



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: April 13, 2023

Council Chamber & Virtual Zoom
8:30 A.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Caroline Willis; Vice Chair Christian Pease; Board Members Samantha Rohman, Michael Makinen, Margaret Wimmer, Gogo Heinrich and Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz

Absent:

Public Comment

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Ms. French acknowledged and welcomed new Board Member, Samantha Rohman, and advised that Christian Pease and Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz have been re-appointed for the next term.

Upcoming meeting dates were shared. Meetings will take place based on agenda items.

[Board Member Wimmer arrived]

The next meeting will be a special, evening meeting, which is the community meeting for the inventory update project (Reconnaissance Survey). This will be an opportunity to meet with the public. Letters and cards have gone out in preparation for this.

Other upcoming meetings will include election of Chair and Vice Chair.

[Board Member Heinrich arrived]

The meeting date of 11/23/2023 will be cancelled since that is Thanksgiving Day.

Ms. French highlighted the April 25th meeting which will include the public, and noted on the webpage where properties eligible for listing can be found, as well as an entry for projects which links to the schedule and FAQs regarding the Reconnaissance Survey being embarked upon.

Study Session

2. Study Session Regarding Flagpole and Monument at Hostess House/Veteran's Memorial Building/MacArthur Park (27 University Avenue)

Ms. French presented the property, owned by Stanford, at 27 University. The property includes MacArthur Park, the Veteran's Memorial Building, and the Flagpole. This item is not an application on file but is a request by multiple parties to present information to the HRB about the flagpole.

Laura Jones, Stanford University Heritage Services, Archeologist and Executive Director, was accompanied by Megan Swezey Fogarty, Office of Community Engagement, and Julie Cain, Historian, Heritage Services. Ms. Jones explained that Stanford was requesting advice from the HRB regarding treatment of the Flagpole at the Hostess House, which is its name on the National Register. Her staff has done extensive research

on the two flagpoles associated with the site. The first was donated by the American Legion; the second, by the Native Sons of the Golden West. A summary of the research material was included in the Board's packet. Ms. Jones said that in the course of their research efforts, the team encountered articles on copper theft and public monuments, and on reconsideration of the plaques that honor the Native Sons of the Golden West.

Ms. Jones wished to acknowledge that the shared past at Stanford and in Palo Alto includes racist and harmful practices in the past as well as patriotism, honor and service which are represented by the building and the flagpole. She pointed out that Stanford has acted in good faith to protect the flagpole, and that they honor and respect the contributions of American Legion Post 375 in their care of the flags at the site. Both flagpoles were gifts to the City of Palo Alto and installed by the City on land that had been leased from Stanford for El Camino Park in 1915. In 1999, the City terminated the lease over the former Red Cross, building and the Hostess House and Stanford took over the care of those properties. They have invested significantly in deferred maintenance improvements, and they are committed to preservation of the Hostess House and the Flagpole.

Ms. Jones explained that from a historic preservation perspective, there are at least two options that meet Secretary of the Interior standards for the treatment of historic properties. These are restoring the original American Legion Flagpole or repairing the Native Sons of the Golden West Flagpole. Ms. Jones said her group was requesting the HRB's input on this heritage that is shared by Palo Alto and Stanford and the veteran's community.

Chair Willis noted there were two aspects of the presentation. One is protecting the plaques and the other is censoring the plaques in a sense. She asked about the original motivation for removing the plaques.

Ms. Jones responded that when the plinth was vandalized, and boxed to prevent further removal of the copper, the plaques were removed so that they could be displayed. The plaques are accessible in a way that they wouldn't be behind the plywood. She stated that they were not removed to censor them, but to store them appropriately and have access to them.

Chair Willis asked if the building is currently occupied. Ms. Jones stated that the building is occupied by the MacArthur Park Restaurant which continues to operate there.

Chair Willis felt it looked like relatively minor damage from the photographs and said it felt to her like an extreme reaction to remove them. Ms. Jones responded that their concern was that the base would continue to be damaged because there are now holes in the copper, so copper thieves would continue to strip pieces of it off. They started the research effort into its history and proper treatment and were concerned that it needed to be protected. The restaurant was closed at the time due to the pandemic. The restaurant in the Depot was also closed, and ridership on Caltrain had plummeted so there was really no one there. They felt it was more at risk because of lack of people visible on the site.

Chair Willis expressed her appreciation for their protective efforts. She asked if Stanford currently has a plan to replace the plaques. Ms. Jones indicated they did not. They felt it was something they wanted to talk with Palo Alto and the veterans about, to understand what the treatments are that are consistent with Secretary of the Interior standards. While doing the research they realized that the Hostess House had had a another, different flagpole which had been donated by the American Legion. They also became aware of the controversies surrounding the Native Sons of the Golden West and felt it would be appropriate to bring it to a community discussion about how to both honor veterans, honor our flag and our history, while making sure they are not perpetuating values that are no longer held as a community.

