



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD RETREAT MEETING
MINUTES: July 28, 2023
Community Room & Virtual Zoom
5:30 P.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

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

Absent: Board Member Michael Makinen

Public Comment

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Action Items

2. Review Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey Report

[meeting in progress]

[Discussion of Community Meetings]

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz stated that there were several owners of potentially eligible properties at the community meetings. There were concerns expressed particularly regarding property values and being able to modify their homes going forward. There was a commercial property owner in attendance who had significant concerns. However, people were trying to keep an open mind, asking what the benefits would be and wanting to understand what this would mean for their properties. She said she heard some "hard-nosed" comments, but there were other people who were interested in more information.

Board Member Willis commented that there were some supporters there that were not necessarily property owners of an affected property, but there were some who did have affected properties who were also supportive, so it was mixed. There was one very negative participant, but she felt he would have been negative regardless, and she didn't feel it was a reflection on the meeting. The meeting was "rugged" because of communications issues, with difficulties getting started and televising it. The process was awkward, but she said that will be fixed next time.

Ms. French added that it was held in the room they were meeting in.

Board Member Willis said the problem was they didn't know how to work the (audio visual) system.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that it was IT difficulties.

Board Member Wimmer(?) stated that it was led by Page and Turnbull and not as much the HRB. She said they didn't really participate at all, but just observed.

Board Member Rohman asked what the attitudes/concerns of the dissenters were.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought it mainly broad concerns about restrictions in general and what that would mean for them.

Board Member Rohman commented that a better process for the next community meeting should include having the technology ready to go and functional when people come in.

Chair Willis added that perhaps Page and Turnbull should be secondary and have a moderator from the HRB, such a Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz, who is more a face to the community and to the city. Also have Page and Turnbull people participate, but have the image being the HRB.

Board Member Rohman agreed. [inaudible comment regarding the surveys]

Ms. French said that for the community meeting, staff prepared the survey, and it will be different the next time because people will have received a letter about their specific property being eligible for nomination. People could get a letter stating something like, "As you know, your home, built in 2020 is no longer an eligible..." so there will be two different letters. It will be held in the chambers because there was likely to be much higher interest. The first one was a kick-off to talk about the project. This is why the consultant took more of a role, explaining what they are embarking upon. The next meeting will be about the findings and next steps. That will be in a September timeframe.

Chair Willis said there were people that wanted to know, they wanted the answer, whether their property was going to be deemed eligible. So it was somewhat dissatisfying for people.

Board Member Rohman made her presentation, stating that she has been looking at Goal 4 in terms of outreach, incentives, et cetera. Goal 4 is to improve outreach, review incentives and develop a work program for the next year. She tried to break this down into what each piece of this means. She said there are really three pieces to it – improving outreach, which is outreach with materials and methods of outreach; second, reviewing the incentives and improving outreach materials related to incentives for rehabilitation; and third, developing the work program for next year, including additional historic preservation policy, looking at the current preservation policies and current ordinance.

Board Member Rohman continued, presenting some of her ideas and possible actions. For Goal 4.1, improve outreach, she said they have made the improvement to some outreach materials, including the Historic Resources and Permit Review Requirements, aka, The Bulletin. They went through this at the last meeting and made some changes to the verbiage, talked about it, and she felt it was a good revision. There was no next step attached to this.

Ms. French clarified there were no changes to the Bulletin, only discussion about how it was out of date and there needed to be a couple things added to it. It needed to be agendized again to work on it more.

Board Member Rohman agreed it should be agendized again, and it needs to be on the website again, because the Bulletin breaks it down more specifically. She wondered if this is something that needed to wait until the reconnaissance survey is done.

Ms. French did not think they needed to wait. She made some draft changes back in 2018 after adoption of the Comp Plan, and the changes never moved forward. She will bring those forward to the Board.

Board Member Willis said if they want to take the opportunity to take the potentially eligible properties out of the mix, this would be a chance to do that.

