



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: August 24, 2023

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

Call to Order/Roll Call

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

Absent:

Public Comment

Darlene Yaplee requested that the Board remember to ask for comments for items on the agenda, since it has been left out at times.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if anyone had planned absences or schedule suggestions. She noted that they will be having some evening meetings.

Ms. French responded that this is the case, although they have not targeted those yet. There is one anticipated evening meeting for the fall, which will be the community meeting, but the date has not been set yet.

Board Member Heinrich reported that she will be absent on September 14th. Board Member Wimmer will be absent on September 28th. Board Member Rohman will be absent on October 12th.

Study Session

2. Review Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey Report

Ms. French presented the staff report with regard to the Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey. It was last discussed at the Board's retreat on the evening of July 28th. She noted the two-page summary of notes from the discussions at the retreat. The consultant was not at the retreat. The current goal was to discuss the report included in the packet. One of the items that the consultant and staff are interested in, and will be seeking input from the Board on, is how the categories are not fully aligned with the criteria for designation to the local inventory. There will be HRB meetings in September and October, through December, and cover letters are being prepared to each property owner whose property appears in the survey. Also on an evening this fall there will be a community meeting. HRB meetings in the fall will include discussion of categories for nominations. The Council will be the decision point on each property.

Ms. French discussed the criterion for designation to the local inventory and explained that the second and fourth criteria are broader in the types of resources that they cover than the actual Historic Inventory Categories, 1-4, which are very narrowly phrased to prioritize architectural quality. The future concept

would be for the HRB to revisit the categories more broadly. She said this is the topic on which she and the consultant would primarily like to hear from the Board.

Ms. French presented a slide on the status of the inventory update, including a summary of the findings of the 2023 Reconnaissance Survey of 167 properties, of which 154 were determined eligible at the time for the National Register. An additional 13 properties were identified as eligible for the California Register. Further detail which was presented at the prior meeting was also available for the Board's discussion.

Consultant, Christina Dikas, addressed the Board and explained that the topic of categories came up because the next step in the Reconnaissance Survey is to align the properties that were found to retain integrity, eligible for the National and California Registers, with the Palo Alto inventory categories, and to prepare cover letters that explain how the National Register "reasons for significance," or California Register can translate to the Local Inventory, so that these properties can be considered for addition to the inventory. They found that, though the criteria for designation aligned generally with National and California Register criteria, including not only criterion for architecture or recognition of a known architect, artist value, but there are also criteria for association with important events, broad patterns or specific events, as well as important people that are directly connected. The reason that they are important is directly connected to a particular property. The criteria includes structures or sites identified with the lives of historic people or important events, representative of an architectural style or way of life, example of a type of building, a business or use which was once common, another one about architecture building was important. Yet, while the intent was to align these National Register eligible properties with Criterion 1 or 2, they do not totally align, so they were interested to hear the Board's feedback before continuing forward with a methodology. She asked if the Board agreed with the approach they were considering, or if they had other suggestions.

Ms. Dikas noted that under Category 1 – Exceptional building – in the Palo Alto Register, this refers to preeminent national or state importance, the work of the best architects, or outstanding example of specific architectural style. The thought was to include architect-designed buildings, recognized known architects, for the properties surveyed under Category 1. This could include prominent builders and architects that were previously identified in the 1997 to 2001 survey. However, few if any buildings will be Category 1 due to "National/State importance." Most of these properties are significant within a local context, and when Dames and Moore surveyed them, they did note this, that there can be a property that is eligible for the National Register, but at the local level. That particular focus in Category 1 – of National or State importance – means that not many of those properties will fit in the category.

Under Category 2, "Major building of regional importance," the description is very architecture- and architect-focused. There is nothing that incorporates some of the criteria about the lives of historic people, important events or businesses. So, the thought was to associate this category with properties identified for the National or California Register that are good examples of a style, or a rare building type, and that all associations with a significant person would be included under this category. There are several of these properties that were surveyed 20 years ago that were identified as significant under a "significant person." Despite the fact that none of the category definitions include this, their proposed methodology would explain their feeling that significant people can be considered as "major building." Ms. Dikas said this is one point for discussion.