Chair Willis invited further questions from the Commissioners.

Board Member Rohman remarked that it sounded like there were three issues at hand. One, the flagpole itself, because the original flagpole of Palo Alto is no longer in place. Two, protecting the plinth and the copper parts in it. And three, the possible revision or best way to now express the narrative of an organization that may not represent Palo Alto's current values. Ms. Jones agreed that was a good summary.

Board Member Rohman asked if the question about Secretary of the Interior standards was related to the flagpole itself, and if so, what the question is. Ms. Jones said the Hostess House Veteran's Memorial Building, is listed on the National Register. The flagpole is a feature of its site but is not individually listed.

It is listed on the Palo Alto inventory, so they would presume that it is also a historic resource because it is locally listed. But the Hostess House has a period of significance on the National Register that is its period when it was the Community Center for Palo Alto and when it had the American Legion flagpole, so it becomes complicated. The way they view it, and from conversations with the American Legion Post, they view a flagpole at the Hostess House Veteran's Memorial Building to be an essential feature of its site. Alterations to the exterior of the historic resource under Palo Alto's ordinance are subject to review and should comply with the Standards. This is the question that Stanford's Property Management Office asked Ms. Jones – what are the appropriate treatments under the Standards? She thought that in this particular case there may be more than one. The issue with the Native Sons of the Golden West flagpole is that it has been modified a number of times. It has less integrity as a historic resource and is not the original pole, but the plinth with its plaques has a more complicated history. There are options about what kind of treatment would meet the standards. But it is all driven by the context of the Julia Morgan Building and its site, which has included a flagpole since 1920.

Board Member Rohman said the way she sees it is there are two separate issues involved. The issue of restoring the plaques is whether they will be safe and protected, or whether they will be damaged or experience theft once again. A second issue she felt the HRB should look at, along with the community, is how they want to present their revised narrative of history. For example, the Native Sons of the Golden West also has a plaque at El Palo Alto. She was not sure whether that is on Stanford land, or Palo Alto's land, but it would be another plaque that should be re-evaluated. If they are to re-evaluate this one Native Sons of the Golden West plaque, then they should perhaps re-evaluate all of those in the Stanford and Palo Alto vicinity.

Ms. Jones said she was unaware that there was a plaque at the El Palo Alto, and she did believe that is Stanford property as well.

Chair Willis thought they might want to interject that, as she recalled, the American Legion flagpole was original to the MacArthur Park building, whereas the Native Sons of the Golden West was on the circle in a gateway between Palo Alto and Stanford and therefore there is other symbolism involved.

Vice Chair Pease asked for a more detail about the two options under consideration. Ms. Jones thought there was an option that meets the Standards to restore the first flagpole. There would need to be discussion about what would happen to the plinth. It would be consistent with its period of significance on the Secretary of the Interior standards to restore the first flagpole that had been on the site from 1920 until 1941. The second option would be to repair the plinth and keep the existing metal pole that's on the plinth and then to discuss how to interpret the plaques and how to protect it. Ms. Jones said they consulted with repair specialists who told them that while they could repair the copper, there is no way to protect it from being damaged other than putting a tall fence around it. They would like to have a community conversation about this issue. They will eventually need to apply for a permit to alter the setting of the Hostess House, and this would come before the HRB for review. Therefore, they felt it was important to get some early feedback since they have a very interested community partner to help move forward development of the options.

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if there were any physical remains of the original flagpole, aside from the photographic evidence. Ms. Jones had not heard that there were any physical remains. Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if the date of the current flagpole interacts with the period of significance of the site. Ms. Jones responded that the history is a little fuzzy about the 1930s. The National Register listing is because of the association with Julia Morgan and as the first community center in the United States. That community center use continued into 1933 or 1934. The Veterans became associated with the building at that point, but during World War 2 it was operated again by community members when most of the veterans returned to service. There is muddiness about the handoff between the community center function and the veterans' function in the 1930's, but largely the reason the Native Sons flagpole is there was because of the building of the undercrossing and overpass which replaced University Circle. Therefore it was convenient to move the City flagpole over and replace the other flagpole.

Ray Powell, Vice Commander, American Legion Post 375, addressed the Board, sharing that he is a 35-year veteran of the United States Air Force, retiring two years ago. Mr. Powell stated he represents the veterans community which has a great interest in the flagpole and the building itself. He acknowledged

and thanked Dr. Jones and the Stanford administration for bringing this topic to the HRB. Mr. Powell shared about the American Legion Post 375's association with the Veteran's Memorial Building since 1930. They have worked to maintain the flagpole display through the years at its various stages. It is currently more challenging with the box around it, and involves the Fire Department. The Post is acting as the primary advocates for the building and the flagpole. Department Commander, Jere Romano, was also present to lend his support as well.

