chair Willis wondered if it would be appropriate for the Board to send a letter to Council stating interest in this and clarifying that they feel its National Register status would be affected by its location and surroundings. Ms. French said the Board can do what it wishes. She said she is happy to follow up and see what the outcome was and talk with the Housing Element team to try to understand better what the next step is. Chair Willis thought that would be great, and that step two might be to invite Council to tour the building and talk about its history. Back when it was MacArthur Park and they all went there with some frequency, it was a more obvious prominent landmark, and the fact that it is now in disuse is not helping its survival. She felt there would be benefit in reacquainting Council with the building.

Board Member Wimmer interjected that when she attended a preservation conference at Stanford back in May, she connected with Laura Jones, the archeologist for Stanford. Ms. Jones did an interesting and informative presentation to the HRB regarding the Stanford Business Park a few years ago. In talking with Ms. Jones, the subject of MacArthur Park came up, and Ms. Jones was interested in doing a presentation to the HRB to discuss the proposed high density housing in that area and the potential impacts. She found her information to be educated, and it is land adjacent to Palo Alto. Board Member Wimmer said she had sent out an email back in May to Ms. French and Chair Willis in regard to potentially having a joint study session with the ARB. Board Member Wimmer did not know how much Ms. Jones' content was in alignment with the Board's thoughts, but she wanted to mention the discussion and that Ms. Jones has done extensive research on the project.

Board Member Bower pointed out that the property that the Hostess House sits on is owned by Stanford, but it is in the City of Palo Alto's jurisdiction, as is most of the shopping center, and that is why it is both a Palo Alto issue and a Stanford issue. When Stanford came before the Board in 2012, they were interested in expanding housing, which is a tough thing to do, because Stanford has employees and student populations that are expanding, and they are looking anywhere they can to find spaces to build houses.

Board Member Wimmer said she didn't get into Ms. Jones' thoughts about the property, just that there are discussions going regarding how to best utilize the property, but Ms. Jones did make herself available to talk with the HRB as well as the ARB.

Board Member Bower commented on the email from Ms. Holman which has good information and links to the important historic features and the architect that designed the Hostess House. He asked that Ms. French forward the email to the other Board Members for their reference. Ms. French will do so.

Chair Willis said she would love to have a short presentation by Ms. Jones regarding the Hostess House, to bring it to the forefront. She thought they would eventually need to deal with the issue, and the closer they can work with Stanford, the better. Board Member Wimmer will follow up with Ms. Jones about doing a 15-minute presentation to the Board.

Chair Willis commented on a Julia Morgan Category 2 on Chaucer Street, where the property immediately across the street is being demolished and rebuilt. The house across the street is mentioned without mentioning that it is a Category 2, or a Julia Morgan. She wanted to raise awareness of staff that those things are important to note when there is feedback being given to the architect/designers of the property. She felt there was substantial consideration being given to the two immediately adjacent properties. This particular Julia Morgan has balconies in the front and is very street-friendly, and it would be an oversight not to consider how it affects the Julia Morgan. She wasn't sure how they could approach the City's process as far as altering that, but she thought at some point they should look at all City processes that would potentially affect historic properties, especially 1's and 2's to see how they can interact with existing guidelines to get a better result for historic properties and perhaps help to ensure their longevity.

Board Member Wimmer said they do that when it's a commercial building and in certain districts. For example, the parking garage that was going to be built across from the post office on Hamilton. They were looking at the proposed parking structure and what the impacts would be to the historic building, but they have never done that for residential properties.

Chair Willis wondered if others felt like this mattered, or if it is something the Board feels they should pursue. Board Member Wimmer said if it is a two-story process it will go through the IR process, so they could maybe ask the IR Review to take that under consideration. She thought if they created a whole new requirement, another hoop for homeowners to jump through, she felt it might be an arduous task, although a great idea in theory. Chair Willis agreed. Board Member Wimmer said she thought they should focus their energy on the inventory and things that they are currently working on. Chair Willis said she wasn't thinking of adding a whole new process, but because the process already takes into consideration the immediately adjacent houses, it seemed that the facing house could easily be included in that group. Board Member Wimmer thought that if they are going through the IR, the houses within 300 feet are noticed, so if the homeowner of the Julia Morgan house has an objection, it is their task to speak up and offer their comments on the impact it will have on their house. The burden would be upon the owner of the historic property to do that. She thought that they are noticed, and any time a new two-story house goes up and they go through individual review then all houses within 300 feet are noticed, including the houses across the street, so the owners of the historic house will be noticed that there is a new house going up across the street.

Ms. French clarified that 150 feet is the radius of notice, so it would capture notice to the property across the street, and that property could request a hearing as well.

Chair Willis commented on building descriptions when the review process is done and asked if the Board supports having the historic status, especially if a 1 or a 2. She wondered if it would be appropriate to identify the house as an historic property that the City values as a Category 2 that was designed by a preeminent architect. Board Member Bower thought that would require the owner to agree to that designation in order for that to happen. Chair Willis said in this case the City has already identified it as a Category 2. As far as giving guidance to the designer, she felt it would be appropriate to point out that the house has additional value, that it also tells a story and has a history. She wondered if there could be guidelines for review of a proposed house when there is an historic house adjacent or immediately across the street, that it's historic status would be identified.

Board Member Bower clarified that MacArthur Park is still open for business and encouraged people to continue to support it, because it protects the Hostess House.

Adjournment

Board Member Bower moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Vice Chair Pease, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.