Categories 3 and 4 in the Register are "contributing buildings," good local examples, but the idea is more about contextualization, such as the character of a neighbor grouping. They would potentially categorize some of the properties that are modest and also have been altered but still have good enough integrity to represent their significance, or those associated with a general trend in Palo Alto, such as illustrating densification or an important period of growth, as worded in the survey from 20 years ago. A little lower threshold of integrity would distinguish between 3 and 4. Properties that were not felt to retain integrity were excluded in the survey process. There are some that retain enough integrity, but not quite as high as others, so they would use that to distinguish and put some of them into Category 3 or 4.

Ms. Dikas concluded her summary stating that they would like to hear from the Board before moving forward with the next step of taking their proposed methodology and applying it to the properties, creating a rationale for which category is appropriate for each.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited comments or questions from the Board members.

Board Member Willis asked about use of the word "register," and said when they proposed an ordinance 20-some years ago, that was the intent. She wondered if there is some distinction between "register" and "inventory." Ms. Dikas said that different cities use different words, and she said she has a habit of using the wrong word depending on the city. It depends on the city and how they define it. Cities that use the term "inventory," may mean the same thing as "registry," or cities that use the term "inventory" where their definition is a little different and may be a long list of identified properties which may not have the same type of requirements under an ordinance as a "register." Basically, they can mean the same thing, or they can mean something different.

Board Member Willis said she wasn't sure where they are going with their inventory with regard owners' preferences, but she wondered if perhaps between Categories 3 and 4, one could be a category that is merely an inventory entry and has no additional repercussions. They would be properties identified as historic by the survey. There may be some CEQA considerations, or advantages, but if people do not wish to add any additional designated significance to their property, she wondered if it might be useful to have a category of purely inventory.

Board Member Wimmer asked her to further explain.

Board Member Willis stated that they do not really distinguish between 3's and 4's. She said she's been working with the inventory long enough that she doesn't really see any difference. She that when they go to homeowners and say they want to put them on the inventory, they are opposed. She thought there could be a "holding category" that is just an inventory entry. Even if current property owners don't want to be on it, possibly the next owners would. She thought there might be some psychological difference for owners who are strongly opposed, to just know that their property is on an inventory. She said they can't go back – the properties have been surveyed and identified so they are going to be subject to CEQA and some regulations. They can't just say that they're not historic because the current owner doesn't want them to be, in her understanding. She asked for clarification if this was incorrect. She advocated "pre-thinking" what they want to do with properties in which the owner does not want to be on the inventory.

Board Member Wimmer responded that this was her thought when they discussed Categories 3 and 4. The descriptions seem very generalized, and she wondered how that would impact someone who owns one of the properties and might want to do some future development. She said every property is unique and does have to go through the CEQA step to determine what it all means. She felt that Categories 3 and 4 have always been somewhat vague, but at least they serve as a place to group these properties into, so they at least have some sort of classification.

Board Member Willis advocated that perhaps those that are now Category 3's and 4's become a Category 3. Her vision would be that a Category 4 would become something else.

Board Member Wimmer said she always thought the ones that are "potentially eligible," such as on the parcel reports, were maybe what Category 4's were.

Board Member Willis indicated that is a category she would like to scrap. She said she wished they could take it off of the radar, and if they want to identify actual historic properties in that one, but she was opposed to having that huge holding tank.

Ms. French clarified that the ordinance as it stands is the same one they've had for a long time, where Category 3 and 4 homes, unless in Professorville or Downtown, are not protected by the Ordinance. If, in going forward with the inventory, there is an opportunity to consider when a home is placed on the inventory as a Category 3 or 4, that it does not have a significant consequence. If an owner says they don't want to be on the inventory and/or it's clear to them that a Category 4, for instance, is not subject to any mandatory registrations, it could be of interest to the owner. Currently, unless it's Downtown or in Professorville, there is not anything in the way of regulation for those homes. She doesn't like to say this in a public hearing, because the people that are currently in Category 4 homes may not be aware of that and they may think that Category 4 is an encouragement to keep their home, which it is perhaps, but it carries less weight as far as regulations.