Mr. Powell noted that when his organization thinks of the flagpole, they think of it as a whole with the Veteran's Memorial Building, because they feel their concerns over the flagpole extend to the building itself. The Veteran's Memorial Building was dedicated in 1976 in Palo Alto and has been added to various registers and is of great importance to Palo Alto veterans. As the Hostess House before it was moved, it was a very important site for soldiers going off to fight to meet with their families. It was run at the time by the YWCA. At the time it was believed by the City Council of Palo Alto to have been the first "community house" for a city in the nation.

Mr. Powell explained that the roles of the American Legion Post include advocating for the building and representing the United Veteran's Council of Palo Alto. The flagpole is listed as another feature of the Veteran's Memorial Building which is why they keep the two issues together. Mr. Powell noted that at the time the plaques commemorated the sponsors and founders and veterans. Although they understand the complicated history of some of the founders, they want to remember that there was a sense of civic and national pride around them and that they were sited at the Veteran's Building, which was itself a World War I memorial and has had a continuous veteran's presence through the years.

Mr. Powell stated that optimally when this vandalism first occurred there would have been a law enforcement report, which did not occur. Damaging veterans memorials is a federal crime, and that would have raised the profile of this incident. The organization is happy to now be in a historical project review and appreciates Stanford for bringing it forward and working with them. Mr. Powell said that part of the reason they brought this to Stanford, and Stanford brought it to the HRB, is that optimally this would have been corrected properly. COVID played a role in the reason it was not, but they would like to see it done as promptly as possible.

Mr. Powell explained that his organization thinks of the building and the flagpole in two senses. One, the historical integrity and also the public good that the Veteran's Building and the flagpole have represented through time. They are happy that Palo Alto and Stanford worked closely with them to bring the last Veteran's Day event back to the Veteran's Memorial Building. They are grateful that Mayor Burt, at the time, spoke at the event, as did the four-star Admiral from the Hoover Institution. Stanford and the City were helpful in setting up that event and in reaffirming the building and the flagpole to the veterans in Palo Alto. They hope to see this continue, because it is essentially the last place the veterans have which marks their history there.

Mr. Powell discussed the attention in recent years regarding housing proposals that would have essentially removed the Veteran's Memorial Building and the flagpole and replaced it with housing. The housing issue is a pressing issue for Palo Alto and the whole area, which is why it is important to make sure that when slides are produced in the future, they list the heritage and historical preservation as one of the considerations rather than barriers to being removed as public goods that could be superseded by a housing proposal. They advocate for the flagpole and Veteran's Memorial Building being a public good that needs to be preserved, that the Historic Preservation Code would apply, and that some sort of resolution in the future be considered to preserve the Veteran's Memorial Building and the flagpole into the future and stave off other pressing needs that seem to be wanting to push it to the side.

Mr. Powell concluded by sharing that as a veteran in Palo Alto, veterans across the country are in a very different state than veterans were 100 years ago when much of this issue started. There is no longer a draft, so there are fewer veterans. In Northern California, many bases were closed so there were fewer veterans. He said it is very important to the remaining veterans that there is a sense of belonging and community and integrity and that the community continues to value them. Seeing their final monuments in Palo Alto disappear would be very heartbreaking for the veterans of Palo Alto.

Chair Willis invited questions from the Board Members.

Board Member Heinrich wondered if there is any place that shows all of the text on the plaques since it was not readable in the photographs. Mr. Powell thought there was, but wasn't sure if there was a website, or where it would be. Ms. Jones added that they will transcribe the text and send it to the Board through Ms. French. She noted that they are essentially lists of names, without much other text, although the Grand Army of the Republic plaque honoring Civil War Veterans may have some text on it.

Ms. French noted that photos are on packet page 69. Ms. Jones said it is difficult to read but there is not a lot of text on them aside from the lists of members of the Native Sons of the Golden West, the list of members of the other organizations, and the list of the Civil War veterans who were still living at the time of the Grand Army of the Republic plaque.

[The discussion was paused to allow public speaker, Darlene Yaplee, who had her hand raised in the chat during the Public Comments section.]

Ms. Yaplee stated that this was the second time she raised her hand to comment. She was not called on during the previous meeting on February 9th, as the chat was not activated, and that it has been difficult to participate as a remote citizen. Her comment was in regard to the Historical Resources Inventory kickoff. It was not recognized, and the packet stated that up to five minutes from the presentation, citizens would be able to comment. She was disappointed she was unable to speak and ask questions and possibly get answers. Her comment at the meeting was on the Reconnaissance Survey. The March 21st Council directed staff not only to make recommendations for the inventory but also to collaborate with the HRB for community engagement. She was not aware of the collaboration for the engagement. At the August 25, 2022, HRB meeting it was stated that 10 people from the 130-person list of property owners would help review and create the outreach content. During her comment she volunteered, and Chair Willis stated they would put her on the list. This did not happen. Ms. Yaplee asked if staff and HRB were collaborating on the community engagement, and if so, how? She referenced slide task 1A that was presented at the meeting, which is not in the notes of the meeting. The Historical Resources Reconnaissance Survey presented on February 9th a list that would be made available to homeowners. The legend shows "verified" and "questionable eligibility." She asked if that list could be made available, and why it would not be available, so that people would have an understanding of where things are today. Ms. Yaplee reported that the project website says, "incentives," but there is no link to the documents. It also states that the HRB will nominate properties to the City to make a decision on the housing to be on the inventory. In another location it doesn't mention the HRB but says that the City will designate the inventory. She wondered if this is the same process, or different.