Ms. French suggested calling them Priority 1 and 2 – not further evaluated properties.

Board Member Willis thought it was just a policy decision within the Planning Department that decided they should be evaluated. She wondered why they couldn't undo that decision, talk to Jonathon and perhaps re-evaluate that decision. It would mean a lot of money and a lot of labor.

Ms. French thought it was a decision based on the wording of the Comp Plan policy and for the Director at the time to figure out how to make it "bite-sized" as opposed to properties dating until 1970 or '80.

Board Member Rohman said in addition with the community meeting and people wanting answers, she thought they should make it a priority to update the Bulletin and repost it so that they are providing as much information as they can.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz said with a few tweaks the Bulletin was pretty close to being usable and re-postable. She thought having something there is better than not having anything.

Board Member Pease wondered if it would be appropriate to ask some of the people that attended the meeting to look at a draft for understandability and how they reacted to it.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought the information in the Bulletin was not the central focus of the people who had concerns.

Board Member Pease said one person told him that she offered to do that and got no response.

Board Member Rohman said that was unfortunate.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought she recalled that and said maybe they will take her up on it for some other things.

Board Member Pease thought that would be a good idea.

Board Member Rohman said 4.2 or 4.3 talks about community advocates, and that is exactly what they need – a list of community advocates who want to help and want to look at the verbiage and tell them where it doesn't make sense.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought it would be good to hear the thoughts from some of the attendees about when they presented the incentives, whether it makes sense to them, whether they are interesting or potentially helpful.

Board Member Pease said he was a little disappointed he had asked if they could see it in advance in some detail and have some input into it. He thought they were missing a good opportunity, when people showed up, to not go to them and run some of these things by them.

Board Member Willis mentioned there were only about 15 of them.

Board Member Pease said he was talking about the notion of thought leaders, and they need to have some in the community who feel like they are being listened to, and they would probably benefit whether they agree or not with the tone and the detail they are willing to provide.

Board Member Willis said she wouldn't limit that to people that were at the meeting but would look at the whole community. She thought it was a good opportunity to find new HRB members. She said she would volunteer her neighbor, who owns the Julia Morgan and is very smart young and would be a good analyst.

Board Member Pease thought that would be great, but he thought the people who showed up should definitely be asked.

Board Member Willis asked if he knew who they were.

Ms. French responded that there were minutes of the meeting prepared.

Board Member Rohman said, along with this, in additional areas where they could be more effective, the incentives page on the City website is not very user-friendly or actionable. It is broken down by building code, municipal code, and it's a lot of information. When opened, this section in particular is straight from the Code. This is good, but it needs a translation and explanation of what it actually means. How to get there and who would do this would be a huge project but making it more accessible in language and in format and the way it is presented would be a great benefit.

Board Member Pease said that theme occurs over and over again in the documents that Board Member Rohman sent them – understandability, user-friendliness. He said it seems that before trying to engage broad outreach there needs to be some focus group testing. That would be a way to find people who might want to join the Board or become more active. For example, go to a homeowner's association and see if they would like somebody to participate in the process.

Board Member Rohman said in terms of content for outreach, her assessment was, from her perspective, if she couldn't find the information she assumed a homeowner looking for information wouldn't be able to either. She said they don't have a City page linked to the eligible 1998 survey, or the specific Palo Alto inventory list.

Ms. French said there is.

Board Member Willis said it is just a list of addresses with no information except categories.

Board Member Rohman shared one of the lists.

Ms. French said there is also the inventory list.