Board Member Willis said she understood this, but since the properties are already identified as historic, there are still some CEQA consequences.

Ms. French said the “potentially eligibles,” as mentioned by Board Member Wimmer are the Priority 1 and Priority 2 windshield surveys which are basically unevaluated. They just happen to be built before 1948. When the word “potentially eligible” appears in a parcel report it means that they were appearing on the windshield survey, but there was no further study. The same could be said about properties that are now 50 years old, and older. Those are also potentially eligible. They haven’t been studied either, so the word “potentially” can refer to the ones deemed eligible back in 2000 and some continue to remain so because they have integrity.

Board Member Willis said she is only referring to the 145 that have been identified. She asked if there are regulations outside of being on the inventory that would affect them because they are identified as historic properties.

Ms. French responded that properties deemed eligible are not protected under the current ordinance. If someone does come through with a discretionary application, certainly for commercial, ARB applications, they do require CEQA.

Board Member Heinrich asked the consultant, regarding Attachment B, Table 5, under “Significance Criteria,” whether those designations are only for the National and California Registers, or if there is a column for Palo Alto categories.

Ms. Dikas thought it was the criteria for the National Register and California, and not all of the properties have as yet been connected with the local categories, because of the conversation about how best to do that, since the categories are defined so narrowly, but the significance of the properties as identified using National or California criteria are more broad. They are looking to create a methodology to expand each of the categories, particularly 1 and 2 – especially 2, which they really want to focus on – so that they can include significant people under 2, even though the category definition does not include that. Once they are able to establish that this is an appropriate approach, they will then associate the local categories with the properties. This will be the next step, in which they will prepare a cover letter for each one that will provide a rationale.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz agreed that there is a gap in the categories in that associations with significant people is not discussed. She felt that a place to put those properties is needed. She asked Ms. French if a formal revision would need to be done in order to establish that.

Board Member Rohman said she wondered about this as well, if they all agree with the analysis and support it, whether they need to actually change the ordinance.

Ms. French stated that it is one of the work program items, because it is in the Comprehensive Plan to “review the current Chapter 16.49 of the Municipal Code for its effectiveness.” What does this mean? Does this mean it’s effective at allowing people to demolish their homes? Is it effective at allowing preservation? It is an analysis that is out there waiting. She said they have started the survey effort first, but they have not started the next item, which is to evaluate the effectiveness of the ordinance.

Board Member Rohman said her question is whether they have the authority as the HRB to direct Page and Turnbull to go ahead and basically do a very liberal interpretation of each of the categories in the code.

Ms. French said they are asking for HRB’s input. If all on the survey are qualified as Category 2, if they still have integrity, does the HRB agree that this is the approach that they should initially take? She suggested the Board could take a straw poll on that question. They would still be coming with individual properties throughout multiple HRB meetings to bring batches of homes forward.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz said she understood that the question is, for the purpose of moving forward with the survey, do they want to include associations with significant people in a Category 2, at least for now, as a very limited discussion of what is going on with categories, simply or the purpose of the survey. There is a longer-range discussion of categories that is broader and an ongoing item that’s included in the work plan.

Board Member Rohman said her understanding is, for the purposes of moving forward, they give Page and Turnbull the license to Category 1, 2 and 3 or 4, as needed which will allow them to come back at a later date, and recommend them to Council for listing in the inventory. This would be the first step before moving forward.

Ms. French said they haven't discussed how they might bring in the four batches, but they could come back with the Category 2's for association, for one meeting. Another meeting could address Category 2's for architecture. She suggested they could talk about how the Board would like to see the batches come forward, or Page and Turnbull might have an idea of this.

Board Member Rohman said she wanted to see them move a project forward, so she was definitely in favor of having some license with the categories.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked to get a sense from the Board members in providing some direction on whether they are okay with Page and Turnbull's proposal.