Ms. Yaplee went on to say that for many Palo Alto residents their homes are the most consequential asset they have. Therefore, this reconnaissance project is important and having authentic community engagement is critical for its success. She hoped the community meeting will emphasize dialogue and not too much presentation. She feels that the property owners should have opportunities to ask important questions and get straightforward answers. She hoped there would be a transparent and understandable information exchange with consultants and staff. She appreciated being allowed to speak and looked forward to the April 25th meeting.

Chair Willis apologized and noted that there needs to be some technical work on the system which will hopefully be fixed before the next meeting. She looked forward to meeting Ms. Yaplee at the community engagement meeting on the 25th.

Chair Willis brought the discussion back to the current agenda item and invited further questions on the study session item.

Board Member Wimmer wondered about the four plaques that were on each side of the base that had been removed to be restored or preserved. As potentially a more sensitive element of the review, she was curious whether some of them may have background information or meaning beyond what the plaques convey, because the plaques themselves don't immediately strike her as offensive. She wondered if, in fact, there may be some community members who react to plaques such as these in a negative way at times, which invites vandalism. She noted that there are many social issues that arise out of historic preservation, so perhaps this would lend itself to that sort of sensitive review. She was glad to have had a chance to think further about what this possibly represents.

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that although it is somewhat hard to read the plaques, some of the dates are in the early 1900's and seem to date to that original period of significance. She asked about the earlier dates and how they interact with the earlier pole and/or the current pole. Ms. Jones replied that they are related to the gift of the University Circle flagpole and to the fundraising for that which was later led by the Native Sons of the Golden West. During the Hostess House period of significance the University Circle flagpole was still at University Circle, and the American Legion flagpole was at the Hostess House.

Chair Willis thanked the group for their presentations. She commented that it is a critical junction of communities including the veterans, Stanford, Palo Alto, and the entrance off of El Camino and the entrance from the train station, which would have been the primary entrance at that point. She said it very important to add something in looking at that area, because the train tracks are being redone. There is going to be change, and these are good things to think about. She remarked that the restoration of the original flagpole, the veteran's flagpole, that was originally there would not be happening. It could be reconstructed, but she didn't think they would be restoring it. She felt the flagpole that exists was at one time very symbolic, and not just to veterans but to the whole community. Chair Willis said when she moved to Palo Alto she felt like she lived between San Francisco and San Jose and didn't feel anchored in Palo Alto, but she feels it is important for everyone to have some sense of belonging, for veterans, but also for the rest of the community. She looked forward to the effort going forward in the near future.

Chair Willis invited comments from the public on this item.

Martin Sommer, Palo Alto resident, commented that he lives at 427 Alma Street, facing west. In reading the documents, he understood that most of the conversation is about the base of the flagpole and the plaques, whether or not they should be replaced, et cetera. He wanted to state additionally the importance the top portion of the flagpole which actually maintains the two flags – the U.S. flag, and the P.O.W., Prisoner of War, flag. He looks upon these on a daily basis. He felt fortunate to have a bird's eye view of the two flags out of his living room looking west, over Stanford, at the Santa Cruz mountains, a beautiful view, and he would hate to see either the flagpole removed or replaced, or be temporarily taken down, since many things temporary tend to last many years. He referenced option 2, to maintain the current flagpole, which he fully supports. He said in looking at the flagpole and the two flags for over 25 years, it's a fortunate and beautiful view, and he hoped it would be maintained.

Board Member Heinrich asked when they would be discussing the social issue in regard to the plinth. Chair Willis invited her comments/questions on the issue. Board Member Heinrich stated that she would like to see the plinth restored as is to use as a teaching moment to everyone about the good of the Native Sons of the Golden West and the bad of the organization as well. For them to do fundraising and get an American flagpole set up shows great patriotism, but the racism part, she was not as aware of what it was that they did. She thought it would be a good thing for everyone to know that the organization was both good and bad, but we should not erase history.