Board Member Rohman said she couldn't even find the inventory list. She shared some proposed examples of how other cities in the area have done this. The City of Los Altos inventory page, including a landmarks list, is shorter, but helpful, so if one was to Google a particular address, it would show its historic designation. Another example was Saratoga. In the notes section of their inventory there is guidance as to whether it is a designated landmark, a Mills Act property, et cetera. The City of Los Altos also has a beautiful historic resources inventory booklet that they put together. She will link these pages for the Board members to look at. She said the second part of improving outreach is the methods and the access of how to actually reach people. Number one being current homeowners and future homeowners. She said they need to re-list the Historic Resources Bulletin as previously discussed. She suggested partnering with PAST and getting on their email distribution list, in their newsletters or whatever speaker boxes they have that they talk to their members about, the HRB should also partner with, because that is a community that they know has a vested interest.

[inaudible comment]

Board Member Rohman said they would be very willing. They just need to follow through and do the ask.

[inaudible comment by Board Member Heinrich]

Ms. French said they do have a link to their reconnaissance survey, and a presence on their webpage about it.

Board Member Rohman said she did find that. It was at the top of the HRB links. She said although they can't talk to interested buyers of potentially historic homes, she wondered how they would feel about a "FYI Welcome Packet," with information about PAHA, PAST and messages like, "Your property has been in this reconnaissance survey and was deemed...Here's what it means to you. Here's the website where you can find more information. Here's how to access the parcel report," et cetera.

Board Member Willis thought this had potential, but they need a system. She thought they might talk PAST about doing this, because they are in a position to get a variety of volunteers. She did not know if the HRB could bring in volunteer labor directly. But through PAST it would be possible. She thought they should take Board Member Rohman's ideas and hear what the other Board members' priorities are and pick two or so out and see if there might be a couple groups of people at PAST who would find larger groups to carry them out. She thought that might also be how they go about updating their current survey, so there might be some competition for volunteer labor, but there are some good ideas for projects that people would be interested in. Her experience with PAST has been that it tends to be a very enthusiastic group of volunteers who are interested in learning about houses and properties and Palo Alto history.

Board Member Rohman remarked that this speaks to the community influencers piece.

Board Member Heinrich said as far as reaching out to each community, PAST might do a walking tour of a community and have good stories to tell about the people that lived there.

Board Member Rohman said that also goes to creating community, reaching the community and creating advocates. Finding community influencers and using them as extensions of the HRB to get their mission out. She thought it would be interesting to do a community survey to gauge interest from anyone in historic preservation and/or assets and find out if there are other people in the community who care, other than people that are already PAST members or already supporting PAHA. Having HRB members on the PAST tours to have representation of the HRB in person would be great. There are always more documents that can be created on historic districts, the context, and some great examples. Board Member Rohman shared an example from Sunnyvale, showing architectural styles. Board Member Rohman's final idea was partnering with realtors, which has been discussed – presenting to some local associations, or having a "For Realtors" page. She shared an example from the National Association of Realtors on historic properties,

which has great links and information and very honestly speaks of both benefits and drawbacks a historic home.

Board Member Heinrich wondered how they would link their information directly to something like that. Board Member Rohman said this is something more national-focused, and they would probably need to create a smaller page.

Board Member Willis said they have a local group of realtors who give talks. She wasn't sure how they distribute information, but she said she could find out. She thought they were a group worth cultivating because they can spread misinformation very easily.

Board Member Rohman remarked that they can provide them with the correct and relevant information.

Board Member Willis commented that if you treat them with respect and acknowledge their power it will go a long way.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz said it would also be a source of great information for someone looking for a home.

Board Member Wimmer said she talked to some of the realtors trying to get their perspective on what it means to have a house that's listed on an inventory, in terms of salability. They have said it narrows the buying pool and it is seen as a negative thing.

Board Member Willis thought it depended on who you talked to, and they aren't all that way.

Board Member Wimmer said they should talk about the incentives in place and that it's not a negative, because they will take the information and pass it on to potential buyers. Their bottom line is they just want to sell the house.

Board Member Rohman said it's another avenue to the owners that the Board should be working through as a resource.