Board Member Willis thought they should start out broadly, and if they need to narrow it down, if Council was opposed, then they could backtrack. She thought as long as the reasons they are identified as historic are documented, then she felt they were fine, assuming they could change the ordinance to match the survey results.

Board Member Heinrich asked how to define "significant people." For instance, would Jerry Garcia's bandmate's house, or the Grateful Dead be significant? To some people those would be very significant, but to others it would not be. She wondered if there is a definition for "significant." She noted another example, Alan Cranston's house and asked if he would be considered "significant."

Board Member Rohman asked Ms. Dikas what criteria she is using.

Ms. Dikas said the National Register and California Register have bulletins for how to analyze and evaluate a property for association with an important person. Her recommendation was, if the HRB wants to make some adjustments to the definitions of the categories at some point, to try to align them with the National and California Register as benchmarks, which most cities use currently. They could use the guidance from those registers. She said in terms of people, typically a person who is recognized for contributing to their business or their community, and that this property is the best representation of the reason why they are significant. It is not that, "George Washington slept here," but that there is a direct connection to an important person. It could be an early community member or a few things like that. She thought that in the Dames and Moore survey they were somewhat liberal with that, and they have not questioned the definitions of significance from that survey, so they decided to use the reasons that they identified and try to connect them to these categories, but there are a number that are identified for the original or an early owner.

Board Member Rohman read the definitions which were included in the packet. For National Register, Criteria B is "Person," and it is properties associated with the lives of persons significant in the past – very broad. For the California Register, Criterion 2 – resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history. She said she felt that they had some creative license with the categories.

Ms. Dikas agreed that the definitions are stated quite broadly and that there is a National Parks Service Bulletin that provides guidance for how to interpret each of the criteria and provides more information. But there is still, based on the wording of the criteria, some room for interpretation.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if they plan to do further research on any of the properties that have historical figures that may or may not rise to that level of significance. She said there were a couple of other open homeowner questions that may require research.

Ms. Dikas said this is not in their scope. She thought they might do a little spot research if there is one that they are questioning, to find a little more information. They have received some historical information from owners after the first community meeting, and they did consider that, but it is not technically part of their scope, so they're trying to keep time for additional research to a minimum.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz said on packet page 21 there is a reference to some additional research that was done on certain properties. It was hard to tell which properties these were, so maybe they could also find out for next time.

Ms. Dikas said they sometimes took pictures and looked at the properties from the street, but for a few it was unclear what had been changed about the properties, so they looked at some Sanborn maps and

photos over time to compare and better understand how the building had changed and what the true integrity was, so the comment about research may have been focused on alterations.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited comments from the public.

Carlyle "Lad" Wilson addressed the Board, and commented that he owns two of the properties on the list. They are 334 High Street and 342 High Street. He has been a resident of Palo Alto since 1960 when his parents first came to Palo Alto and bought Dahl Plumbing and Heating. He said all of their plumbers lived in Palo Alto, but those days are long gone. He said he was there to request that they remove – or hearing their frustration with the categories – establish perhaps a category of what could potentially happen with his houses. He said what Page and Turnbull did not unveil was that his two parcels are part of six parcels that are contiguous. The six parcels are the core of that block. He has been a landlord since taking them over from his parents. The properties have been in their hands for 63 years. The two houses are examples of co-habitation, which is very rare in Palo Alto, and they have been that way since the 1960s. He has ten individuals, employees of companies in Silicon Valley, that have affordable living. Mr. Wilson said he takes pride in trying to be under market with his rentals and he has very few transitions, with most people staying with him for a long time. One person has been with him for over 30 years. He asked that if the houses are not removed from the list, they should be designated or recognized as potential houses that could be part of a redevelopment of that area. He said he has been considering this for some time, and he will finish all of his leases in the future. He said he also felt that the historical standards of Page and Turnbull are in conflict with the Housing Element of Downtown Palo Alto. He said his six parcels are really the epicenter for development for worker affordable housing, being right across from the train station. He felt there should be a category that allows those buildings to be torn down in lieu of creating worker housing for Downtown Palo Alto. He said he also lives on that property – 344 High Street – his primary residence since 2014. He lives, breathes and walks on that block, and he foresees that as housing developments are done that they're good at building expensive studios and one-bedrooms, and it is not really affordable. Two of his three kids had to move out of state because they couldn't afford to live here. The one left is, fortunately, very well established. His consideration is for in the future if a redevelopment is done, to be more focused on exactly what he does now – co-habitation. He is looking to put in five bedrooms with one common kitchen and two bathrooms throughout the development. He said it creates the kind of suite living that he had at the University of California as a student. He said he encouraged the City to look at putting housing on top of the Palo Alto Fire Department, either incorporating or moving it, to provide housing for their employees. Mr. Wilson concluded by asking the Board to consider allowing a type of category that does not give a handicap of a historical standard that will drive people like him away from trying to develop.