Board Member Wimmer touched on the original request of the Board, to offer advice on the treatment of the two flagpoles – and she thought they ought to end the discussion with a response to that request. She believed, hopefully on behalf of the Board that it was agreed that this is an important landmark, monument, an important piece of their history to preserve. Whatever that takes, she believed the Board Members were all in support of. She did not feel qualified to comment on the plaques history or meaning and that would have to be handled by the two parties involved and they are in communication with each other. She felt that they are fortunate to have two amazing organizations – Stanford and Post 375 – that are passionate about the project. She presumed they would be raising the funds for the project and hoped that wouldn't be an issue. Her advice was to support the preservation, possible re-dedication, and possible learning moment that could be taught. She fully supported the preservation and the restoration going forward. The three issues – the flagpole, the plaques, the plinth – will need mutual effort going forward, and she is supportive of the project altogether.

Mr. Powell responded to Mr. Sommer's comments, noting that the regular maintenance and care of the flags at the flagpole has been a mission and purpose of Post 375. He noted specifically that in attendance was former Commander of Post 375, Larry Yaggy [phonetic spelling] who for many years has personally taken that maintenance and care as his responsibility for many years.

[inaudible comment, off microphone]

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz said she understood that the installation of the plaques is a mitigation for a theft concern. If there is restoration of the plaques going forward, she wondered if there has been exploration of perhaps reproductions or a way to safeguard the originals while still maintaining the original look and content of the monument with less concerns about a potential theft risk of the original plaques.

Chair Willis agreed that going forward there is work to be done, and it seems that all are well-intentioned. She optimistic for a good outcome, hopefully soon.

Board Member Makinen commented that he fully supported the preservation and restoration of the plinth and the flagpole, as it represents a significant emotional connection with the veteran's organization. Being a veteran himself, he said he has some sensitivity along those lines, and it represents disrespect of veterans by not having the flagpole and the plinth restored to the condition it was in. He felt it is imperative that the community do the right thing by restoring the flagpole and the plinth. He felt the real issue was what security measures could be put in place to prevent future damage. He said there are a number of security techniques that could be applied to deter any attempts to desecrate the plinth that would be sensible. He fully supported getting the historic monument put back in its original form.

Mayor Lydia Kou, City Council Liaison, commented that, since it was a study session, she requested asking for a follow-up on the restoration as an action item for a future meeting.

Chair Willis requested that Ms. French check in every month or so to make sure the issue does not fall by the wayside. Ms. French expressed that she would remain in touch with Ms. Jones as to next steps, and the next opportunity that presents itself to relay the status, she will do so. Also, when there is a project, there will a formal application and that will be presented to the Board because it is on the list of inventory properties.

Vice Chair Pease said he was struggling with the most sensitive part of the discussion – the Sons of the Golden West, et cetera. He wondered if it is something that the Human Relations group should possibly look at. He pointed out that the purpose of this was to honor the veterans, and it might be possible to separate that from the motivations of contributors in other areas that are not appropriate to today's social construct. He also felt it ironic that, of all the largest institutions in the United States, the Department of Defense has probably done more to promote equality in terms of literacy, access, promotions. The Secretary of Defense is an African-American. Integration, in 1948, in many ways has led the country from those darker days in whatever progress has been made today. He felt that someone needs to look at these things if there is a real conversation about whether these things stay, or if they have some notation, or if they have to be in a museum, because they're unacceptable today, this is what seems complicated to him.

Mr. Powell expressed appreciation for the comments and thanked the Mayor for her recommendation. He stated that because it has been more than two years since the vandalism, the veterans think that having some sort of marker to say when the issue will be addressed again is very important, because it seems to be one of the things that can easily fall by the wayside if they are not very diligent.

Chair Willis expressed that they would stay on top of the issue. She agreed with Board Member Heinrich that is important to not bury their history. If people research and discover the history of that organization and they object, then at least they have learned something and can understand that progress has been made and more progress is needed. Pretending like nothing bad every happened is going nowhere, so she preferred not to have that be a huge part of the flagpole conversation. She felt there is nothing overtly negative in the plaques themselves. She said she was somewhat disappointed, although it was educational to find out that that group was not always great, but if they look back, they would find that most organizations did not always do the right thing throughout history, unfortunately. She hoped they would go forward instead of backwards.

Chair Willis once again thanked the guests for their presentations and reiterated the importance of the topic to not only the veterans and Stanford, but important to Palo Alto.

3. HRB Discussion of 2022 Work Plan Results and Draft 2023 Work Plan, and Receipt of Submitted CGL Annual Report Covering the 2021-22 Reporting Period

Ms. French summarized the current work plan, which was submitted to the Council last year, taking a look at how they have done. Some of the comments were brought forward into the new work plan for the

coming year. She also wished to present the CLG, Certified Local Government, report, which is due. There are responsibilities and training requirements for Board Members and staff. The annual report is submitted each year. It summarizes the number of meetings held during the period of October 2021 to September 2022. The report qualifies the Board for any grants that may come their way through the Office of Historic Preservation.

Ms. French went over an outline of a draft of the upcoming year's work plan, carrying through basically the same content, with a few tweaks. On goals and projects she pointed out that they are farther ahead in one of the projects – the inventory update. The CLG report summarizes the meetings held and the properties which were found eligible during this period. There were two that were found eligible for the California Register, which was less than the prior year.