Mayor Lydia Kou said there is a group that meets on Fridays to disseminate information, but also talks to brokers, and each of the offices in Palo Alto would be important. They have sales meetings on Mondays or Tuesdays which would be good times to come into the office and speak about the incentives. She added that many of the long-time realtors in Palo Alto go through the exercise of getting more information on the home, who has lived there, et cetera. There are also many that come in from out of town and are basically interested in selling something and do not know the city, its ordinances, et cetera. She said they should make sure to be able to reach them as well.

Board Member Willis asked if she had any thoughts about how to reach them.

Lydia Kou said it's difficult as they come from all over. There have been people come in from San Diego come in and sell in Palo Alto or Los Altos. But local realtors and those from nearby cities would know Palo Alto better, so those would be ones to focus on. Another place they could go is directly SVAR – Silicon Valley Association of Realtors.

Ms. French said she has done this twice in the past.

Ms. Kou spoke of going directly to them, they may decide to disseminate the information in one of the bigger meetings, which are mostly online, on Zoom, now.

Ms. French said she had conversations many years ago, before COVID, and a couple presentations.

Ms. Kou thought if they would reach out to them and request to be a speaker or to be on their agenda, they would be willing to do this.

Board Member Willis asked if most real estate agents from out of town are the buyer's agent, or if most of the listing agents are local.

Ms. Kou said most of the listing agents she sees when looking through the inventory are mostly local, although there are a few listing agents that come through because they sold the house.

Board Member Willis wondered, if they knew or could monitor when things come on the market, if they could get the information to the listing agent.

Board Member Wimmer commented on the ideas suggested by Board Member Rohman and said if the information could be made more accessible online then when anyone types in an address, these kinds of information would pop up, and this should be the goal. It would be difficult to reach every realtor to give them the information, but if they could make the information more widely available, the realtors would find it.

Board Member Willis added that the more information is available on the internet, the more kids are going to read it and the more Palo Alto's history will get out there, and there is a lot to be said for entering the modern age where the information is at anyone's fingertips.

Board Member Wimmer said many of the houses are represented on the PAST website, with photos and references.

Ms. French added that their photos are in color as well.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that much of their information is based on the DPR forms.

Board Member Willis noted that the HRB needs to do its part, too. She said she randomly tried to pull up two addresses before the meeting. She thought the address was wrong on one. There may be clean-up work to be done on the existing inventory. She said she could email **Caroline George** (?) and ask her to do it, but it would be good if the HRB could methodically go through the inventory, especially ones that are demolished. Many of the demolished ones probably are noted on the PAST website.

Ms. French said the parcel reports are available 24/7 that realtors or any interested buyer or sellers can go see. It corrects for the address problems, because it is based on the parcel number, or it could be a subdivision. When it is subdivided the address is no longer applicable but should still be applicable on the parcel report system if people are looking for a specific parcel.

Board Member Heinrich said it's easy to change the address, except she got two tax bills. The parcel number is much more accurate.

Ms. French noted that when you're on a corner lot, you can choose which one. It doesn't matter where the door is, or where the front property line is.

Board Member Rohman shared the second part of Goal 4 – reviewing the incentives for rehabilitation, about which they have talked at length – the Mills Act, the possible packet or outreach for homebuyers. She thought articles on home ownership could go in there, such as those on the realtors' websites, as well as information on PAST plaques. She said she saw a PSA on the PAST site saying if someone thinks their home was built in 2023, it may have actually have been, 2022, so check the parcel report, do some digging and you could be eligible for a plaque. She said the incentives page is comprehensive but hard to read or act on. She referred to the Page and Turnbull report sent by Ms. French where it says that the incentives are only available to property owners whose property is listed on the historic inventory. She wondered if this is true.

Ms. French said it was. The HIE, in which you get extra square footage, if you want to modify is Categories 1, 2, 3 and 4. It's used to be 1 and 2. It's all four categories now for the past four years or so.

Board Member Rohman shared that Pasadena's award program creates goodwill with owners and reasons to continue to put resources into the upkeep of their property. She shared incentives from other cities as well, including City of Los Angeles. Incentives included such things as reduction of building permit fees and construction tax or waiver of covered parking requirements. She will send her materials to the Board members.