Darlene Yaplee commented on terminology. She said she believes she is on the inventory list, confirmed through the survey that she could continue to be on the list, and that she is not bound by the ordinance. She asked if this means she is on the historical list or not. She said she is asking because there is a lot of language used that is confusing for the resident to be able to be precise in their feedback and to read and understand the minutes and understand what their comments should be. Secondly, she said she does not see the slide set in the packet. In 2022, there were links to minutes and attachments. In 2023, there is only the agenda, and she does not see the minutes, so she wondered how the public can comment on the minutes. She encouraged posting information to allow the public to go through the materials and make comments. Thirdly, she urged the Board to look at a category that has people on the inventory but do not want to be historical and do not fit Category 1 or 2. Finally, she said she does want to make comments, but it is hard to do so based on verbally was is heard and a subset of slides they see. She urged more transparency and minimizing confusion and working on clarification before the upcoming meetings.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked for additional questions or comments.

Board Member Rohman commented that her understanding was that the HRB can make a recommendation based on the ordinance categories for structures to be preserved. However, their recommendations are, unfortunately, discretionary.

Ms. French said that the HRB is a recommending body to the City Council so after this process concludes, after many months, if the HRBs recommendations/nominations go to Council, the Council can decline any or all of them. The way the ordinance is written anyone can propose nominations of a structure, even if that person is not the owner. If the property owner disagrees, it is the decision of the Council.

Board Member Rohman asked, if a property is designated on the local inventory as Category 1, 2, 3 or 4, if there is anything that prohibits the property owner from doing what they would like with it.

Ms. French clarified that Category 1 and 2 properties that are on the existing inventory have some protection under the existing ordinance. Category 3 and 4 properties only have some protection if they are located in Downtown or Professorville.

Board Member Wimmer said she appreciated the public coming to speak to the Board because it is important to hear their perspective and the issues they see being presented in the future. She said, as a Board, they are just trying to protect and preserve because it is sad to see resources lost and replaced with a big, impersonal glass box that is out of scale for what was a charming downtown and city. She also felt, however, that it is important for the public to not see these as something that will prevent them from doing something in the future. It is simply the HRB's effort to preserve Palo Alto, because they all love Palo Alto. She hates to have people perceive these preservation efforts as a negative thing when the HRB exists as a positive thing. She felt that for the people that come through the process of having projects reviewed by the HRB it ends up being a better project overall for them. She has heard for the most part positive feedback from those who have had their project reviewed and supported by the Board. In terms of public perception of what they do, she said they need to be mindful of this.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if a motion was needed.

Ms. French thought a straw poll would be sufficient. She addressed the comment regarding the availability of minutes and noted that there are minutes for June 8th and June 22nd in the packet, to act on. Online, she sees that the minutes are posted from May 25th and prior. She invited Ms. Yaplee to reach out to her, and she would provide links to all of the minutes and to have a conversation about her home.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked for a straw poll regarding having Page and Turnbull move forward as proposed. This was affirmed by a voice poll by all Board members present. Boardmember Makinen was not present at the time of the straw poll.

Approval of Minutes

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

Motion by Board Member Heinrich to approve the minutes of June 8, 2023. Seconded by Board Member Pease, the motion carried (4-0-3), by voice vote.