Ms. French noted that there were 14 meetings during the period. The five goals were shared. Goal one is an ongoing goal as is goal 2. Goal three was new the past year. This goal was advanced to the point of working with a consultant and kicking off the project in February. They are now in progress, getting ready for the community meeting.

On the outreach and incentives and work program development, Ms. French said they can do better with inviting the public and hearing from the public which is an important task. The Mills Act program was stalled out and they have recently discussed maybe getting a report to Council to share the work of the subcommittee from a year or so ago.

Ms. French requested comments from the Board Members with regard to the five goals from the past year. She commented in regard to equity in work, in that they had just had an item where she questioned if they are inviting members of the public in case there are more voices out there that they haven't heard, or other venues that they could look to. She asked about ways they can look into that in the coming year. She noted they have certainly had engagement at the present meeting.

Chair Willis said she hoped that the community meetings and an update to the ordinance will bring some preservationists out and that they will get some new and exciting community conversations going. In regard to the Council priority of climate change and natural environment protections and adaptations, she felt that preservation, and not demolition, certainly plays into that. She commented that stuffing a landfill does nothing for the natural environment. She referenced Priority Three on housing for social and economic balance, and said that maintenance of the housing structure that is not so upscale goes a long way towards maintaining that balance in the environment, so she felt that they are addressing some of those issues and they need to keep them in mind.

Vice Chair Pease wondered if they should talk about the Mills Act as well. He said it seems like the goalposts on finishing this keep moving out over 20 years. He acknowledged Board Member Wimmer and past Board Member Bower's work on this. He asked if there is a way to take what has been done so far and submit it to staff and get something designed for the Council to consider. He didn't understand why the work goes on and on and why they can't get a draft in front of the Council to decide the particulars of how it could be tailored.

Ms. French responded to this, noting that there have been conversations this year when they have brought up the Mills Act from the Board looking to a potential project that could be part of a pilot to be described along with that pilot program. Perhaps a one-year period in which to test it out. She said that just merely sending an informational report is possible but wondered if the Board's interest is still in finding a parcel or property that would be a test case for the program.

Vice Chair Pease said that at least three times when the Council was in session, he has heard at least one member of the Council bring this up and urge the Board to get it done, whatever the process is to put a document in place which is ready for the Council to consider and discuss. Waiting for an ideal prototype will not get them anywhere. He said 20 years is long enough. The town is dealing with many complex issues, and it seems to be able to address them much more quickly than that, and every other city on the Peninsula as far as he knows, has one.

Chair Willis suggested that Margaret, as leader of the committee, could perhaps refocus the Mills Act committee and put a detailed document together and bring it to the Board. She noted that they need to

have a serious discussion about it with new Board members, because she didn't think they've addressed it since she has been on the Board.

Board Member Wimmer agreed that the issue is often brought up and then for some reason, it goes by the wayside. As the only remaining Board Member that was involved in the subcommittee in the past, she said she ought to take it upon herself to gather the information that had been put together and suggested they agendaize at least a part of meeting to focus on the Mills Act with newer Board Members who might not be as familiar with it. She said in the meantime she will gather the information so that she is more current about where they left off. As an agenda item they could focus on the issue together and discuss it, and throw out ideas amongst themselves about what the best approach would be. She said that they did present it to the City Council and there was talk about it also having to do with the School District and the revenues that they would potentially lose because of the Mills Act. There were many different elements involved which brought a complexity to it that no one could seem to get beyond. She thought in revisiting it, they could do better at moving it forward.

Chair Willis thought it was time to start attacking the project, identifying the issues, for starters, and taking them on one-by-one.

Board Member Wimmer said the Mills Act has always been one of their supposed incentives among the few that there are with respect to historic preservations, and this has always been their potential incentive for people.

Vice Chair Pease suggested that though former Board Member Bower had retired from the Board, he would have a lot of information on this, if she could get together with him and consolidate the information so that it could be shared with the Board.

Ms. French noted that she had included the that which had been done in a packet last fall. She will send out the link to that HRB packet that contained the latest work of the subcommittee. Vice Chair Pease said that had slipped his mind but he would appreciate receiving it again.

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz wondered if there was a way to get some general feedback from Council on the issue.

Ms. French stated that study sessions are the means through which feedback is obtained. She could talk to the Director and let the Director know that the HRB is interested in having a study session if that seems of interest. It used to be that they would have a joint meeting with the Council, and that would be another format in which a conversation could take place, but lacking a joint meeting, trying to find a Council meeting that would accommodate a study session would be the way to go, to just have a conversation.

Chair Willis thought the more they educate themselves before that, the better off they would be. She felt it would be good to at least get some sort of collective opinions about how they want to move forward and what they would ask from Council so that they would have a simple way to agree or disagree with them.