Regarding the work program for 2024, Board Member Rohman said she reviewed the ordinance and observed that it is seemingly effective because it is vague. The current fine for demo of part of a historic structure is \$1,000. The civil penalty is not to exceed \$10,000. She felt most would not mind paying that, so that is a problem. There is a 20-year moratorium, which would seem more effective.

Board Member Willis wondered how many times that is reinforced.

Ms. French didn't even know what this was talking about.

Board Member Rohman said the way she read it is if someone demolishes a structure and they weren't supposed to without a permit, they cannot then build for 20 years.

Board Member Willis remembers reading something about that but didn't remember the 20-year part. (See below 2nd to last paragraph)

Ms. French asked if that is downtown.

Board Member Rohman went on to say there is no current benefit to designation as the Code is currently written, other than being listed on the inventory.

Ms. French added that in that case, one can take advantage of the incentives. She said they were supposed to put a pool of money out a couple years ago through a new law where someone could get a break on their income tax.

Board Member Rohman said she had read about that and was trying to find out if there were any income eligibility rules.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought there was. She said if someone bought a home in Palo Alto, even recently, the chances are they earn too much to qualify for the state level program, although it might benefit some longer-term homeowners, but for recent purchasers, it is not helpful.

Ms. French appreciated Board Member Rohman's efforts to research and present what some other cities are doing.

Board Member Rohman said there were some great examples that are leading the pack in California, like Pasadena. She said the Getty Institute has great preservation materials as well, and she will share the links. She felt the next step would be to figure out what they want to actually do and how to prioritize it.

Ms. French felt the webpage fixes need to be a priority. Perhaps a subcommittee was needed to focus on this.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought regarding the incentives page, making a version or some sort of bulletin that is clearer and more useful would be needed.

Ms. French said there is a way to, instead of listing the entire Code material out, provide a links to click on if someone wants to read the Code itself.

Board Member Heinrich said she can go to the PAST for immediate action and ask them to take a look at perhaps helping to come up with a welcome packet, and also to do a walking tour of the Eichler neighborhoods and Barron Park neighborhood.

Board Member Rohman thought it would also be good to start a list of community advocates that are willing to advocate on PAST's behalf or the HRB's behalf.

Ms. French felt it would be important to have people who can come to a community meeting for the next phase of the survey, to help people understand what the HRB is doing and to understand that it's not the end of the world to be nominated, but the incentives and benefits are actually a good thing.

Board Member Rohman said that's an example of something they should get into the PAST bulletin, a message such as, "Hey, even if you don't have anything to say we'd love for you to be there and to have your support."

Board Member Willis read the section referring to the 20-year moratorium, to clarify. "If the site of an unlawfully demolished historic structure from which development rights have been transferred shall not be developed in excess of the floor area ratio of the demolished structure for a period of 20 years from the unlawful demolition." So it's not everything, but you can't develop in excess of the floor area of the demolished structure. She said it's not like if you demolished a house, you can't build on it for 20 years.

Ms. French said there's a program when a person can do historic rehabilitation and then document everything and then sell to a property located in the Downtown the transferable development rights so that they can add the floor area to a non-historic property instead of the historic property, adding to their own property and making it less historic. She said that hasn't happened in her 25 years there, so that's good news.

Amy French thanked and complemented Board Member Rohman on her presentation.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz directed the conversation to the next item – housekeeping.

Ms. French said one of the discussion topics was in regard in meeting in the evenings, quarterly evening meetings or something else. The Bylaws currently state when the HRB meets.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz wanted to raise the fact that their meeting time is during business hours, which limits who can participate as a Board member, but also limits who can attend the meetings and learn about what they are doing and speak publicly. She wondered if having some evening meetings might broaden attendance and be a bit more inclusive to people who are unable to attend during business hours.