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

Motion by Board Member Heinrich to approve the June 22, 2023, minutes as corrected. Seconded by Board member Rohman, the motion carried unanimously, by voice vote.

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

Board Member Willis commented that since there will likely be some new Board members within the year, they should perhaps think about a Board orientation. She felt they need to do some foundation work. They have depended upon PAST to keep their inventory in the public eye, and she mentioned not knowing how long Caroline George would be there.

Board Member Heinrich advised that Caroline George will be passing the maintenance of the web pages to another member.

Board Member Willis was happy to hear this, but asserted that it is still a mistake for the HRB to be totally dependent upon PAST to keep up their inventory. She also said she thinks there is a difference between PAST having a readable, friendly presentation and HRB as the keyholders to Palo Alto's Heritage. She felt that people should be able to go online and see the DPR sheets for the properties on the inventory. She felt strongly that Palo Alto's inventory should be online instead of in print only, and if they can't get funding through a grant or Council, she is willing to search for independent funding for this, although she didn't think that is the best response. She feels it is a civic responsibility and would like to see their inventory accessible to the public online by the time they start adding properties to it, because it would be a much

smoother process. She commented that in this day and age in Palo Alto it is strange to not focus on this basic building block to their preservation efforts.

Board Member Rohman agreed that it should be digital archival basics, and as they refer to these and they affect homeowners' decisions, they need to be made easily accessible. She agreed that PAST is a wonderful partner, but it is not responsible to rely on them to do what the City should be maintaining.

Ms. French responded that certainly the list of the inventory addresses is on the website. The 1970's, black-and-white forms is what is being referred to.

Board Member Rohman agreed and said basically anything that, when Page and Turnbull brings the properties for designation on the local inventory, all of the data comes from the DPR.

Ms. French said for the current effort for the ones not on the listed inventory, properties that are online but the DPRs are not, those will be posted online. They can also post the old forms from the 1970s that don't have as much information as modern day DPRs.

Board Member Rohman asked if this is in process.

Ms. French responded that they have not been put online for the existing Category 1 through 4 homes. If that's what is being requested, she can do that. She said it pales on comparison to what PAST has, because they have color photos of the homes, nicely laid out. What she could do is just scan the existing paper forms and have them online such as they are.

Board Member Rohman thought that would be fine.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz agreed.

Board Member Willis thought it should be possible to add some color pictures as they are able to.

Ms. French thought it would involve more effort, but they could discuss it further.

Board Member Willis thought if they could, for starters, get some decent scans online it would be a great start. She wondered if it could be indexed by address.

Ms. French said she wasn't aware that Board Member Willis had a binder containing the inventory.

Board Member Willis said she bought it from the City for \$20 in 1987.

Ms. French said she would like to have the opportunity to provide hard copies of what she has in her office to each Board member, and then go through the process of scanning and putting the documents online. She could not commit to photos of home in their current condition.

Board Member Willis clarified that was not her intent, only a baseline scan of DPRs that in the future could possibly be re-typed and have photos added. She felt they needed a starting point and could then get volunteers to supplement the initial scans. She felt the originals are now historic documents and there is an advantage to keeping them online in their current state.

Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought having a scanned version of the DPR forms attached to the properties as a linked record sounded like a good idea.

Ms. French added that they will keep a link to the PAST webpages, because they do a nice job of indexing and presentation.

Board Member Rohman said she meant no negative against PAST, she simply felt the HRB needed to do their part as well.

Board Member Willis said she also had a thought about HRB members having a card with their email address and/or a few brief points/introduction to be able to pass out to the public. She was interested in Board members' opinions on this. She said she thought there were times, such as at the public meetings, when it might be useful to have something like a professional calling card.

Ms. French said she would look into this. She thought those were perhaps only for paid employees of the City. Perhaps Council as well, because they do get a stipend. She wasn't aware of any board or commission that has City of Palo Alto business cards, but she can raise the question.

Board Member Willis says she still has plenty and would not need anymore.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.