Board Member Rohman indicated that she would be happy to help move the needle forward this summer in any way she could.

Chair Willis shared her thought that their four categories are a little sketchy. The previous night she had read some ordinances from other cities. She felt for their purposes if they had two categories, she would suggest historic and landmark, which she felt would accommodate everything they have. Contributing properties in a historic district could be a third category. She thought if they could make some minor modifications to their ordinance which would make it clearer. Currently, everyone questions, for example, the difference between a 3 and a 4. She thought if they clarified it for themselves, it would be much easier as they participate in the upcoming conversations with the community about the inventory. For such minor changes to the ordinance, she asked if they could do that fairly easily, given they would have to go through Council, et cetera. She said rather than trying to rework the whole thing, if they perhaps had just one or two goals, maybe the Mills Act and Categories, it might help them move forward.

Ms. French said in regard to using that as a goal into the coming work plan, they have Mills Act Program continuing as number 5, so they could refine that further. It is a Comprehensive Plan policy as well to modify the Historic Ordinance, so they could refer to the Comprehensive Plan policy.

Chair Willis thought it would be good to have some specifics so they are more focused on small things that they can all agree on, rather than trying to rewrite the whole thing.

Ms. French questioned which quarter in which this would come forward in the coming year. They will be doing the Reconnaissance and the inventory and coming through with nominations to the Council.

Chair Willis thought it was going to take a while for these properties to come through the Council and that before they do, they would do well to at least have a proposal out there. Perhaps the ordinance could not be changed that quickly, but if they could get Council buy-in prior to that, she felt it would make the process smoother and would make the conversations with the public much smoother if they, as a group, at least knew what direction they wanted to move in. She found it hard to believe that anybody supports Category 1, 2, 3, 4.

Board Member Wimmer thought this was also something that had been discussed at length in past meetings as well. She did see some merit in keeping four categories, but more clearly defining them. For instance, Category 4 could just be "potentially eligible," as the lowest level. She thought this would get people used to the idea that their house could be potentially historic and being potentially eligible sounded like a cool designation and has a positive feeling.

Chair Willis agreed that they do have a whole list of potential eligible things. Board Member Wimmer said those should be Category 4. It wouldn't mean that they are historic. But they are on the radar. Chair Willis said some of the ordinance did have that. She said part of her thought process was not calling the categories 1, 2, 3, 4, because if they had a name – like "potentially eligible" or "landmark" it would be much easier for the public to understand where they fit in a hierarchy.

Board Member Rohman thought that was part of their mission, to better educate the public about the properties that are potentially eligible. She agreed with having clearer designations or names for Categories 1, 2, 3, 4. She didn't think that they necessarily needed to remove those categories but do a better job of education about what the potential benefits are, and responsibilities.

Board Member Heinrich agreed with renaming the categories into names, and not numbers.

Board Member Wimmer thought the categories make sense because instead of saying, "Oh, you're in the Professorville category," you could say, "You're a Category 3," so they all know instantly what that means. She felt it could be, for example, that Category 1 is on the National Register. Category 2 is on the Palo Alto Local highest register. Category 3 might be Professorville, and Category 4 might be potentially eligible. She thought that the categories give people a scale, an easier way to value. Category 1 would be the most historic, on the National Register. Then, 2, more local, et cetera.

Chair Willis proposed agendaizing category definitions for the next meeting. She said they could talk in the meantime and bring to the Board the different viewpoints. She thought it should be fairly easy to have it as an action item and decide. She thought they should be able to identify what it is going to be the most effective.

Ms. French asked which meeting she was considering. Chair Willis responded the first meeting in May. Ms. French reported that they also have an item for the second meeting of May, so it would be a possibility to have both items on the second meeting in May.

Chair Willis thought they might want to work back into two meetings a month while they work through the inventory and bring things to Council and clarify for the public and for themselves where they're going and the best way to get there. Perhaps just for May and June and have one meeting in July and August.

Board Member Heinrich shared that she will not be able to attend the May 11th meeting.

Vice Chair Pease asked if the May 25th meeting will be accessible remotely. Ms. French responded that it will be in Community Room, and they will definitely have coverage. Vice Chair Pease noted that he will be out of town, but he wanted to have access to the meeting. Ms. French stated that she and Dao would work together to get him a Zoom panelist link. Vice Chair Pease said when he was looking at the flyer and the letter it gives a date for the physical meeting, but there is no mention of being able to remotely participate. He said that is important to communicate as they don't have much time for these property owners. Some may be more inclined to participate.

Ms. French thought on the notice cards going out that week that there is a link that leads to the webpage. On the webpage they can include the agenda and it will have the link. They will receive the card that will give the location. Vice Chair Pease didn't think that information was on the notice cards. Ms. French said they could put it on the notice cards. Vice Chair Pease was surprised that on the flyer there was no option mentioned explicitly that remote access was available. Ms. French said they would make sure that it is on the notice cards that get sent out.