Board Member Rohman felt it would help further the goal of community outreach and advocacy.

Board Member Willis added that is harder for staff, so it is a balance. She said maybe at certain times of the year, such as the fall, it would work better. They could build it into their schedule in a limited way and see how it works. She said, not only Ms. French, someone else from the City needed to come they should keep that mind.

Board Member Rohman wondered how other boards and commissions handle it.

Ms. French informed them that the Architectural Review Board is one such board that meets twice a month. They are professional architects on that board, so it's just on their calendar. They have development projects, so those consultants and property owners are very motivated to come and present their project and get a recommendation for approval. She said in regard to people coming and commenting on things, if they're concerned enough about a project going up next door to them, they will find time to come to a meeting to talk about it. It is a different type of board, whereas, with HRB, they rarely have an actual project to work on.

Board Member Pease thought it would help over time to recruit younger people who are in the middle of their careers. He suggested every other month to try it out, so after six months they could assess how it works.

Ms. French said it could be done with special meetings that can be decided in advance, on a quarterly basis or every other month, however they decided. With the reconnaissance survey being at the forefront currently, there will definitely be the community meeting in September. There could be another community meeting or special meeting in October or November. Currently the schedule is for two daytime meetings per month.

Board Member Willis said there is only one in November and one in December, so there might be an opportunity to have a special meeting in November.

Ms. French said they could try for every other month, having one in September and then the next one could be in November. They had talked about another meeting after the drafts. The next step is to get letters out, and the letters should probably say when the meeting is.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if they could come up with a soft date for the September meeting and find a date to reserve the room.

Ms. French informed the groups as to when various other commissions and committees meet.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz observed that many of the groups do meet in the evenings.

[Unidentified Speaker] Only HRB and ARB meet during the daytime.

Ms. French suggested also later in the afternoon might work, such as 5:00. This would allow for staff to still be there.

Board Member Rohman asked if staff can come in later if they were to meet in the evening.

Ms. French said yes. There are staff that are paid overtime to come in on the evenings. As a manager she would come in as needed, not on an hourly basis.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that the 5:00 suggestion may work better for schedules, at the end of a standard workday. This would be better than taking an entire morning.

Ms. French summarized that for the community meeting in September they should look at a 5:00 start. They will do a poll to find out which date works best for that.

The Board re-addressed dates for the next community meeting and future special meetings.

Board Member Willis asked if they would discuss the Mills Act on the August 24th meeting.

Ms. French confirmed that they can do that.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz verified that there were no public commenters waiting to speak.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if there were other housekeeping items to discuss.

Board Member Willis said even if they are not going to be in attendance at a meeting, it would still be nice to get a packet. She said she did not get one for the meeting she missed at the beginning of June.

Board Member Heinrich said she did get one for the meeting she missed.

Ms. French thought they always send the email packet out to all Board members. If they have stated that they will not be attending, they do not send out a physical package.

Board Member Pease wondered what the deadline is to get a packet out.

Ms. French responded that the packet usually goes out on the Thursday before the meeting.

Board Member Pease wondered if they can send a packet out in the mail as opposed to a courier, because he will be some distance away for an extended period of time. He said he doesn't mind getting a soft copy, but when they are 100 pages long, it is hard to print them out.

Ms. French said they can send him the packet by mail when that is the case.

Board Member Willis wondered about what a good time for annual retreats is. The Board discussed their preferences.

Ms. French thought fall was better than April when new members come onboard.

Board Member Wimmer suggested perhaps toward the beginning of the year when they are coming up with their work plan.

Ms. French suggested perhaps February, which would have some advantages.

Board Member Wimmer asked about recruitment of new members and when old members go off the Board. The Board discussed the topic of term lengths.

Approval of Minutes

3. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of June 8, 2023.
4. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of June 22, 2023

Approval of the minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements or Future Meetings and Agendas

Adjournment

Motion by to adjourn. Seconded by Board Member, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.