Chair Willis said they need to remember that some of the owners are not the residents of the properties, and they should feed that into their timelines. The odds of them getting that notice card before the meeting might be slimmer than they would like. It might end up with a tenant. She thought that would be a good question at their meeting, how many remote owners have actually gotten the notice, and whether they need to do something else. She wondered if they had owners' names. Ms. French said they are drawn from the system that shows the owners of the addresses on the list. Chair Willis wondered if they are sending the notices to the property owners at their mailing address as opposed to the property address.

Ms. French reiterated her question about the goals stated for the work plan, whether anyone has any other comments about any additional goals to add for the work plan or if they wished for her to come back at the May 11th meeting with a modified work plan, that would probably be the last opportunity to comment on the work plan for the coming period that would then be transmitted to Council.

Chair Willis thought it would be a good idea to refine the Comprehensive Plan policy and make it more specific to certain parts.

Ms. French said she would be happy to have a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair to go over the plan before it gets published in the packet for May 11th if they wanted to provide advice.

Board Member Wimmer asked if reviewing the categories and reviewing the ordinance is included in one of the goals.

Chair Willis replied that Ms. French had suggested that the Comprehensive Plan Policy L7.1.1 is the goal that related to that.

Ms. French thought it was, but if not, it's looking at the ordinance. The ordinance is what sets forth how each category is defined, so they need to look at the ordinance itself that sets forth what the categories are. She thought this was Comprehensive Plan Policy L7.1.1. If not, she will put the right one in.

Ms. French explained that on the annual CLG report, Dao had reached out to the Board Members with what she came up with as trainings based on emails she had received over the period, which is from October, 2021, through September, 2022. She asked Board Members to let her know if there is anything that needs to be fixed on it. She will need to send it that day or the next to the Office of Historic Preservation. The report notes that there were 15 meetings during the reporting period and describes the activities completed. She will be sharing the properties found eligible during that timeframe and note that the Board proceeded along the important project of the Historic Inventory Update. She hoped that all the Board Members have had a chance to look at the CLG report so that she can report this in her cover memo to the OHP.

Chair Willis mentioned under the "Commission Membership" where professional details are recorded, after Board Member Bower's name there is a date, which she thought was just misplaced. Ms. French said she had also sent out a form for everyone to fill out, the statement of qualifications. She asked that the Board Members get those back to her. If not, she will do her best to fill them out.

Board Member Wimmer asked for the forms to be re-sent. Ms. French stated that they are changed each year, so she can't just use last year's form, and she will re-send the form.

Approval of Minutes

4. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of March 9, 2023

Board Member Heinrich moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2023, meeting. Seconded by Vice Chair Pease, the motion carried (4-0-1) by voice vote.

Commissioner Questions, Comments, Announcements or Future Meetings and Agendas

Board Member Heinrich inquired about the Resolution for the Birge Clark Centennial. Chair Willis she had not yet talked to the City Clerk. Board Member Rohman asked what the date is and what the plans are. Board Member Heinrich responded that the Centennial is of Birge Clark's opening of his office in Palo Alto one hundred years ago. PAST and PAHA are recognizing Birge Clark and have a special presentation on May 7th at the Arts Center near Rinconada Park. They thought it would be nice if someone did a resolution honoring Birge Clark.

Chair Willis asked Mayor Kou if she would help on this if someone would draft the resolution for her, or with her. Mayor Kou indicated she would be happy to and said she has been getting a lot of help on resolutions and historical facts from Palo Alto Museum, so they might be able to help with the language. She suggested asking the Clerk about whether it should be a resolution or a proclamation. A resolution requires the Council's vote. A proclamation does not. Mr. Staiger or Ms. Holman at the Museum would be potential contacts at the Museum. Ms. French volunteered to follow up with them.

Chair Willis proposed that the Historic Resources Board have a liaison with the Museum Board. They do this with PAST Heritage now. She is anxious to see the Museum move forward. She asked Mayor Kou if she would support having a liaison with the Museum Board, and she will follow up with the Board President in that regard as well.

The Board welcomed new Board Member, Samantha Rohman. Board Member Rohman shared that she is pursuing her master's in Public History at CSU East Bay and is finishing her first year there. She has an undergraduate degree from UC Santa Barbara in History. She has worked in the corporate world, technology world for the past 10 to 12 years. She and her rescue dog, Bo, live in a yellow 1926 cottage in one of Palo Alto's bungalow courts on Homer, so she has a vested interest in historic preservation and is happy to be on the Board.

Board Member Heinrich offered a reminder that PAST has the walking tours of all the historic neighborhoods starting Saturday, and they will continue through the month of May. Their website lists which neighborhoods, and when. They are on Saturday mornings, at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Motion by Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz to adjourn. Seconded by Board Member Wimmer, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.